

# Self-Abandonment in Purifications



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Reading *Life of Love* has shown us the necessity of interior reform and of accepting suffering, whether this latter comes from the words or conduct of others or from personal, moral or physical trials. We know we must constantly place our will once again in God's will, and it is through our little voluntary "yeses of love" that our heart is progressively transformed, giving the divine the possibility of penetrating it.

## THE FIRE OF PURIFICATIONS

But what happens when the soul is going through a particularly painful phase of purification? How is one to react when the suffering never seems to end or reaches a level that seems unbearable? Then we are tempted to get discouraged, to say to the Lord, "This is too much!" And yet, God waits for us in this ultimate surpassing of self, for the intensity of suffering is precisely the consequence of His proximity, allowing the soul to open up to His mysteries.

In a letter written to Gemma who was entering a phase of the "night of the spirit", the phase of the purification of the will, Marie-Paule described what lay in wait for her: "*In the fire of purification, the soul suffers, writhes in pain, does not know where to go or what to do, or what is going to become of it – just as iron, which is to be forged, is put in the fire before being given the form desired by the artist. The more sure, solid and well-tempered the soul was, the more indecisive it now becomes, lost, as it were, in a will that is a will in name only.*" (*Life of Love* III, p. 262)

## A GREATER SELF-ABANDONMENT

Adhesion to the divine will must always be our guide in great purifications, but the intensity of the pain then requires from the soul a greater surpassing of self, even complete self-abandonment. Thus, when a person is dying and is living his or her last moments, we often notice a change, as though an interior battle were ending. Anglophones sometimes describe this phase by "surrender", a word full of imagery. This complete abandonment of the soul to God when it is experiencing a very great suffering is necessary so as to let Him

"work" the desired purification.

Marie-Paule gave us an example of this when, at a certain point in her life, both her health and the consequences of her husband's behavior made her suffer dreadfully. Lying in a hospital bed, she reiterated her abandonment by writing to Father Veilleux: "*Nothing bothers me, for nothing can any longer surprise me. Only one thing is of concern to me: to do the will of God. And I float along on the divine commands, following His caprice, like the reed bent to and fro by the wind.*" (*Id.* II, p. 160)

## DIVINE LOVE GIVING ITSELF

However, when He lets the soul be "burned" by His divine fire, God has no

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**The cross is a caress that is at once both painful and loving. The love that it begets alleviates all our miseries, all the pain of separation. Everything in nature recalls Him who is Love. I am ready for every suffering provided that Love no longer suffers.**

– Marie-Paule, *Life of Love*, vol. II, p. 99

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other purpose than to give of himself even more. Thus, Marie-Paule would go on to say that she did not regret having married the one who was her husband because, through him, she has known "*the most extraordinary abandon to the divine will, and the vision and knowledge of things spiritual. What is all human knowledge in comparison to those spiritual graces bought with the cross?*" (*Id.*, p. 160)

We can clearly see that, as a result of her sufferings accepted well, God rewarded her with great graces and blessings for herself and for the world. Her example can guide us in our ascent which must also be done through the acceptance of purifications that are increasingly intense.

## LIVING OUR PURGATORY ON EARTH

Those purifications are necessary to "gain Heaven", and if we do not freely accept them here below, then we will have to undergo them, helplessly, in what is known as Purgatory.

Sister Jeanne d'Arc spoke of this in *Life of Love*. After having written her autobiography, published in *Life of Love*, she experienced a very hard year and was subjected to all kinds of sufferings and trials. As she was living in great spiritual aridity, she wrote: "*In the face of this seeming reality, my soul is at times seized by a certain melancholy; this longing for God begets in me a genuine loneliness, for I feel so solitary in my desert. And as my mind fixes itself upon these spiritual phenomena, a thought that is almost a certainty comes to me: the souls in purgatory must suffer these kinds of pains, only with greater intensity, because, having had a glimpse of God, their longing to possess Him is something that cannot be described.*" (*Id.* V, p. 139)

Anne Catherine Emmerich, for her part, described in these words what she saw in Purgatory: "*poor souls, silent and afflicted, yet not without joy and hope in the mercy of God. I saw no fire, but I felt that the souls were racked by the most intense interior sufferings.*" (*The Life and Revelations of Anne Catherine Emmerich*, vol. I, p. 24)

## THE ASSURANCE OF GOD'S SUPPORT

As each soul is purified in keeping with the deep desire it has of attaining sanctity, Marie-Paule assured us of God's support: "*The more a soul desires to ascend, the more does God attend to it and furnish it with all the means necessary. He places along its way the persons and the things which will support it in its painful ascent. It goes without saying that there will be crosses, but there will also be delights, for the Lord gives assurance of the soul's happiness.*" (*Life of Love* III, p. 266)

In spite of the natural reluctance we may have when faced with suffering, let us not be afraid to advance in our progression to the Divinity, enlightened by Marie-Paule's witness and sustained by the prayers of all those who acknowledge that she is their "divine Mother" and the Mother of the Kingdom. ■