

HUMILITY AND CONFIDENCE

PRESENCE OF GOD - Out of the depths of my misery I have cried to Thee, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice. . . . I trust in Thee.

MEDITATION

1. Christian humility does not lower, it elevates; it does not cast down, but gives courage, for the more it reveals to the soul its nothingness and abjection, the more it moves it toward God with confidence and abandonment. The very fact that in everything—in essence as in act, in the natural as in the supernatural order—we depend on Him, and that we can do nothing without Him, shows us that God wants to sustain us continually by His help and His grace. Consequently, the relations of a humble soul with God will be those of a child who confidently expects everything from its father. This is the lesson that Jesus wished to give His Apostles when they asked Him who would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven: "Amen, I say to you, unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven" (*Mt 18,3.4*). "To remain little," explains St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, "is to acknowledge one's nothingness and to expect everything from the good God, as the child expects everything from its father. . . . Even among the poor, a child, while he is very little, is given everything that is necessary, but when he has grown, his father no longer wants to support him, and says 'Go to work now! You can rely on yourself.' It is that I might never hear those words that I never wanted to grow up, because I felt incapable of earning my own living: *eternal life*" (*NV*).

To the soul who humbly acknowledges its poverty and turns toward God with complete confidence, He is a very tender Father who delights in showering His gifts upon it and in doing for it what it cannot accomplish by itself. Then the smallest soul—that is, the one most tho-

roughly convinced of its own nothingness—becomes the greatest, since it has the greatness of God Himself at its command.

2. God does not introduce a soul to a higher spiritual life, nor admit it to deeper intimacy with Himself, as long as it is not completely despoiled of all confidence in itself. When a soul practically forgets its nothingness, and still relies on its own strength, knowledge, initiative, or virtues—be it ever so little—God leaves it to itself. The failures which follow, the falls, the fruitlessness of its works—all reveal its insufficiency; and the more a soul insists upon trusting in itself, so much the more will the Lord prolong this experience of its nothingness.

In speaking of her definite, total conversion, St. Teresa of Jesus confesses that what prevented her from overcoming the last obstacles was really a remnant of confidence which she still had in herself. "I must have failed to put my whole confidence in His Majesty and to have a complete distrust of myself" (*Life*, 8). Confidence in God increases in proportion to our mistrust of ourselves; it becomes total when the soul, having acquired a thorough comprehension of its nothingness, has lost all faith in its own resources. The soul then realizes the truth of Jesus' words: "When you shall have done all these things that are commanded you, say: We are unprofitable servants" (*Lk* 17,10). Even if the soul has had much experience in the interior life, in prayer and in virtue, it knows that it cannot rely on its own strength at all. It realizes that even if it has worked for the glory of God, it cannot depend on its own works; hence it will rely wholly and solely on God's mercy and grace: *Non habeo fiduciam nisi in tua misericordia*. All its confidence rests on the infinite merits of Jesus, on the merciful love of the heavenly Father and on the workings of grace; and this confidence makes it more courageous, more daring than ever, because it knows that with God it can do everything.

"What pleases Jesus," says the Saint of Lisieux, "is to see me love my littleness and poverty, the blind hope that I have in His mercy. This is my only treasure" (*L*).

“ I admit, O Lord, that I am very weak; I have salutary proof of it every day. But You deign to teach me the knowledge which makes me glory in my infirmities. This is a very great grace, and only in it do I find peace and contentment of heart, for now I understand Your ways : You give as God, but You want humility of heart ” (T.C.J. L).

O Lord, Your light penetrates my soul and makes me understand how far from Your ways are mine! Instead of being disturbed on account of my miseries and discouraged by my falls and failures, instead of pretending to succeed in everything and to accomplish great things, I must humbly accept the fact that I am weak, needy, and absolutely unable to get along without Your help.

How sweet it is, O my God, for a soul who loves You, to need You so much that it can do nothing without You! It is sweet for me, for in this way I learn that You wish constantly to take part in my poor life, that You want to sustain me always by Your grace, and that You will never of Yourself abandon me. To give me the fullness of Your divine help, You are only waiting for me to come before You with the humble, trusting attitude of a child who, not being able to rely on his own strength and resources, expects everything from his father. You wish me to be thoroughly convinced of my nothingness and to accept with love the fact that I am nothing so that You may be my All.

Deprive me, O Lord, of every remnant of confidence in myself. Every man is like the grass of the field which springs up today and tomorrow is not, and what greater foolishness is there than to rely on the strength of a blade of grass! Free me, O Lord, from such stupidity and place me, I beg of You, in the way of truth. O You who are Truth, sanctify me in the Truth, in the truth of my nothingness.

You alone are good, my God, and You alone can make me good. You alone are just and You alone can justify me. You alone are holy and You alone can make me holy. The less I expect from myself, the more I can and will expect from You : good-will and constancy, strength and patience, purity and goodness, virtue and sanctity. Hasten, O Lord, to come to my aid! My nothingness implores You, my misery sighs for You!