

Dealing with Difficult Turns in Life and Trusting in God's Providence

God can do nothing but love us. After all, God *is* love (1 John 4:8). So what do we do when we are faced with difficult turns in our lives? Do we think that God has stopped loving us, since we don't see *our* plans coming together? Or do we think that perhaps God has something different in mind, and that his Divine Providence is guiding us to better awareness of his loving care?

God orders all things in his Divine Providence to help us to know and to accept His great love for us. His Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, showed perfect humility by becoming man and accepting an agonizing death as part of God's plan for our salvation. God loved His Son from all eternity. Should we want to be treated any different than the Son of God, who was faced with the challenge of the cross as part of God's Providence?

St. Theresa of Avila said, "The truly humble person must be content with the path along which God leads him." In other words, why should we think that we know better than God what is best for our well-being and, ultimately, for our salvation? All of the great Saints resigned themselves peacefully to God's will, knowing that God allows difficulties and sufferings in a world that is fallen on account of sin. The Saints felt privileged to be allowed to face difficult turns in life and to share in Christ's sufferings, knowing that they were chosen to make up what is lacking in His sufferings (???). They accepted their difficulties and sufferings as an invitation to a deeper sharing in the Trinitarian love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

All of us experience various difficult turns and sufferings in our lives. We may suddenly find ourselves unemployed. We may be confronted with the untimely death of a loved one. We can lose our homes and other possessions to fires or natural disasters. Many are confronted with illness and suffer from physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual problems. Many suffer from addictions, financial woes, a strained marital relationship or other relationships. The list could go on. Do we accept those difficult turns and sufferings as given to us by a God who loves us more than we love ourselves, a God who knows the best way to draw us into intimacy with Him? Or do we rebel and become bitter? It is of no value to anxiously and bitterly rebel against such difficulties and sufferings - it only increases them. But it is of great value to do as the Saints did and to humbly resign oneself to them as God's will. That does not mean we don't try to alleviate our difficulties and sufferings through reasonable means, including such things as medical intervention for illness. It means that we face them patiently, lovingly, and with hope and trust in God. God knows what we need far better than we do. When we turn difficulties over to God, we find, as did the Saints, the truth of Jesus' statement - "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Mt 11:30).

My grandma spoke some wonderful words of wisdom to me several months before her death - "praise God for everything." And why shouldn't we praise God for everything, even the difficult turns and sufferings of life? Is He not the God who created us and who shows His love by ordering all things for our good in His Divine Providence? Why should we not praise Him for such a wonderful invitation to share in the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? The ability to praise and thank God, even when suffering very intensely, is clearly the work of God's grace in one's life. Just think of the many martyrs who were praising God while undergoing the most torturous deaths. We can