

## **One**

### **Our Need to Abandon Self-Reliance**

One of the questions St. Thomas Aquinas asks is, “Why did God take so long to become Incarnate and save us?” In other words, why didn’t God become man immediately after Adam and Eve sinned? Why didn’t He save us right away? Why did He leave us to be lost and sin, in so many different errors of paganism and idolatry and moral weakness?

The answer Aquinas gives is that the human race had to know its own powerlessness against sin before it would accept Christ as the only solution to the ultimate problem of life. Otherwise, we would ignore the Lord. Why would we need His help if we could save ourselves?

What’s true of humanity in general is true for us in particular: for Christ to come and save us, we first have to be convinced of our own utter powerlessness. Only then will we rely on Him, and abandon ourselves to Him, in such a way that He can transform our lives.

## **Two**

### **Recognizing that *You* Can’t Get it Done**

It shouldn’t take much convincing that we *are* actually powerless, that we do need to rely utterly on God’s power and God’s help. Because, after all, who can you save?

Who can you heal? Who can you make happy, or liberate from sin? You can’t save the world. You can’t fix the world’s problems. You can’t save the Church. You can’t reform the hierarchy, the liturgy, or even your local parish. You can’t save your kids. You can’t prevent them from

going off the deep end, or failing to launch, from becoming a workaholic, eating too much, drinking too much, or wrecking their marriages or their lives.

And you can't save yourself. There are sins and vices and anxieties and weaknesses that, try as you might, keep their hold on you – make your life harder and make the lives of those around you harder.

So, because you can't trust yourself, you can't rely on yourself, who can you rely on? Only on God. Only on Christ. He's the only one who can save the world, the Church, your family, and you.

So how do you rely on Christ? How do you surrender yourself to the Lord, abandon yourself to Him?

### **Three**

#### **Mind-frame: Abandonment as Faith in God's Promise**

The first step is to get into the mindset of reliance on God, surrender to Him.

What that means is that your life has to be based on faith in His promises. You have to really trust Him, believe that what He has said is true. And what has He said?

He has told us that He is Our Father. He has told us that He wants all to be saved, and all to be perfect. And He has told us that if we follow His program, He will bring us to Himself. So that means that the way you must evaluate all things according to God's promises. As opposed to evaluating things by *the way it looks to you*.

So, for instance, it may look to you like God's providential plan isn't workingm that evil is winning and good is losing. God has promised that

all things work together for good, so we believe Him, not our impressions.

Or, it may look to you as though the sacrament of confession isn't working, it's not helping you overcome sin, and that God isn't actually helping you become more virtuous. But God has promised that confession is the core way to fight sin and that anyone who asks for spiritual help from Him receives it. So we believe Him, not our impressions.

It may look like the Church is a merely natural institution, with all kinds of economic and PR problems, led by clueless men. But God has promised that Christ is the Head of the Church and that it will never dissolve, and it will preserve the core of His teaching forever. So we believe Him, not our impressions.

Again, the first step of abandoning ourselves to God is to trust Him and what He says – not to trust ourselves, and the way things look to us.

## **Four**

### **Living Abandonment to God**

So how do you actually rely on God *in practice*? How do you *act* like everything depends on God, and not ultimately on you?

Three primary things:

First, ask for God's help in everything. Jesus says, "Without Me, you can do nothing." And you make that truth central to your life by asking Him for grace whenever possible.

Secondly, don't freak out. Don't freak out about stuff outside your control. Global events, political events, events in the lives of family and

friends. God is supervising those areas, you aren't. He has the knowledge and power to do what needs to be done. You don't. Give those situations to Him, and be at peace. But also, don't even freak out over your own decisions. Don't even freak out regarding the choices that *are* under your control. Remember, everything depends on God, not on your choices. God can bring good even out of your imperfect, or even bad decisions. Try to make a good decision, but don't pretend everything depends on it. It doesn't.

Thirdly, stick to God's program presented through Scripture and the Church. Even if it doesn't seem to be "working", making you holy or happy, keep praying, keep going to the sacraments, keep trying to keep the moral law, repenting when you fail, and keep trying to love and serve the people around you.

Say, "Lord, it doesn't look like it's working to me, but I trust in You, so I'll stay the course."

That's a sign that you have really made yourself reliant on Him.

## **Five**

### **God's Plan is Surprising, but Trustworthy**

Jesus Christ has shown us that God's plan is always surprising, but trustworthy. As He hung on the cross, He was accomplishing God's will. He was winning. Everything was going according to plan. But it certainly looked like everything had gone horribly wrong. It looked like Christ had definitively, in just about every way, been thwarted and neutralized. And while He was accomplishing God's will, in His supreme moment of victory that looked like defeat, He cried out, "Father, into Your hands I commend my Spirit."

That's what abandonment is. It means saying, regardless of what the situation looks like on the surface, "Father, into Your hands, I commend my spirit, my life, my family, my Church, and my World to You."

And when we do that, to the extent that we do that, God's plan will be fulfilled.