

Sometimes We Just “Make God” Too Darn Hard!

These next two maxims from the teachings of Brother Lawrence (See reverse side) will seem very difficult. They have expectations that go against our culture and may even seem to go against our understanding of ourselves. That’s the surface recognition.

These may make God too darn hard to grasp and understand. They almost go against the idea of a God who loves us, and instead present us with trials and hardships we’re not really seeking.

But if we take the time to really look at what is being offered, we see another whole dimension of the value of these maxims. If God truly inspired Brother Lawrence to teach these, then there must be some hidden wisdom found in them. In reality, they show us the life of Jesus, and the perfection that came to be in the life of Christ Jesus.

“In the days when he was in the flesh, he offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered; and when he was made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, declared by God high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.”
(Hebrews 5:8-10)

And again:

“Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God,

did not deem equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God highly exalted him.”
(Philippians 2:5-11)



GOD FIRST

Year Two, Part 7

The Prayer of Awareness

It is Jesus who teaches us the same way of life. One example from the gospels, the teaching of Christ, immediately comes to mind.

“When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not recline at table in the place of honor.....Rather, when you are invited, go and take the lowest place so that when the host comes to you he may say, ‘My friend, move up to a higher position.’ Then you will enjoy the esteem of your companions at the table. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 14:8-11)

And a short bit later in Luke’s gospel, we hear:

“When you have done all you have been commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do.’” (Luke 17:10)

The Spiritual Maxims of Brother Lawrence (Second and Third of Four)

Second: *When we undertake the spiritual life we must consider in depth who we are, and we will find ourselves worthy of all scorn, unworthy of the name of Christian, and subject to all sorts of afflictions and countless misfortunes. We will find that these woes not only trouble us but also in our inner and outward dispositions. In short, we will find ourselves among those who God chooses to make humble through an abundance of sufferings and travails, both within and without.*

Third: *We must believe beyond any doubt that it is to our advantage to sacrifice ourselves to God and that He is pleased by our sacrifice. It is normal in His divine Providence that we should be abandoned to all sorts of conditions, suffering, afflictions and temptations for the love of God, as much and as long as it is His will. Without this submission of heart and spirit to the will of God, there can be no devotion or going on to perfection.*

What we are taught from scripture — the Word of God, is far different than what society wishes for us to live. Being humble does not fit into society’s design which displays the basic elemental living found in the animal kingdom: “Eat or be eaten”, “Survival of the fittest”, “No one is going to care about you”, and on, and on. These cannot even be truly described as coming from human nature which was elevated by God at the time of creation.



The experience of humbling ourselves for a growing awareness of the divine nature within us is our acceptance of an invitation into something much greater. It is this divine presence that brings our human nature into perfection as designed by God. It is of God. It is here that we now see ourselves as one, whole — human and divine — with the divine being shown through a changed human response to God, the world, and all of creation.

These are the times when we begin to give over ourselves and allow God to do what God so desires — simply make us one with Him completely. Whether the trials, afflictions, etc., are from within or from outside ourselves, they can become means by which we turn more and more over to our God. Our lives become more and more in alignment with that of Jesus Christ, who did the same in offering up his own tribulations to conform to the will of the Father. The hardest part of Brother Lawrence’s teachings is no different than the invitation given by our Lord — to surrender to the will of the Father.

And “giving it up “ isn’t what our basic nature is all about, even though we’ve had God’s divine nature shared with us since baptism.

What these two maxims are really saying to us is simple. Without our removing all else in our life, without being ready to have GOD FIRST, in the forefront, we will never experience ourselves as complete persons. We will never experience the fullness of God as we should, as God wants for us.

Don’t look at what may seem as the negative side of these teachings. Transform the heart and mind to see the positive, what is truly being asked and offered:

1. An opportunity to abandon so much clutter

that fills our lives and creates barriers to our knowing our true self.

- 2. An opportunity to return to a simple understanding of God that offers the overwhelming experience of the fullness of God’s love. We are realizing the “Hidden Ground of Love” found at all times.**
- 3. An opportunity to see and experience life with a renewed sense of faith, hope and peace. We don’t have the need any longer to create. God does it in and through us.**

Praying for this gift of humility, seeking to live it, acknowledging our own failures and self-gratifying dispositions, and then working to let go of them, is creating the opportunity for the “host to come and invite us to a higher place at the banquet,” even as we find ourselves saying, “I am not worthy,” with all sincerity and truthfulness.

The sufferings, travails, afflictions, and temptations become only temporary hardships as we work through letting go of our plans and expectations and develop a trusting relationship with the Father.

Gifts abound at this point in time, as we truly realize that our lives are being directed by the Spirit of God, and we like it and seek it more. The greatest gift is that of a joy-filled spirit that we soon learn is the very joy God has wished for us all along.

Now, we are no longer burdened with the “have to...” We know all that we must do. The Spirit forms an attitude within us of “want to...” We want to live in the presence of God. We want to have a change of heart and spirit. We want to live the will of God. And it is simple.



The Spiritual Maxims of Brother Lawrence (First of Four)

“All things are possible to one who believes, even more to one who hopes, and still more to one who loves; but all things are even more possible to one who practices these three virtues (faith, hope, and love) and perseveres in them. All who are baptized believers have made the first step on the road that leads to perfection, and will be perfect providing they persevere in the practice of the following guides to their conduct.”

“First. We must always keep our eyes on God and his glory in all we do, say or undertake. May the goal toward which we strive be to become perfect worshipers of God in this life, just as we hope to be throughout all eternity. Resolve firmly to overcome, by the grace of God, all the difficulties found in the spiritual life.”