

## Classics

### Doing The Will Of God

#### Practicing childlike faith in the ordinary circumstances of life

By Jane de Chantal



Since God, in His eternal goodness, has moved you to consecrate all your love, your actions, your works, and your whole self to Him utterly without any self-interest but only for His greater glory and His satisfaction, remain firm in this resolve. With the confidence of a son, rest in the care and love which divine Providence has for you in all your needs. Look upon Providence as a child does its mother who loves him tenderly. You can be sure that God loves you incomparably more. We can't imagine how great is the love which God, in His goodness, has for souls who thus abandon themselves to His mercy, and who have no other wish than to do what they think pleases Him, leaving everything that concerns them to His care in time and eternity.

#### Daily Devotion

After this, every day in your morning devotions, . . . use words like these:

“O most holy will of God, I give You infinite thanks for the mercy with which You have surrounded me. With all my strength and love, I adore You from the depths of my soul and unite my will to Yours now and forever, especially in all that I shall do and all that You will be pleased to send me this day, consecrating to Your glory my soul, my mind, my body, all my thoughts, words and actions, and my whole being. I beg You, with all the humility of my heart, accomplish in me Your eternal designs, and do not allow me to present any obstacle to this.

“Your eyes, which can see the most intimate recesses of my heart, know the intensity of my desire to live out Your holy will, but they can also see my weakness and limitations. That is why, prostrate before Your infinite mercy, I implore You, my Savior, through the gentleness and justice of this same will of Yours, to grant me the grace of accomplishing it perfectly, so that, consumed in the fire of Your love, I may be an acceptable sacrifice which will praise and bless You forever. Amen.”

During the activities of the day, spiritual as well as temporal, as often as you can, unite your will to God's by confirming your morning resolution. Do this either by a simple, loving glance at God, or by a few words spoken quietly and cast into His heart, by assenting in words like: “Yes, Lord, I want to do this action because You want it,” or simply, “Yes, Father,” or . . . other words that the Holy Spirit will suggest to you. This will show that above everything, you want to do the holy will of God and seek nothing but His glory in all that you do.

As for the will of God's pleasure, which we know only through events as they occur, if these events

benefit us, we must bless God and unite ourselves to this divine will which sends them. If something occurs which is disagreeable, physically or mentally, let us lovingly unite our will in obedience to the divine good pleasure, despite our natural aversion. We must pay no attention to these feelings, so long as at the fine point of our will we acquiesce simply to God's will, saying, "O my God, I want this because it is Your good pleasure." Whatever good or evil befalls you, be confident that God will convert it all to your good.

## Listening for His Voice

Follow your own way of speaking to our Lord sincerely, lovingly, confidently, and simply, as your heart dictates. Sometimes be content to stay ever so short a while in His divine presence, faithfully and humbly, like a child before his father, waiting to be told what to do, totally dependent on the paternal will in which he has placed all his love and trust. You may, if you wish, say a few words on this subject, but very quietly: "You are my Father and my God from whom I expect all my happiness."

A few moments later (for you must always wait a little to hear what God will say to your heart): "I am Your child, all Yours; good children think only of pleasing their father. I don't want to have any worries and I leave in Your care everything that concerns me, for You love me, my God. Father, You are my good. My soul rests and trusts in Your love and eternal providence." Try to let yourself be penetrated by words like these.

When you have committed some fault, go to God humbly, saying to Him, "I have sinned, my God, and I am sorry." Then, with loving confidence, add: "Father, pour the oil of Your bountiful mercy on my wounds, for You are my only hope; heal me." A little later: "By the help of Your grace, I shall be more on my guard and will bless you eternally," and speak like this according to the different movements and feelings of your soul. Sometimes put yourself very simply before God, certain of His presence everywhere, and without any effort, whisper very softly to His sacred heart whatever your own heart prompts you to say.

Finally, try to perform all your actions calmly and gently, and keep your mind ever joyful, peaceful, and content. Do not worry about your process of perfection, or about your soul. God to whom it belongs, and to whom you have completely entrusted it, will take care of it and fill it with all the graces, consolations, and blessings of His holy love in the measure that they will be useful in this life. In the next life He will grant you eternal bliss.

*Adapted from a chapter in In Her Words: Women's Writings in the History of Christian Thought, Amy Oden, ed. (Abingdon 1994), which was an excerpt from Francis de Sales, Jane de Chantal: Letters of Spiritual Direction (Paulist Press 1988) trans. Peronne Marie Thibert.*

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

JANE DE CHANTAL (1572–1641) was a wealthy young French baroness, wife, and mother when her husband died in 1601. As a widow she cofounded a religious community dedicated to serving the poor and sick. She provided spiritual direction to a number of Christians through her letters, each one of which began with her personal motto: "Live Jesus!" This letter was written in 1625 to her brother, an archbishop.