

Commentary on *“The Way of Christ”*

“Make love your aim.”
(1 Cor. 14:1)

In our walk with the Lord Jesus Christ we are working toward a definite goal: the union of our will with God’s will. Why do we focus on offering up our will instead of our mind or body, for example? The will is the master-faculty insofar as it commands or directs all the other faculties or powers of our soul and body which are subject to it, that is, all that is voluntary. Moreover, the will is represented by the heart, and in Sacred Scripture the word “heart,” when used figuratively, indicates the source and center of our life, strength and desires, including our mind, soul and spirit. For example, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding.”—Proverbs 3:5 or “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew within me a right spirit.”—Psalms 51:10 or “You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart.” (Jeremiah 29:13) Therefore, by offering up our will and asking for God’s will in return, we are giving God all that we have, all that we are, to do with as He pleases. We are loving God and being united to Him because the will’s activity is to love, and love unites the lover with the beloved. Thus we attain union with God and come to love Him above all things by giving Him our will—our heart, our love. However, in order for us to be able to give up our will to God we must deal with sin and its countless effects.

Sin binds our will in a tight knot and hinders us from freely loving God and our neighbor. In being inherently selfish, sin can only love itself. Thus self-love, an effect of pride, is our greatest enemy. We go right to the source of the trouble when we begin to deal with sin through repentance, penance, and reparation. By God’s grace we can conquer the sin within and practice the opposite virtues, thereby freeing our will from the chains of self-love and return our love back to God. By dealing with pride and anger through the humility and meekness of Christ, we strike at the source of all our evils. So here we see the sound basis for practicing The Four Step Prayer in *The Way of Christ* as well as the nightly examination of conscience.

At the same time, it is profitable to work hardest on our predominant fault or “besetting sin” whatever that happens to be, because all of the capital sins (vices) reside inside of us to some degree (until we are purified and brought to perfection), and they all weaken and die together. Thus, we will make great gains in all areas

of our spiritual life and growth in virtue by removing the main obstacle, by the grace of God. Yet, while this is true, it remains necessary to die to our pride especially, because it is the root cause of all sin and holds the whole structure of the “old man” together. As humility is the spiritual disposition, attitude and intention behind all true love and virtue, all grace and glory, so pride is the perverse power, the spiritual disorder, behind all self-centeredness and sin, all evil and vainglory.

The action of offering our will to God in The Four Step Prayer includes the action of letting go of our own false concepts or ideas about who we are or should be, about what we need or have coming, about the nature of true love, and so forth. All of our concepts or ideas not in conformity with the Gospel of Jesus Christ are obstacles to union with God because God is “the Spirit of truth” and “God is love”—infinite, uncreated and eternal. (John 16:13)(1 John 4:16) “Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love Him.” (1 Cor. 2:9) As we deny ourselves, pick up our cross daily, and follow Jesus, these false concepts or ideas, these untrue imaginings, false presuppositions or erroneous assumptions, begin to burst by the enlightenments of the Holy Spirit, and we are left with concepts or ideas more in line with the truth. Eventually, through the gift of infused contemplation and the supernatural light of divine illumination our mind will be purified, put in order, and brought to rest in “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding.” (Phil. 4:7) We will be freed from the need to think or meditate continually, especially in our relationship with God, now that our heart and soul and mind have been united to God more fully in the Living Flame of Love. We will know the Truth, and the Truth will set us free. (John 8:32)

The ideas or concepts that we have which do correspond with reality to some degree have a kernel of truth in them which will remain after the imaginary rind has been burned away—absorbed and removed—by the Flame of Love in divine contemplation. Even so, the candle light of human reason will be superseded by the warm bright light of the “Sun” with its powerful rays of divine wisdom and supernatural love. “I am that ‘Sun,’ God eternal, from which proceed the Son and the Holy Spirit,... and we are one and the same ‘Sun.’” (*The Dialogue of St. Catherine of Siena*) Increasingly, we will no longer be ruled by our imagination and passions, or even by human reason enlightened by faith (as good as that is for spiritual beginners), but by the gentle guidance and gifts of the Holy Spirit and the circumstances of Divine Providence.

In our spiritual journey, the devil (our enemy) tries to block the way to union with God by interfering. As we grow closer to God in the spiritual life, we will become better at recognizing the approach or presence of the evil one—“Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation.” (Matt. 26:41) Reject the

temptation or distraction, the disquieting thought or desire that disturbs your peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord, and through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, praying immediately in whatever way works best for you. Then, continue with the duty or action of the present moment, according to God's will.