

(English translation)

Castel Gandolfo, 21 February 2002

A Serious Sharp Turn

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We all realize that, not rarely, some slight attachment can slip into practically all that we do. While working, writing, speaking, or resting, we can become attached to ourselves, to things, to persons.... Consenting to these attachments would be a terrible setback for our spiritual life. St. John of the Cross says: "It comes to the same thing whether a bird be held by a slender cord or by a stout one; since, even if it be slender, the bird will be well held as though it were stout, for so long as it breaks it not and flies not away. And thus – he continues – the soul that has attachment to anything, however much virtue it possesses, will not attain to the liberty of divine union."¹

In these circumstances then, we must really intervene immediately, and nothing can be more helpful – it's my recent personal experience - than to repeat to Jesus forsaken: "You, Lord, are my only good. *Only* good. I have no other."

I really think it's a very important prayer and extremely pleasing to God. It helps to protect us from the dust of earthly things. In living it, we are struck – I was and am always struck - by how that adjective, "only", ("You, Lord, are my *only* good") seriously makes our spiritual life take a sharp turn. It immediately straightens us out, as if it were the trustworthy needle on the compass of our journey towards God.

Moreover, this way of acting is very much in conformity with our spirituality, in which the positive aspect prevails: by living what is good, evil disappears as a consequence. We are not so much called to detach ourselves from something (ourselves, things, persons), but to fill ourselves with something (love for Him, our all). We don't like the *no*'s very much; we like the *yeses*.

This prayer, "You Lord, are my only good," is a wonderful way to live as true Christians who love God with all their heart, and not just half way.

It's also a sublime way to prepare ourselves for every encounter with Him in the daily inspirations he gives us. As it will prepare us for the great encounter with Him at the dawn of that eternal day when the only treasure that will count will be our love of God, and for Him, of our brothers and sisters.

"You, Lord, are my only good": what wisdom, what depth, what light, what strength, what love, what perfection in these few words!

May the Lord grant us to experience them in all their power.

¹ St. John of the Cross, *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, 11:4, Image Book, 1958, p.145-146.