

Sacrament of the Present Moment

Synopsis by Erin Williams

The Sacrament of the Present Moment (SPM) is a work by Father Jean-Pierre de Caussade, whose clear and sublime message is that God can be found in and as every moment of our lives. This is a synopsis of the main themes of SPM, including the nature of mysticism, the nature and role of Divine Grace and human effort, the process of the spiritual path, and the function of spiritual practices.

Defining Mysticism

One of the major discussions from the SPM is the nature of mysticism. In mysticism, God is living His Life through and as us. A mystic sees only God. God is in and as the [0,1], the White, the blue, the relationship between the White and blue, the balance and degree of balance: God is all of it and beyond it because God is greater than any concept we can have of Him.

In De Caussade's time, as well as our own, *mysticism* can be confused with *quietism* or non-dualism. The quietists' perspective was that righteousness or sanctification comes from God's grace alone, and that human effort is of no value. They believed that passive meditation was the only way to union with God. The key components of quietism are that man's highest perfection consists of a self-annihilation and subsequent absorption of the soul into the Divine as the mind is withdrawn from all worldly interests. This non-dualism is a trend to be withdrawn into the White to the point that the blue is considered to be irrelevant, unspiritual and inferior.

Mysticism differs from quietism in its acknowledgement of duality. Quietism is a bird with one wing; mysticism has the two wings of White and blue, Silence and activity. A mystic's motto is: "Pray as if everything depends on God and work as if everything depends on you." Mystics attempt to manifest the Unmanifest in their activity in the world because they know they are the vehicles that God has chosen to do so.

Mysticism is the "scrambled eggs" that includes both the White

and the blue and embraces the Wholeness of [0,1] of God transcendent to creation, but also God manifested as every bit of creation. As a wise mentor, Fr. Flynn, once said, "I later gleaned that a true mystic is one who takes his blue responsibilities as seriously as his responsibility to be aware of God and His Presence within."

We never eschew our responsibility as citizens in the world; rather we infuse our nature and participation, as it has been given to us, with the value of our divinity. Mystics (those who are in the Consciousness of unity - the Christ of Krishna) are both inhabitants of this world and citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. They commit themselves wholeheartedly to the building of the earthly society (righteous structures), but they remain focused on the things of eternity (relaxed in Consciousness witnessing all of this as God's manifestation).

Acceptance and Effort

Mysticism encompasses the Wholeness of Divine Grace and human effort. We fully participate as individuals in the relative world while fully realize the Self beyond it, and appreciating/realizing the underlying oneness between the creation and beyond-creation.

On a day-to-day level this means that we recognize that God is the Source and stimulating agent of everything but we also act and respond according to our nature and the best information that we have at the time (which also is ultimately God). True acceptance includes acceptance of our reactions and drives to act, create, and respond rather than just become immobilized in a cookie-cutter state of passivity.

If acceptance and effort are the left and right point of the base of an isosceles triangle, the apex is faith. Faith is the relationship between the two. Faith informs our acceptance and effort with purpose and understanding and gives our lives transcendental value. We know there is just One. He uses His creation and we are His hands and feet as He works an aspect of His creation through our individual body/mind units as He wishes. We follow our deepest impulses according to our nature (effort) and at the end of the day leave it to Him (acceptance), the apex is the balance of the two.

The integration of acceptance of God's will and power, and our

own effort is the position of both /and. De Caussade saw clearly, “the place of human works in placing us before God in such a way that grace may be effectual.” Human effort and divine intervention emanate from the same Source. Our desire to love God can be lived spiritually by obedience to His laws and our spiritual practices and mystically by seeing All as Him.

In a way, as mystics, we begin to see the world less in polarities and more in wholeness. Acceptance and effort constitute a whole – we make the effort necessary to carry out His Plan for us in our daily lives (by staying focused on Him), and accepting whatever He gives. This allows Him to experience His creation through and as us.

The Path to Holiness

The path to holiness is really a way. It is living each moment as a sacrament – a moment in the Life of Christ. God’s Life is unfolding moment by moment all around us, through us and as us. This way denies any separation from Him and attributes all circumstances and events to His Doing. It allows us to live free of the burden of our own sense of “doer-ship”, smallness and lack of self- acceptance and keeps us obedient to His Will.

The path to holiness is recognizing and being receptive to the Divine in every moment, thing, action, and circumstance. De Caussade cautions his readers to avoid condensing the path to holiness to a specific activity or experience. He observes that we tend to “idolize the means through which he is made known to us...” and “take that living experience and calcify it and idolize it as *the* way to meet God.” Although specific practices are important and cultivate our receptivity and nurture our relationship with God, the ultimate reality is that God is each moment and comes to us under all circumstances, not just the ones we associate with a “spiritual” feeling or quality.

The desire for God, living from the “Divine Center,” is the path to holiness. “It is obedience to the duty of the present moment that constitutes the path to holiness.” As we do, we are in the process of being emptied of a sense of separation, of our ideas of how we and everything else “ought to be”, and we live more of our true nature.

According to De Caussade, the path to holiness is twofold: it

includes trust and obedience. Jesus and His Mother are perfect examples of the way these qualities must intertwine. They believed that their surrender to God's Will and their endurance of what had to be was their purpose. They trusted God and believed He had a plan; they obeyed His Will and patiently bore the suffering for the world.

We make all moments of our lives a sacrifice to Him by remembering Him in and as all things large and small and obedience to His will for us in each moment. This process over time diminishes our identity of the small self and attunes us to His will not our own desires.

When we realize that everything is coming from a loving God for our highest good - then we can relax, be still and know that this very awareness is in fact the God within.

Whatever is happening at each specific moment is exactly how God wants it to be! Holiness is to keep one's mind and heart on and in God and knowing everything that happens is His will for His divine play. Why? Because it is His show not ours! It is knowing that "God speaks to every individual through what happens to them moment by moment." He says, "There remains one single duty. It is to keep one's gaze fixed on the master one has chosen and to be constantly listening so as to understand and hear and immediately obey his will." And again, "the only condition necessary for this state of self-surrender is the present moment in which the soul, light as a feather, fluid as water, innocent as a child, responds to every movement of grace like a floating balloon." Seeing God in all the mundane and big events - everything - is holiness.

"What was a means of God's grace one moment may become a hindrance in the next..."

De Caussade sees the coming of Christ to each of us as a dynamic, fresh, ever-new experience. He is alive in us, not because of anything we have done (especially specific rituals or prayers) but because of God's grace. We must be open to *Him*, not what we perceive as how He might have come to us. The relationship - what He wants of us at any given moment - is what's important.

"Christ comes to us in a new and living way each day." God wants to experience His creation in infinite ways, through and as us, and

comes to us through and as everything.

What he means by this is that Divine Will is ever-changing, moment to moment. We may be "guided" to perform one task one moment and another task in another moment. Each is a sanctifying moment for HIS WILL.

God knows best what we need at any particular time. Being flexible to the demands of our daily lives and to inner inspiration is a way to lessen the chokehold of our limited concept of how "it ought to be." This reminded me of the definition of Love being the most evolutionary response to the situation-- likewise the means of God's grace may take shape in our lives from being in meditation at one time to busting butt and being extremely active and serviceful in the outer world.

The "means" becomes a hindrance when we idolize it. It reminds me of Lord Jesus' words, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."

"If an aspirant fixates on an event, condition or experience as God, no matter how wonderful then "that" is worshipped and focused on, to "idolize the means", rather than staying open and receptive to the living ever new God and what His will is in every moment.

As an example, having quiet meditation to be with God seems so ideal but, if your noisy in laws knock on the door for a visit, I think Caussade is saying that that is the next way to be with God – with your noisy in-laws. Don't be so stuck, fixed or idolized on the quiet meditation! Everything is God's grace yet from the mind, perhaps something is a hindrance if it gets in the way of our ego identified body to control for a desired outcome thus being overshadowed. Recognizing that God did not give us the "play book" of His creation, we see no hindrance if we treat each moment as a sacrament and flow with His plan -As He wishes. Even if we don't like it or feel sad or angry – those feelings too are His. De Caussade is "inviting us to the adventure."

God's grace is all that is, from one moment to the next and our receptivity to His Will as it lives and moves from moment to moment is what frees us. We often want to cling to a moment as though the grace of that moment will carry us forward, or sometimes our senses want to stay awhile in the comfort of a particular grace. But God's Will is living and breathing anew in each moment.

“Cease frantic strivings for holiness”

Spiritual practices are to make us receptive to the presence of God in every moment. And, in fact, these practices open our eyes so that we can ‘see’ what’s already there.

Meditation, contemplation, prayer, practicing the Presence and service shouldn't necessarily get scrapped or devalued. I think what this means is that these practices get put into proper perspective. They are means by which we can relax and be more receptive to the Light of Christ in each moment. This is a shift from strictly following rigid practices as an end unto themselves.

Meditation, contemplation, prayer, etc. will arise as HE calls it to in each moment, so the need to strive is relaxed. It doesn't mean that we don't participate in these practices, only that we are not driven by them. Give HIM your heart - devotion.

Striving to achieve something that is in us and all around us—it's like the poem about the thirsty fish needing some serious help! Resting in the Light of Christ does not mean an end to spiritual practices. Spiritual practices are not about striving for results but rather about relaxing and receiving what is. They are not about achieving but about giving, emptying, and becoming.

The “frantic striving” that de Caussade talks about keeps the mind on the small self who is striving and perpetuates the thought that we are separate from God and must get to Him by our ego's idea of effort. For the Mystic meditation, contemplation, prayer, practicing the Presence and service are done in a spirit of love and the desire to give the Beloved what His wishes. The practices are to make us receptive to Him as He gives us the ability to do so. This keeps our minds and hearts focused on Him, not ourselves, our efforts, our experience.

As de Caussade says, “Let us unceasingly impress upon every soul that the invitation of this gentle, loving savior expects nothing difficult or extraordinary of them. He is not making impossible demands on them, he only asks that their good intention be united to his so that he may lead, guide and reward them accordingly. Indeed...God is only asking for your heart.”

"There is nothing easier, more ordinary, more available to all, than

saintliness."

Saintliness is keeping one's mind on God and heart in God. When we 'do' all of our work for Him and give Him credit for 'our' thoughts and deeds, we become saintly. We are all animated by the same consciousness thus available to everyone even though everyone is not called to hear it yet.

The soul or heart desiring to surrender to God's Will and Direction is all that is necessary for Him to do His work within us. Saintliness is not about striving for or achieving anything. It is receptivity to His Work within us in each moment.

Saintliness is easily available to all because the way of it consists of taking the simple moments and duties of our days and giving them sacramental significance. De Caussade wants us to "profit" by them – to find meaning in them and to evolve through them. Nothing special is needed. The ordinary events of life are what God gives us to work with and as we become aware of what we are we will see how we are the hands, feet and eyes of Christ in the world.

Our Divine Beloved is ever-present to us, surrounding and permeating and IS all that is, and yet we strive and yearn for some far off, difficult goal that in actuality doesn't have much to do with true saintliness of being our Self and our self.

Our "loving savior expects nothing difficult or extraordinary" from us. "He only asks that their good intentions be united to his so that he may lead, guide and reward them." The desire to love Him is the same as loving Him. It is this desire that draws us close to Him and opens us to surrender and obedience to His will. As Shirdi says faith and patience or endurance is what he asks of us. A pure heart means a heart that wills one thing, to love God.

Mysticism and spirituality

In his writing, de Caussade speaks to both mystics and non-mystics. He speaks to mystics in his understanding of how God's activity permeates all things. He is non-mystical when he speaks of a separation between God and man, one that allows us to keep our eyes fixed on God and be constantly listening to hear and obey his will. His belief that God

speaks to every individual through what happens to them moment by moment seems to reconcile the mystical and non-mystical. God 'speaking' is not an auditory event; instead His words and meaning come through each moment we live because He is within it all. He is All.

De Caussade clearly recognizes the immanence of God in our lives and how He works through every moment and circumstance. However he doesn't seem to acknowledge or identify that God ultimately *is* All That Is (at least not explicitly). God orchestrates every detail of our lives but he never overtly makes the connection that God lives through and as us. However the mystical message is there for those with ears to hear: God is present in all aspects and every moment of our lives, ergo what or where is He not?

De Caussade seems like a Mystic because he sees God in everything and in every moment. His indifference to the spectacular and seeing no moment as trivial, every moment contains a divine Kingdom and heavenly sustenance; everything bears the mark of its maker...In praying for "a blessed state" and aspiring to holiness de Causade might seem dualistic, yet mysticism is all inclusive and does not exclude life in the blue, a relationship with our Source, our selves or one another, it does not exclude metaphysics or spirituality.

In the sense that even if one doesn't practice the sacrament of every moment, that is God too. God is even our response to life's events. Reconcile the two. Ultimately, we know ALL is God and we are here to witness His creation for Him. Also, ambiguity is the mystic's certainty!

God's Life is mediated to us

How is God's life being mediated to us? If 'mediate' means to form a connecting link, then what is the connecting link between God and myself? The link would be my *what* – my identity as Pure Consciousness - which is the same as God and is the Witness of my "who." That means God is living His life through me and my experience of life is the one He wants to have. Everything I do is for God; it is also by Him.

God's life being mediated is an opportunity to be receptive to, experience and respond to God's Will. It is the opportunity to love God, to participate in the sanctification of life and the process of continually renewed life, living from the Divine Center, surrendering the sense of

separation. We become giving itself through experiencing all of this as Him and for Him.

The more we see it all as Him and surrender to His Will, accepting and responding from the heart, the more "quiet worship and adoration can begin to flow out of (rather than in spite of) ordinary tasks and experiences."

It can be a no brainer to think of us mediating the Light and Love of God to others (i.e. through our spiritual practices, our different modes of service in the outer world, etc.). It's more of a challenge to see God being mediated through life *to me*.

Life circumstances are opportunities to loosen our desires to be able to know and directly perceive that something is for the Good. He will do whatever it takes to make us dependent on Him alone. Our ability to understand why something happens is not relevant in determining its Goodness or alignment to the Will of God. He's got it handled!

God's life is being mediated to us daily. How rarely does the day we have planned unfold in the way we imagined! Yes, the structure is there, but everything within that can change. When we can flow with the moments in our day and trust in His Will and Plan, the tension of resistance is gone and these moments become sacramental.

Christ can be mediated to us through tests of endurance and faith. Sometimes it may feel as if we are going into the unknown with the only tools we can carry: faith and trust and afterwards, patience. How is this a participation in the life and death of Christ? The life and death of Christ is to do what is right and good: take care of what is in front of you (God's Will) in the best way possible with faith in His Plan and rest in His Love and let It transform you.

The To-Do List Syndrome

When there is not enough Silence and Pure Knowledge, the exhaustive to-do list is a band-aid to mask the emptiness of lack of relationship to Source. The gauze that we stuff in the hole in the heart is the "muchness and manyness."

The to do list is a strategy devised by the ego to cope with the main "inner monster" which is a profound and terrify sense of aloneness

and separation for our Source and sense that that experience is my fault. This is the experience of the wave dangling above the Ocean, not even knowing there is an ocean. This monster can be faced by turning toward our true Beloved. Every desire is our desire for this union with Him. Once this Truth is remembered in our hearts, and that He is with us every moment, then the to do list begins to be put into balance with our desire to give everything to Him.

A life with an endless to do list is not so much the problem, it's that it overshadows our relationship with God. We think we have to accomplish it all. We forget who does the accomplishing! With a commitment to placing God first in each moment, our list can be from here to kingdom come, but it won't matter because it will be in its proper place.

"Indifference to the spectacular"

We sometimes say, "Flash is trash." *The Sacrament of the Present Moment* is a hymn to the un-flashy, a tribute to the simple and daily, the small and insignificant. It is in the moments that others never notice – that without this developing awareness and focus we might not notice ourselves – that God speaks to us. I think He is whispering to us all the time and to hear Him we have to be quiet inside, ready, and listening.

De Caussade's discussion of "indifference to the spectacular" is much like the story of the widow's mite. It isn't how big or noticeable the gift, but that every tiny gift, every moment, a tear, a kind gesture is God speaking to us, through us and as us.

This "indifference" is recognizing that God comes to us as we are, without necessarily any huge Broadway production number of perceivable sensations, feelings or apparitions. His love and presence are not measured by our experience or feeling. He permeates all aspects of our lives and is our loving companion through each moment: "No moment is trivial since each one contains a divine Kingdom, and heavenly sustenance."

Although he seems to be speaking about looking for "spectacular" spiritual experiences, it could also be that he is saying there are no great deeds that we need to do to "attain" God, nothing we need to improve or change about ourselves to know God. Just love and do what is before us.

Life itself, no matter how small or ordinary, is an opportunity to be our selves and to know, love, serve and experience God. There is nowhere to look but in the here and now.

The desire for the spectacular can be the desire for astral experiences in meditation, or it can be the desire for major miracles to prove God's love for us or our specialness. It can also be the desire for a big "calling", "what have I come to do!?"

Indifference is total surrender and obedience to God's will for us. It is accepting the situations, people, circumstances, challenges and results God gives us, knowing he has done all things for our best even if our human mind can never understand the significance. We do and be because we love Him right where He has put us.

"Everything bears the mark of its maker." Stop searching for big and grand gestures and see what is in front of you. He is in everything, what is right in front of us! Each moment is created by Him and is necessary for His divine play to evolve. Each moment is sacred.

Daily Experiences as a Divine Sacrament

A key word here is integration. The White is knitted with the blue, the Silence is integrated into activity, so that even the most mundane daily activities are sanctified by remembrance of His presence and are opportunities for His revelations to emerge and Love to be expressed. With the idea of worship and adoration "flowing out of (rather than in spite of) common tasks," there is again this theme of integration: that our "spiritual" experiences and activities aren't divorced and distinct from everyday experiences and activities. God manifests as all of the above. Each moment can be realized as God acting through/for us to bring us to our highest Good. This duty to the present moment is an opportunity to participate in the life and death of Christ as we offer our total obedience to the Will of the Father and realize ourselves as God's instruments to do His work in this world.

Another central concept can be likened to Maharishi's Transcendental Meditation expression of "Self-referral." Meditation and other spiritual practices are obvious opportunities to refer back to the Self, to Source, but also each moment, each decision, each daily activity can be offered to Him and be opportunities for continuous Self-referral, or recognizing the Self as present at all times and places.

Our commitment to the most sacred command the First Commandment, Love God first, is the foundation of the mediation of the Christ to us. Knowing we are living our lives for Him and as Him every moment sanctifies all we do. Daily circumstances, duties and difficulties are opportunities to practice His Presence including faith, patience and endurance.

Difficult situations impel us to look at life from God's point of view and practice all we have learned to be receptive to God in the moment. This is God having our and others' experience. Ultimately distressful situations are part of a bigger plan that our minds cannot understand. We am God's love and life shining in the circumstance and will perform any duty He has assigned without being overshadowed by the discomfort of our senses. By remembering who God is and who we are, we are given the necessary resources to perform and endure in a way that is beyond what our individuality could imagine.

This is like Saint Therese Lisieux's Little Way – a method of bringing consciousness to the little things we do every day. When we remember "I am Pure Spirit," then as a witness we can see Christ is mediated to us, connected to us. When we fulfill my duties wholeheartedly then we participate in the life of Christ Who did the same. We die to our own needs and desires when we focus on the highest Good of others. This makes the work a sacrament.

Although life in the world is constantly changing and often is very difficult and painful, we have the most precious, reliable, loving inner resource of all--the companionship and love of God-- and also the grace of realizing ever more fully that this individuality is not all of who/What we are. We are part of a Wholeness that is beyond our comprehension. This allows the shift to endure through sanctification of living as/for/in Him whatever happens, rather than just enduring in the sense of coping or attempting to tolerate circumstances.

It also means that although day to day living is not always easy, or pretty, it's sometimes downright painful and difficult, every moment and every breath and every opportunity is filled to overflowing with life and love, and His grace, and we get to experience all of this for God, so precious!!

This gives us courage and endurance to perform our duties in the blue and to strive to be His instrument, as well as to rest and relax in the arms of God to know there is a bigger, bigger plan.

There is a much greater purpose to our lives that has very little to

do with our 'me'. In the blue and the White, it is all Him experiencing Himself. That we can be such vessels and vehicles for Him and His evolution (which means all the circumstances of His life as us) is both humbling and a great honor to have this human form in which to know Him and to find our strength in Him.

Spiritual Practices of the Early Christians

From De Caussade's writing, the original spiritual practice of the early Christians sounds a lot like what we talk about at StillPoint: fulfill your duties according to your station in life, serve others as you can and remember Him. They practiced the Presence in seeing everything and everyone as coming to them from God. They had a very feminine approach of attuning their focus to God rather than a strictly codified set of rituals or behaviors. This same practice is effective today for those who are called to the mystical spiritual paradigm and a feminine path. It is suited to mystics who can flow with ambiguity, however it may not be appropriate for many people today who are in the grip of a to-do list and a measurable achievement oriented lifestyle. A more specific set of spiritual practices might be a good segue from outer to-dos and masculine paradigm to a more receptive practice of the Sacrament of the present moment.

De Caussade says of the early Christians: "The simple practice of what God, the only director of souls, gives them at each moment to do and suffer, whether it is obedience to the laws of Churches or princes... The spiritual life was then a matter of immediate communication with God...constantly prompted by divine impulsion, they found themselves imperceptibly turned towards the next task that God had ready for them at each hour of the day."

Early Christians accepted God's will in and as all things in their lives. With faith and obedience they lived each moment, doing what was in front of them according to God's will. Unenlightened men began to 'teach' the path and over time "I think therefore I am" became a predominate perspective. Putting our attention on the mind, identifying with it and worshiping it became a huge obstacle to "knowing" God through our hearts in Silence and intuition. Therefore today many Westerners have to go east to go west. We must learn to cultivate the

Silence within to remember God's Presence within. Through practices of quieting the mind and feeding it Pure Knowledge, the original desire written in our hearts for God and capacity to live with faith and acceptance of God's presence at all times is reawakened.

Submitting to God's Will

To submit to God's Will is to recognize and acknowledge Him as the source and essence of all things, people, circumstances that we encounter. It also means to recognize and accept Him as the source and essence of ourselves, our individualities, our natural reactions, our thoughts and feelings, our past, our decisions. It means to enact His will through our discrimination, judgment and behavior to the best ability and understanding that He gives us at any time, regardless of whether it is comfortable. It means to give credit for (ultimate) doership to Whom it is due rather than hanging onto endless mental lawsuits against ourselves or other people.

It is taking care of one's responsibilities in life in the blue and being His hands and feet. Knowing oneself to be both human and divine and honoring both the blue and the white. "We put nothing of ourselves into it apart from a general willingness that is prepared to do anything or nothing, like a tool that, though it has no power in itself, when in the hands of the craftsman, can be used by him for any purpose within the range of its capacity and design."

God is all things, people and circumstances. Submitting to His Will is standing before Him, unprotected, knowing that this is His Life and allowing Him to direct this life from within according to our nature (how He has made each of us) and as we are given to understand it from moment to moment. It is giving our life to God, knowing that He is the 'Wirepuller' and that we are the vehicles in and through which He experiences His Creation. It is shifting focus from the small and sometimes demeaning thoughts of our selves lost in separation from Him, to embracing Love in Its fullness. It is seeing God, Life and Love as an inseparable Trinity. It is seeing all aspects of Silence and activity as Him and knowing through faith in His Love, that all is happening for our greatest good, no matter what it looks like and we are not meant to understand. Faith is not of the mind, it is of the heart. It is accepting with faith all circumstances of our lives, our joys and sorrows or sufferings as

necessary steps to His drawing us close to Himself and fulfilling His Purposes.

Submitting to God's Will is obedience to His Laws and Commandments and His Will as it unfolds around us, through us and as us. It is doing what is necessary in each moment or day to take care of our duties and responsibilities as they have been given and leaving the results up to Him. It is loving Him foremost, then ourselves and others through and as His Love. It is remembering Him always.

"To be nourished by God alone"

God is our Source, for all things. With attunement to God, Self-sufficiency grows and the desire to go within develops while the things of this world no longer sustain us. Ultimately, only to be with Him is our nourishment. He alone fills the wound in the heart.

The spiritual virtue of Hope is that we look to find our ultimate fulfillment in the Eternal Life rather than the relative ever-changing world around us. Our ultimate "sustenance" of life, love, wholeness and fulfillment comes from God and not our circumstances, experiences, possessions, other people, etc. God is the God on our altar.

To be nourished by God alone is to be fulfilled in the desire for what God desires. To give ourselves over to His Will we receive, experience, become and we are His Presence. By God's grace, our true nature is realized. Lord Jesus said that His nourishment was "to do the Will of the Father and to accomplish His work."

Nothing the world can give nor the mind can imagine can fill the hole in the heart, which only God can fill. As this truth becomes enlivened in us the mind and body are brought into alignment with the heart's desire to love God alone. The truth that "in giving we receive" becomes a living reality. Each moment becomes a "gift from the Father" regardless of the comfort or discomfort of the senses.

The secret of finding this treasure

We can't help but do what God wants. Divine action is the cause of all our actions because it is God Who is expressing Himself through

ourselves and everyone around us. It “cleanses the universe” through Love, the evolutionary principle that is always at work. There is no “secret to find this treasure” – we have only to look.

God's presence and essence pervades everything because He has become everything. As Anasuya Devi says, He does not appear as a separate being because He is ALL. He can be found in every person and circumstance because what else is there?

God’s Living Presence is everywhere and beyond and is available to us always and everywhere and because of this it is not easily detected with the eye of reason or the eye of the senses alone. As we turn within to the core of our being we experience this Presence and over time Truth takes hold of our hearts and we begin to live in attunement with His Presence immediately present within us and all around us.

The light of God is hidden within every being and available to all but not at the same time. God’s courting strategy reaches out to all of us always. Everything is Grace, as every person, place and event is placed just for us to move in the direction to realize Him. The Master chess player arranges the pieces exactly for one’s perfect evolution. Or the sculptor is closest to his piece as He divinely sculpts His work of art. God is a jealous lover – He pursues us relentlessly.

What is this treasure – minute grain of mustard seed?

This treasure is love. Every creature loves in its own way and each is pouring out into the world the love of God. Divine action is always in the cause of love. It is God’s love for us that engineers our evolution into whole beings who know we are both human and divine, and He uses every moment of our lives to do so. Since He is always working through the creatures He has made/become, this love is always flowing “to the very center of our being.” We are surrounded and immersed in His love though in any given moment there may be little understanding of that. It may seem tiny sometimes, but it is always available and accessible. It is all there is.

This treasure is the faith and perspective that all of this is going according to God's Will and our circumstances are part of a greater plan for the Good than we can perceive. The analogy of the seed is apt because it implies that it is self-perpetuating and grows without our

control: God calls us home, awakens that spark, and all we have to do is nurture it through providing a life-giving environment of our focus on Him and a lifestyle that brings a balance of Silence into activity. God will bring that seed of faith to fruition in His own time.

Life is “God fulfilling his mighty purpose” regardless of our experience and understanding. Through this tiny seed a person can move from being identified with the body/mind unit only to knowing they are fully divine and fully human and living their role in the mighty purpose by being themselves under all circumstances.

The simple duties of a Christian

The simple duties of a Christian are to do one’s job as given to the best of one’s ability, to serve others where we can and to remember God and have faith in Him in and as all things. It is also our duty to accept (which does not mean we have to like) what is given (all circumstances) as God’s Grace for our greatest good and evolution. De Caussade says a Christian ‘humbly accepts the suffering involved and submits without question to the demands of Providence in everything that is to be done and suffered’. Living this sacrament of the present moment is sanctification and all that is needed.

De Caussade says, “And so we leave God to act in everything, reserving for ourselves only love and obedience to the present moment. For this is our eternal duty.”

"The heavy and dangerous burdens"

The Sacrament of the Present Moment is about the simplicity of living a life in God’s Presence, from moment to moment, allowing Him to move and act in and as our life. “God reveals Himself to the humble in small things.” The heavy and dangerous burdens are those unnecessary, elaborate and rigid practices as well as ideas given by those in ‘religious authority’ that make inquiring souls question their capacity for God. They thereby focus on the rules or technical details of practice or their

worthiness in their pursuit of God, all of which takes them away from God and obedient to those who wish to control their spiritual life rather than submitting to God's Love through the inspiration given in each moment.

If you only think of yourself as a "wave" and there is a big emptiness inside and you know it's not whole but you're not sure what to do about it, then you are vulnerable to false gurus or bogus self help or even well-intended but indiscriminating religious/spiritual people who make it all about what YOU need to do to make this better, especially how you need to change, etc. etc., and God forbid you don't do it right otherwise you'll feel this emptiness forever and you'll also deserve it because clearly you aren't doing the techniques properly!!! Heavy and dangerous burden, indeed.

It is a great burden to strive to conform to some image of perfection. It's not about striving to achieve but relaxing to receive. What Mother would make it so hard for Her children to find Her?

The burdens are also the illusions that we are separate from God, that we are the doers and there for responsible for fixing the situation, called life in duality, possibly by heavy spiritual practices.

Defining Fulfilled Relationships

A working, fulfilling relationship is one where we respond according to our nature, where we share in one another's nature, where we are and where we become more fully our whole selves. Where we love and are loved, where we evolve.

First, we see there is something appealing, even uplifting about the other. We are drawn to communicate, responding with mind and heart, with touch, showing interest and respect. As we open up to each other, we share with the other his own goodness and beauty. We show appreciation, tending the fire that will light the other's sense of value, his courage and confidence. We acknowledge our commitment to the other's highest good through friendship or marriage or whatever the structure of the container is.

These aspects of relationship create attunement. We adjust to and learn how to be in harmony with the other, how to create harmony with

the other. The relationship at the heart of Mystical Spirituality is with Christ or Shirdi or Anandamayi Ma or Yogananda– the image of God that draws us personally. We find a way to communicate, to listen and respond when we are in the Silence. We praise and adore and worship and glorify to show our appreciation. Our commitment is what conforms us to God and His Will. We become His eyes, His feet, His hands.

For a relationship to be truly fulfilling, the fulfillment comes from within the person not from the relationship. I've always appreciated Maharishi's expression of "two fullnesses coming together." Ideally a relationship is a connection to someone else or something else that is an opportunity to share God's love and light, as well as relate on a human level. Commitment, shared values, communication and attraction provide a safe, coherent structure in which the relationship can flourish.

The relationship is a living presence that deepens and grows and regardless of circumstances becomes more and more clear and bright, faithful and complete, graceful and fluid, beautiful and strong and deeply satisfying as we give ourselves to it. (like wax burning in service to the flame of relationship).

We give our time and attention and through companionship we share the strength of our values and perspectives. We work together toward common goals, set boundaries and seek to understand one another. We seek one another's clarity and counsel, insight and best understanding, we share experiences, communicate our thoughts, emotions, affections, attractions, repulsions, joys and consolations, we offer our prayers and resources, and do and give whatever it takes to put the highest good first.

We acknowledge differences as well as what we have in common. We seek to encourage and inspire one another, we share our talents and endure our weaknesses and seek to point one another beyond them.

There is a level of fulfillment that only God can provide. But, by committing to live the above list there is a fulfillment in knowing you have given it your best at any given moment. There is also fulfillment in receiving these expressions of relationship. The other is living their highest good by living these principles and having you as a vehicle for them to live express these qualities.

Alignment

Right behavior means actions that conform to natural law or the Commandments. Right thinking is discrimination. Discrimination – good judgment or wisdom – is the consequence of following the Commandments. Jesus told us how important these were and it is his example that is meant to be our model. Not that we are supposed to do the same actions as Jesus – he had his own personality and character – but his singleminded focus on the Will of his Father is what we are to imitate. All the events of his life flowed from that focus. His wisdom was the result of aligning himself with the divine perspective. As mystics we must develop that awareness of doing God’s Will in every moment and seeing our lives from His point of view. Christ was His; so are we. We are living God’s life for Him.

As alignment is defined as relating to right behavior and right thinking, it involves promoting coherence and righteousness through living a life in accordance with natural law shown in the Ten Commandments and spiritual teachings. On a day-to-day level, we come into alignment through the discrimination of "does this person, place, thought, attitude, event bring me closer to my goal or not?" Alignment creates the coherent container for the relationship or attunement with God, and also alignment becomes more and more natural as we are more attuned to God, or more focused on cultivating our relationship with Him.

Alignment is being an instrument for God. It is the integrity of the container or conduit that Silence flows through.

Alignment is everything we do that keeps our focus and goal “True North” or in God. All of our practices, which orient our day with Silence and Pure Knowledge and put closure to our evenings as well, are like magnets, keeping our course straight and true. These allow us to attune to and to be guided by His Will in our daily activities and thinking. We know that what we focus on we draw the consciousness of.

Alignment includes addressing all aspects of our selves as best we can so that we are in right relationship to be receptive to and a vehicle for His Love and Light. The physical body requires balance, both internally and externally. We use discrimination to assess and adjust this balance. In order to be stable, the emotional body needs adequate rest, allowing the nervous system to recover from the stimulation of the active life of a householder. The health of the mental (right thinking) aspect of the body is strengthened by Practicing the Presence or using

any name of God one prefers, which then draws the consciousness of God. The intellect is served through absorbing Pure Knowledge by reading scripture and the teachings and poetry of the Mystics as given through Stillpoint. And finally, the Reincarnational Vehicle heals into the Love of God in Silence. Gradually, the Reincarnational Vehicle is purified and the Light of the Soul can shine more brightly.

Absolution

To a traditional Catholic, absolution means forgiveness of sins. In the blue this means recognizing that there has been a transgression of God's law and confessing it to a priest. He gives absolution and a penance and this is followed by repentance – a change in direction - in the hope of not giving in to temptation again. Washed clean, the soul is strengthened and renewed by the sacrament.

To a mystic, there are no sins. Everything is God's Will. God is forever working through us to evolve us as individuals and the world as a whole. We witness our actions; though they may be surprising and even awful, absolution means we come to view them as all part of God's plan. We accept on faith that there is a reason for all that happens. In one of the poems in *Love Poems From God*, the poet says it is God we should forgive. In the blue we must take responsibility for our actions and expect the same from others, which means saying we're sorry, asking to be forgiven, and trying to change. In the white, we know God is doing it all but it is hard sometimes to be His instrument or the recipient of the actions of another instrument.

This term ultimately implies liberation from a false sense of doership. It is a principle expressed through a sacrament that returns our focus to God as the Doer of everything. In the "white" it is apparent that all of this is God manifesting and behaving through all being and things, including us, according to our natures that He designed, so how could any individuality ultimately be "guilty" of wrong? In the "blue" it is a reminder for the individuality of our dependence on God and that there is something bigger going on than the mind can understand and He is in charge.

Absolution is to move our perspective/identity from the doer who is not good enough to there is only One Doer. We can acknowledge what

is out of alignment with God's laws or attunement with our relationship with God and recommit to giving our lives to Him with our best effort and move on. God does not condemn us, we can condemn ourselves with a continued perspective that we are the doer, the cause in the cause and effect play of creation.

From the white: no one did anything wrong, this is all God doing it to God. From the blue: everyone is doing the best they can with the consciousness they have. We are playing our roles in God's creation drama.

"God living in souls and souls living in God"

"Pray as if everything depends on God; work as if everything depends on you." Mystics know that God is within (like Shirdi says, "My abode is in your heart and I am within you") and He is using our individualities to perform His divine actions. But as householders we can't passively wait for every impulse: we must plan and organize and do our duty. We behave as responsible people yet we also understand that our responsibilities flow from and through God and we are doing His work in the world.

We are citizens of two worlds: "Spirituality is experiencing God within and around you (souls living in God). Mysticism is allowing God to live His life as you (God living in souls)." And, "A spiritual man sanctifies the drama of creation by his very presence (souls living in God). A mystic watches his spiritual man or individuality do this (God living in souls). We are citizens of both the finite and infinite worlds." As householder mystics, we have both: 1) we are passively receptive to the Divine and His life is lived through and as us. There is nothing to "learn" or "do," simply be open to and focused on Him. And, 2) we have active individualities in the world who need to exercise discrimination, make intelligent decisions, create a coherent lifestyle, earn a living, be held accountable, promote righteousness, work hard, etc., etc. De Caussade presents this as an either/or, but for us this is knitted into a Whole.

De Caussade tells us that when souls live in God they must use every effort and means available to unite with God and that when God lives in souls they must surrender themselves totally to Him. He is speaking to monastics who are called to surrender all ideas, interests,

efforts, possession, desires to be useful, not just what is overshadowing, relying completely on what is given to them at each moment.

As householder mystics we live in a state of grace where we don't experience separation and at the same time we live fully in the world in relationship with His grace and with one another (soul living in God). We look to Him first and desire to put the quality and good of our relationship with Him first so we use effort, explore interests, share our talents and look after our homes and possessions. We look to Him and He gives us the wherewithal to live the experience of the individual role and nature that He's given to us so that we can evolve.

Virtue

A certain virtue, a certain goodness, a certain light, a kind of peace, and always love – these are the qualities a mystic gives to the world by her presence. Through infinite correlation and sympathetic resonance the mystic affects others, though the mystic, and the others, may be completely unaware. “These souls pour out infinite blessings on people who may never have heard of them...” It is the work of the mystic to stay tuned to God's fiddle and bring that coherence to wherever she is.

Through intelligence, power and creativity HE is moving HIMSELF through the mystics and impacting the others. I think HE is speaking of the virtue of charity. When we surrender to GOD we, along with others are impacted, healed, etc. according to HIS will.

Through infinite correlation, everything affects everything else even if on an imperceptible subtle level. Our inner Silence and attunement/alignment with God is a virtue or coherence that influences the evolution of everything and everyone around us. We may be totally unaware of this and may never see concrete measurable results, but it is enlivening the Silence and coherence in all others as well as ourselves.

The virtue is the 'vibration' we have to God and thus we act as a tuning fork to those around us whether we are aware of it or not. He is at our core and we act from there with a sense of detachment for the things of the world even though we participate in the world. The attunement and alignment to Him create coherence and again creates a vibration to those around us. This coherence and Self sufficiency make us different as we don't partake of the same values of the world and I thought of De C's quote “the less can be made of them and the more they

are criticized.”

Surrendering and responding to God’s Will

You know you are hearing God’s Will when you become aware of the way He speaks through every moment. This happens when you develop divine perspective and can see everything that happens through the lenses of faith and love. The Pure Spirit within each of us has the heart and mind of God and it is to Him that we surrender our human minds and hearts. In *Jesus Calling*, Jesus says that He wants us to give up all other dependencies and depend on Him alone. This is surrender to God in the moment and the impulses that flow from this dependency are the way we respond to His Will.

To surrender to God's will, is to accept what is placed before us in each moment; to know that HE is guiding this life, and being obedient to HIS wishes. We let go of "our" idea of what should be, for HIS wishes for "us" and our life circumstances.

Initially we rely on Scriptures and the words of the Saints to inform and align us to God's Will. As we mature in Silence and Pure Knowledge, the consciousness of the Scriptures is enlivened in our own being so that we may trust our inner judgment and intuition more, like in the Cave of the Heart. We develop the discrimination to know that it is God's Will (does this person, place, attitude, action, event bring me closer or not?). We accept it and allow it to guide us, even if it isn't comfortable or clashes with our limited view of how it ought to be.

God’s Will is all there is. What we are inspired to say or do, whether right or wrong is His will for us in that moment. As has been said, He will lead us to all the right people/circumstances and all the wrong ones as well, for our evolution toward our greatest potential, and His experience of His own Creation. Surrendering to God’s Will and responding as we are inspired is living the sacrament of the present moment – being open and receptive to His Presence in, around and as us.

"Belonging Wholly to God"

Before we realize that we belong wholly to God we spend a lot of

our time managing our world. We might focus on the way we dress or speak, where or what we're going to eat, which committee to join. We take on these little roles to give ourselves something to do. Once we surrender our lives to God, these little roles lose their meaning. Instead, our lives are given Real Meaning, our time is given Real Value because it all belongs to Him. Those things that used to interest us fade as we learn to keep our gaze "fixed on the master one has chosen and to be constantly listening..." We no longer need to manage our little worlds because we know God is managing everything for us.

Human effort and Divine intervention emanate from the same source -- even the desire or impulse to withdraw from ambition, worldly matters, fashion, etc., must come from Him. God has each individuality play its part differently, and some may actually be very active participants in these outer affairs while simultaneously belonging wholly to Him and realizing Him as the source and essence of every moment of their lives. Outer behavior or temperament isn't necessarily an indicator of our relationship with God.

De Caussade speaks to dispassion or the dark night that happens as we experience Silence and the things of the world seem to pale in comparison. He also says that interest and ambition would lead us to conclude that a person is in control of their own lives and that this would preclude the state of surrender. But God is greater than our idea of God and mysticism doesn't dull our interests and ambitions when we see God in them, it doesn't dull our nature, Silence informs and enlivens it. A Mystic becomes more fully themselves as they become more fully God's.

De Caussade is speaking to monastics and what he is saying reminds me of what Jerry calls the "package deal." The church takes care of feeding, clothing and housing you and you give up everything including your interests, ambitions and individuality. The package deal has certainly given the world many Mystics and Saints but it could also take away from the opportunity to grow through experiences and relating to God, Life, in Self/self sufficiency. We evolve through our lives, our unique roles, we look to Him in all circumstances of Life and choose the good over the comfortable - so repressing the interests and ambitions that are wholesome and good could bring inner tension and could take away from the opportunity to strengthen and deepen the integrity of your relationship with God and evolve more fully.

God is the Sole Doer and has become the many to have the myriad

of experiences as His creation. Total surrender to Him will look differently in each life. An individual who is totally surrendered to God maybe involved in many worldly activities based on his unique nature and station in life. Belonging Wholly to God is easy in the sense that you do not have to try to become someone you are not. You go in the direction of remembering your True identity and purpose as an aspect of God and be yourself.

God is first – The first Commandment. The things of the world are not the things we find ultimate fulfillment in. We participate in the world, perhaps buy clothes we like, work on projects and have goals but if things change and events don't pan out as we would like, we don't become overshadowed, we may be upset or happy but not overshadowed. If an 'outsider' watches us, it may seem that we really like shopping at Nordstrom's or going out to dinner with family or attend school board meetings but, it is simply our façade, our face for the outside world. If one dug deeper, they would find us with our mind and heart in God, not deeply in the shopping, etc. We assume no ultimate control only control according to our nature and His will. I think of Shirdi, if just anyone watched him, what comments would they make? Would they accuse him of craziness because he threw bricks at people or shouted at someone for no apparent reason? His personality in many ways hides his true nature. One has to be able to 'see' and 'hear' to understand what is really beneath Shirdi's façade.

"The Path of Pure Duty"

A duty is what we are supposed to do because of our roles as householders and our positions at work; a sense of duty is the consequence of having responsibilities that must be fulfilled in order to support ourselves or our families. Duty is also the obligation we feel and accept when we commit to another's highest good; it is the manifestation of our commitment.

When we fulfill our primary duty to God and put Him before all else, then we are surrendering our lives and all other duties to Him. We begin to see that our duties are what He is asking us to do. Our willingness to be aware of His Presence and to serve Him allows Him to be part of every obligation we have. We think we are only doing what we are supposed to do, but at the same time we are accomplishing God's

purposes through our actions.

When we follow this path we act as though there is nothing in the world but God and this pressing obligation. We see only God and what He is asking us to do. This sanctifies our duties and makes a sacrament of every moment. Our actions are so intertwined with God's Will, the white fully connected to and manifested in the blue, that our lives become holy and we become Whole.

As we meditate, contemplate, pray and practice the Presence, there is more and more Silence inside. This Silence is the source of true fulfillment, love, peace, wisdom and joy, so we are less and less overshadowingly attached to outer things. We still have our individual temperaments, likes and dislikes, desires, etc., but our basis of reality and meaningfulness has shifted to the Silence or Presence of God within. There is no longer a deep distressing need to control or to know "why???" We have greater fluidity to "take it as it comes." We increasingly recognize God as the source, not only of ourselves, but of everything in our lives. With this perspective, we still do our duties and fulfill our responsibilities, but we aren't as overshadowingly attached to results. We are more open to God's purpose, not fixated on our own purpose, which allows us to more effectively be instruments of His Will and His Love (the evolutionary force). God, Love, Life flow through us and accomplish the Divine purposes in and through us, even if we are totally unaware or have no conscious intention of this. There is great inner peace and relaxation when we realize that God is ultimately the Producer and Director of this play of life, and all circumstances of our lives are orchestrated specifically for us by His Love.

God is Life and Life is God's gift to us bringing us into unity with Him. The Path of Pure Duty is to see Him in all that comes to us, to do our duty, to serve others as we can and to remember Him through our spiritual practices of Meditation, Contemplation, Prayer and Practice of the Presence. We see Him in all that comes to us, and experience and respond to Him for Him.

We respond according to our nature because God has become our nature and wants to experience through it. God is our Source and because we live in relationship with Him who loves us beyond all understanding we accept His Love for us and respond according to His loving guidance, His Laws of Nature, His rules for living.

For some souls at a particular time they are called by God to take up the Mystical path. There is an inner calling which frequently looks

like a melancholy or depression as things of the world do not fulfill them and they feel empty and inadequate. Through faith and commitment to the Mystical path this emptiness becomes filled with the desire to love God and to follow “the path of pure duty as though there is nothing in the world but God .” Pure Knowledge tells us that this is true. There is nothing but God taking all forms in creation.

Mystics agree to live life as and for God. They willingly serve God in whatever way He wishes. Some mystics are “transcendants” living in the Silence, attuned to God much of the time. Others focus on Pure Knowledge and encourage alignment to God’s truth actively in the world or passively in their hearts. Others are express their love and devotion largely through service.

We are God’s Light and Life. Our purpose is to evolve to our greatest potential, which is to know both our human and Divine natures. Through our practices of meditation, contemplation of Pure Knowledge and Practicing the Presence of God in our daily lives, we begin to attune to the essence of the divinity within and all around us, God’s Will. Our focus and identity shift from the body/mind unit and outer world to an inner life of Silence and union with our Source balanced with our outer responsibilities. We begin to align ourselves more consciously to God’s Laws, the Ten Commandments, with an understanding that draws the mind and heart together; where the limitations of the mind are surpassed by the heart’s faith in His Mystery. Alignment to God’s Laws and attunement to His Presence establishes us in His “Supreme Order” that is life-giving and evolutionary.

Our practices serve to empty us of the neediness of our small selves in order to be receptive to the fullness that is God Himself. We sacrifice our smaller needs for the gifts of the Spirit: Love, Peace, Wisdom, Joy, Power, Intelligence and Creativity. What we once thought was our life becomes, in truth, His. Empty of ourselves, we become His instruments – His eyes and ears, hands and feet. God wants to reveal Himself, His Light and Love, and as He does, we become aware that “it is not I who lives, but He who lives through and as me”.