

Prayer

June 4, 2024



Praying and Living in
the Present Moment

Introduction

A hidden magnet lies in our unconscious...the yearning to go back to the Garden of Eden.

What is meant by this? Sometimes we assume our life should be perfect, as before the Fall in Eden; then, when it is not, we get frustrated. Instead, like Mary's Immaculate Heart, we must direct the magnet of our desires to participate in Heaven *now*.

This paper will explore **the Sacrament of the Present Moment**, which teaches us how-to live-in God's Presence, a sure way to imitate Mary, now and at the hour of our death, the two most important moments of our lives.

What is the "Present Moment?"

What it is not

It is not remorse for the past or fear of the future. Have you ever experienced this? This is not the present moment. Rather, we cloud our present joys or sorrows by past regrets or future worries. Why do we do this? Our fallen nature or our enemy or most likely both attract us to such darkness.

When past regrets or anxiety for the future come up, let us be aware, understand what is going on, and renounce the enemy who wants us to be like Adam and Eve, distrusting God's plan. Satan entices us to see only past wounds and a bleak future.

Jesus Himself tells us: *Do not worry over tomorrow. today's troubles are enough.* (Mt 6:34) St. Augustine, a man with a past, reminds us to leave the past to divine mercy and the future to His loving providence.

What the Present Moment is

We find the original meaning of "present moment" in Jean-Pierre' Caussade's classic *Abandonment to Divine Providence*. In this book he coins the phrase

“sacrament of the present moment.”¹ He defines it as recognizing God’s Will in each minute. Why did he call it a sacrament? Caussade taught the present moment, analogous, but not identical, to the sacraments, mediates grace by bringing God’s will to us. Recall, grace is not static, but a relationship. Each moment is a beckoning to unite in relationship with God.

Active and Passive Responses

Each moment contains either an active response to a duty, or a passive yes to something God sends or permits

The Active

Everyone has daily actions to do. As the individual fulfills them, he pleases God because of playing the role He has given the individual in His-story, the unique and irreplaceable story of his life.

The Passive

Our Lady of Fatima said the best penances are those trials sent or permitted by God. It is easy sometimes to choose to give up some food or sleep or other satisfaction because I have chosen it. It is harder to bear with challenging personalities, injustices, or illnesses, to name a few passive trials.

Why Passive Suffering is Superior

Our Lord said to the Fatima seer Venerable Lucia: *The sacrifice required of every person is the fulfillment of his duties in life and the observance of My law. This is the penance I now seek and require.*²

What is the point of these passive sufferings? The self can easily slip in sacrifices we select, good and important as they are. When God sends sufferings, He chooses our penance.

¹Jean-Pierre Caussade, *Abandonment to Divine Providence*

² Venerable Lucia, “Sister Lucia and Our Lady of Fatima”

Who best lived the present moment?

Of course, Our Lady. One moment an angel appeared to Her asking if She would be God's Mother; After pondering, she immediately fully surrendered, a surrender that carried her in Bethlehem's cave, the exile to Egypt, the hidden duties at Nazareth, her support of Jesus at Calvary and her waiting for Him to rise and appear to Her.

No matter what her jobs were: ordinary or seemingly more important, She saw God, responding with gratitude.

Our Unique Personal Moment

Each moment has its own call in the present. Venerable Fulton J. Sheen calls it the "now" moment, carrying a message personally from God to each of us in a way books, talks and podcasts do not. Why? No one else but you and me are in the unique circumstances with crosses and joys tailored for us. The lesson the Now moment gives us surpasses all other lessons, giving wisdom distilled from experience.

His will often comes disguised through others, circumstances, sins and their consequences. Each moment contains messengers announcing His wishes. Sometimes He's hidden behind repulsive appearances, antipathies, emotional wounds. Yet He is still present and persists in calling us.

Our Response to the Present Moment

How do we respond to the present moment? Venerable Fulton J Sheen wrote:

Every human being is like a baby in its loving mother's arms who sometimes administers medicine. The baby cries, the egotist protests, but the saint in the making is content Why? The potential saint knows God gives what is best. This includes the bitter and sweet, the joys and sorrows of each minute. Nothing's boring with God. Every moment can be sanctified.³

God never takes away a natural gift without giving a more precious supernatural gift.

³ Venerable Fulton J. Sheen, *The World's First Love*, 218

Spiritual Benefits from Living the Present Moment

We will look at three special benefits among the many blessings.

1) *Participation in Eternal Timelessness*

Venerable Sheen wrote, “To accept the duty of the moment us to touch Eternity, to escape from time.⁴ (Sheen, 215) In other words, we are in the eternal present, in time but not controlled by time, participating in Heaven.

2) *Holiness Made Easy*

Have you ever thought being holy is way above you? This is a common misconception. Caussade reminds us: *Holiness consists of one thing only: complete loyalty to God’s Will. (24)*

Every individual can practice this holiness. If our duties lie beyond our ability, we’re not expected to fulfill them. If we’re too sick to go to Sunday Mass, we don’t have to go. This is the same for other church precepts.

God asks nothing more than this: fidelity to our duty in our state of life.

If we honestly look at our lives, we see countless minor actions. Yet nothing is little to God, if it is done with love. God judges us according to the love in our heart as we do either mundane things like washing dishes, fixing broken machines, doing laundry, changing a baby’s diaper, picking weeds, grading papers and seemingly important tasks like running for a political office, leading a company, singing in the Metropolitan. To God, they are all the same depending on our intentions.

3) *Ability to Bear Pain and Suffering*

St. Therese of Lisieux exemplified this. In the midst of severe pain, spiritual darkness, and misunderstandings at the end of her life, she told her novices who worried over her future pains: *It’s a mistake to trouble yourselves as to what I may still have to undergo. It’s like meddling with God’s work. If I did not simply live from one moment to another, it would be impossible for me to be patient; but I only look at the present, I forget the past, and I take good care not to forestall the future. When we yield to discouragement or despair, it’s usually because we think too much about the past and the future.*⁵

⁴ Sheen, *The World’s First Love*, 216

⁵ St. Therese of Lisieux, “Epilogue, Victim of Divine Love”

Therese said this on her death bed. Recall, we usually die as we have lived, and she did live the present moment as testified by her own Carmelite Sisters.

We all have daily actions we do. As we fulfill them, God's pleased for we're playing the role He's given us in His story, the unique and irreplaceable story of our lives.

Practical Living of the Present Moment

Our Lady gives us a model as she sings her Magnificat, her song of thanksgiving. Some practical ways to live the present moment:

Gratitude

Often express gratitude by thanking the Lord. Fr. D'Elbée, in the book *I Believe in Love*⁶, recommends the "Thank You Prayer"⁷: *Jesus, I thank you for everything...for poor health, unemployment, slander" and the lesser trials, that frustrating computer crash, my co-workers' worldly talk, this annoying person.*

We also thank Jesus for the sacraments, family and friends, work, babies, a bed in which to sleep, ice cream. Fr. D'Elbée, a spiritual director, said "The Thank You Prayer" has brought many to high sanctity⁸.

Along with the thank you prayer, let us begin each day with thanking the Lord for the grace of each moment we will encounter and ask Him to help remember Him as we navigate the day⁹.

Pausing during Difficult Times

By pausing in times of duress, we can then invite the Holy Spirit into our hearts to give us guidance.

Making daily stopping points

Ask ourselves, "Where do I feel God tugging my heart in this moment?"¹⁰

⁶ Shirts, *Living Holy in the Present Moment*

⁷ D'Elbée, *I Believe in Love*, 66

⁸ D'Elbée 66

⁹ Shirts, *Living Holy in the Present Moment*

¹⁰ Taliaferro. "Living in the Present Moment"

Posting a Helpful Quote in a Familiar Place.

In our over-loaded information world, a written reminder can help us refocus spiritually. It is wise to put reminders where we can see them immediately. The following quotes from saints can awaken us¹¹:

We must be faithful to the present moment or we will frustrate the plan of God for our lives. – Blessed Solanus Casey¹²

“Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin.” – St. Mother Teresa¹³

“God does not ask of us the perfection of tomorrow, nor even of tonight, but only of the present moment.” – St. Madeleine Sophie Barat¹⁴

“Let us strive to make the present moment beautiful!” – St. Francis de Sales¹⁵

“O present moment, you belong to me, whole and entire. I desire to use you as best as I can. And although I am weak and small, you grant me the grace of your omnipotence.” – St. Maria Faustina Kowalska¹⁶

Conclusion

In conclusion, we're wired, magnetized to living in Paradise. May the practice of surrender to God's Will in every moment take us there **now and at the hour of our death**.

Immaculate Heart of Mary, Holocaust of Divine Love, pray for us.

¹¹ Shirts, Living Holy in the Present Moment

¹² Blessed Solanus Casey, cited by Shirts, Living

¹³ St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Shirts, Living

¹⁴ St. Madeleine Sophie Barat, Shirts, Living

¹⁵ St. Frances de Sales, Shirts, Living

¹⁶ St. Maria Faustina Kowalska, Living

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