

Leap of Faith & Holy Indifference



A leap of faith, in its most commonly used meaning, is the act of believing in or accepting something outside the boundaries of reason. As in John 21:1-10, we see a futile night of fishing, Jesus offering some unsolicited fishing advice, an overwhelming catch of fish, and a recognition of Jesus' identity that focuses especially on the response of Simon Peter. He had been fishing all night with no success, then working from the early morning hours cleaning his nets. Most likely he was exhausted and looking forward to going home and getting some sleep. So it must have seemed a bit of an imposition when Jesus got into Simon's boat and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Nevertheless, Simon did what Jesus asked.

We know what happens next - nets so full of fish that they begin to break, boats so full of fish that they begin to sink. Seeing what is happening, Simon is overwhelmed with fear and wonder, sensing that he is in the presence of divine power. He responds by falling down at Jesus' knees and begging him, *"Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!"* What might it mean for us to go deep-sea fishing with Jesus - to trust and follow Him outside our comfort zones, to let go of our certainties, to have our lives radically reoriented?

The leap of faith with holy indifference, one seems an active response while the other, seems like a passive response. Yet both are equally necessary for our spiritual growth. There is a term called *'Ignatian Holy Indifference'*.

By “Indifference” Ignatius does not mean apathy, a “*who cares*”, “*I don’t give a darn*”, “*whatever...*” attitude or interior disposition. On the contrary, ‘*Holy Indifference*’ really means a total openness to the will of God in one’s life. In other words, whatever God wills for me, I will strive with all of the energy of my will and the proposition in my intellect to conform my will to His Almighty will. As the poet Dante expressed it: “*In God’s will is our peace.*” With respect to *Ignatian Holy Indifference*, St Ignatius divides it into four separate categories. “Therefore, we must make ourselves indifferent to all created things, as far as we are allowed by free choice and are not under any prohibition. Consequently, as far as we are concerned, we should not prefer health to sickness, riches to poverty, honour to dishonour, a long life to a short. The same holds for all other things.” (Spiritual Exercises # 23). To arrive at this lofty spiritual disposition requires extraordinary grace, limitless patience, as well as firm purpose and determination of the will. Among the most important blessings is that of peace of mind, heart, soul, and an unreserved trust in God’s loving and constant guiding Divine Providence. As St. Paul reminds us, “*If God is with us who can be against us.*” Jesus Himself calls us to trust with the comforting words: “*My Father has you in the palm of His hand and nobody can snatch you from His hand.*” A key means to attaining *Holy Indifference* is a constant and dynamic prayer life, which leads to a total confidence in God, which is translated and manifested in a total willingness to give one’s whole self to God as a sacrifice, offering and oblation. A Leap of Faith to thrust oneself into the ‘deep sea’ of the unknown and to trust that God is in control. ***God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference.***



That serenity is what St. Ignatius called ‘*holy indifference.*’ You want God to help you learn to not simply be resigned to, but to embrace your life’s limitations. If you learn to embrace, nothing will touch you, neither praise nor criticism, success or failure, because you know what you are. As St. Francis of Assisi so poignantly exclaimed, “*I am who I am before God, no more, and no less*”. Does it matter what the Will of God is for us? That may sound like a strange question at first. But think about it. Does it matter what God wills of us? What if He were to call us to constant work? Or what if He were to call us to a restful repose? Or what if He were to fill us with delight? Or remove all delight from our soul? Or call us to be extolled and honoured in the sight of many? Or draw us into the desert of solitude and hiddenness? The truth is that it matters not what God’s call is in our lives, it only matters that He calls. We must strive for a holy indifference in our lives.

A holy indifference is not indifference to God and His Will; rather, a holy indifference is a detachment to all preferences regarding what the Lord asks of us. We must be ready for all but we must be willing to receive nothing. The goal is to be ready for God and His Will, whatever it may be (See St. Faustina's Diary #952).



Reflect upon whether or not we are ready and willing to accept whatever God wills of us. What He wills is not as important as the fact that He wills. This may be a difficult subtlety to grasp at first. But it's important to understand. The simple truth is that we should be ready for anything God asks of us without clinging to our personal preference. If we can achieve this level of detachment, the Mercy of God will begin to flow in abundance in our life, and through us into the lives of many others.

Confidence and Humility

God often accomplishes His providential purposes in ways that we do not expect, so we should not be too quick to rejoice over what seems like a positive development or to despair over what seems like bad news. Further, we should be very cautious to claim that we can recognise what exactly God is doing in any given situation. Remember the big catch of fish, with confidence and humility, the disciples did what Jesus asked, ridiculous as it may seem. This is holy indifference, to be confident in our faith that God is in control, and humble in our acknowledgement that we don't know how He might be working out His providential will. What's the benefit of "holy indifference"? Freedom and joy. Because we trust in God's sovereignty, we are freed from our own sense of insecurity. We don't have to follow the same worldly path as the politicians and pundits whose strategy is always focused on the next temporal victory. Instead, we look around to see what good work we can do in both the short-term and the long-term, trusting that God will use our efforts for His purposes.

Wholly Indifferent, or Holy Indifference?

To be wholly indifferent means that a person is not particularly concerned with or perhaps even aware of the challenges, trials or suffering of society as a whole. In some instances, these individuals might not even be aware of or in any way concerned about the sufferings of those in their immediate circle. As a result, these individuals seldom, if ever, make time to offer prayers and sacrifices for others. It is not that these people are maliciously uncaring, it is simply that they become so caught up in their own circumstances, desires, aspirations and expectations of what they want God to do in their lives. It is that they simply are not involved with the plight of those around them, whether these challenges concern individuals they read about on the pages of the newspaper or persons in their own immediate family. Again, these are not bad people; they may well go to Church, pray regularly and even have reputations as good and thoughtful individuals. However, the central focus of their lives, including their practice of faith and their prayer life, is centered almost exclusively on the issues that affect their personal lives. Even when they do pray about the issues of others in their lives, it may only be done to relieve the burden the situation is placing on themselves. We are all aware of these people – we may even have been one of them at some point in our own spiritual journey. Scripture has some advice on the matter. *"Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others"* (Philippians 2:4). Conversely, there are those souls who are the polar opposite of the wholly indifferent; these are the souls who practice what we call *holy indifference*.

Holy indifference is the opposite of being wholly indifferent because it adopts the attitude of placing all the cares and worries of our life, our personal circumstances, into the hands of God and living a life of complete faith that God will handle everything. *“Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you”* (1 Peter 5:7). Those blessed who can practice this degree of faith in God’s providential care for their lives can also practice this *holy indifference*, which means that they do not live with anxiety, fear, doubt or concern. Every single day they simply commend their lives and all their circumstances to God, and then they go about their daily routine, including prayer, with complete confidence that whatever happens to them will simply be the Will of God working itself out in their lives.

They do not attempt to measure whether the events of their lives are good or bad. They accept that God will work through what appears to be good, and what may, on the surface, appear to be bad. They are *holy indifferent* to it all. This is not to say that they live with some stoic acceptance of the inevitable consequences of circumstances they cannot control. That is not a Christian perspective. Instead, these individuals see everything that happens to them not as chaotic accidents of nature, but as the natural manifestation of God lovingly working through their lives to continually transform them into perfect models of charity. These people live by the scripture verse found in Romans, and they repeat it to themselves daily, sometimes hourly, and, most especially, in those seasons of trial which we all encounter.



“We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28).

The real difference between those who pray predominantly for the things they hope to see happen in their lives, or their own will, and those who pray that God’s Will be fulfilled in their lives, is the difference of those who seek first an earthly Kingdom and those who seek first the Kingdom of God (see Matthew 6:33). This practice of *holy indifference* brings about a profound freedom of spirit, which is borne of and benefits from the daily act of prayer. This free spirit allows them to spend a great deal more of their time being concerned for, involved in and praying for the needs of their immediate community and the world. A leap of faith leading to a life of holy indifference, when we have done everything we were told to

do, we can only say, *“We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.”* (Luke 17:10). After the big catch of fish, when Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, *“Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!”* (Luke 5:8)

Lord, I surrender to You all my selfish preferences in life. I give You complete freedom to do whatever You will in my life. No matter what You ask of me, I accept, and no matter what You take from me, I give to You. Give me, dear Lord, the grace of a holy indifference so that I may be free to love You and Your holy Will more than life itself. Jesus, I trust in You.

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