
GANZ NOTES ON THE SUSCIPE¹ PRAYER

SONG – “THESE ALONE ARE ENOUGH”

See my Notes on the original text of St. Ignatius presented below after the lyrics to Schutte’s song:

Dan Schutte, SJ² - “These Alone Are Enough” based on the words of the *Suscipe* prayer by St. Ignatius of Loyola in the *Spiritual Exercises* (see original below):

Take³ my heart, O Lord, **take** my hopes and dreams.
Take my mind with all its plans and schemes.⁴

¹ This Latin verb form – Imperative Mood, Present Tense (= kind of action, not time of action) – is pronounced SOO-she-pay.

² “**Dan Schutte, SJ** is one of the best-known and most influential composers of Catholic music for liturgy in the English-speaking world. In addition to his Jesuit formation, Dan holds two master’s degrees, one in theology and one in liturgy, from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California. He did graduate studies in music composition under the direction of Fr. Kevin Waters, SJ, at Seattle University. He has three honorary doctoral degrees for his contribution to the life of the Church.”

³ “**Take!**” – This verb in the Imperative Mood is written **six times** in this lyric. One must not miss the significance of this word “**Take!**” It is in the Imperative or “Command” form. A person “commands” God to take something (he or she is about to indicate what in particular). Why? Because that person knows that he or she has no capacity to give things so centrally precious to him or her. But the person has been brought by God far enough along the Path of Depth that he or she now knows that even things so centrally precious to him or her can be misused, left unrecognized. The person here “commands” God to “take” them from him or her and then to help him or her to use these powers in the way God wanted them to be used for His greater glory (i.e., greater meaning, greater than my own glory!).

⁴ “**plans and schemes**” – Actually this is a nice way of indicating the kind of practical knowledge – “how to” knowledge, worldly savvy, etc. – that the Wisdom traditions of the Bible collect and esteem. Job, in the Book of Job, has all of his unusually successful “plans and schemes” taken from him.

Give me *nothing more than*⁵ your love and grace.
These alone, O God, are enough for me.⁶

Take my thoughts, Oh Lord, and my memory.
Take my tears, my joys, my liberty⁷.
Give me *nothing more than* your love and grace.
These alone, O God, are enough for me.

I **surrender**,⁸ Lord, all I have and Hold.
I **return** to you your gifts untold.⁹
Give me *nothing more than* your love and grace.
These alone, O God, are enough for me.

When the darkness falls on my final days,
take the very breath that sang your praise.

⁵ “**nothing more than**” – This phrase appears once in each of the four stanzas of this lyric. This is a central rhythmic element in this poem. Its repetition over and over again emphasizes this thought. Consider how it is that when we wonder whether we have *enough* (of anything), we conclude about that **in a comparative way**. We, because our desires are *mimetic* (see René Girard), cannot seem to decide about “enough” from within a thing itself. We must compare how much of it we have *compared to* someone else! Also “nothing more” is another way of saying “enough.”

⁶ “**Give me nothing more than ... enough for me**” – These two lines are the second two lines of each of the four stanzas of this lyric. Notice how all that I ask God to “take” from me – my central power, my possessions, anything that I have or hold on to – **is not so that I have nothing left, but so that I have nothing now that stands in the way, competes with, God’s gift of Himself** – the indwelling of the Holy Trinity; that is, “your love and your grace.”

⁷ The *Oxford English Dictionary* at the noun “**liberty**”, as to “the state or condition of being free – *Theology*. Freedom from the bondage or dominating influence of sin, spiritual servitude, worldly ties, etc.” Notice here how the long effort we must exert, and through so many trials, finally to become free: free of self; free of compulsions or addictions; free the distorting power of a Capital Sin; free of the disordered expectations of others, etc. “Free at last! Free at last! Praise God Almighty, we are free at last!” concluded Dr. Martin Luther King in his “I Have a Dream” speech. Why then would I ever consider handing that over to God?! I am finally free, and I am to give that up, to God? We must pay attention to what we are asking God to do: “Take it!”

⁸ The *Oxford English Dictionary* at the verb “**to surrender**” – “More widely: To give up, resign, abandon, relinquish possession of, esp. in favour of or for the sake of another.” This is a strong word. To surrender, and especially to surrender oneself so fully, in all of one’s most central Powers, is not easily done at all! To do so, to surrender so fully, is beyond a person’s ability; it is just feels too close to dying! That is why that first word in this prayer “Take!” is so important. The person is asking God *for the grace* to be able to give himself or herself fully to God. **This kind of word in this prayer proves that this prayer has no romance in it at all. This is difficult, the work of sacrificial love.**

⁹ “**gifts untold**” – What are gifts “untold”? The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “**untold**” – “Uncounted, unreckoned, because of amount or numbers; immense, vast.”

Give me *nothing more than* your love and grace.
These alone, O God, are enough for me.

Regarding especially that notion of “**liberty**,” I found this quotation in Ursula Le Guin’s *The Farthest Shore*, Chapter 3, Kindle location 517:

He [Ged/Sparrowhawk/the Archmage] stopped and after a while went on, “Try to choose carefully, Arren, when the great choices must be made. When I was young, I had to choose between the life of being and the life of doing. And I leapt at the latter like a trout to a fly. But each deed you do, each act, binds you to itself and to its consequences, and makes you act again and yet again. Then very seldom do you come upon a space, a time like this, between act and act, when you may stop and simply be. Or wonder who, after all, you are.” How could such a man, thought Arren, be in doubt as to who and what he was? He had believed such doubts were reserved for the young, who had not done anything yet. [Le Guin, Ursula K.. *The Farthest Shore* (The Earthsea Cycle Series Book 3) . Atheneum Books for Young Readers. Kindle Edition.]

THE ORIGINAL TEXT OF ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA (1491-1556)

LATIN

Suscipe, Domine, universam meam libertatem. **Accipe** memoriam, intellectum atque voluntatem omnem. Quicquid habeo vel possideo, mihi largitus es : **id tibi totum restituo**, ac tuae prorsus voluntati trado, gubernandum. Amorem tui solum cum gratia tua mihi dones, et dives sum satis, nec aliud quicquam ultra posco.

I should note here that these ‘spiritual exercises’ refer to a set of interlocking, and developmentally integrated, set of “exercises” (as in “inner” exercises, as in “efforts” of prayer) through which a retreatant is guided by his or her Spiritual Director.

So, the first meaning of these “spiritual exercises” refers to this set of experiences through which a person is guided towards a much more profound experience of his or her relationship with God ... or better, God’s relationship to him or her.

The second meaning of “spiritual exercises” refers to the published text, or *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, which is a manual given to spiritual directors to guide them in their directing of those under their care – the retreatants – during a time of Retreat.

As a manual, then, a person should not purchase the *Spiritual Exercises* as one would a book he or she wished to read for spiritual enjoyment or benefit. Rather only after one has been guided through the experience, or as he or she is being guided through it, ought a person to have for him or herself a copy of this text.

ENGLISH

Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius [234]¹⁰ – **First Point** [English translation by Louis Puhl, SJ.]

This is to recall to mind the blessings of creation and redemption, and the special favors I have received.

I will ponder with great affection how much God our Lord has done for me, and how much He has given me of what He possesses, and finally, how much, as far as He can, the same Lord desires to give Himself to me according to His divine decrees.

Then I will reflect upon myself, and consider, according to all reason and justice, what I ought to offer the Divine Majesty, that is, all I possess and myself with it. Thus, as one would do who is *moved by great feeling*, I will make this offering of myself:

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess. Thou hast given all to me. To Thee, O Lord, I return it. All is Thine, dispose of it wholly according to Thy will. Give me Thy love and Thy grace, for this is sufficient for me.

A study of the boldfaced text above – the *Suscipe* prayer – now follows below.

¹⁰ This number in brackets directs a person to a specific section in the text of the *Spiritual Exercises*, which in this case refers in that text to the “Fourth Week,” and to a specific contemplation there called “A Contemplation for Stimulating within us Divine Love.”

Take,¹¹ O Lord, all my liberty.¹² Receive¹³ my memory, my understanding, and my entire will.¹⁴ Whatsoever I have or hold on to¹⁵ You have given to me; I give it all back to You and surrender it wholly to be governed by your will. Give me only your love and your grace, and I am rich enough¹⁶ and ask for nothing more.

¹¹ Third conjugation Latin verb: *suscipio, suscipere, suscepi, susceptus*. The verb means “to support, to hold up, or to sustain.” It can also mean “to defend.” And when it refers to a person’s willingness to take something upon himself or herself voluntarily, as a favor to someone, it means “to take upon oneself” – to become responsible for something on behalf of someone else. What is important to notice in the Latin form of “Take” used here is that it is in the Imperative mood, Present. What this means is that “Take” is addressed to a single Other – in this case to God, the One in Three – as a command – “**take it!**” – but being in the Present tense (in this case, not *time* of action but *type* of action) it means: “take it – my liberty – **and keep taking it unceasingly.**”

¹² Latin, feminine noun *libertas, libertatis* means “the state or condition of being a free human being (i.e., one is no longer a slave). It also means as an abstract noun “freedom” itself, as in free from external restraint or obligation (as in civil or political freedom; being free from being subject to someone else’s freedom and power to compel him or her). In this regard it is worth recalling the famous distinction of the political philosopher Isaiah Berlin between “freedom *from*” and “freedom *for*.” In other words, what is the use of being “free from” restraint if it is not for the sake of being “free for” others, for the common good, and for the service of the Kingdom of God? **I have defined “liberty” here in the sense of what remains of our actual dispositional freedom, which our decisions over the years make smaller and smaller.** And so for a person to “command” God to take even that – what is left of my dispositional freedom – is to command Him to take complete possession of my life!

¹³ Third conjugation Latin verb: *accipio, accipere, accepi, acceptum*. The verb means “to accept a person, or a thing, to oneself” as having been received from another. It can also by extension mean “to hear or to perceive, and therefore to learn.” And when referring to something disagreeable or difficult, this verb can mean “to bear, to endure, or to suffer” something imposed on me by someone else or by some circumstance.

¹⁴ One cannot directly observe the soul. **However, it is possible to recognize the presence of the soul by observing its powers.** In the medieval period, the human soul came to be characterized as exercising *three* powers – the famous “Powers of Soul”: *memory* (the capacity to remember our experiences and what we have learned, but also our power of imagination), *understanding* (all the activities of human intellect: the ability be awake and alert to experience; the ability to think about what we are experiencing and to gain insight into its meaning; the ability to judge what is the genuine and true) and *will* (the activity of deciding to act according to the truth, rather than, for example, to do what is popular to do, to do what feels so good to do even if not true or good or worthy, or to do what the powerful prefer us to do; but this power includes the rich affective side of the soul by which we *desire* what is valuable and good and beautiful and right). **Thus, to surrender these central powers of the soul to God through this prayer means to give God direct access to all that makes me what I am or to become.**

¹⁵ Literally, “whatever I am having or possessing” (notice the present tense of these verbs, implying continuous action – I am actively and always having and possessing these things: my memories, understandings, feelings, and values and decisions. I translate, for this reason “whatever I have or *am holding on to*” to capture the idea of **how precious these things are to me**, which in grace I am now able to turn over to God continuously for Him to “have and to hold on to” for me, and for His purposes.

¹⁶ One of the very long and widely perceived things about those who are wealthy (in money or status or gifts) is that *enough is never enough*. And so to pray for the grace to be “rich enough ... and to ask for nothing more” is something of great spiritual and social and cultural and religious significance.