

You Have Only  
One Problem



# You Have Only One Problem

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Experience the  
Instant Reward of  
Trustful Surrender

CONOR GALLAGHER

TAN Books  
Gastonia, North Carolina

*You Have Only One Problem: Experience the Instant Reward of Trustful Surrender*

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“All that happens to us in this world  
against our will (whether due to men  
or to other causes) happens to us  
only by the will of God. . . .

Show Him respect by accepting it  
from His hand, believe firmly that He  
does not send it to us without cause.”

*–Saint Augustine of Hippo*

*To all those I have wrongly perceived  
as being problems in my life. Thank you  
for being a gift from God.*

Dear Reader,

I, your unworthy author, must emphasize two points in my spiritual writings: the first is regarding the writing style, and the second is a vital disclaimer.

Regarding style, I have adopted a rather antiquated style of writing. Spiritual writers of old spoke directly to the reader with phrases like “Christian Reader” or “Immortal Soul” or even “Unworthy Christian.” Modern sensitives emphasize the first-person plural pronouns of “we” and “us” in an unnecessary attempt to avoid the appearance of paternalism or arrogance. So, when I address “you,” as the reader, I am truly saying “we,” for the message of this work is intended for myself as much as anyone.

Additionally, my favorite works of spirituality have a very particular voice. It is a voice that calls the reader to conversion, as if the author has but one page, one paragraph, one single sentence to convert the reader to Jesus Christ. Such a voice is starkly different from an intellectual work intended to convince the reader’s mind of a superior argument. Here, I hope to jar your soul to conversion with the power and beauty of truth, for your soul and those within your care will be in heaven or in hell ten trillion years from now. We all need a little jarring.

Now, a vital disclaimer: I beg you, remember that preaching and doing are two different things. In fact, I find that I gravitate towards projects in which I need the most improvement.

Sincerely,

Conor Gallagher





# P R A Y E R   O F   S U R R E N D E R

*Heavenly Father,*

*I know You are here. I know You can hear me and see me. You know my every thought and emotion, my dreams and fears. You know all of my perceived problems. You know the reason for my little aggravations and my great sufferings. Your infinite love has chosen each of these perceived problems to be a remedy for my sins and a path to my eternal salvation. Forgive me, Lord, for my failure to accept these sufferings from Your loving hand.*

*Throughout these pages, enlighten my mind and open my heart. Give me the grace to see beyond the perceived problems in my life. Help me see Your fatherly love in every suffering that comes upon me.*

*Grant me the wisdom and purity of heart to see with celestial clarity that my only real problem is that I have yet to trustfully surrender to Your providence. In Your infinite mercy, use these pages to enkindle in my soul an unquenchable desire to fully surrender to You so that I may not only experience eternal happiness in paradise but also enjoy peace and happiness right now, even amidst the trials and tribulations of this earthly life.*

*Amen.*



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You are ready to eliminate  
all your perceived problems  
by focusing on **the one**  
fundamental problem that  
all saints must face.

# I N T R O D U C T I O N

What if I told you that you could remove *all* of your problems? What if I told you that you could collapse your numerous challenges into *one* problem and that you could resolve all your problems simply by dealing with this one problem?

Imagine what people would pay for a single pill that solved every medical issue from a hangnail to a brain tumor. Imagine if science could find the source of all energy, harness that energy, and apply it universally for movement and power. While those examples are not realistic at the moment, there is a path to freedom from the countless problems that give you anxiety every day.

This is not lip service, hyperbole, or exaggeration. It is real. And the saints do it every day.

If you are like most people, you have a lengthy list of problems.

- Do childhood wounds still haunt you?
- Does marriage conflict leave you exhausted and angry?
- Does financial hardship leave you worried about the future?
- Do colleagues at work irritate you to no end?
- Do adult children break your heart?
- Do you have a sick loved one with whom you would gladly switch places?
- Do you suffer continual failure due to your own shortcomings, whether it be mental, social, or physical?
- Are you confronting death in the near future?

The list could go on forever.

## **NO NEED FOR PRIORITIZING**

If I asked you to list your many problems, big and small, it might take you all day. No doubt, you would add to the list as the day goes on. As soon as you sit in traffic, your list would grow. As soon as you have too many emails to process, your list would grow. As soon as you have to deal with an insurance company, your list would grow. As soon as you look at your full schedule, your list would grow.

When you try to diagnose your problems, when you try to grapple with them, you become overwhelmed. Often, the best advice you are given is to “prioritize them” and start chipping away at them one at a time.

While this is good advice, it fails to provide the real solution. Why? Well, if you solved your numerous problems tomorrow,

aren't you going to have more problems creep back in? Isn't some irritating person, or Mother Nature, or the laws of economics going to return with a vengeance in the near future?

If you reflect on your life you will see that you have "solved" many problems. And yet, they seem to pile up faster than you can off load them.

## WHY PROBLEMS PILE ON

There are a few reasons why our perceived problems seem greater than previous generations, despite the comforts and ease of modern resources:

1. **Life Complexity:** Planet earth has reached the greatest levels of complexity. As a result, you are pulled in so many directions due to technology, movement, speed, and secularism. And there seems to be no end to this uncontrollable whirlwind of complexity.
2. **Micro-vision:** In our modern times, we are used to bifurcating everything into as many little pieces as possible. This has trained your brain to see your life (especially the problems) in terms of tiny little pieces, as if your life were an instruction manual with a million pieces.
3. **Sloth:** The devil looks for ways to complicate your life. Complexity breeds sloth. Too much movement breeds sloth. Too much speed breeds sloth.
4. **Pride:** Because you are a member of a fallen race, you sometimes enjoy the drama of problems. The Irish call it the "delicious misery." Part of you, even if only a tiny part, feels important when you have many problems, and perhaps a bigger part of you desires sympathy from others. This is often called the "martyrdom complex."

The modern solutions for addressing these problems will not last. The perfect time management system will not guard you from what you experience as problems. There is no app that will make your problems disappear.

Why?

## NO PROBLEMS—PLURAL

Believe it or not, you do *not* have problems—plural. Truly, you have only one problem—one problem that underlines all other perceived problems. You have one problem that springs forth from your soul and infiltrates every aspect of your life.

You are like a bird that flutters about a hundred different branches, never understanding that all the branches make up one tree.

God is watching you, right now, jump back and forth between problems. And He knows all along that there is actually one problem at the core of your soul. And if you could only climb down from all the branches, you could also see the base of this mighty tree that is your life.



*“What saint has ever won his crown without first contending for it?”*

Saint Jerome



Again, you do not have many problems. You do not have financial problems, or health problems, or social problems, or family problems. Do you have difficulties in these areas? Of course. Do you have tremendous suffering in these areas? Of course. But are they truly problems? In the purest sense of the word, no. These difficulties and sufferings are not necessarily meant to be overcome, conquered, defeated, or solved.

Your one and only one problem is this: you have not completely surrendered your entire being and life to Divine Providence. Once this is done (or at least begun with intent), you will begin to see all the other difficulties and sufferings as from the infinite hand of a loving Father. They are no longer “problems” but gifts—perfectly customized gifts for your salvation.

The good news is that you are not alone in this struggle. Most saints did not become saints overnight. They, too, experienced moments of uncertainty, doubt, anxiety, mental confusion, and intense suffering. Their lives were filled with more “problems” and obstacles than anyone. But with time, they came to see these problems with supernatural faith as their greatest treasures.

C H A P T E R

1

THE  
PERCEIVED  
PROBLEMS

You no longer need to  
perceive the sufferings in  
every area of your life as  
problems to be solved.

Perception always begins with the senses. You see, hear, smell, feel, or taste. When we speak of a *perceived* problem, let us consider the *mental impression* that results from the sensory input. As a human, you quickly develop a mental impression of what you sense.

Due to the effects of original sin, however, your darkened intellect can easily perceive reality through a selfish, sinful framework. It is as if sin has fogged the lenses through which you see reality: you do not easily see things for what they truly are.

*As a result of original sin, human nature “is wounded in the natural powers proper to it; subject to ignorance, suffering, and the dominion of death; and inclined to sin.”*

*Catechism of the Catholic Church 405*

As a flawed creature, you must have the humility to realize that your perception may differ from reality. At times, your perception is even skewed, distorted by not only original sin but habitual sin.

Years and years of pride, lust, envy, greed, gluttony, anger, and sloth have led you down the wide road to hell rather than up the narrow road to heaven.

## SUFFERING

One of the greatest perception problems today is the notion that pain is bad. You have been conditioned by virtually every aspect of your life (especially your natural propensities) to avoid suffering. It is only natural. And it is only natural for those who love you to help you avoid suffering.

From your own experience, however, you know suffering is often the prerequisite to great accomplishment. Whether you train for a marathon, or have a baby, or study for college exams, or work

through marital conflict, anything worth doing involves some level of pain.

Think of your heroes. Perhaps they are living. Perhaps they are dead. Which one of them became truly great without suffering? Not a single one. Now, what loving parent would deprive his child of this opportunity? And how is God, dear reader, any different?

*“Pain and suffering have come into your life, but remember pain, sorrow, suffering are but the kiss of Jesus—a sign that you have come so close to Him that He can kiss you.”*

Saint Teresa of Calcutta

God has never given you a problem. He gives you only exactly what you need at exactly the right moment. Very often, dear Christian, He gives you suffering. Why? Because suffering is something that most often must be endured, experienced, embraced, and converted into something beautiful. Suffering—as difficult as this sounds—is a gift. Mother Teresa once said, “Pain and suffering have come into your life, but remember pain, sorrow, suffering are but the kiss of Jesus—a sign that you have come so close to Him that He can kiss you.”

## PEOPLE

Most people would admit that other people are their biggest problem—a complaining wife, an angry or lazy husband, an arrogant teenager, an unsympathetic boss, a bull-headed neighbor.

A saint, however, understands that these people are not problems. They may cause much suffering in your life, but they are never problems.

God is infinite. He has the almighty power to customize every moment of your life. This includes every person you ever meet.

Consider this, dear reader: Yesterday you came to a red light beside a stranger in the next lane over. This was not a coincidence. This was not nature unfolding after 13.8 billion years of happenstance. No! It was almighty God's customized plan for you *and* the person in the next lane over. Every encounter with other people is God's perfect plan for you.

*"The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich, he humbleth and he exalteth."*

1 Kings 2:7

*"Good things and evil, life and death, poverty and riches, are from God."*

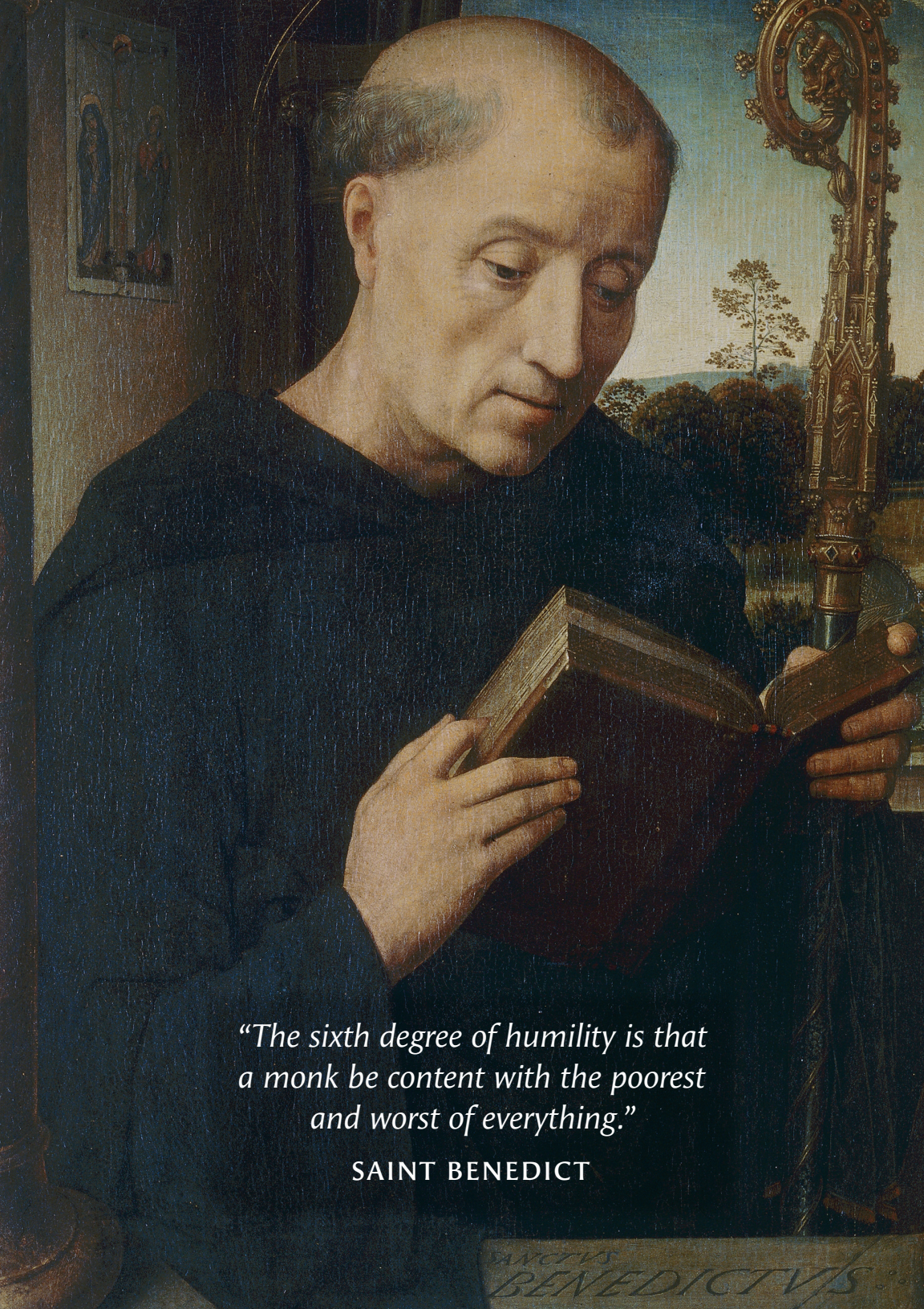
Ecclesiasticus 11:14

## MONEY

Financial stress seems to have a ripple effect in a staggeringly disproportionate manner. For this reason, financial stress is one of the greatest perceived problems. How common it is to say, "I have money problems."

Your free will decides when to save and when to spend. God never controls our free will. But the story of Job teaches that "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away" (Job 1:21). Did Job say the Lord gave and the devil hath taken away? No, the Lord hath taken away. This is a hard reality to accept for the modern mind. Sometimes God unexpectedly blesses people with money, and sometimes He takes it away. He can do this through the laws of economics, by natural disasters, or by simply not intervening when you continue down a destructive path.

The Lord, dear reader, is the Divine Financial Planner. He is not limited to amortization tables; He has infinity on His side. And thus, you do not have money problems any more than Job. Job had an extraordinary invitation by the Lord to entrust his suffering to Him. It is no different with you.



*"The sixth degree of humility is that  
a monk be content with the poorest  
and worst of everything."*

**SAINT BENEDICT**

*SANCTI  
BENEDICTI*

## YOUR GOD-GIVEN LIMITATIONS

If you are the more reflective type, one of the most difficult perceived problems is your own shortcomings. Perhaps you have a learning disability. Perhaps you are socially awkward. Perhaps you are naturally anxious and therefore twitch and fidget in odd ways to cope. Perhaps you are trapped in a wheelchair.

Now, imagine walking into Michelangelo's studio as he is sculpting his famous statue, *David*. You, who know nothing about sculpting, look at his tools lying on the table. You see oddly shaped chisels and hammers. They look nothing like the chisel and hammer in your garage. Michelangelo reaches for his tool, in fact, the oddest-looking tool on the table. You stop him and abruptly say, "You can't use that! That's the dumbest looking tool I've ever seen. You are about to ruin your sculpture!"

This, my friend, is exactly what you do to the Divine Craftsman when you think He made a mistake in giving you a perceived shortcoming. Every part of you is a tool custom designed by the Divine Craftsman. Your limitations are not problems. Rather, they are the tools for the Divine Craftsman to design you into exactly what He wants you to be.

The great Jesuit spiritual master Father Jean Baptiste Saint-Jure wrote, "We ought to be content with what we have been given and desire nothing more. What we have is sufficient because God has judged it so." The reason so many people are miserable is this: They are not content with whom God made them to be. They want to be somebody else. They want to rid themselves of their defects. But according to Saint Paul, "Power is made perfect in infirmity. Gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me" (2 Cor. 12:9). Dear reader, the more you embrace your weaknesses, the more God's strength will shine through you.



## SICKNESS AND DEATH

What greater perceived problem is there than the dreaded C word: cancer? What greater perceived problem is there than a sudden death? How could sickness and death not be a problem, especially when they affect your loved ones so greatly? You know someone who has a serious illness. You know someone who has died “before his time.” And you see the sorrowful aftermath in those all around.

God, however, has a time and place for everything. If your son suffers from a grave illness, it is because his infinitely loving Father has chosen him to suffer greatly for some special reason. If your daughter dies, it is because her infinitely loving Father wanted the child for Himself.

While these seem to be life’s greatest problems, they are not. They are opportunities granted by God for those who are able to focus on the real problem—the one problem that underlies all of your perceived problems—to which we now turn.



*“He who accepts death with perfect resignation acquires similar merit to that of a martyr.”*

**Saint Alphonsus Liguori**