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“Here I am, Lord, ready to do whatever you want”

"What do I have to do to maintain my love for God and make it increase?" you asked me, fired with enthusiasm. Leave the 'old man' behind, my son, and cheerfully give up things which are good in themselves but hinder your detachment from yourself. You have to repeat constantly and with deeds, "Here I am, Lord, ready to do whatever you want." (The Forge, 117)

August 9

Once again I raise my heart in thanksgiving to my God and Lord, because there was nothing to stop him from creating us impeccable, irresistibly drawn towards the good. Nevertheless, 'he judged that his servants would be better if they served him freely' [1]. How great is the love, the mercy of our Father! Whenever I think of his *divine extravagance* for us his children, I wish I had a thousand tongues, a thousand hearts and more, with which to be constantly praising God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Just think: the Almighty, who through his Providence rules the whole universe, does not want the forced service of slaves; he prefers to have children who are free...

But we can still say 'no' to God, rejecting this source of new and permanent happiness. Anyone who does so stops being a son and becomes a slave...

Allow me to insist on this point. It is quite evident, as we can see in ourselves and in others, that everybody is a slave in some form or other. Some stoop before riches; others worship power; some, the relative tranquility of skepticism, and there are those who discover in sensuality their golden calf. The same happens in noble things. We put effort into a job of work, into an undertaking, large or small, into scientific, artistic, literary or spiritual activities. Wherever there is commitment and real passion, the person involved lives enslaved, joyfully devoting himself to fulfilling his task. (Friends of God, 33-34)

[1] St Augustine, *ibid* (PL 34,134)

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