

MAXIMS AND COUNSELS
OF
ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

FOR EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY

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Introduction

Pious Soul:

The Spiritual Father who presents himself to you under this title is the gentle Bishop of Geneva, who, in the opinion of St. Jane Chantal and St. Vincent de Paul, was the most perfect imitation of our Saviour living among men.

Love for souls is his great passion. He is not astonished at either falls or discouragement, which he cures by remedies as gentle as they are efficacious. Whatever your disposition, you will find sometimes a word of consolation, sometimes a counsel of perfection, or a means of accomplishing a difficult step in the ways of God, and of elevating yourself to Him.

This collection is like the inner life of the Saint unconsciously written by himself. He first practised, and then taught. One is gentle from motives of virtue, only when he possesses moral strength; now we find in these lines the secret of that strength which made St. Francis de Sales the gentlest of men. He admirably inculcates the method of sanctity which he perfectly possessed—a sanctity which seems so easy to realise that we feel a desire to reproduce it. It is the flower which the Spiritual Father causes to bloom in your soul. It will soon bear fruit if you are faithful.

These counsels have been carefully gleaned from the complete collection of the holy Doctor.

1.

Keep yourself faithfully in the presence of God; avoid hurry and anxiety, for there are no greater obstacles to our progress in perfection.

2.

Cast your heart gently, not violently, into the wounds of our Saviour; have an unlimited confidence in His mercy and goodness.

3.

To make good progress we must devote ourselves to getting over that portion of the path which lies close before us, and not amuse ourselves with the desire to attain the last step before we have accomplished the first.

4.

We must make our imperfections die with us from day to day. Dear imperfections, which cause us to recognise our misery, which exercise us in contempt of self, and the practice of virtue, and notwithstanding which God accepts the preparation of our hearts which is perfect.

5.

I recommend simplicity to you; look before you, and not at the dangers which you behold in the distance. Keep your will firmly bent upon serving God with your whole heart. While you are thus occupied in forecasting the future you expose yourself to some false step.

6.

Have no care for the morrow; think only of doing well today, and when tomorrow shall have become today then we shall think about it.

7.

We must make a provision of manna for each day only; and let us not be afraid that God will fail to send down more upon us tomorrow and the day after tomorrow, and every day of our pilgrimage.

8.

Since the Heart of Our Lord has no more loving law than meekness, humility, and charity we must firmly maintain these dear virtues in us.

9.

True sanctity lies in love of God, and not in foolish imaginings, raptures, etc. Let us devote ourselves to the practice of true meekness and submission, to renouncement of self, to docility of heart, to love of abjection, to consideration for the wishes of others: this is true sanctity and the most amiable ecstasy of the children of God.

10.

May you belong to God for ever in this mortal life, serving Him faithfully through its trials, bearing the cross after Him, and may you be His for ever in life eternal with the whole celestial court!

11.

The great good of our souls is to live for God, and the greatest good to live for God alone.

12.

He who lives but for God is never sad, save at having offended God.

13.

He who lives but for God seeks only God, and since God is with him in adversity as well as in prosperity, he dwells in peace in the midst of tribulation.

14.

He who lives but for God frequently thinks of Him during all the occupations of life.

15.

Then let us belong wholly to Him, and live but for Him, desiring only to please Him, and for His creatures in Him, through Him, and for Him.

16.

Make your little efforts sweetly, peacefully, and amiably to please this Sovereign Goodness, and do not be astonished at difficulties.

17.

We must be constant in aspiring to the perfection of holy love, in order that love may be perfect; for the love which seeks anything less than perfection cannot fail to be imperfect.

18.

Never permit your soul to be sad and live in bitterness of spirit or scrupulous fear, since He who loved it and died to give it life is so good, so sweet, so amiable.

19.

To live contentedly in our exile, we must keep before our eyes the hope of our arrival in the country where we shall live for ever.

20.

God, who calls us to Him, sees how we are approaching, and will never permit anything to happen but what is for our greater good.

21.

God knows what we are, and will hold out His paternal hand to us in a difficult step, in order that nothing may arrest us.

22.

Never look forward to the accidents of life with apprehension; anticipate them with a perfect hope that God, whose child you are, will deliver you from them, according as they come.

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