

MAXIMS AND COUNSELS  
FOR  
EVERY DAY  
OF THE YEAR

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FOR  
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OF THE YEAR

St. Francis de Sales

Translated from the French by  
Miss Ella McMahon

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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.*

# MAXIMS AND COUNSELS FOR EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR

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, &c. 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.

23.

God has preserved you so far; only keep yourself faithful to the law of his providence and He will assist you at all times, and where you cannot walk He will carry you.

24.

Do not think of what may happen tomorrow, for the same eternal Father who cares for you today will care for you tomorrow and always; either He will not send you trouble, or, if He does, He will give you invincible courage to bear it.

25.

The child can never perish who remains in the arms of a Father who is almighty.

26.

If God does not always give us what we ask, it is to keep us near Him and give us an opportunity to urge and constrain Him by a loving violence.

27.

Behold this great Artisan of mercy. He converts our miseries into graces and the poison of our iniquities into salutary remedies for our souls. Tell me, I pray, what will He not do with the afflictions, the labours, the persecutions which assail us?

28.

An over-sensitive mind can neither receive nor endure anything without telling of it, and it is always a little astonished at the lowly places which humility and simplicity choose.

29.

I see you with your vigorous heart which loves and wills powerfully. I like it, for what are those half-dead hearts good for? We must make a particular exercise once every week of willing to love the will of God more tenderly, more affectionately than anything in the world, and that, too, not only in bearable but in the most unbearable events.

30.

Even at a time when you had not so much confidence in God, did you perish in affliction? Then why have you not courage to meet all other trials?

31.

Plant in your heart Jesus Christ Crucified, and all the crosses of this world will seem to you like roses.

32.

We must not only be willing that God should strike us, but we must accept that He shall strike us where He wills.

33.

Lord Jesus, without reserve, without an if, without a but, without exception, without limitation, may thy holy will be done in all things, at all times.

34.

Daily strengthen yourself more and more in the resolution, which you formed with so much affection: of serving God according to his good pleasure.

35.

Never think you have attained the purity of heart which you owe to God until your will is freely and joyfully resigned to his holy will in all things, even in the most repugnant.

36.

Regard not the appearance of the things you are to do, but Him who commands them, and who, when He pleases, can accomplish his glory and our perfection through the most imperfect and trifling things.

37.

A true servant of God has no care for the morrow; he performs faithfully what is required of him today, and tomorrow he will do what is required of him without a word.



38.

So, no matter how God treats you, it is all the same to you, you tell me.... Ah! how suddenly self-love insinuates itself into our affections, however devout they may appear.

39.

Here is the great lesson: We must discover God's will, and, recognising it, we must endeavour to do it joyfully, or at least courageously.

40.

The meek Saviour would have us meek, so that, though surrounded by the world and the flesh, we may live by the Spirit; that, amidst the vanities of earth, we may live in heaven; that, living among men, we may praise Him with the angels.

41.

The sight alone of our dear Jesus crucified can speedily soften all sorrows, which are but flowers compared with his thorns. And then our great *rendezvous* is an eternal

heaven; and compared with the price of eternity, what are the things which end with time?

## 42.

Continue to unite yourself more and more with our Lord. Plunge your heart into the charity of his, and say always with your whole soul: "May I die and may Jesus live!" Our death will be a happy one if we have died daily.

## 43.

The repugnance you feel testifies no want of love; for it seems to me that, if we believed that being flayed God would love us more we would flay ourselves, not without repugnance, but in spite of the repugnance.

## 44.

Cultivate not only a solid love, but a tender, gentle, meek love for those about you; I have learned from experience that infirmities destroy, not our charity, but our meekness towards our neighbour, if we are not strongly on our guard.

45.

Lord Jesus, what true happiness for a soul consecrated to God to be strongly exercised in tribulation before leaving this life!

46.

How can we know frank, ardent love but in the midst of thorns, crosses, weariness, above all, when this weariness is prolonged?

47.

Nothing can give us deeper peace in this world than to frequently contemplate our Lord in all the afflictions He endured from his birth to his death: contempt, calumnies, poverty, abjection, weariness, suffering, nakedness, wrongs, and grief of every kind.

48.

A heart which esteems and grandly loves Jesus crucified, loves his death, his sufferings, his insults, his poverty, his hunger, his thirst; and when Jesus grants this

heart a small share in them, it is jubilant with gladness and lovingly embraces them.

## 49.

Every day, not in prayer, but in your walks, you should recall to mind our Lord amid the thorns of our redemption, and consider what happiness it would be to share them.

## 50.

Let us faithfully cultivate that resignation and pure love of God which is never wholly practised but amid sufferings; for to love God, when He feeds us with sweetness is nothing more than children do; but to love Him when He feeds us with gall is to offer Him the cup of our loving fidelity.

## 51.

I recommend you to God, that you may obtain the gift of holy patience; and it is not in my power to propose to Him anything for you, save that He may, according to his holy will, fashion your heart for his dwelling, and reign there eternally; and whether He fashion it with

the brush, the hammer, or the chisel, must be according to his good pleasure.

52.

The heart which unites itself to the Heart of God cannot help loving and accepting with sweetness the arrows with which God pierces it.

53.

I desire that your cross and mine should be wholly the cross of Jesus Christ; and as to the imposition of this or that burden, or making any choice, God knows what He is doing and why He does it—it is certainly for our good.

54.

Our sweet Saviour is pleased that we should speak to Him of the trouble He sends us, and that we should complain, provided it be lovingly and humbly, and to Himself, just as little children do when their mother has punished them.