

CONSOLING THOUGHTS

on

ETERNITY

—FOURTH BOOK—



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*Gathered from the Writings of
St. Francis de Sales,
And Arranged in Order, by the*

REV. PÈRE HUGUET

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

27TH EDITION

*“You cannot read anything more useful than the works of
St. Francis de Sales, in which everything is pleasing
and consoling.”—Fenelon.*

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ST. FRANCIS DE SALES' LOVING HEART

“Through a great part of my soul I am poor and weak, but I have a boundless and almost immutable affection for those who favor me with their friendship. Whoever challenges me in the contest of friendship must be very determined, for I spare no effort. There is no person in the world who has a heart more tender and affectionate towards his friends than I, or one who feels a separation more acutely.”
—St. Francis de Sales.

“It has pleased God to make my heart thus. I wish to love this dear neighbor ever so much—ever so much I wish to love him! Oh! When shall we be all melted away in meekness and charity towards our neighbor! I have given him my whole person, my means, my affections, that they may serve him in all his wants.”—St. Francis de Sales.

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PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

ST. FRANCIS de Sales was a man of great passion. Reading his thought is to know his heart. Has Holy Mother Church ever reared a child so willing and able to express his longing for perfect union with God? Has a man so learned ever presented Truth and Beauty so simply?

Words cannot fully express the Publisher's appreciation for this Gentle Saint, the Bishop of Geneva and Doctor of the Church. Saint Francis was a lawyer, a theologian, and a missionary. As a young priest, he volunteered to re-evangelize the Calvinist of Chablais, France. He preached not only with conviction, but also with unparalleled gentleness and grace. He worked tirelessly, even under the cover of night, slipping his apologetic writings beneath the doors of anti-Catholics. The Lord rewarded him with one of the most remarkable and well-documented events in Catholic history when nearly the entire population of 72,000 Calvinists returned to the Faith.

This volume, *Consoling Thoughts*, is representative of why St. Francis was so well-received in Chablais, and

indeed, throughout history. Perhaps more than any other saint, St. Francis preached truth with love. His teachings, his works, and his very presence were consoling to those 72,000 lost souls of Chablais and to millions of more over the centuries. Now, then, it is our hope that they will offer consolation to a new generation of Catholics.

It is for this reason that TAN Books is proud to bring this compilation of St. Francis' writings back to print. Initially published in a single volume, we now present this work in a four volume series, carefully arranged by topic to give solace in times of darkness, or, simply in times of deep meditation.

It is the Publisher's sincere hope that *Consoling Thoughts* finds a permanent home in your library and among our long list of Saint Francis de Sales classics, including *Introduction to the Devout Life*, *Treatise on the Love of God*, *Catholic Controversies*, and *Sermons of St. Francis de Sales* (in four volumes).

Saint Francis de Sales, Doctor of the Church, *Pray For Us*.

ROBERT M. GALLAGHER, PUBLISHER
November 19, 2012

PREFACE TO THE SIXTH FRENCH EDITION

By Père Huguet

SIX editions of this little work, published in a short time, tell better than any words of ours the popularity which St. Francis de Sales enjoys amongst us. Many sick and wounded souls have found in these sweet and affecting pages a heavenly consolation.

Encouraged by this success, the honor of which belongs to God and His blessed servant, we have again with pen in hand run through the works of the Bishop of Geneva, to glean carefully whatever had escaped us on our former tour. Nor has our labor been in vain; we have gathered new flowers, whose beauty and perfume yield in no respect to the first.¹ To introduce them in this edition, we have been obliged to lop off a good many of the old chapters which were so well suited to the object of the book. We have acted thus with the less regret as we have published the omitted

¹ The author has scarcely taken anything from the *Introduction to a Devout Life*, this admirable book being in the hands of everyone.

portions, complete, in two other volumes: the *Consoling Piety of St. Francis de Sales*, and the *Month of Immaculate Mary, by St. Francis de Sales*. These two works form a complete course of consolation for all the trials of life.

We may be permitted to give a short extract from a late number of the *Catholic Bibliography*, which contained an article on *Consoling Thoughts*. The idea of publishing the article was most remote from our mind, on account of the many marks of very great kindness towards us which it bears; but remembering that the merit of this work belongs entirely to St. Francis de Sales, we have felt impelled to give at least an extract, as a new and encouraging proof of the opportuneness of our little book.

“The very title of the book,” it says “pleases, and should secure a large number of readers. How many souls are there today who stand in need of being encouraged and consoled? Want of confidence is the great obstacle in the work of the Christian apostleship. Discouragement is the evil of our period, because in general the Christian life, or SANCTITY, appears like a sharp mountain, which only few persons can ascend; in despair of arriving at its summit the majority of men remain below on the plains. The mere word ‘sanctity’ frightens. The *Lives of the Saints*, which ought to encourage, often discourage, by their list of heroic virtues; we gladly conclude that such a state of perfection is suited only to a very small number, and we remain out of the ways of sanctity for fear of not being able to walk in them.

“Blessed then be the pious author who has received the happy inspiration of assembling together the *Consoling Thoughts of St. Francis de Sales*, the sweetest and most

amiable of the saints, and one of the greatest masters of the spiritual life!

“It is especially by his admirable union of firmness and mildness that St. Francis de Sales shines in the first rank of ascetic writers. Who else ever painted virtue under lovelier colors, or made it easier or more practicable? Whoever knew better how to enlighten and bring back souls that had withdrawn from God, or that wearied themselves in His service by an unreasonable fear?

“Happy then and useful inspiration [it was], to gather from his works the thoughts most fitted to enlighten pious and timorous souls, to console them, and to dilate their hearts dried up by fear! Father Huguet has given us, in this little work, the quintessence of everything that our amiable saint wrote most sweet and consoling, especially in his letters, in which that heart so good and tender, which God had formed to comfort the afflicted, is entirely revealed. The book is of the greatest assistance to the simple faithful, and to directors and confessors charged with comforting discouraged and troubled souls.

“A word now as to the method adopted. The author read, he tells us, with pen in hand, the works of the holy Bishop of Geneva; and, after noting the different passages which referred to the same subject, he arranged them in such order as to form a single chapter. A page is thus sometimes collected from seven or eight places in the saint’s writings. Yet such is the connection of ideas that we scarcely perceive the labor, and everything seems to flow as from one fountainhead. As to the graceful, artless style of St. Francis de Sales, the author has lightly retouched it in some

places, changing a few antiquated expressions that would be little intelligible nowadays. Without altering anything in substance, he has considered it a duty to suppress certain details and comparisons, whose want of simplicity, a common fault at present, might cloy the work. Everywhere we have the good shepherd, who, after the example of his Divine Master, instructs, cheers, and consoles, by the help of parables and similitudes, in the great art of using which perhaps he never had an equal.

“To add more clearness and authority to the book, the author has, from time to time, placed at the foot of the page some notes taken from the most esteemed writings of our greatest masters of the spiritual life, particularly Bossuet and Fenelon. These notes, happily selected, give a new value to the work. Should we now recommend it to all those whose souls have need to be encouraged and consoled—in a word, all the faithful?”

INTRODUCTION

By Père Huguet

“The writings of St. Francis de Sales are the fruit of grace and experience.”—Fenelon.

THE great evil of our period is discouragement. Tempers and characters have become weak and degenerate.

Everyone agrees in saying that the most common obstacle, and the one most difficult to be overcome, which all those meet who labor for the conversion of sinners and the sanctification of pious souls, is want of confidence. The great evil that Jansenism wrought in the midst of us has not yet entirely disappeared: many still believe that perfection consists only in fearing the Lord and in trembling before Him, who, in His mercy, permits us to call Him *Our Father*, and to name Him *the good God*.

The generality of authors have placed in the *Lives of the Saints* an account of their heroic virtues only, without a single word of the defects and miseries which God left in them, in order to preserve them in humility and to

make them more indulgent towards their brethren; yet the history of their weaknesses would, according to the judicious remark of St. Francis de Sales, have done the greatest good to a large number of souls, who imagine that sanctity can, and should, be exempt, even in this world, from all alloy and all imperfection. It is to remedy, as far as lies in our power, these inconveniences, that we have gathered together, under appropriate headings, from the writings of the sweetest and most amiable of all the saints, those passages which are best calculated to enlighten pious souls, and to expand their hearts withered with fear.

The writings of St. Francis de Sales are admirably suited to times of trial and sadness. The soul enjoys in them an atmosphere of mild salubrity that strengthens and renews it. The doctrine there is holy and profound, under a most amiable exterior; the style adds, by its simple naïveté, to the charm of a clear and ingenuous fancy; we are instructed while we imagine ourselves distracted, and admire while we smile.

We hesitate not to say that no saint has ever contributed so much as St. Francis de Sales, by his immortal writings, to make piety loved and practiced in all classes of society.

“Under his pen,” says the best of his biographers, “devotion is noble, true and rational; courtesy of manners, a spirit of sociality, all the charms of a well-ordered piety, form its cortege, if we may use the expression, and yet it is not disguised in order to appear the more agreeable. Everywhere the author’s sweetness appears without weakness, and his firmness without bitterness. He teaches us to

respect decorum, which he calls the gracefulness of virtue, to rise above nature without destroying it, to fly little by little towards Heaven like doves when we cannot soar thither like eagles, that is to say, to sanctify ourselves by ordinary means. There the mind contemplates truth, unveiled in majestic splendor, bedecked with maxims equally elegant and profound, clad in a style noble, flowing and natural, relieved by the justness of the expressions, sometimes fine and delicate, sometimes vivid and impressive, always graceful and varied: this is simplicity, with all the merit of beauty, for every idea is rendered by the proper word, and every word embellishes the thought. There, above all, the heart tastes an inexpressible pleasure; because the sweetness of the sentiment always seasons the precept, while the delicacy of the precaution that accompanies it secures its acceptance, and the artless candor and goodness of the author, who paints himself without intending it, make him beloved; at the same time the soul, embalmed in what it reads, deliciously participates in the sweetest and purest perfume of true piety.”¹

The style of St. Francis de Sales is a picture of his heart as much as of his mind: we feel that he loves and deserves to be loved, but that he wishes above all things that we should love God.

A special characteristic of St. Francis de Sales is that the frequent use he makes of figures and the comparisons which he endlessly multiplies, never weary. This style

¹ *Life of St. Francis de Sales*, by M. the Curé of Saint Sulpice. This beautiful work has met with a success which surprises no one except its author, whose modesty and evangelical simplicity can alone equal his learning and his zeal for the conversion of souls.

would be clumsy in another author; with our saint it is a new pleasure, which draws away the reader and attracts him every moment, as a gentle magnet, and this with so much the more ease as the reader does not perceive it. One is led along unresistingly, yielding with pleasure to the charms of this enchanting style. An effect, so rare and wonderful, is owing not only to our saint's judicious choice of figures and comparisons, but also to his amiable character, to the sprightliness of his sentiments, and to the transports of his love for God, which burst forth even in the midst of the most abstract truths. He cannot contain the fire that consumes him; he allows it to escape by every sense. Moreover, he so well unites simplicity of diction with beauty of metaphor, that, in perusing his works, we feel the ornaments to flow from his pen without an effort on his part to seek them. A tender and compassionate soul, he is full of charity towards his friends. Let us hear him speak: "Through a great part of my soul I am poor and weak, but I have a boundless and almost immutable affection for those who favor me with their friendship. Whoever challenges me in the contest of friendship must be very determined, for I spare no effort. There is no person in the world who has a heart more tender and affectionate towards his friends than I, or one who feels a separation more acutely."

We have so often heard the following affecting words repeated, that they seem to have fallen from the mouth of the sweet Saviour Himself: "It has pleased God to make my heart thus. I wish to love this dear neighbor ever so much—ever so much I wish to love him! Oh, when shall

we be all melted away in meekness and charity towards our neighbor! I have given him my whole person, my means, my affections, that they may serve him in all his wants.”

This benignity, this gentleness, which breathed through the whole conduct of our saint, made St. Vincent de Paul exclaim with touching simplicity: “O my God! How good must Thou be, since the Bishop of Geneva is so good!”

It is in his works that he deposited the richest treasures of this sweet sensibility and of this playful imagination, which enabled him to lend to the driest subjects and the severest precepts of the evangelic law a charm that makes them loved even by the profane.

The French Academy proposed the writings of St. Francis de Sales as a model to all, even at a time when it extolled the faults of Corneille.

To make himself all to all, St. Francis de Sales descends to the level of the simple faithful, and there he loves to rest. Sometimes he places himself with his *Philothea* in the midst of the stormy sea of the world, and there casts out the anchor of faith; again, he takes his stand on the high road to show to the multitude, who pass indifferent and distracted along, the narrow way that leads to Heaven. We might say that he smoothes its roughness, so carefully does he conceal it under flowers. These are not deceitful flowers, by which virtue is disfigured in the endeavor to render it more attractive; they are those flowers of the soul which perfume without corrupting it, secret joys, interior consolations, ineffable delights, the anticipated inheritance of God's elect upon earth. The picture which he draws of devotion can only be compared to that of charity by

St. Paul. "In his writings," says Père de Tournemine, "we have the morality of the Sacred Scriptures and the Holy Fathers reduced to true principles and practical rules."

The doctrine of St. Francis de Sales is like a beautiful river which takes its rise in pure and elevated regions, and which, descending to the lowlands, spreads wide its banks, in order to reflect a broader expanse of Heaven; it is decked with the flowers of the prairie which it gathers on its course, and carries to the sea a tribute only of limpid and perfumed waters.

According to St. Francis de Sales, we must not be too punctilious in the practice of virtues, but approach them honestly, with liberty, in a *grosso modo* way. "Walk simply in the way of the Lord," he says, "and do not torment your mind. We must hate our defects, but with a tranquil and quiet hatred—not with a spiteful and troubled hatred—and, if necessary, have patience to witness them and to turn them to account by a holy self-abasement. For want of this, my daughter, your imperfections, which you view so closely, trouble you much, and by this means are retained, there being nothing that better preserves our defects than fretfulness and anxiety to remove them." (*Sermon for the Feast of St. Magdalen*).

He applies to himself what he counsels to others: "I know what sort of a being I am; yet even though I feel myself miserable, I am not troubled at it; nay, I am sometimes joyful at it, considering that I am a truly fit object for the mercy of God, to which I continually recommend you."

This devotion, at least in appearance so easy, naturally

pleases persons of the world, who, like the Count Bussy-Rabutin, say: "I merely wish to get into Heaven, and no higher." This nobleman, writing in another place, says: "Save us with our good Francis de Sales; he conducted people to Heaven by beautiful ways." Yet these beautiful ways were no other than the narrow way of which the Gospel speaks; only our amiable saint knew how to smooth its entrance and to hide its thorns under flowers.

St. Francis particularly excelled in comforting the afflicted and the sick; a few words falling from his heart sufficed to calm and enlighten them; his words entered into their soul as an oil of great sweetness, which moderated the heat of their malady. Let us hear him console a pious person to whom sickness was an insupportable burden: "Be not annoyed to remain in bed without meditation, for to endure the scourges of Our Lord is no less a good than to meditate. No, indeed; but it is much better to be on the cross with Jesus Christ, than merely to contemplate Him in prayer." To another, who was troubled at the sight of her miseries, he said: "When we happen to fall, let us cast down our heart before God, to say to Him, in a spirit of confidence and humility, 'Mercy, Lord! For I am weak.' Let us arise in peace, unite again the thread of our affections, and continue our work."

St. Francis de Sales was so much the better qualified to tranquilize and encourage souls inclined to diffidence and depression, as he had himself been obliged to pass through the severest trials, and arrived at the possession of peace of heart only by a total abandonment to God. "Since at every season of life, early or late, in youth or in old age, I

can expect my salvation from the pure goodness and mercy of God alone, it is much better to cast myself from this moment into the arms of His clemency than to wait till another time. The greater part of the journey is over; let the Lord do with me according to His will; my fate is in His hands; let Him dispose of me according to His good pleasure.”

The pious M. Olier, that great master of the spiritual life, very much esteemed St. Francis de Sales. “God,” he says, “wishing to raise him up as a torch in the midst of His Church to enlighten an immense number, replenished him with the most marvelous gifts of understanding, knowledge, and wisdom, proportioned to His designs. As for his knowledge, it was evidently more than human, and the effect of the Divine Spirit.”

If you wish to know Francis de Sales thoroughly, to be initiated into the most secret mysteries of that vast understanding and that perfect heart, read and re-read his *Letters*, in which every subject, from the most humble to the most sublime, from a simple how-do-you-do to a description of ecstasies and eternal beatitudes, is treated of in the style that best suits it. Read, above all, the *Letters to Madame de Chantal*, and those which treat of the *direction of souls*. Considering these admirable letters, Bossuet says: “Francis de Sales is truly sublime; there is no one among moderns with such sweetness, who has a hand so steady and experienced as his, to elevate souls to perfection and to detach them from themselves.” The letter written after the death of his mother is of a primitive simplicity, and a sublime model of Christian resignation; we imagine that we hear

St. Augustine weeping over St. Monica, and the tears it makes us shed have nothing of bitterness, so sweet is the death of the just when thus related.

The learned and pious Archbishop of Cambray continually recommended the perusal of our saint's writings. "You cannot read anything more useful," says Fenelon, "than the books of St. Francis de Sales; everything there is consoling and pleasing, though he does not say a word but to help us to die. His artless style displays an amiable simplicity, which is above all, the flourishes of the profane writer. You see a man who, with great penetration and a perfect clearness of mind to judge of the reality of things, and to know the human heart, desires only to speak as a good-natured friend, to console, to solace, to enlighten, to perfect his neighbor. No person was better acquainted than he with the highest perfection; but he repeated himself for the little, and never disdained anything, however small. He made himself all to all, not to please all, but to gain all, and to gain them to Jesus Christ, not to himself."

To this judgment of the pious Bishop of Cambray we shall add that of the learned Bourdaloue: "The doctrine of St. Francis de Sales is a food, not of earth, but of Heaven, which, from the same substance, nourishes, like the manna, all kinds of persons; and I am able to say, without offending against the respect which I owe to all other writers, that after the Holy Scriptures there are no works that have better maintained piety among the faithful than those of this holy bishop."

The illustrious Monsignore of Paris shared the same

sentiments. "All that can contribute," he says, "to make the most amiable of saints better known to the world must be useful to the cause of our holy religion."

Thus, the three men who were the glory of the clergy of France in the age of Louis XIV were unanimous in esteeming and praising the works of this great master of the spiritual life.

Protestants themselves are obliged to render justice to the exceptional merit of the works of St. Francis de Sales. One of their best authors² thus appreciates the writings of the blessed Bishop of Geneva: "From its first appearance, the *Introduction to a Devout Life* had a universal success in France, and editions succeeded one another rapidly. This was an event of great consequence in regard to such a book, and Catholicism could most justly rejoice at it. The learned controversies of Bellarmine had been of far less advantage: they had indeed fitted for theological discussion a clergy who found themselves face to face with superior forces; but from the first blow, the *Introduction* could make conquests to a religion whose practices were presented under forms so amiable, and even so delightful. . . . Among Calvinistic gentlemen solicited to abjure their faith, the little book served as an occasion for more than one renunciation. In this respect, the *Introduction to a Devout Life* was, in the beginning of the century, what the *Exposition of the Catholic Faith* was in the middle, and had effects quite similar. Of all that St. Francis de Sales has written, his *Letters* are the most widely spread: Protestants read them after a selec-

2 *History of French Literature*, by M. Sayous.

tion, for all would not suit their taste; but in each class, the amiable and glowing piety, the grace—what shall I say? the wit, the familiar gossip, with which the Bishop allows his pen to twirl along, have a singular charm; and never does the afflicted or dejected heart disdain the consolation and encouragement which it finds in perusing them.”

It is in his correspondence that we must study the great, the holy Bishop of Geneva; there we shall find humility unparalleled, a joyous cordiality, peace unutterable, the sole desire of accomplishing the will of God.

There we shall find that elegance, ever new, in thought and in expression; that richness of beautiful images and of fine comparisons borrowed from things most familiar: the rose, the pigeon, the halcyon, the bee, the odorous plants of Arabia; that dovelike simplicity, that childlike candor which does not, however, exclude, on due occasions, a manly strength and energy; that chaste tenderness which could only come from Heaven; that gentle meekness which holds the key of every heart.

We shall be the less surprised at the eulogies given to the writings of St. Francis de Sales by the most experienced doctors and the most eminent personages, when we consider with what maturity and wisdom they were composed. Those beautiful pages, which seem to flow as from a well, so free and natural are the doctrine and the style, are the fruit of the most serious study and the most assiduous meditation, joined with a great knowledge of the human heart, which he had acquired in the direction of souls.³

3 *Spirit of St. Francis de Sales.*

His beautiful *Treatise on the Love of God* is the result of twenty-four years' preaching, according to the statement of the author himself, and the fruit of such profound study, that there are fourteen lines in it, which, as he told Mgr. Camus, Bishop of Belley, had cost him the reading of more than twelve hundred pages in folio.⁴ After this, we should not be surprised at the unexampled success which has crowned the writings of St. Francis de Sales. The *Treatise on the Love of God* is a most beautiful book, and one that has had a great circulation. All the agitations, all the inconsistencies of the human heart are painted in it with inimitable art. We behold there the exercises of love, contemplation, the repose of the soul in God, its languors, its transports, its dereliction, its dying sadness, its return to courage, the abandonment of the docile spirit to the secret ways of Providence. When the *Introduction to a Devout Life* appeared in the world, it created an extraordinary sensation; everyone wished to procure it, to read it, and, having read it, to read it again. Very soon it was translated into nearly all the languages of Europe, and editions succeeded one another so rapidly that in 1656 it had reached the fortieth. Henry IV, on reading it, declared that the work far surpassed his expectations; Mary of Medici, his wife, sent it bound in diamonds and precious stones to James, King of England; and this monarch, one of the most learned who ever occupied a throne, conceived such an esteem for it, that, notwithstanding his schismatical and spiteful

⁴ It is related that the publisher, in gratitude for the considerable gain he had derived from the sale of the *Introduction to a Devout Life*, made a journey to Annecy expressly to offer as a gift to the author a sum of four hundred crowns of gold. (*Memoirs of the Academic Society of Savoy*, Vol. II).

prejudices against Catholic writers, he carried it always about with him and often read it. Many times he was heard to say: "Oh, how I should wish to know the author! He is certainly a great man, and among all our bishops there is not one capable of writing in this manner, which breathes of Heaven and the angels." The general of the Feuillants, speaking of this work, calls it the most perfect book that mortal hand ever composed, a book that one would always wish to read again after having read it many times, and he adds this beautiful eulogium, that in reading it he who would not be a Christian should become better, and he who would be better should become perfect.⁵

The Church, directed by the Holy Spirit, exhorts all her children to be guided by the counsels of St. Francis de Sales. *Admonished by his directions*, she says in his Office. She assures us that his works have diffused a bright light amongst the faithful, to whom they point out a way as sure as it is easy, to arrive at perfection.

We could, if our design permitted it, multiply evidence in favor of the works of St. Francis de Sales. We shall terminate this introduction by some extracts from a letter of Pope Alexander VII, one of the greatest of his panegyrists: "I conjure you anew to make the works of M. de Sales your delight and your dearest study. I have read them I cannot tell how many times, and I would not dispense myself from reading them again; they never lose the charm of novelty; they always seem to me to say something more than they had said before. If you trust me, these writings should be

5 *Life of St. Francis de Sales*, by M. the Abbé Hamon.

the mirror of your life, and the rule by which to form your every action and your every thought. As for me, I confess to you that from often reading them I have become like a repository of his most beautiful sentiments and the principal points of his doctrine, that I ruminate over them at my leisure, that I taste them, and that I make them, so to speak, pass into my very blood and substance. Such is my opinion of this great saint, exhorting you with all my heart to follow him.”

If in gathering these lovely flowers and binding them into bunches, we have lessened their beauty or their perfume, we trust that still they will at least a little serve those severely tried souls for whom we intend them; we shall consider it an ample recompense for all our trouble, if, even in a single heart, they increase confidence in God, and the desire to love and serve Him generously.

“Most holy Mother of God, the most lovable, the most loving, and the most loved, of creatures! Prostrate at thy feet, I dedicate and consecrate to thee this little work of love, in honor of the immense greatness of thy love. O Jesus! To whom could I more fitly offer these words of Thy love than to the most amiable heart of the well-beloved of Thy soul?”⁶

6 Dedication of the *Treatise on the Love of God*, by St. Francis de Sales.

—FOURTH BOOK—

Consoling Thoughts on Eternity



CHAPTER ONE

THE CHRISTIAN MANNER IN WHICH WE SHOULD MOURN OVER THOSE WHOM WE HAVE LOST

IF WE lose our parents and friends, we ought not to be too much distressed; for there is no reason in the world why we should desire those whom we love to remain a long time here, and we ought rather to praise God when He takes them away, than be grieved at it. In the same manner we must all, one after another, depart, according to the order which has been established; the first who leave, only find themselves the more fortunate, when they have lived with care of their salvation. And then, in eternity, such losses are repaired, and our society, broken up by death, will be restored. This is a very sufficient consolation for the children of God, when their parents and friends have received the efficacious remedies of the holy Sacraments, before dying; which they ought always to procure without delay.

Let us keep our hearts in repose and without bitterness;

but let us have courage, if there be need, to close the eyes of our dear departed one, giving him the kiss of peace. After which, let us render, without much pomp, the little honors which the Christian custom requires, according to the state and condition of everyone. Especially, let us see that the prayers are said, and other pious exercises performed, exactly according to the intention of the deceased, for fear he may have need of some expiation through the severity of the divine judgment, that he may not be long deprived of the enjoyment of a full and glorious liberty—that his soul may not be imprisoned, through some of God’s inscrutable secrets, for a time in Purgatory, before being received into the arms of the divine goodness in Heaven.

By this last journey, friendships and associations, commenced in this world, are renewed, never more to suffer interruption. In the meantime, let us have patience, and wait courageously until the bell for our departure tolls; we shall then go to the place where our friends have already arrived, and since we have cordially loved them, let us continue to love them; let us do, for love of them, that which they wished we should do, and for ourselves, that which they now desire.

However, I am on my guard against saying, “Do not weep,” for it is very just that you should weep a little, as a testimony to the sincere affection you bear towards the dear departed. This will be to imitate Jesus Christ, who wept a little over Lazarus, His good friend; but it is on condition that those exterior demonstrations should be moderate, and that those sighs and sobs should not be so much tokens of regret as marks of tenderness.

Let us not weep like those who, altogether attached to this life, consider not that we go to eternity, where, if we shall have lived well in this life, we shall meet again our dear departed, never more to be separated from them. We are not able to prevent our poor heart from feeling the loss of those, who were here below our amiable companions; but still, we must not break the solemn resolution we have taken, to keep our will inseparably united to that of God, nor cease to say to Divine Providence, "Yes, Thou art blessed, for all that which pleases Thee is good." I weep on such occasions, and my heart, which is like a stone on heavenly things, pours out tears over such subjects. The imaginary insensibility of those who do not wish us to be men has always appeared to me chimerical; but, at the same time, after we have paid our tribute to the inferior part of the soul, we must do our duty to the superior part, in which is seated, as on a throne, the spirit of faith, which ought to console us in our afflictions, and even by our afflictions. Blessed are they who rejoice in being afflicted, and who thus transform quassia into honey! God be praised! It is always with tranquility I weep, always with a great sentiment of loving confidence in Divine Providence; for since Our Lord loved death and delivered it as an object for our love, I cannot wish it ill, for taking away my sisters and others, provided that they die in the love of the holy death of the Saviour. I regard this frail life as such a trifle, that I never turn to God with sweeter sentiments of love, than when He has stricken me or permitted me to be afflicted.

I presume you have so much love and fear of God, that seeing His good pleasure and His holy will, you

accommodate yourself to them, and sweeten your grief by the consideration of the miseries of this world. We cannot prevent ourselves from feeling much regret at separation; and this regret is not forbidden us, provided we moderate it with the hope of not remaining entirely separated, but consider that in a little time we shall follow our friends to Heaven, the place of our repose, God showing us this mercy.

Raise up your eyes often to Heaven; and see that this life is only a passage to eternity. Four or five months' absence will soon be over. And if our senses, amused with beholding and prizing this world and its life, make us resent a little too sharply that which is contrary to us, let us often correct this defect by the light of faith, which ought to make us judge those most happy who in the fewest days have finished their voyage. Oh, how desirable is eternity, at the cost of some miserable vicissitudes! . . . Every day my soul grows in love and esteem for eternal things. . . . Let time flow by, with which we hasten on to be transformed into the glory of the children of God. . . . How incomparably more amiable is eternity, since its duration is without end, and its days are without nights, and its contentments are without variation!

Oh, if once we had our heart well penetrated with the thought of this holy and blessed eternity: "Go," we should say to our friends, "Go, dear friends, to the Supreme Being, at the hour which the King of Eternity has marked; we shall follow after you, and since time is given us only for this purpose, and the world is peopled only to people Heaven, we will do all that we can to render ourselves worthy of it."

Yes, truly, the journey of our friends to a better life is

most amiable, since it happens only to people Heaven, and to increase the glory of our King; one day we shall go to rejoin them; and, while awaiting that day, let us carefully learn the canticle of holy love, that we may be able to sing it more perfectly in eternity. Blessed are they who place not their confidence in the present life—who esteem it only as a plank by which to pass to the celestial life, in which alone we should center all our hopes!

Let David weep over his Absalom, hanged and lost; but, over the departure of him who has accepted death willingly, who has received the efficacious remedies of the holy Church before dying, there is more occasion to be consoled than afflicted; for, having lived well, he is not dead, but saved from death, since virtuous men do not die, living in Heaven by the magnificent recompense of their merits, and on earth by the glorious memory of their good deeds.

Oh, if we could hear the sweet and amiable words of some deceased one now happy, he would say to us: “My dearly beloved, I beseech you to consider that I am in the place which I so much desired, where I am consoled for all my past labors, which have merited for me the glory of immortality. Why do you not console yourselves with me? When I was on earth, you made profession of loving me, and sometimes seeing me succeed happily, you rejoiced and congratulated with me. Ah! Am I not always the same person? Why then are you afflicted at my departure, since God has given me so much glory? No, I desire everything else from you but sorrow and regret. If you have tears, keep them to weep over the miseries of the world, and also over your sins. Do you not know that the evils of the wretched

life in which you live are such, that you ought rather to praise God for having taken me away from them than be dejected? The first who leave it, only find themselves the more fortunate, when they have lived with care of their salvation. No one is esteemed before God for having lived long, but for having lived well. A single anxiety now presses on me: it is, that you should despise, being in the body, those things of which you shall have no more need when out of the body, and that you so live amid the prosperity of the world, that you may not dread its adversity, assuring yourselves that you shall very soon meet again with your dear departed ones, never more to be separated from them through all eternity.”

Would to God that all the children of Adam reflected attentively on these beautiful truths! Certainly they would not be so ardent or so eager after pleasures and vanities; for they would see clearly that all they have esteemed until the present is nothing but nothingness, the wages of death, the lure of Satan, the bait of Hell, and by means of this clear knowledge, united with a firm and determined resolution, they would draw from temporal death, help and succor to avoid the eternal.

It is related that Alexander the Great, sailing on the high seas, first and of himself, discovered Arabia Felix, by the odor of the aromatical woods which grew there; and thus formed the desire of conquering the country. In like manner, those who seek the eternal country, though sailing on the high seas of worldly business, have a certain foretaste of Heaven, which wonderfully animates and encourages them, but it is necessary to stand at the bows, and to turn towards that side.