

365 DAYS OF CATHOLIC WISDOM

365
DAYS
— *of* —
CATHOLIC
WISDOM

A Treasury of
Truth, Beauty, and Goodness

Deal W. Hudson

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Gastonia, North Carolina

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To Monsignor Richard Lopez

*If you would tell me the heart of a man,
tell me not what he reads, but what he rereads.*

—François Mauriac

*I consider as lovers of books not those who keep their books hidden
in their store chests and never handle them, but those who, by nightly
as well as daily use thumb them, batter them, wear them out, who fill
out all the margins with annotations of many kinds, and who prefer the
marks of a fault they have erased to a neat copy full of faults.*

—Erasmus of Rotterdam

*The only real sadness, the only real failure,
the only great tragedy in life, is not to become a saint.*

—Léon Bloy

At the end of life, we will not be judged by how many diplomas we have received, how much money we have made, how many great things we have done. We will be judged by “I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was naked and you clothed me. I was homeless, and you took me in.”

—St. Teresa of Calcutta

Everything now depends on whether the Christians of the new age are equal to their mission—whether they are able to communicate their hope to the world in which man finds himself alone and helpless before the monstrous forces which have been created by man to serve his own ends but which now have escaped from his control and threaten to destroy him.

—Christopher Dawson

God wants you to be in the world, but so different from the world that you will change it. Get cracking.

—Mother Angelica

FOREWORD

Those familiar with Deal Hudson's erudition, as exemplified in his discussions with guests on Ave Maria Radio's *Church and Culture*, will have little doubt that he is uniquely qualified to select the 365 gems of wisdom which adorn these pages. Thinking with the mind of the Church, Mr. Hudson has mined the riches of faith and reason with which the Church has blessed civilization and with which She has shone forth the splendor of truth across two millennia.

It was G. K. Chesterton who quipped that the Church is the one continual institution to have been thinking about thinking for two thousand years, and it is for this reason, as Chesterton also quipped, that She saves us from the ignominy of ignorance which makes us children of our own time and slaves of the *Zeitgeist*. It is She who enables us to think outside the temporal box so that we can perceive the time.

Mr. Hudson is additionally well-qualified to make this selection because he understands the triune splendor of the true, the good, and the beautiful. He knows that the Church thinks with the mind of the theologian and philosopher but also with the heart of the saint and with the eye of the poet. He also knows that God shows us Himself most powerfully through the art of narrative, through

storytelling and parable, and through that primary story which is history itself. Knowing this, he has filled these pages with the wisdom of the ages as perceived by a diverse range of sages, including theologians, philosophers, saints, mystics, poets, novelists, and historians. Thus, for instance, we find the Little Flower (St. Thérèse of Lisieux) appearing demurely between a contemporary American philosopher (J. Budziszewski) and a contemporary British historian (Paul Johnson), a rose between thorns!

Such unlikely juxtapositions proliferate throughout these pages. St. Louis de Montfort finds himself sandwiched between Frank Sheed and Malcolm Muggeridge; St. Albert the Great is squeezed between Marshall McLuhan and Charles de Foucauld; Russell Kirk is flanked by Fulton Sheen and Joseph Pieper; Chesterton finds Léon Bloy to his left and Flannery O'Connor to his right; Alice Thomas Ellis makes way for Dietrich von Hildebrand who presents us, in turn, with Blaise Pascal; Romano Guardini proceeds from Paul Claudel and precedes Evelyn Waugh; Fr. Benedict Groeschel forms an unlikely trio with Bernard Nathanson and Monsignor Ronald Knox.

As if these quirky triumvirates are not enough to keep us intrigued and intellectually alert, there are some equally surprising couplings. Jim Caviezel rubs shoulders with Montaigne, Graham Greene with St. Anselm, Boethius with Henri de Lubac, Joris-Karl Huysmans with St. Francis de Sales, Georges Bernanos with Thomas Aquinas, and Thomas Merton with Orestes Brownson.

One thing that is evident from this array of Catholics of all stripes is the breadth as well as the depth of Mr. Hudson's selection. It is not merely the profundity of the wisdom that commands our

respect but the omnivorous array of centuries and cultures that are represented. Mr. Hudson is as comfortable with the Fathers of the Church as he is with his twenty-first-century contemporaries, and he is equally at home in the Catholic cultures of France, Spain, Germany, Italy, England, and the United States. This astonishing diversity enables the reader to both deepen and broaden his own understanding of the Catholic heritage with which the Church has blessed him.

Yet another strength of Mr. Hudson's selection is its unpredictability. Alongside those Catholic sages whom we'd expect to see, such as Augustine, Aquinas and Newman, and Dante and Shakespeare, we are also introduced to important and yet tragically neglected figures. We discover forgotten poets, such as Roy Campbell, David Jones, Lionel Johnson, and Elizabeth Jennings, and are reminded of apologists whose influence, great in their own time, has waned with the passage of time—Christopher Derrick, for instance, and Arnold Lunn.

In this selection which provides a plenitude of surprises, there were nonetheless some surprises that are especially welcome, at least to this particular reader. I was surprised and delighted in equal measure to see the inclusion of great but neglected poetic pearls, such as Ernest Dowson's "Extreme Unction", as well as extracts from letters, such as Maurice Baring's letter to G. K. Chesterton upon the latter's reception into the Church, and J. R. R. Tolkien's letter to his son on the beauty and majesty of the Blessed Sacrament, "the one great thing to love on earth."

It is truly an honour and a privilege to raise the curtain on the treasure trove of penetrating wisdom that fills these pages. Having

done so, and with a nod of deferential respect and reverence to Mr. Hudson for this admirable selection, I will let the sages of the ages speak for themselves with those words of wisdom they've learned from Holy Mother Church.

—JOSEPH PEARCE

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Editor John Moorehouse has turned out, once again, to be a delightful editor to work with, honest and flexible. Copyeditor Nick Vari and designer Caroline Green have again produced a beautiful book, as is the norm with TAN titles.

My wife, Theresa, reassured me about the worthiness of the book as I wrote and did her share of editing.

My son Cyprian made some excellent suggestions, and my daughter Hannah encouraged me from afar.

This book could not have been written without the friendship of Allan and Alyssa Carson, David Hanna, and Frank Hanna III.

INTRODUCTION

Let's avoid all the technical definitions of wisdom. Such flights into abstraction can distance the interested reader from what can and should be an enjoyable topic of thought and conversation.

In assembling this book, I have read about poets, mystics, historians, philosophers, theologians, apologists, psychologists, saints, theologians, priests, professors, converts, and a film director and an actor.

Being a convert myself, who read himself into the Church, and a former philosophy professor, I had a sense of where to start looking for words that I thought were worth sharing. I made my choices based upon a single criterion: words that would stand the test of time and deepen the faith of believers.

Some of my selections, such as those from the Church Fathers and Doctors of the Church, have stood the test of time. Others, like the much-loved apologists—Dawson, Belloc, Chesterton, Sheen, and Sheed—are very likely to be read a century from now. A few others, less known or unknown, I have put forward as purveyors of wisdom, but, once again, it is time that will tell.

“Time will tell” . . . just saying that should give us hope: the passing of time, it appears, filters out and rejects the nonsense of passing fads and outright intellectual error. History is on our side

and on the side of wisdom.

In preparing this book, I was reminded of how often wisdom is found in laughter and poetic utterance. There may be no discernible principle being expressed, but the gut, so to speak, gets the message.

I've decided not to include much from the popes and bishops, only because many of them deserve books of their own. The presence of their papal authority might sway the reader to take them more seriously than the rest.

The reader especially will wonder why some highly-regarded figures, such as Benedict XVI and Saint John Paul the Great, are not included. The reasons are simple: first, their writings are available and already widely-read, and second, if I started choosing quotations from their writings, they could fill a book of their own.

Yes, there are familiar names to be found, and with all of them, I had to remind myself to limit my choices, for the richness found in each is astonishing.

This collection gathers the familiar with the unfamiliar, the philosopher with the poet, the historian with the mystic, the sinner with the saint.

Herein you will find that some selections are short and easily digested while others are longer and require a slower pace of reading. I trust the reader to make those adjustments and experience the joy of recognizing a truth when it is told.

—DEAL W. HUDSON,
EASTERTIDE, 2020