

Praying with Images from St. Francis de Sales: November



November 1:

The hares on our mountains become white in winter, since they neither see nor eat anything except snow. (Pliny) I assure you that similarly by repeatedly adoring and feeding in this divine Sacrament, on him who is beauty, goodness and purity, you will become completely beautiful, completely good and completely pure. (**Intro.** 2. 21 – 157)

November 2:

The queen of the bees never goes to the fields without being accompanied by her little subjects. Similarly charity never enters a heart without finding a lodging there for itself as well as for a retinue of other virtues which it exercises and sets to work as a captain does his soldiers. (**Intro.** 3. 1 – 159)

November 3:

Let us willingly leave lofty heights to the exalted. We do not deserve such a high rank in the service of God. We shall be extremely happy to serve him in his kitchen, in his pantry, to be his servants, porters or attendants. Later, if it pleases him, it is for him to take us into his Cabinet and Privy Council. Yes, Philothea, this King of Glory does not reward his servants according to the dignity of their office but according to the love and humility with which they carry them out. (**Intro.** 3.2 – 166-7)

November 4:

If it is expedient for you to complain to someone either to correct an offence or to restore your peace of mind, then let it be to peaceful persons who really love God. Otherwise instead of calming your heart, they will stir it up to greater anxieties; instead of taking away the thorn which pricks you they will drive it deeper into your foot. (**Intro.** 3. 3 – 170)

November 5:

When you meet with difficulties in the exercise of devotion, and these will not be wanting, remember the words of Our Lord: A woman has great anguish when she is in labor but seeing the child that is born she forgets her suffering for joy that a man is born into the world (Jn. 16:21). In fact, you have within yourself the noblest child in the world who is Jesus Christ. Until he is formed and brought forth you cannot but feel great pain. But be of good courage. These sorrows will pass away and eternal joy will remain for bringing forth such a child into the world. Then he will be brought forth entirely for you, when you have formed him completely in your heart and in your works by imitating his life. (**Intro.** 3. 3 – 171)

November 6:

Remember that the bees at the time of making honey live and feed on very bitter food. Similarly we cannot make acts of the greatest gentleness and patience nor compose the honey of excellent virtues except by eating the bread of bitterness and living amidst trials. (**Intro.** 3. 3 – 171)

November 7:

Alas! My sufferings are comforts and my thorns are roses in comparison with those who without help, without assistance and without relief live in continual death weighed down by afflictions infinitely greater than mine. (**Intro.** 3. 3 – 172)

November 8:

We know genuine goodness like we know genuine balm. We test the balm by pouring it in water. If it goes to the bottom and takes the lowest place it is judged to be the finest and most precious. Similarly to know whether a man is truly wise, learned, generous, noble, we ought to see whether his good qualities tend to humility, modesty and submission for then they will be really good. If they float on the surface and wish to show themselves then, the more showy they are, the less genuine will they be. (**Intro.** 3.4 – 173)

November 9:

Alas! The mules do not cease to be clumsy and disgusting beasts even when laden with the precious and perfumed goods of the prince. What good do we have that we have not received? If we have received then why are we proud (1 Cor. 4:7)? On the contrary, a lively consideration of the graces received makes us humble, for recognition of them begets gratitude. (**Intro.** 3. 5 – 176)

November 10:

In this, humility resembles a tree found in the island of Tylus. At night it shuts up and keeps its beautiful, rose-colored flowers closed and opens them up again at sunrise so that the inhabitants of the country say that these flowers sleep at night. (Pliny) Thus humility covers and hides all our virtues and human perfections and never allows them to appear except for the sake of charity. (**Intro.** 3. 5 – 178)

November 11:

I have told you many things which will appear quite hard to you when you consider them. But, believe me, they will be sweeter than sugar and honey when you practice them. (**Intro.** 3. 6 – 183)

November 12:

The leaves of trees are of no great value in themselves. All the same they are of great use not only to beautify the trees but also to protect the fruits when they are still tender. So too, a good name not very desirable as such is very useful. (**Intro.** 3. 7 – 184)

November 13:

Those who want to preserve fruits are not satisfied with covering them with sugar but put them in jars suitable for their preservation. In the same way, although divine love is the principal preservative of our virtues, we can still make use of our good name as very suitable and useful for that purpose. (**Intro.** 3. 7 – 185)

November 14:

In fact, fruits are to be preferred to leaves, that is, interior and spiritual good to all the external. (**Intro.** 3. 7 – 185)

November 15:

Reputation is like a signboard which indicates where virtue resides... For the root of a good name is goodness and integrity. (**Intro.** 3. 7 – 185-6)

November 16:

The holy chrism used in the Church of God for confirmations and consecrations following apostolic tradition is composed of olive oil mixed with balm. Among other things it represents the two favorite and beloved virtues which shone forth in the Sacred Person of our Lord. He has particularly recommended them to us to indicate that through them our hearts are to be specially consecrated to his service and dedicated to his imitation: Learn of me, he says, for I am gentle and humble of heart (Mt. 11:29). Humility makes us perfect towards God and gentleness towards our neighbor. The balm, which as I mentioned earlier always sinks to the bottom more than all other liquids, symbolizes humility. Olive oil, which always floats on the surface, symbolizes gentleness and kindness which being the flower of charity rises above all things and is outstanding among virtues. According to St. Bernard charity reaches its perfection when it is not only patient but also gentle and meek. (**Intro.** 3. 8 – 188)

November 17:

We ought, indeed, to resist the evil and restrain the vices of those in our charge constantly and courageously but gently and peacefully. Nothing calms down an angry elephant as quickly as the sight of a little lamb and nothing breaks the force of cannon balls so easily as wool. **(Intro, 3.8 – 189)**

November 18:

The princes bring incomparable honor and comfort to people when they visit them with a peaceful retinue. But when they come with armies, though for the welfare of the people, their visits are always disagreeable and harmful. Even though they enforce the exact observance of military discipline on the soldiers, they cannot, however, do it so effectively that no disorder occurs in which a good civilian is oppressed. In the same way, when reason governs and peacefully administers punishments, corrections and admonitions, everyone loves and approves it even though it is done strictly and exactly. But when reason brings with it anger, fury and wrath which, according St. Augustine, are its soldiers, it renders itself more terrifying than lovable; **(Intro, 3.8 – 190)**

November 19:

It is better to deny entry to just and reasonable anger rather than welcome it, however small it may be. Because once it is let in, it is difficult to drive it out; in so far as it enters as a little shoot and in no time grows and becomes a tree. **(Intro, 3.8 – 190)**

November 20:

It is better to learn to live without anger than to try to make a wise and moderate use of anger. When we find ourselves surprised by it due to our imperfection or weakness, it is better to repel it promptly than to bargain with it. Even in the little delay offered to it, it makes itself mistress of the place, like the serpent which draws easily the whole of its body where it can put in its head **(Intro, 3.8 – 190)**

November 21:

Recall to mind that the Spouse of the Song of Songs has honey not only on her lips and at the tip of the tongue but has it also under the tongue, that is to say in her breast; not only honey is there but also milk (4:11). For we should have not only kind words for our neighbor but also the whole heart, that is, the whole interior of our soul. We should not only have the sweetness of honey which is aromatic and fragrant, in other words, the sweetness of polite conversation with strangers but also the sweetness of milk among the members of our family and close neighbors. **(Intro, 3.8 – 192)**

November 22:

Believe me, Philothea, the correction made by a father gently and with love has much more power to correct the child than one made with anger and fury. So too when our heart has committed some fault we must correct it with gentle, calm remonstrances, with more compassion for it than anger against it, encouraging it to amendment. (**Intro.** 3. 9 – 193)

November 23:

Drones make much more noise and are more in a hurry than the bees but they make only wax and no honey. Thus those who rush around with tormenting anxiety and noisy solicitude do neither much nor well. (**Intro.** 3. 10 – 196)

November 24:

Flies do not trouble us by their strength but by their number. Accept your affairs in peace as they come and strive to do them in order, one after another. (**Intro.** 3. 10 – 196)

November 25:

Do as little children who with one hand hold fast to the hand of their father and with the other gather strawberries or blackberries along the hedges. In the same manner, while gathering and managing the goods of this world with one hand, hold fast with the other to the hand of your heavenly Father, turning to him from time to time to see if your actions or occupations are pleasing to him. Take care, above all, that you do not leave his hand and protection thinking of collecting and gathering more. For if he abandons you, you would not take even a single step without falling flat on your face to the ground. (**Intro.** 3. 10 – 196)

November 26:

When matters of great importance are at hand, that require all your attention to do them well, you look at God from time to time, as sailors do, who in order to reach the land they desire look more at the sky above than on the ocean below where they sail. (**Intro.** 3. 10 – 197)

November 27:

Charity alone establishes us in perfection. But obedience, chastity and poverty are the three great means of acquiring perfection. Obedience consecrates our will, chastity our body and poverty our material possessions, all to the love and service of God. These are the three branches of the spiritual cross, all the three, however, based on a fourth which is humility. (**Intro.** 3. 11 – 197)

November 28:

Chastity is the lily of virtues. It renders men almost equal to the Angels. Nothing is beautiful except by purity and the purity of men is chastity. We term chastity as honesty and the profession of it honor. (**Intro.** 3. 12 – 200)

November 29:

The little moth seeing the flame, curiously flutters around it to find out if it is as sweet as it seems to be beautiful; urged by this fantasy, it does not stop till it is lost in the first attempt. In the same way, young persons often allow themselves to be obsessed by such false and foolish imaginations that they have of the pleasures of voluptuous flames; after many curious thoughts they finally plunge into ruin and perish in it. In this, they are more foolish than moths which have some cause for thinking that the fire is delicious since it is beautiful. (**Intro.** 3. 12 – 202)

November 30:

The human bodies are like glasses which cannot be carried together, one touching the other, without running the risk of breaking them. (**Intro.** 3. 13 – 204)

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Note: St. Francis de Sales addressed the **Introduction** to “**Philothea**,” a name meaning “one who loves God.”

Reference:

Intro – St. Francis de Sales, INTRODUCTION TO THE DEVOUT LIFE (Complete and Unabridged – Second Revised Edition). Translated and Edited by Antony Mookenthottam, MSFS, Armind Nazareth, MSFS, Antony Kolencherry, MSFS. Bangalore: S.F.S. Publications, 1995