



*St. Francis de Sales*

**INTRODUCTION**  
**to a**  
**DEVOUT LIFE**

**BY**  
**SAINT FRANCIS**  
**DE SALES**

Adapted by  
Sister Halcon J. Fisk



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# CONTENTS

Maxims of St. Francis de Sales.....	11
A Dedicatory Prayer of the Author .....	12
Foreword .....	13

## PART 1

*Instructions and exercises for conducting a soul  
from its first desire until it is brought to  
a full resolution to embrace a devout life.*

Chapter 1 True Devotion.....	15
Chapter 2 The Propriety and Excellence of Devotion.....	18
Chapter 3 Devotion Is Compatible with Every Station of Life .....	20
Chapter 4 Of the Necessity of a Guide To Con- duct Us in the Way of Devotion.....	21
Chapter 5 The Necessity of Purifying the Soul ...	22
Chapter 6 The Purgation Which Is That of Affection to Mortal Sin .....	24
Chapter 7 The Second Purgation Which Is That of Affection to Venial Sin.....	26
Chapter 8 The Means for Making the Second Purgation.....	28
Chapter 9 First Meditation—On Our Creation ..	30
Second Meditation—On the End for Which We Were Created .....	32
Third Meditation—On the Benefits of God .....	34
Fourth Meditation—On Sin .....	36

	Fifth Meditation—On Death .....	39
	Sixth Meditation—On Judgment .....	41
	Seventh Meditation—On Hell .....	44
	Eighth Meditation—On Heaven .....	46
	Ninth Meditation—By Way of Election and Choice of Heaven .....	48
	Tenth Meditation—By Way of Election and Choice, the Soul Chooses a Devout Life.....	50
Chapter 10	How To Make a General Confession .....	52
Chapter 11	An Authentic Protestation .....	53
Chapter 12	That We Must Purify Ourselves from Affection to Venial Sins .....	54
Chapter 13	That We Must Purify Ourselves from Our Evil Inclinations.....	55

## PART 2

*Various instructions for elevating the soul to God  
by prayer and the sacraments.*

Chapter 1	Of the Necessity of Prayer.....	57
Chapter 2	A Short Method of Meditation on the Presence of God.....	60
Chapter 3	Profitable Advice on the Subject of Meditation.....	64
Chapter 4	The Dryness Sometimes Experienced in Meditation .....	66
Chapter 5	The Morning Exercise.....	67

Chapter 6	The Evening Exercise and Examination of Conscience .....	69
Chapter 7	Spiritual Recollection.....	70
Chapter 8	Aspirations, Ejaculatory Prayers and Good Thoughts .....	71
Chapter 9	How To Attend the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass .....	73
Chapter 10	On Receiving Inspirations.....	75
Chapter 11	Holy Confession .....	77
Chapter 12	Frequent Communion .....	79

### PART 3

*Instructions concerning the practice of virtues.*

Chapter 1	The Choice We Ought To Make in the Exercise of Virtues.....	81
Chapter 2	Patience.....	85
Chapter 3	Exterior Humility .....	89
Chapter 4	Internal Humility.....	91
Chapter 5	Humility Makes Us Love Our Own Abjection .....	95
Chapter 6	How We Are To Preserve Our Good Name in the Practice of Humility ....	98
Chapter 7	Meekness Toward Our Neighbor and Remedies for Anger .....	100
Chapter 8	Meekness Toward Ourselves.....	101
Chapter 9	We Must Treat Our Affairs with Diligence but Without Anxiety .....	102

## FOREWORD

**B**ISHOP Francis de Sales was a true shepherd of his sheep and an excellent spiritual director of souls. In his prayer he searched for a way to reach out to all of his people and wrote the *Introduction to a Devout Life*, revising it as many as seven times. This abridged and adapted edition uses current English and treats all of the most relevant subjects in St. Francis' comprehensive work in order to be accessible to a contemporary audience.

St. Francis de Sales known as the apostle of love, reached out to everyone through this small book, showing that devotion is available to everyone in every walk of life and occupation.

Guided in simplicity and humility, one can become open to God's love in small ways of everyday life. Little darts or rays of spiritual enlightenment are compared to a *nosegay*, a tiny bouquet consisting of one bud and leaf pinned to a garment, so our soul is directed to take the whispers of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us to guide us into a devout way of life.

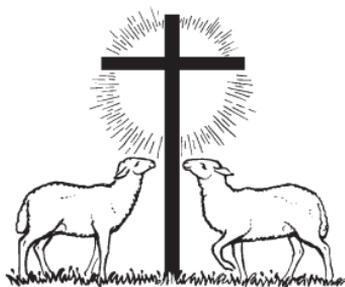
*Philothea* is the imaginary perfect woman of St. Francis, and one who always makes the right decision. Knowing we are human, St. Francis supplies us with remedies for various

occasions. He explains the difference between true and false devotion, mortal sin, ordinary sins, faults, and weaknesses. Contrition is telling God you are sorry for offending Him. This is easily done if you tell God at the moment of the offense instead of forgetting it in the rush of the day.

We grow strong in loving God by resisting any form of hate, through growth in humility and courage to face our own faults and weaknesses.

May you find inspiration in this little book, and may the Lord grant you peace of mind and heart.

*Sister Halcon J. Fisk*



## PART 1

*Instructions and exercises for conducting a soul from its first desire until it is brought to a full resolution to embrace a devout life.*

### CHAPTER 1 — True Devotion

**T**HERE is but one true devotion and many which are false and deceitful. If you cannot distinguish that which is true, you may easily fall victim to the false one, even amuse yourself by following some fantastic and superstitious devotion.

Everyone paints devotion according to his own passion and fancy. If you are addicted to fasting and think yourself very devout, yet your heart is full of anger, jealousy or resentment, where is your charity? If you recite a multiplicity of prayers, then tear your neighbor apart with words sharp as a two-edged sword, does this not counteract your charity? That is a false devotion.

Many persons by covering themselves with certain external actions belonging to devotion make the world believe that they are truly devout. In reality, they are nothing but statues and phantoms of devotion.

True devotion, Philothea, presupposes, not a partial but a thorough love of God. Divine love adorns the soul, it is called grace, making

CHAPTER 9 — First Meditation  
On Our Creation

*Preparation*

**P**LACE yourself in the presence of God.  
2. Beseech Him to inspire you.

*Considerations*

1. Consider that so many years ago you were not yet in the world and that your being was a nothing. Where were we, my soul, at that time? The world had already existed a long time, and we were not yet known.

2. God has drawn you out of this nothingness to make you what you now are, out of His goodness and with no need of you.

3. Consider the being that God has given to you. It is the greatest in this visible world, capable of eternal life and of being perfectly united to His Divine Majesty.

*Affections and resolutions*

1. Humble yourself profoundly before God, saying from your heart with the Psalmist, “O Lord, my whole being is as nothing before You, and You love me.”

2. Return thanks to God. My Great and Good Creator, how much I thank You since You have drawn me out of nothing, and by Your mercy make me what I am. What can I do to bless Your Name and give You thanks for your inestimable goodness?

Sixth Meditation  
On Judgment

*Preparation*

**P**LACE yourself before God.  
2. Beseech Him to inspire you.

*Considerations*

1. After the time God has prescribed for the duration of this world, a fire will reduce the earth to ashes. Nothing that exists will escape its fury.

2. After this deluge of flames, all men will rise from their graves, and at the voice of the Angel they will appear in the valley of Josaphat. Some will rise with a glorious and resplendent body, others in bodies most hideous.

3. Consider the majesty with which the Sovereign Judge will appear, surrounded by the Angels and Saints. Before Him will be borne His cross, shining more brilliantly than the sun; a standard of mercy to the good and of punishment to the wicked.

4. The Sovereign Judge will separate the good from the bad, placing the one at His right hand and the other at His left.

5. This separation being made, all men will see the malice of the wicked and the penitence of the good and the effect of grace which they



## PART 2

*Various instructions for elevating the soul to God by prayer and the sacraments.*

### CHAPTER 1 — Of the Necessity of Prayer

**P**RAYER places our understanding in the brightness and light of God and exposes our will to the heat of heavenly love. Nothing so effectively purges our understanding from its ignorance and our will from its affections.

Above all, I recommend to you mental prayer, or the prayer of the heart. That which has for its object the life and passion of our Lord. By making Him the frequent subject of your meditation, your whole soul will be replenished with Him; you will imbibe His spirit in all your actions. He is the light of the world. It is in Him, by Him, and for Him that we ought to be enlightened. We, by keeping close to our Savior by meditation and observing His words and actions, shall by the help of His grace, find access to God the Father, but only through this gate.

We could never contemplate the divinity in this world had we not been united to the sacred humanity of our Savior, whose life and death is the most delightful, sweet, and profitable object we can select for our ordinary meditation.