

Praying with Images from St. Francis de Sales: October



October 1:

A man, who has recently recovered from some illness, walks only as much as he needs to, but slowly and with difficulty. So also, a sinner healed of his sinfulness moves ahead to the extent that God commands him, and that too slowly and with difficulty until he acquires devotion. After that, like a man in good health he not only walks but runs joyfully in the way of God's commandments (Ps. 118:32). Even more, he moves ahead and runs in the paths of God's counsels and inspirations. (**Intro.** 1. 1 – 59)

October 2:

Sugar sweetens fruits that are not quite ripe and puts right anything unpleasant or harmful in those that are fully ripe. Indeed, devotion is the true spiritual sugar, removing unpleasantness from mortifications, and what may be hurtful from consolations. (**Intro.** 1. 2 – 61)

October 3:

God commanded the plants, at the creation, to bear fruit each according to its kind (Genesis. 1:11). Similarly, he commands Christians, the living plants of his Church, to produce the fruits of devotion, according to each one's ability and occupation. (**Intro.** 1. 3 – 62)

October 4:

"The bee," says Aristotle, "sucks honey from flowers without damaging them," leaving them as whole and fresh as it found them. But true devotion does even better. Not only does it not spoil any sort of life-situation or occupation, but on the contrary enriches it and makes it attractive. (**Intro.** 1. 3 – 63)

October 5:

A faithful friend is the medicine of life and of immortality: those who fear the Lord will find one. These divine words, you will note, refer principally to immortality, for which it is necessary to have, more than anything else, this faithful friend to guide our actions by his advice and counsel and so keep us safe from the snares and deceits of the evil one. He will be like a treasure of wisdom to us in our difficulties, sorrows and failures. He will serve as a medicine to soothe and comfort our hearts in our spiritual illnesses. He will protect us from evil and help to improve our good. When spiritually ill, he will prevent it leading to death since he will help us to recover. (**Intro.** 1. 4 – 65)

October 6:

The flowers, says the sacred Spouse (Song 2:12), have begun to blossom in our land, pruning time has come. What are the flowers of our heart, Philothea? Our good desires, certainly. As soon as they appear, we should get hold of a pruning knife to cut off from our conscience every deed that is useless and irrelevant. **(Intro. 1. 5 – 67)**

October 7:

As the saying goes, the cure which takes place slowly is always more sure. The illnesses of the heart, like those of the body, come on horseback very fast, but they go away on foot, slowly. **(Intro. 1. 5 – 68)**

October 8:

In this spiritual struggle, we have to be wounded sometimes in order that we may practice humility, but we shall never suffer defeat unless we lose either life or courage. As imperfections and venial sins cannot take away our spiritual life, which is lost only by mortal sin, the only thing that matters is that they should not make us lose courage. Save me, Lord, David said, from cowardice and discouragement (Ps. 55:5). We have a happy condition in this warfare that we shall always be victorious as long as we want to fight. **(Intro. 1. 5 – 69)**

October 9:

At the end of your prayer, walk about for a while and gather a little bouquet of devotion, from your considerations, and inhale its fragrance all through the day. **(Intro. 1. 9 – 76)**

October 10:

Imagine a beautiful, very calm night and feel the delight of seeing the sky with its countless, different stars. Now add its beauty to that of a lovely day, but without the brightness of the sun preventing a clear view of the stars and the moon. Then say boldly that all this beauty put together is nothing in comparison to the excellence of Heaven. **(Intro. 1. 16 – 89)**

October 11:

The scorpion that stings us is poisonous when it does so. But made into an oil it becomes a powerful remedy against its own sting. Sin is shameful only at the time we commit it. Changed into confession and repentance, it is honorable and brings salvation. **(Intro. 1. 19 – 96)**

October 12:

Now at last, returning to myself, prostrate in heart and in spirit before the throne of divine justice, I acknowledge, admit and confess myself to be rightly accused and convicted of the crime of treason against his divine Majesty, and guilty of the Death and Passion of Jesus Christ, because of the sins I have committed, for which he died having suffered the torment of the cross, so that as a result I deserve to be lost and condemned forever. **(Intro. 1. 20 – 99)**

October 13:

After you have made the firm resolution, be attentive and open the ears of your heart. Hear in spirit the words of your absolution which your Savior himself, seated on the throne of his mercy, will proclaim in Heaven before all the Angels and Saints, at the same time as the priest absolves you, in his name, here on earth. **(Intro. 1. 21 – 100)**

October 14:

As the morning grows brighter, we see more clearly in the mirror the stains and dirt on our face. In the same way, the more the interior light of the Holy Spirit shines upon our consciences more distinctly and clearly we see the sins, inclinations and imperfections which can prevent us from acquiring true devotion. **(Intro. 1. 22 – 102)**

October 15:

Prayer is opening our understanding to God's brightness and light, and exposing our will to the warmth of his love. (64) Nothing else purifies so well our understanding of its ignorance and our will of its sinful attachments. It is a spring of blessings and its waters quench the thirst of the passions of our heart, wash away our imperfections, and make the plants of our good desires grow green and bear flowers. **(Intro. 2. 1 – 107)**

October 16:

Children learn to speak by constantly listening to their mothers and chattering to them. So we, remaining close to the Savior in meditation and observing his words, his actions, and his loving desires, shall learn with the help of his grace to speak, act and will like him. **(Intro. 2.1 – 107)**

October 17:

Just as the birds always find the air wherever they fly, so wherever we go or wherever we are, we find God present. **(Intro. 2. 2 – 111)**

October 18:

Blind persons do not see a prince who is among them. If they are told of his presence, they behave with respect. But, in fact, since they do not see him, they easily forget his presence. Having forgotten it, they more easily lose respect and reverence. Alas, Philothea, we do not see God who is present with us. Though faith reminds us of his presence, since we do not see him with our eyes, we very often forget and behave as though God was very far from us. In spite of knowing well that he is present everywhere, we are not attentive to it at all. Hence it is just as if we did not know it. **(Intro. 2, 1 – 112)**

October 19:

As long as you find sufficient attraction, light and fruit in one of these reflections, stop there without moving on to another. Be like the bees who do not leave a flower as long as they find honey to gather there. **(Intro. 2. 5 – 116)**

October 20:

After taking a walk in a beautiful garden, people hesitate to leave without taking four or five flowers in order to enjoy their fragrance the rest of the day. Similarly, having considered some mystery in meditation, we should pick one or two or three ideas in which we took special delight and which are more helpful to our improvement. We should remind ourselves of them during the day, breathing in their spiritual fragrance. This nosegay of spiritual thoughts is to be gathered while we are still in the place where we made our meditation, or as we walk about alone for some time soon after. **(Intro. 2. 7 – 118)**

October 21:

On finishing this earnest prayer, take care not to give your heart a sudden jerk which will spill the balm you have received by means of the prayer. I mean, you must keep silence for some time if you can, and move your heart very gently from prayer to your occupations. Keep the feelings and good movements of the will produced in you for as long as possible. **(Intro. 2. 8 – 120)**

October 22:

Before the midday meal you are to have a spiritual lunch by means of meditation. Similarly, before your evening meal you are to have a small spiritual supper, or at least a devout light meal. So, set aside some time, a little before supper. **(Intro. 2. 11 – 126)**

October 23:

Birds have nests in the trees where they can seek refuge when they find it necessary. Deer have their bushes and their thickets where they hide, seek shelter and find the coolness of the shade in summer. Similarly, Philothea, our hearts must find and choose some place each day, either on Mount Calvary, or in the wounds of our Lord, or in some other place near him. There we must seek refuge at every opportunity. **(Intro. 2. 12 – 127-8)**

October 24:

The father and mother of St. Catherine of Siena denied her every convenience of place and of time for prayer and meditation. At that time, our Lord inspired her to make in her spirit a little interior prayer room. Retiring into it spiritually, she could, in the midst of her exterior occupations, immerse herself in this holy solitude of heart. Since then, when the world attacked her, she was not disturbed by it in the least. She said this was because she shut herself in this interior room and there found comfort with her heavenly Spouse. Hence, she advised her spiritual children to make a room in the heart and to dwell there. (**Intro.** 2. 12 – 128)

October 25:

Therefore, long for God again and again, Philothea, by short and ardent soarings of the heart: hold out your hand to him like a little child to its father that he may guide you, put him on your breast as a delightful nosegay, plant him in your spirit like a banner. Make a thousand different movements of your heart, to rekindle in yourself love for God, and to rouse yourself to an ardent and tender affection for this divine Spouse. (**Intro.** 2. 13 – 130)

October 26:

They carve her name on the bark of every tree they find. Similarly, those who love God cannot stop thinking of him, seeking him, longing for him and speaking of him. They would engrave, if it were possible, the holy and sacred name of Jesus on the breast of every person in the world. (**Intro.** 2. 13 – 131)

October 27:

The young nightingales learn to sing while with the older ones. In our holy sharing with the Saints, we shall learn better to pray as well as to sing the praise of God. "I will sing praise", David said, "in the sight of the Angels". (Ps. 137:1). (**Intro.** 2. 16 – 140)

October 28:

Be determined, Philothea, to accept whole-heartedly all the inspirations that God may be pleased to send you. When they come, welcome them as ambassadors of the heavenly King who wants to enter into a marriage alliance with you. (**Intro.** 2. 18 – 145-6)

October 29:

Fruit that is very delicate and decays easily, like cherries, apricots and strawberries, remains good for a whole year without difficulty, if preserved in sugar or in honey. So, it is not unusual that our hearts, though frail and feeble, are kept safe from the corruption of sin when preserved in the sugar and honey of the incorruptible flesh and blood of the Son of God. (**Intro.** 2. 20 – 151)

October 30:

Philothea, the bee gathers from the flowers the dew of heaven as well as the most delicious juice of the earth and changing them into honey carries it to the hive. In the same way, the priest takes from the altar the Savior of the world, true Son of God, who like dew has come down from Heaven, and true Son of the Virgin Mary, who like a flower has sprung from the earth of our humanity, and places him as a delightful food in your mouth and in your body. (Intro. 2. 21 – 156)

October 31:

You see that death is mocking you and is calling you to its dance in which the sobs of your relations will serve as violins. There you will make a single movement from life to death. This dance is the real pass-time of the mortals since they pass by it in a moment from time to eternity either of happiness or of pain. (Intro. 3. 33 – 266)

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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