

# SPENDING A MONTH



Published by  
*De Sales*  
SPIRITUALITY CENTER

1120 Blue Ball Road  
Childs, MD 21916-0043  
410-398-3040, ext. 237  
[mmurray@osfs.org](mailto:mmurray@osfs.org)

[www.oblates.org/spirituality](http://www.oblates.org/spirituality)

WITH

**St. Jane de Chantal**



## References

**Selected Letters of St. Jane Francis de Chantal** (trans. by the Sisters of the Visitation, Harrow). London: R T Washbourne, Ltd., 1918

**St. Chantal on Prayer** (trans. A. Durand). Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1968

**St. Jane Frances Fremyot de Chantal: Her Exhortations, Conferences and Instructions.** Westminster, MD: The Newman Bookshop, 1947.

Perrotta, L. **Live Jesus! Wisdom from Saints Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal.** Ijamsville, MD: The Word Among US Press, 2000.

## **An introduction**

St. Jane de Chantal (1572-1641) was a holy woman: wife, mother, widow, co-founder and leader of the Sisters of the Visitation of Holy Mary. She lived in the early seventeenth century in France and was the spiritual friend of St. Francis de Sales.

The happiness of her married life was shattered by a hunting accident which took the life of her young husband. As a widow, she met St. Francis de Sales who became her spiritual director. He encouraged her to grow in her spiritual life as a widow and mother.

In 1610, they founded the Sisters of the Visitation in Annecy (Savoy, now France). During the next 30 years, she laid the foundation for a great number of monasteries.

Her letters, exhortations and conferences give us great insight into living the spiritual life. She was sought out by many lay people, religious and clergy for advice and counsel.

St. Jane has enriched the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales with her own personality as mother and superior. Her firm but gentle manner toward those she lived with and advised is evident in her letters and exhortations.

Spending a month with the thoughts of St. Jane will offer insights into the daily effort needed to live a holy life. May you learn to let Jesus live in you, as Jane did. May you find in her words wisdom and grace for your day.

## Day 1: Trusting in a God who loves me

Having an image of a God who loves me is the foundation for growing in a deeper relationship with God, for becoming holy in my daily living. God greatly desires to love me just as I am because I am His child.

St. Jane offers me thoughts to pray over.

*Ah! to know that our good God is everywhere, and that He is always ready to be to us Father, Mother, sweet and gentle Spouse, should indeed make us happy.*

- Selected Letters of St. Jane Francis de Chantal

*Grace never fails us, never leaves us, unless we leave it. Our good God waits for us patiently in our delays; he unceasingly calls us even though we don't answer him; he knocks at the very door of the heart that is shut to him.*

- Live Jesus! Wisdom from Saints Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal

### Prayer thought for my day:

My God loves me just as I am!

## Day 30: How to live my day

I have listened to St. Jane each day and I have tried to live as she suggested. I know the struggle that will mean, but I have great confidence in the grace of God.

Let me listen to St. Jane one last time:

*Since God, in His eternal goodness, has moved you to consecrate all your love, your actions, your works, and your whole self to Him utterly without any self-interest but only for His greater glory and His satisfaction, remain firm in this resolve. With the confidence of a son, rest in the care and love which divine providence has for you in all your needs. Look upon providence as a child does its mother who loves him tenderly. You can be sure that God loves you incomparably more. We can't imagine how great is the love which God, in His goodness, has for souls who thus abandon themselves to His mercy, and who have no other wish than to do what they think pleases Him, leaving everything that concerns them to His care in time and in eternity.*

- Live Jesus! Wisdom from Saints Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal

### Prayer thought for my day:

Lord, do as You wish with me today.

## Day 29: What does “seeking God alone” mean?

I find that I am drawn to seek God alone, but I have so many things to do in my life. I become anxious when I think of seeking God alone.

Let me listen to St. Jane:

*If you seek only God, you will be indifferent about your employments, your charges, your abode and all that concerns you, inasmuch as you will find the good and great God of your heart, since He is never better found than in obedience.*

- St. Jane Frances Fremyot de Chantal: Her Exhortations, Conferences and Instructions

### Prayer thought for my day:

God of my heart let me find You each day.

## Day 2: Trusting in my God who cares for me

If my God loves me, then my God cares for me in a very personal way as I go about my daily living. God is always present to me with all the help I need to handle whatever comes my way. Can I learn to see God present in my daily duties?

St. Jane offers me a consideration:

*Tell me, if you were mothers of families, would you send your servant and your children to work in the fields or prune the vines without providing them with the tools necessary for doing what you wanted them to do? . . . Are we to think that God asks us to do something and does not at the same time give us the assistance necessary for carrying out His commands? It would be a great mistake to have such mistrust. No, God is never wanting to us.*

- St. Jane Frances Fremyot de Chantal: Her Exhortations, Conferences and Instructions

### Prayer thought for my day:

My God, You are caring for me today.

### Day 3: What is God asking of me?

When I understand God's loving care for me, am I responding by loving God in return? Like Jesus, loving my God will mean seeking to do God's will in my life. Loving attention to the duties of my state in life is a major part of doing God's will for me.

St. Jane offers me a thought for reflection and prayer:

*I'll tell you what Our Lord wants of you and of us all, a humble and tranquil submission to His most holy will in whatsoever happens, for everything is, without question, ordained by divine Providence for His glory, and for our gain; henceforth to be indifferent to health or sickness, consolation or desolation, the enjoyment or privation of what we most cherish, should be our aim. May our hearts have but one desire, that His holy will be accomplished in us and in regard to us. Let us not philosophize on things that happen to ourselves or to others, but as I have already said, remaining sweetly humble, and tranquil in the condition in which God has placed us.*

- Selected Letters of St. Jane Francis de Chantal

#### Prayer thought for my day:

Help me to see Your hand in all that happens today.

### Day 28: The simple life

I hear simplicity talked about so often when the spiritual life is mentioned. What is simplicity?

Let St. Jane offer me a thought:

*Perfect simplicity consists in having but one single and sole pretension in all our actions, and that is of pleasing God in all things.*

*To live from day to day without forethought or care for ourselves, but do well at each moment what is ordered of us, according to our vocation, trusting and committing ourselves to Divine Providence.*

- St. Jane Frances Fremyot de Chantal: Her Exhortations, Conferences and Instructions

#### Prayer thought for my day:

Let me simply do what You ask today.

## Day 27: My neighbor

*I find myself watching others and making judgments about them. That can't be if I want to love them as they really are.*

St. Jane offers some advice:

*Those who are on the watch to consider and observe others will never be humble, nor occupied with God, nor will they come to much good in the ways of the Spirit. Such occupation means distraction and a continual lack of inward silence.*

- St. Jane Frances Fremyot de Chantal: Her Exhortations, Conferences and Instructions

*It is no little displeasure and no little offence that we do to God when we conceal and lessen the good in our neighbor, of whom He said that he who touches him touches the Divine Majesty. . . . Our neighbor is something very delicate; we can hardly touch him without offending God.*

- St. Jane Frances Fremyot de Chantal: Her Exhortations, Conferences and Instructions

### Prayer thought for my day:

Help me to see and experience You in my neighbor.

## Day 4: What am I seeking in this life?

Everyone has wants and desires in this life. I find that my various wants and desires often compete for my attention. Often I find that my desire for God becomes one of many desires in my heart.

St. Jane offers me some advice:

*The mark of our fidelity is when we are entirely abandoned to God, when we wish for God only, when we are satisfied with Him. . . . But we want and seek so many things along with God that this hinders us from finding Him. We want to be loved and highly regarded and we think that everything we do should be approved of... This only serves to makes us restless and troubled. If we sought God only, we would always be content and would find all things in Him.*

- St. Jane Frances Fremyot de Chantal: Her Exhortations, Conferences and Instructions

### Prayer thought for my day:

Today, may I desire only You, my God!

## Day 5: How can I remain grounded in God?

I desire to remain grounded in God each day. But I find that I get distracted. Is there a way that can help me when I find myself distracted?

St. Jane offers me some encouragement:

*Carry, hold, and carefully keep your soul in your hands, that you may always watch it and keep an eye on its movements. Check often in case some tendency wound it, some hatred spoil it, some unruly passion disturb its steadiness, in case some impure or harmful desire already have robbed you of it. Then, very gently repair the disorder, returning your soul once again to its place, which is God, its true center.*

- St. Jane Frances Fremyot de Chantal: Her Exhortations, Conferences and Instructions

### Prayer thought for my day:

Help me to return myself to You gently today.

## Day 26: Loving my neighbor isn't easy

I know that "my neighbor" means everyone I meet. There are some people who are very hard to love.

Let me listen to St. Jane:

*By the grace of God, we don't hate our sisters passionately or wish them any evil. But this isn't enough: we must love one another from the heart. . . . We must respect our sisters and want all sorts of good and prosperity for them. We must desire their perfection and progress in the love of God as much as we desire our own. . . . Before God, let's examine ourselves to see if we desire the good of all our sisters equally, one as much as the other.*

- St. Jane Frances Fremyot de Chantal: Her Exhortations, Conferences and Instructions

### Prayer thought for my day:

Help me to desire good for all I encounter today.

## Day 25: Meekness / Gentleness

The world I know sees meekness and gentleness as signs of weakness. I know Jesus tells us to learn from Him for He is humble and gentle of heart. How can I reconcile these views?

Let me listen to St. Jane:

*Meekness of heart . . . means having a heart which is angered by nothing, and offended by nothing that is done to it, which bears with everything, which endures everything, which is compassionate and full of love for our neighbor, which has no bitterness of heart. No, I am not speaking of the heart of flesh, but of the heart of the will and higher part of our soul.*

- St. Jane Frances Fremyot de Chantal: Her Exhortations, Conferences and Instructions

*Zeal combined with gentleness is of great force in animating hearts.*

- Selected Letters of St. Jane Francis de Chantal

### Prayer thought for my day:

Help me to be gentle in loving my neighbor.

## Day 6: I don't always feel God's presence

I do believe that God is always present, but I don't always feel God's presence, especially in prayer. Sometimes I feel very alone and far from God.

I will listen to St. Jane:

*God has shown me that He does not make much account of faith that comes with sentiment and emotions. This is why, though against my inclination, I never wish for sensible devotion. I do not desire it. God is enough for me. Notwithstanding my absolute misery I hope in Him, and I trust He will continue to support me so that His will may be accomplished in me. Take my feeble heart into your hands, my true Father and Lord, and do what you see to be wisest with it.*

- Selected Letters of St. Jane Francis de Chantal

### Prayer thought for my day:

I put my heart into Your hands.

## Day 7: Is my best enough?

Sometimes I think that God wants more from me than I seem able to do. Look at the great saints who did so much in their lives. I try to do my best each day. Is that enough?

I will listen to St. Jane:

*When I see myself with all my wretchedness in the pierced side of my Redeemer, I hope for heaven, for I behold myself therein a miserable beggar at the door of a great nobleman, and I wait for Him to show His Divine mercy towards me. . . . I will do, then, with Divine grace the best that I can and then I will trust not in myself or in my works, but in my God and in His mercy, and in the desire He has to give me His glory.*

- St. Jane Frances Fremyot de Chantal: Her Exhortations, Conferences and Instructions

### Prayer thought for my day:

My God, I will do my best and trust in Your mercy.

## Day 24: Humility

I'm not sure I understand how to be humble. I don't enjoy humiliations. Do I need to do that in order to be humble?

Let me listen to St. Jane:

*It is only the humble who glorify and honor God aright because, acknowledging that of themselves they are nothing and can do no good thing, they render to God the honor and glory of all the good they do, knowing and confessing that He is the fount and origin of all graces and virtues. God is pleased to do great things by humble soul.*

- St. Jane Frances Fremyot de Chantal: Her Exhortations, Conferences and Instructions

### Prayer thought for my day:

May I glorify You by any good I may do today.

## Day 23: Living a virtuous life

I try to live a good life each day. I think about what I do and try to do my best to please God.

Let me listen to St. Jane:

*To firmly establish our virtue, receive all things as coming from the hand of God, Who sends us all for our own good and to make us merit.*

- St. Jane Frances Fremyot de Chantal: Her Exhortations, Conferences and Instructions

*Virtuous feelings do not lie within our power, but virtuous conduct does indeed lie within our power, and this it is that God requires of you at the moment, while He holds you on the cross.*

- St. Chantal on Prayer

### Prayer thought for my day:

All things today come from Your loving hand.

## Day 8: Sometimes I get discouraged

There are many times that I get discouraged in my spiritual life. I look around and others seem so much more advanced than I am. How can I keep moving on my journey with the Lord?

St. Jane offers some practical advice:

*It is true . . . that in this life we must always be beginning anew, but if it were not so where should we be? For this is essential to our humility and to confidence, the two virtues our good God asks of us. Be brave, train yourself to courage and to exactitude in the observance. Keep a light heart, and above all things put sadness far from you. God is wholly ours, and we, my daughter, have no other wish than to be wholly His. How then can we be solicitous about anything whatsoever?*

- Selected Letters of St. Jane Francis de Chantal

### Prayer thought for my day:

My God, grace me with a lighter heart and the courage to begin anew each day.

## Day 9: Faith and Remembrance

Enlivening my faith in God's presence more often each day can keep me on track and give meaning to what I do. Accepting my distractability as a human being and working with it with faith and trust in God is a holy endeavor.

St. Jane offers words of encouragement:

*We do not see our Lord, but we are taught by faith that He is present in all things, by presence, by essence and by power, moreover that He dwells in our hearts in a particular way by assistance and by grace. But alas! My God! We are blind, and because we see Thee not, we easily lose the remembrance of Thy Divine presence! What remedy for that, my dear daughters, except often to quicken our faith that God is everywhere present and that nothing happens in the world but by the ordering of His divine Providence, which governs the whole world according to His good pleasure.*

- St. Jane Frances Fremyot de Chantal: Her Exhortations, Conferences and Instructions

**Prayer thought for my day:**

My God, You are always with me.

## Day 22: Patience

I'm not the most patient person, especially when it comes to dealing with my own short-comings and failings.

Let me listen to St. Jane:

*The best and the greatest practice of patience which we can possibly make in the spiritual life is to bear with ourselves in our weaknesses and powerlessness of will to do what is right, in which the poor soul finds itself at times.*

- St. Jane Frances Fremyot de Chantal: Her Exhortations, Conferences and Instructions

**Prayer thought for my day:**

Lord, may I be more patient with myself today.

## Day 21: Handling my imperfections

I am always aware that I am imperfect. I am a sinner. It's easy to become discouraged.

Let me listen to St. Jane:

*When you fail through cowardice or infidelity, be not disturbed, make no reflection, humble yourself in meekness and confusion before God, and then lose no time in rising up again by an act of courage and holy indifference.*

- Selected Letters of St. Jane Francis de Chantal

### Prayer thought for my day:

Lord, help me to rise humbly from my failings.

## Day 10: Disposing myself to receive God's grace

Being consciously attentive to God's loving presence more often during my day can open my heart to receive the graces that God desires to give me as I go about living my day.

St. Jane offers me some advice:

*All the day and at each hour, at each moment, if possible, let us raise our heart to God. Let us keep ourselves in the disposition to be guided by His Divine goodness and to acquiesce promptly in the effects of His good pleasure in everything He shall permit to happen to us. This is the only and true means of being in the disposition to receive graces God has prepared for us.*

- St. Jane Frances Fremyot de Chantal: Her Exhortations, Conferences and Instructions

*How blessed is the person who, in tranquility of heart, lovingly maintains the sacred sense of God's presence. For this person's union with divine Goodness will continue growing perpetually, though imperceptibly, and will fill her whole spirit with its infinite sweetness.*

- Live Jesus! Wisdom from Saints Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal

### Prayer thought for my day:

I desire to be open to Your grace today.

## Day 11: To labor faithfully with God

Can I learn to be faithful to whatever I am doing during the day simply because that is what God desires me to be doing? If I do my work in the most faithful and loving way that I can, God's providence will give me all I need.

Let me listen to St. Jane:

*A soul wholly lost in God wishes to have no virtue, and no perfection save that God wishes it to have. It labors faithfully, because God wishes it, but it leaves to Him all care of its work, and troubles not to seek new means of perfection, but merely applies itself to make good use of those which Providence supplies and offers it on each occasion.*

- St. Jane Frances Fremyot de Chantal: Her Exhortations, Conferences and Instructions

*Were you to do no other thing than to stand in the presence of God and consume your life away before Him, like a candle burning itself up in the presence of the Sacrament, would you not be blessed and fortunate?*

- St. Chantal on Prayer

### Prayer thought for my day:

May my life today be as a candle burning in Your presence, Lord.

## Day 20: Praying while I'm ill

It's so hard to pray when I'm not feeling well. How can I pray better in these circumstances?

Let me listen to St. Jane:

*In time of affliction and, above all, of bodily sickness, when the heart is often much weakened and without power of prayer, we must not oblige ourselves to try to pray, because simple acts of consent to the will of God, from time to time, are quite enough. In any case, suffering which is borne by the will, with patience and gentleness, forms an unending and all-powerful prayer in the sight of God, in spite of the complaining and anxiety which may be felt in our lower nature.*

- St. Chantal on Prayer

### Prayer thought for my day:

Help me, Lord, to be patient in my illness.

## Day 19: Prayer and mortification

I struggle to keep prayer and daily living together. I know I need to deny myself more. Do prayer and self-denial go together?

St. Jane comments:

*Mortification and prayer are the two wings by which one may take one's flight into those holy resting places in which one may find one's peace in God far from the business of men. . . We must not allow ourselves to think that by means of mortification alone, without the aid of prayer, a soul will ever take flight in order to raise itself to God. Penances without prayer are useless pains; prayer without penance is food without salt which easily goes stale. Hence it is absolutely necessary to fit our souls with these two wings in order that we may make our flight to the heavenly court in which we may find contentment of soul in conversation with our God.*

- [St. Chantal on Prayer](#)

### Prayer thought for my day:

Lord, help me to deny myself so that I can be with You more.

## Day 12: My emotions can create inner storms

How often I find myself reacting emotionally to the events and people around me. When I stop to think about it, my emotions can lead to inner storms too frequently. They can interfere with my remembrance of God's loving presence.

St. Jane offers me some advice:

*Here is a little model of what we should do when we are taken by surprise as we row peacefully in our little boat. When all our emotions arise to stir up a great internal storm that seems certain to overwhelm us or drag us after it, we must not wish to calm this tempest ourselves. Rather, we must gently draw near the shore, keeping our will firmly in God, and coast along the little waves; by humble knowledge of ourselves, we will reach God, who is our sure port. Let us go gently along without agitation or anxiety and without giving in to our emotions.*

- [St. Jane Frances Fremyot de Chantal: Her Exhortations, Conferences and Instructions](#)

### Prayer thought for my day:

Lord, You are the source of my inner peace.

## Day 13: I seem to struggle so often

Trying to live a spiritual life seems to be a real struggle at times. Is that the way it's supposed to be?

Let me listen to St. Jane:

*Never give way to the desire to be liberated from your difficulties. This is a privilege which is from God in order to make you perfect in every virtue. It is a reward and not a punishment, make no doubt of this. What God desires is that you bear this burden patiently, with complete surrender to His holy good pleasure, without permitting your mind to seek, nor inquire what is going on within you; without allowing your self to discuss, nor even to glance at temptations, no matter what their type, nor even to consider why this trial has been imposed on you.*

- St. Chantal on Prayer

*All the repugnances of which you speak, all your feelings, diversions, difficulties, are all to my judgment for your greater good, and you are found not to yield to them. You should keep making resolutions every day to fight and resist them – nevertheless when you fall, say fifty times a day, never on any account be astonished or uneasy, but quite gently reproach yourself, and take up again the practice of the contrary virtue, saying all the time words of love and confidence to Our Lord.*

- Selected Letters of St. Jane Francis de Chantal

### Prayer thought for my day;

My God, I love You and trust You.

## Day 18: My attitude in prayer

As I listen to St. Jane's advice on praying and try to use it as I pray, I find something happening in me.

Let me listen to St. Jane:

*In the hands of God, the soul must become like clay in the hands of a potter, who from it can form any sort of dish; or, if you like, the soul must become like soft wax receptive to the impression of a seal, or like a blank sheet upon which the Holy Spirit writes His divine will. If, when entering upon prayer, we could make ourselves a mere capacity for receiving the spirit of God, this would suffice for all method. Prayer must be carried on by grace, and not by deliberate art.*

- St. Chantal on Prayer

### Prayer thought for my day:

Lord, I want to be open to Your Spirit.

## Day 17: Success in prayer

Sometimes I think I make success in prayer too important. Is there a better focus for me?

St. Jane offers me some advice:

*Though our prayer be without words or considerations, there is no danger in this, because the good success of prayer depends neither on words nor on study. Rather, it is the simple raising of our minds to God: and the more simple and the more stripped of feeling, the surer. As far as thinking of our sins during prayer, this we must never do. A simple humbling of our soul before God as regards all our offense, without thought of this one or that, is enough. Most of the time, such thoughts only act as distractions.*

- [St. Chantal on Prayer](#)

### Prayer thought for my day:

Lord, let me focus on You alone in my prayer.

## Day 14: My prayer life

I try to pray each day. But I don't know if I'm praying the right way?

Let me listen to St. Jane:

*Prayer does not mean to be always on our knees or in some corner, very recollected, enjoying consolations. The soul that can say with truth that she is always ready at anytime for whatever is commanded or wished of her can say with equal truth that she is always in prayer.*

- [St. Jane Frances Fremyot de Chantal: Her Exhortations, Conferences and Instructions](#)

*One kind of prayer is a tranquil attention of the soul to God, which has the effect of calming the over-activity of our mental faculties, and which brings us interior silence and the repose of all our powers.*

- [St. Chantal on Prayer](#)

### Prayer thought for my day:

Lord, help me to be at peace with You today.

## Day 15: Some advice on praying

Are there ideas about prayer that can help me in my praying?

Let me listen to St. Jane:

*The first piece of advice about prayer is that anybody who wishes to pray . . . must prepare himself according to the phrase of the wise man: "Before prayer prepare your soul, think where you are going, and to whom you mean to speak."*

- St. Chantal on Prayer

*I strongly commend to you cordial prayer, that is, prayer which is not made by the understanding, but by the heart.*

- St. Jane Frances Fremyot de Chantal: Her Exhortations, Conferences and Instructions

*The only thing which is absolutely indispensable to prayer is our heart and, though if this part of us be not committed all the rest is only a hollow mockery, nevertheless with heart alone given to prayer we never lack for anything.*

- St. Chantal on Prayer

### Prayer thought for my day:

Lord, help me to speak to You from my heart.

## Day 16: More advice on praying

I find myself saying prayers. How can I deepen my spiritual life?

St. Jane offers me some advice:

*In prayer more is accomplished by listening than by talking. It is our business to give ear to the Son of God and not to speak. We are not worthy to utter a word in His presence. Let us leave to God the decision as to what shall be said, without troubling ourselves to find a theme or subject in our own minds. God speaks to the heart only when the heart is recollected. You tell me that you have no thoughts, that you have no feelings toward God. But if it is God Himself you hold, why be concerned about anything else? What does there remain for you to desire?*

- St. Chantal on Prayer

### Prayer thought for my day:

Lord, help my heart to listen.