

THE SAYINGS OF LIGHT AND LOVE

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Introduction to The Sayings of Light and Love

In the style of the apothegms of the Desert Fathers, John of the Cross's teaching first comes in these hard, clean, unsentimental sayings that overflow with spiritual wisdom. They give to their recipients treasures that must first be unlocked; as maxims they were to be repeated and mulled over.

While he was spiritual director in Avila, before he had undertaken any of his larger treatises, John jotted down many thoughts and counsels for the guidance of those whom he directed, probably similar to the ones expressed in the later collections. None of those earlier sayings has come down to us, but we know from witnesses that this practice was characteristic of the Carmelite confessor at that time.

After John's imprisonment in Toledo, when he took up spiritual direction again, this time in Andalusia, he returned once more to the practice of condensing his thought into concise spiritual counsels for his penitents. They could keep them for inspiration, so as to be stirred in the Lord's service and love. Sometimes these sayings were directed to the particular needs of an individual; at other times they were destined more for a group of persons. The number of sayings that circulated must have been large, but comparatively few have come down to us, and they come through different collections.

The most distinguished collection is contained in an autograph manuscript, the largest autograph we have from John. Restored in 1976 and reproduced in a facsimile edition, the manuscript is preserved in the church Santa María la Mayor in Andújar (Jaén). In his prologue to this collection, John calls his maxims "sayings of light and love".

The title, *Sayings of Light and Love*, comes then from John's own words, and provides a good general designation for the other collections as well. Footnotes will indicate where one collection ends and another begins and the source from which each comes.

Sometimes, rather than being counsels destined for others, these sayings have an autobiographical coloring, as for example in the celebrated *Prayer of a Soul Taken with Love*. Here John in a profound experience of spiritual poverty becomes aware that God has pardoned him and given him everything in Jesus Christ; love then carries him off in a lyric outburst.

Though these sayings do not follow in any systematic order, we do find in them the important themes that the Carmelite friar developed at length in his major works. What he there expounds in detail, he here compresses into dense aphorisms.

Much difficulty lies in deciding whether many of the maxims attributed to John actually did come from his pen, or disciples culled them from his sermons and conferences, or if they are simply spurious. Omitting the counsels of Madre Magdalena because they are repetitions of those given in [chapter 13](#) of the first book of the *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, we include here only those sayings that editors have considered trustworthy.

Prologue and Sayings 1-79

O my God and my delight, for your love I have also desired to give my soul to composing these sayings of light and love concerning you. Since, although I can express them in words, I do not have the works and virtues they imply (which is what pleases you, O my Lord, more than the words and wisdom they contain), may others, perhaps stirred by them, go forward in your service and love - in which I am wanting. I will thereby find consolation, that these sayings be an occasion for your finding in others the things that I lack.

Lord, you love discretion, you love light, you love love; these three you love above the other operations of the soul. Hence these will be sayings of discretion for the wayfarer, of light for the way, and of love in the wayfaring. May there be nothing of worldly rhetoric in them or the long-winded and dry eloquence of weak and artificial human wisdom, which never pleases you. Let us speak to the heart words bathed in sweetness and love that do indeed please you, removing obstacles and stumbling blocks from the paths of many souls who unknowingly trip and unconsciously walk in the path of error - poor souls who think they are right in what concerns the following of your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in becoming like him, imitating his life, actions, and virtues, and the form of his nakedness and purity of spirit. Father of mercies, come to our aid, for without you, Lord, we can do nothing.

1. The Lord has always revealed to mortals the treasures of his wisdom and his spirit, but now that the face of evil bares itself more and more, so does the Lord bare his treasures more.

2. O Lord, my God, who will seek you with simple and pure love, and not find that you are all one can desire, for you show yourself first and go out to meet those who seek you?

3. Though the path is plain and smooth for people of good will, those who walk it will not travel far, and will do so only with difficulty if they do not have good feet, courage, and tenacity of spirit.

4. It is better to be burdened and in company with the strong than to be unburdened and with the weak. When you are burdened you are close to God, your strength, who abides with the afflicted. When you are relieved of the burden you are close to yourself, your own weakness; for virtue and strength of soul grow and are confirmed in the trials of patience.

5. Whoever wants to stand alone without the support of a master and guide will be like the tree that stands alone in a field without a proprietor. No matter how much the tree bears, passers-by will pick the fruit before it ripens.

6. A tree that is cultivated and guarded through the care of its owner produces its fruit at the expected time.

7. The virtuous soul that is alone and without a master is like a lone burning coal; it will grow colder rather than hotter.

8. Those who fall alone remain alone in their fall, and they value their soul little since they entrust it to themselves alone.

9. If you do not fear falling alone, do you presume that you will rise up alone? Consider how much more can be accomplished by two together than by one alone.

10. Whoever falls while heavily laden will find it difficult to rise under the burden.

11. The blind person who falls will not be able to get up alone; the blind person who does get up alone will go off on the wrong road.

12. God desires the smallest degree of purity of conscience in you more than all the works you can perform.

13. God desires the least degree of obedience and submissiveness more than all those services you think of rendering him.

14. God values in you the inclination to dryness and suffering for love of him more than all the consolations, spiritual visions, and meditations you could possibly have.

15. Deny your desires and you will find what your heart longs for. For how do you know if any desire of yours is according to God?

16. O sweetest love of God, so little known, whoever has found this rich mine is at rest!

17. Since a double measure of bitterness must follow the doing of your own will, do not do it even though you remain in single bitterness.

18. The soul that carries within itself the least appetite for worldly things bears more unseemliness and impurity in its journey to God than if it were troubled by all the hideous and annoying temptations and darkneses describable; for, so long as it does not consent to these temptations, a soul thus tried can approach God confidently, by doing the will of His Majesty, who proclaims: *Come to me, all you who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will refresh you* [Mt. 11:28].

19. The soul that in aridity and trial submits to the dictates of reason is more pleasing to God than one that does everything with consolation, yet fails in this submission.

20. God is more pleased by one work, however small, done secretly, without desire that it be known, than a thousand done with the desire that people know of them. Those who work for God with purest love not only care nothing about whether others see their works, but do not even seek that God himself know of them. Such persons would not cease to render God the same services, with the same joy and purity of love, even if God were never to know of these.

21. The pure and whole work done for God in a pure heart merits a whole kingdom for its owner.

22. A bird caught in birdlime has a twofold task: It must free itself and cleanse itself. And by satisfying their appetites, people suffer in

a twofold way: They must detach themselves and, after being detached, clean themselves of what has clung to them.

23. Those who do not allow their appetites to carry them away will soar in their spirit as swiftly as the bird that lacks no feathers.

24. The fly that clings to honey hinders its flight, and the soul that allows itself attachment to spiritual sweetness hinders its own liberty and contemplation.

25. Withdraw from creatures if you desire to preserve, clear and simple in your soul, the image of God. Empty your spirit and withdraw far from them and you will walk in divine lights, for God is not like creatures.

Prayer of a Soul Taken with Love

26. Lord God, my Beloved, if you still remember my sins in such a way that you do not do what I beg of you, do your will concerning them, my God, which is what I most desire, and exercise your goodness and mercy, and you will be known through them. And if you are waiting for my good works so as to hear my prayer through their means, grant them to me, and work them for me, and the sufferings you desire to accept, and let it be done. But if you are not waiting for my works, what is it that makes you wait, my most clement Lord? Why do you delay? For if, after all, I am to receive the grace and mercy that I entreat of you in your Son, take my mite, since you desire it, and grant me this blessing, since you also desire that.

Who can free themselves from lowly manners and limitations if you do not lift them to yourself, my God, in purity of love? How will human beings begotten and nurtured in lowliness rise up to you, Lord, if you do not raise them with your hand that made them?

You will not take from me, my God, what you once gave me in your only Son, Jesus Christ, in whom you gave me all I desire. Hence I rejoice that if I wait for you, you will not delay.

With what procrastinations do you wait, since from this very moment you can love God in your heart?

27. Mine are the heavens and mine is the earth. Mine are the nations, the just are mine, and mine the sinners. The angels are mine, and the Mother of God, and all things are mine; and God himself is mine and for me, because Christ is mine and all for me. What do you ask, then, and seek, my soul? Yours is all of this, and all is for you. Do not engage yourself in something less or pay heed to the crumbs that fall from your Father's table. Go forth and exult in your Glory! Hide yourself in it and rejoice, and you will obtain the supplications of your heart.

28. The very pure spirit does not bother about the regard of others or human respect, but communes inwardly with God, alone and in solitude as to all forms, and with delightful tranquility, for the knowledge of God is received in divine silence.

29. A soul enkindled with love is a gentle, meek, humble, and patient soul.

30. A soul that is hard because of self-love grows harder.

31. O good Jesus, if you do not soften it, it will ever continue in its natural hardness.

32. If you lose an opportunity you will be like one who lets the bird fly away; you will never get it back.

33. I didn't know you, my Lord, because I still desired to know and relish things.

34. Well and good if all things change, Lord God, provided we are rooted in you.

35. One human thought alone is worth more than the entire world, hence God alone is worthy of it.

36. For the insensible, what you do not feel; for the sensible, the senses; and for the spirit of God, thought.

37. Reflect that your guardian angel does not always move your desire for an action, but he does always enlighten your reason. Hence, in order to practice virtue do not wait until you feel like it, for your reason and intellect are sufficient.

38. When fixed on something else, one's appetite leaves no room for the angel to move it.

39. My spirit has become dry because it forgets to feed on you.

40. What you most seek and desire you will not find by this way of yours, nor through high contemplation, but in much humility and submission of heart.

41. Do not tire yourself, for you will not enter into the savor and sweetness of spirit if you do not apply yourself to the mortification of all this that you desire.

42. Reflect that the most delicate flower loses its fragrance and withers fastest; therefore guard yourself against seeking to walk in a spirit of delight, for you will not be constant. Choose rather for yourself a robust spirit, detached from everything, and you will discover abundant peace and sweetness, for delicious and durable fruit is gathered in a cold and dry climate.

43. Bear in mind that your flesh is weak and that no worldly thing can comfort or strengthen your spirit, for what is born of the world is world and what is born of the flesh is flesh. The good spirit is born only of the Spirit of God, who communicates himself neither through the world nor through the flesh.

44. Be attentive to your reason in order to do what it tells you concerning the way to God. It will be more valuable before your God than all the works you perform without this attentiveness and all the spiritual delights you seek.

45. Blessed are they who, setting aside their own pleasure and inclination, consider things according to reason and justice before doing them.

46. If you make use of your reason, you are like one who eats substantial food; but if you are moved by the satisfaction of your will, you are like one who eats insipid fruit.

47. Lord, you return gladly and lovingly to lift up the one who offends you, but I do not turn to raise and honor the one who annoys me.

48. O mighty Lord, if a spark from the empire of your justice effects so much in the mortal ruler who governs the nations, what will your all-powerful justice do with the righteous and the sinner?

49. If you purify your soul of attachments and desires, you will understand things spiritually. If you deny your appetite for them, you will enjoy their truth, understanding what is certain in them.

50. O Lord, my God, you are no stranger to those who do not estrange themselves from you. How do they say that it is you who absent yourself?

51. That person has truly mastered all things who is not moved to joy by the satisfaction they afford or saddened by their insipidness.

52. If you wish to attain holy recollection, you will do so not by receiving but by denying.

53. Going everywhere, my God, with you, everywhere things will happen as I desire for you.

54. Souls will be unable to reach perfection who do not strive to be content with having nothing, in such fashion that their natural and spiritual desire is satisfied with emptiness; for this is necessary in order to reach the highest tranquility and peace of spirit. Hence the love of God in the pure and simple soul is almost continually in act.

55. Since God is inaccessible, be careful not to concern yourself with all that your faculties can comprehend and your senses feel, so

that you do not become satisfied with less and lose the lightness of soul suitable for going to him.

56. The soul that journeys to God, but does not shake off its cares and quiet its appetites, is like one who drags a cart uphill.

57. It is not God's will that a soul be disturbed by anything or suffer trials, for if one suffers trials in the adversities of the world it is because of a weakness in virtue. The perfect soul rejoices in what afflicts the imperfect one.

58. This way of life contains very little business and bustling, and demands mortification of the will more than knowledge. The less one takes of things and pleasures the farther one advances along this way.

59. Think not that pleasing God lies so much in doing a great deal as in doing it with good will, without possessiveness and human respect.

60. When evening comes, you will be examined in love. Learn to love as God desires to be loved and abandon your own ways of acting.

61. See that you do not interfere in the affairs of others, nor even allow them to pass through your memory; for perhaps you will be unable to accomplish your own task.

62. Because the virtues you have in mind do not shine in your neighbor, do not think that your neighbor will not be precious in God's sight for reasons that you have not in mind.

63. Human beings know neither how to rejoice properly nor how to grieve properly, for they do not understand the distance between good and evil.

64. See that you are not suddenly saddened by the adversities of this world, for you do not know the good they bring, being ordained in the judgments of God for the everlasting joy of the elect.

65. Do not rejoice in temporal prosperity, since you do not know if it gives you assurance of eternal life.

66. In tribulation, immediately draw near to God with trust, and you will receive strength, enlightenment, and instruction.

67. In joys and pleasures, immediately draw near to God in fear and truth, and you will be neither deceived nor involved in vanity.

68. Take God for your bridegroom and friend, and walk with him continually; and you will not sin and will learn to love, and the things you must do will work out prosperously for you.

69. You will without labor subject the nations and bring things to serve you if you forget them and yourself as well.

70. Abide in peace, banish cares, take no account of all that happens, and you will serve God according to his good pleasure, and rest in him.

71. Consider that God reigns only in the peaceful and disinterested soul.

72. Although you perform many works, if you do not deny your will and submit yourself, losing all solicitude about yourself and your affairs, you will not make progress.

73. What does it profit you to give God one thing if he asks of you another? Consider what it is God wants, and then do it. You will as a result satisfy your heart better than with something toward which you yourself are inclined.

74. How is it you dare to relax so fearlessly, since you must appear before God to render an account of the least word and thought?

75. Reflect that many are called but few are chosen [Mt. 22:14] and that, if you are not careful, your perdition is more certain than your salvation, especially since the path to eternal life is so constricted [Mt. 7:14].

76. Do not rejoice vainly, for you know how many sins you have committed and you do not know how you stand before God; but have fear together with confidence.

77. Since, when the hour of reckoning comes, you will be sorry for not having used this time in the service of God, why do you not

arrange and use it now as you would wish to have done were you dying?

78. If you desire that devotion be born in your spirit and that the love of God and the desire for divine things increase, cleanse your soul of every desire, attachment, and ambition in such a way that you have no concern about anything. Just as a sick person is immediately aware of good health once the bad humor has been thrown off and a desire to eat is felt, so will you recover your health, in God, if you cure yourself as was said. Without doing this, you will not advance no matter how much you do.

79. If you desire to discover peace and consolation for your soul and to serve God truly, do not find your satisfaction in what you have left behind, because in that which now concerns you you may be as impeded as you were before, or even more. But leave as well all these other things and attend to one thing alone that brings all these with it (namely, holy solitude, together with prayer and spiritual and divine reading), and persevere there in forgetfulness of all things. For if these things are not incumbent on you, you will be more pleasing to God in knowing how to guard and perfect yourself than by gaining all other things together; *what profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and suffer the loss of one's soul?* [Mt. 16:26].[\[1\]](#)

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[1](#). The autograph manuscript ends here abruptly. The following sayings are the *Maxims on Love* gathered by the Discalced Carmelite nuns in Beas. A manuscript copy is preserved in the Silverian archives in Burgos.

Sayings 80-122

80. Bridle your tongue and your thoughts very much, direct your affection habitually toward God, and your spirit will be divinely enkindled.

81. Feed not your spirit on anything but God. Cast off concern about things, and bear peace and recollection in your heart.

82. Keep spiritually tranquil in a loving attentiveness to God, and when it is necessary to speak, let it be with the same calm and peace.

83. Preserve a habitual remembrance of eternal life, recalling that those who hold themselves the lowest and poorest and least of all will enjoy the highest dominion and glory in God.

84. Rejoice habitually in God, who is your salvation [Lk. 1:47], and reflect that it is good to suffer in any way for him who is good.

85. Reflect how necessary it is to be enemies of self and to walk to perfection by the path of holy rigor, and understand that every word spoken without the order of obedience is laid to your account by God.

86. Have an intimate desire that His Majesty grant you what he knows you lack for his honor.

87. Crucified inwardly and outwardly with Christ, you will live in this life with fullness and satisfaction of soul, and possess your soul in patience [Lk. 21:19].

88. Preserve a loving attentiveness to God with no desire to feel or understand any particular thing concerning him.

89. Keep habitual confidence in God, esteeming in yourself and in your Sisters those things that God most values, which are spiritual goods.

90. Enter within yourself and work in the presence of your Bridegroom, who is ever present loving you.

91. Be hostile to admitting into your soul things that of themselves have no spiritual substance, lest they make you lose your liking for devotion and recollection.

92. Let Christ crucified be enough for you, and with him suffer and take your rest, and hence annihilate yourself in all inward and outward things

93. Endeavor always that things be not for you, nor you for them, but forgetful of all, abide in recollection with your Bridegroom.

94. Have great love for trials and think of them as but a small way of pleasing your Bridegroom, who did not hesitate to die for you.

95. Bear fortitude in your heart against all things that move you to that which is not God, and be a friend of the Passion of Christ.

96. Be interiorly detached from all things and do not seek pleasure in any temporal thing, and your soul will concentrate on goods you do not know

97. The soul that walks in love neither tires others nor grows tired.

98. The poor one who is naked will be clothed; and the soul that is naked of desires and whims, God will clothe with his purity, pleasure, and will.

99. There are souls that wallow in the mire like animals, and there are others that soar like birds, which purify and cleanse themselves in the air.

100. The Father spoke one Word, which was his Son, and this Word he speaks always in eternal silence, and in silence must it be heard by the soul.

101. We must adjust our trials to ourselves, and not ourselves to our trials.

102. He who seeks not the cross of Christ seeks not the glory of Christ.

103. To be taken with love for a soul, God does not look on its greatness, but on the greatness of its humility.

104. "Whoever is ashamed to confess me before others, I shall be ashamed to confess before My Father," says the Lord [Mt. 10:33].

105. Frequent combing gives the hair more luster and makes it easier to comb; a soul that frequently examines its thoughts, words, and deeds, which are its hair, doing all things for the love of God, will

have lustrous hair. Then the Bridegroom will look on the neck of the bride and thereby be captivated; and will be wounded by one of her eyes, that is, by the purity of intention she has in all she does. If in combing hair one wants it to have luster, one begins from the crown. All our works must begin from the crown (the love of God) if we wish them to be pure and lustrous.[\[2\]](#)

106. Heaven is stable and is not subject to generation; and souls of a heavenly nature are stable and not subject to the engendering of desires or of anything else, for in their way they resemble God who does not move forever.

107. Eat not in forbidden pastures (those of this life), because *blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied* [Mt. 5:6]. What God seeks, he being himself God by nature, is to make us gods through participation, just as fire converts all things into fire.

108. All the goodness we possess is lent to us, and God considers it his own work. God and his work is God.

109. Wisdom enters through love, silence, and mortification. It is great wisdom to know how to be silent and to look at neither the remarks, nor the deeds, nor the lives of others.

110. All for me and nothing for you.

111. All for you and nothing for me.

112. Allow yourself to be taught, allow yourself to receive orders, allow yourself to be subjected and despised, and you will be perfect.

113. Any appetite causes five kinds of harm in the soul: first, disquiet; second, turbidity; third, defilement; fourth, weakness; fifth, obscurity [\[3\]](#)

114. Perfection does not lie in the virtues that the soul knows it has, but in the virtues that our Lord sees in it. This is a closed book; hence one has no reason for presumption, but must remain prostrate on the ground with respect to self.

115. Love consists not in feeling great things but in having great detachment and in suffering for the Beloved.

116. The entire world is not worthy of a human being's thought, for this belongs to God alone; any thought, therefore, not centered on God is stolen from him.

117. Not all the faculties and senses have to be employed in things, but only those that are required; as for the others, leave them unoccupied for God.

118. Ignoring the imperfections of others, preserving silence and a continual communion with God will eradicate great imperfections from the soul and make it the possessor of great virtues.

119. There are three signs of inner recollection: first, a lack of satisfaction in passing things; second, a liking for solitude and silence, and an attentiveness to all that is more perfect; third, the considerations, meditations and acts that formerly helped the soul now hinder it, and it brings to prayer no other support than faith, hope, and love.[\[4\]](#)

120. If a soul has more patience in suffering and more forbearance in going without satisfaction, the sign is there of its being more proficient in virtue.

121. The traits of the solitary bird are five: first, it seeks the highest place; second, it withstands no company; third, it holds its beak in the air; fourth, it has no definite color; fifth, it sings sweetly. These traits must be possessed by the contemplative soul. It must rise above passing things, paying no more heed to them than if they did not exist. It must likewise be so fond of silence and solitude that it does not tolerate the company of another creature. It must hold its beak in the air of the Holy Spirit, responding to his inspirations, that by so doing it may become worthy of his company. It must have no definite color, desiring to do nothing definite other than the will of God. It must sing sweetly in the contemplation and love of its Bridegroom.[\[5\]](#)

122. Habitual voluntary imperfections that are never completely overcome not only hinder the divine union, but also the attainment of perfection. Such imperfections are: the habit of being very talkative; a small unconquered attachment, such as to a person, to clothing, to a cell, a book, or to the way food is prepared, and to other conversations and little satisfactions in tasting things, in knowing, and hearing, and the like.[\[6\]](#)

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[2.](#) See [C. 31. 5-6](#).

[3.](#) See [A. 1. 6-10](#).

[4.](#) For more on these signs of contemplation, see [A. 2. 13-14](#); [N. 1. 9](#).

[5.](#) See [C. 15. 24](#).

[6.](#) See [A. 1. 11. 3-4](#). The following maxims are from the edition of Gerona, published in 1650.

Sayings 123-158

123. If you wish to glory in yourself, but do not wish to appear ignorant and foolish, discard the things that are not yours and you will have glory in what remains. But certainly if you discard all that is not yours, nothing will be left, since you must not glory in anything if you do not want to fall into vanity. But let us descend now especially to those graces, the gifts that make people pleasing in God's sight. It is certain that you must not glory in these gifts, for you do not even know if you possess them.

124. Oh, how sweet your presence will be to me, you who are the supreme good! I must draw near you in silence and uncover your feet that you may be pleased to unite me to you in marriage [Ru. 3:7], and I will not rest until I rejoice in your arms. Now I ask you, Lord, not to abandon me at any time in my recollection, for I am a squanderer of my soul.

125. Detached from exterior things, dispossessed of interior things, disappropriated of the things of God - neither will prosperity detain you nor adversity hinder you.

126. The devil fears a soul united to God as he does God himself.[\[7\]](#)

127. The purest suffering produces the purest understanding.[\[8\]](#)

128. The soul that desires God to surrender himself to it entirely must surrender itself entirely to him without keeping anything for itself.

129. The soul that has reached the union of love does not even experience the first motions of sin.

130. Old friends of God scarcely ever fail him, for they stand above all that can make them fail.[\[9\]](#)

131. My Beloved, all that is rugged and toilsome I desire for myself, and all that is sweet and delightful I desire for you.[\[10\]](#)

132. What we need most in order to make progress is to be silent before this great God with our appetite and with our tongue, for the language he best hears is silent love.

133. The submission of a servant is necessary in seeking God. In outward things light helps to prevent one from falling; but in the things of God just the opposite is true: It is better for the soul not to see if it is to be more secure.

134. More is gained in one hour from God's good things than in a whole lifetime from your own.

135. Love to be unknown both by yourself and by others. Never look at the good or evil of others.

136. Walk in solitude with God; act according to the just measure; hide the blessings of God.

137. To lose always and let everyone else win is a trait of valiant souls, generous spirits, and unselfish hearts; it is their manner to give rather than receive even to the extent of giving themselves.

They consider it a heavy burden to possess themselves, and it pleases them more to be possessed by others and withdrawn from themselves, since we belong more to that infinite Good than we do to ourselves.

138. It is seriously wrong to have more regard for God's blessings than for God himself: prayer and detachment.

139. Look at that infinite knowledge and that hidden secret. What peace, what love, what silence is in that divine bosom! How lofty the science God teaches there, which is what we call the anagogical acts that so enkindle the heart.

140. The secret of one's conscience is considerably harmed and damaged as often as its fruits are manifested to others, for then one receives as reward the fruit of fleeting fame.

141. Speak little and do not meddle in matters about which you are not asked.

142. Strive always to keep God present and to preserve within yourself the purity he teaches you.

143. Do not excuse yourself or refuse to be corrected by all; listen to every reproof with a serene countenance; think that God utters it.

144. Live as though only God and yourself were in this world, so that your heart may not be detained by anything human.

145. Consider it the mercy of God that someone occasionally speaks a good word to you, for you deserve none.

146. Never allow yourself to pour out your heart, even though it be but for the space of a Creed.

147. Never listen to talk about the weaknesses of others, and if someone complains of another, you can tell her humbly to say nothing of it to you

148. Do not complain about anyone, or ask for anything; and if it is necessary for you to ask, let it be with few words.

149. Do not refuse work even though it seems that you cannot do it. Let all find compassion in you.

150. Do not contradict; by no means speak words that are not pure.

151. Let your speech be such that no one may be offended, and let it concern things that would not cause you regret were all to know of them.

152. Do not refuse anything you possess, even though you may need it.

153. Be silent concerning what God may have given you and recall that saying of the bride: *My secret for myself* [Is. 24:16].

154. Strive to preserve your heart in peace; let no event of this world disturb it; reflect that all must come to an end.

155. Take neither great nor little notice of who is with you or against you, and try always to please God. Ask him that his will be done in you. Love him intensely, as he deserves to be loved.

156. Twelve stars for reaching the highest perfection: love of God, love of neighbor, obedience, chastity, poverty, attendance at choir, penance, humility, mortification, prayer, silence, peace.

157. Never take others for your example in the tasks you have to perform, however holy they may be, for the devil will set their imperfections before you. But imitate Christ, who is supremely perfect and supremely holy, and you will never err.

158. Seek in reading and you will find in meditation; knock in prayer and it will be opened to you in contemplation. [\[11\]](#)

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[7.](#) See [C. 24. 4.](#)

[8.](#) See [C. 36. 12.](#)

[9.](#) See [C. 25. 9-11.](#)

[10.](#) See [C. 28. 10.](#)

[11.](#) This saying comes from the Cathrusian Guigo II's *Scala paradisi*, chapter 2, in Migne, PL 40. 998. The counsels that follow come from an old manuscript belonging to the Carmelite nuns in Antequera. A copy is preserved in the National Library of Madrid.

Sayings 159-175

159. The further you withdraw from earthly things the closer you approach heavenly things and the more you find in God.

160. Whoever knows how to die in all will have life in all.

161. Abandon evil, do good, and seek peace [Ps. 34:14].

162. Anyone who complains or grumbles is not perfect, nor even a good Christian.

163. The humble are those who hide in their own nothingness and know how to abandon themselves to God.

164. The meek are those who know how to suffer their neighbor and themselves.

165. If you desire to be perfect, sell your will, give it to the poor in spirit, come to Christ in meekness and humility, and follow him to Calvary and the sepulcher.

166. Those who trust in themselves are worse than the devil.

167. Those who do not love their neighbor abhor God.

168. Anyone who does things lukewarmly is close to falling.

169. Whoever flees prayer flees all that is good.

170. Conquering the tongue is better than fasting on bread and water.

171. Suffering for God is better than working miracles.

172. Oh, what blessings we will enjoy in the vision of the Most Blessed Trinity!

173. Do not be suspicious of your brother, for you will lose purity of heart.

174. As for trials, the more the better.

175. What does anyone know who doesn't know how to suffer for Christ?