

THE MINOR WORKS OF SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS

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SAYINGS OF LIGHT AND LOVE

Prologue

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. He who 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. He who falls alone remains alone in his fall, and he values his soul little since he entrusts it to himself alone.
9. If you do not fear falling alone, how do you presume that you will rise up alone? Consider how much more can be accomplished by two together than by one alone.
10. He who falls while heavily laden will find it difficult to rise under the burden.
11. The blind man who falls will not get up alone in his blindness, and if he does, he will take the wrong road.
12. God desires the least 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 an inclination to aridity and suffering for love of Him more than all possible consolations, spiritual visions, and meditations.
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, he who has found its veins 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

darknesses describable; for, so long as it does not consent to these, a soul thus tempted 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 person who in aridity and trial submits to the dictates of his reason is more pleasing to God than he who 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 desire that men know of them. The person who works for God with purest love not only cares nothing about whether men see him, but does not even seek that God Himself know of them. Such a person 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 them.

21. He who does a pure and whole work for God merits a whole kingdom.

22. A bird caught in birdlime has a two fold task: it must free itself and cleanse itself. And he who satisfies his appetite suffers in a twofold way: he must detach himself and, after being detached, cleanse himself of what has clung to him.

23. He who does not allow his appetites to carry him away will soar in his spirit as swiftly as the bird that lacks no feathers.

24. The fly that clings to honey hinders its flights, 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

Lord God, my Beloved, if You remember still my sins in suchwise 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 it is that 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 which 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 himself from lowly manners and limitations if You do not lift him to yourself, my God, in purity of love? How will a man begotten and nurtured in lowliness rise up to You, Lord, if You do not raise him with Your hand which made Him?

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?

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, nor pay heed to the crumbs which 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.

26. The very pure spirit does not meddle with exterior attachments or human respect, but it 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.

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

28. A soul that is hard because of its self-love grows harder. O good Jesus, if You do not soften it, it will ever continue in its natural hardness.

29. He who loses an opportunity is like the man who lets a bird fly from his hand, for he will never recover it.

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

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

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

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

34. 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.

35. Man's appetite when fixed on something else leaves no room for the angel to move it.

36. My spirit has become dry because it forgets to feed on You.

37. 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.

38. 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 this that you desire.

39. 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 savory and durable fruit is gathered in a cold and dry climate.

40. 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.

41. 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.

42. Blessed is he who, setting aside his own liking and inclination, considers things according to reason and justice before doing them.

43. He who makes use of his reason is like one who eats substantial fruit, and he who is moved by the satisfaction of his will is like one who eats insipid fruit.

44. Lord, You return gladly and lovingly to lift up the one who offends You and I do not turn to raise and honor him who annoys me.

45. 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?

46. If you purify your soul of attachment to and desire for things, you will understand them spiritually. If you deny your appetite for them, you will enjoy their truth, understanding what is certain in them.

47. Lord, my God, You are not a stranger to him who does not estrange himself from You. How do they say that it is You who absent Yourself?

48. He has truly mastered all things who is not moved to joy by the satisfaction these things afford nor saddened by their insipidness.

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

50. Going everywhere, by God, with You, everywhere things will happen as I desire for You.

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

52. 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.

53. 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.

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

55. The 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.

56. 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.

57. At the evening of life, you will be examined in love. Learn to love as God desires to be loved and abandon your own ways of acting.

58. 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.

59. Do not think that, because the virtues you have in mind do not shine in your neighbor, he will not be precious in God's sight for something of which you are not thinking.

60. Man knows neither how to rejoice properly nor how to grieve properly, for he does not understand the distance between good and evil.

61. 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.

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

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

64. In joys and pleasures, immediately draw near to God with confidence, and you will receive strength, enlightenment, and instruction.

65. Take God for your spouse 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.

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

67. 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.

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

69. 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.

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

71. 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?

72. Reflect that many are called but few chosen and that, if you are not careful, your perdition is more certain than your salvation, especially since the path to eternal life is so narrow.

73. 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.

74. 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?

75. 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 and attachment and ambition in such wise that you have no concern about anything. Just as a sick man 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.

76. If you desire to discover peace and consolation for your soul and serve God truly, do not be content in this that you have left behind (because in that which now concerns you, you may be as impeded as you were before, or even more), but also leave all these other things and attend to one thing alone, which 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 upon you, you will be more pleasing to God in knowing how to guard and perfect yourself than by gaining all other things together, for what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and suffers the loss of his soul? [Mt. 16.26]

MAXIMS AND COUNSELS

MAXIMS ON LOVE

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

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

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. Rejoice habitually in God, Who is your salvation, and reflect that it is good to suffer in any way for Him Who is good.

6. Let them reflect how necessary it is to be enemies of self and to walk to perfection by the path of holy rigor, and let them understand that every word spoken without the order of obedience is laid to their account by God.

7. Have an intimate desire that His Majesty grant you what He knows you lack for His honor.

8. Crucified inwardly and outwardly with Christ, you will live in this life with fullness and satisfaction of soul, and possess your soul in patience.

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

10. Habitual confidence in God, esteeming in yourself and in your sisters those things which God most values, which are spiritual goods.

11. Enter within yourself and work in the presence of your Spouse, Who is ever present loving you.

12. 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.

13. 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.

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

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

16. 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.

17. Be interiorly detached from all things that move you to that which is not God, and be a friend of the passion of Christ.

18. The soul that walks in love neither rests nor grows tired.

19. The poor man who is naked will be clothed, and the soul that is naked of desires and whims will be clothed by God with His purity, satisfaction, and will.

20. 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.

21. The Father spoke one Word, which was His Son, and this Word He always speaks in eternal silence, and in silence must It be heard by the soul.

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

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

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

25. "He who is ashamed to confess Me before men, I shall be ashamed to confess before My Father," says the Lord. [Mt. 10:32; Lk. 9:26]

26. 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 Spouse will look upon 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.

27. 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.

28. Eat not in forbidden pastures (those of this life), because blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice sake, for they shall be filled. [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.

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

30. 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.

31. All for me and nothing for You.

32. All for You and nothing for me.

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

34. Any appetite cause five kinds of harm in the soul: first, disquiet; second, turbidity; third, defilement; fourth, weakness; fifth, obscurity.

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

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

37. The entire world is not worthy of a man's thought, for this belongs to God alone; any thought, therefore, not centered on God is stolen from Him.

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

39. Not observing 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.

40. 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 which formerly helped the soul now hinder it, and it brings to prayer no other support than faith, hope, and love.

41. If a person has more patience in suffering and more forbearance in going without satisfaction, it is a sign that he is more proficient in virtue.

42. 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 Spouse.

43. Habitual voluntary imperfections which are never completely overcome not only hinder the divine union, but also the attainment of perfection. Such imperfections are: the habit of much talking; some small unconquered attachment, such as to a person, an article of clothing, a cell, a book, or some kind of food, or other conversations and little satisfactions in tasting things, and knowing, and hearing, and the like.

44. 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 of which make men 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.

45. Oh, how sweet Your presence will be to me, You Who are the supreme good! I must draw near You in silence and uncover my feet before You 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.

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

47. The devil fears a soul united to God as he does God Himself.
48. The purest suffering produces the purest understanding.
49. The soul that desires God to surrender Himself to it entirely must surrender itself entirely to Him without keeping anything for itself.
50. The soul that has reached the union of love does not even experience the first motions of sin.
51. Old friends of God scarcely ever fail Him, for they stand above all that can make them fail.
52. My beloved, all that is rugged and toilsome I desire for myself, and all that is sweet and delightful I desire for You.
53. What we need most in order to make progress is to be silent before this great God with our appetites and our tongue, for the language He best hears is silent love.
54. Simple faith 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.
55. More is gained in one hour from God's good things than in a whole lifetime from our own.
56. Love to be unknown both by yourself and by others. Never look at the good or evil of others.
57. Walk in solitude with God; act according to the just measure; hide the blessings of God.
58. 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.
59. It is a serious evil to have more regard for God's blessings than for God Himself: prayer and detachment.
60. 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.
61. Secrecy of conscience is considerably harmed and damaged as often as a person manifests its fruit to men, for then he receives as his reward the fruit of fleeting fame.
62. Speak little and do not meddle in matters about which you are not asked.
63. Strive always to keep God present and to preserve within yourself the purity He teaches you.
64. Do not excuse yourself or refuse to be corrected by all; listen to every reproof with a serene countenance; think that God utters it.

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

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

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

68. Never listen to talk about the faults of others, and if someone complains of another, you can tell him humbly to say nothing of it to you.

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

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

71. Do not contradict; in no manner speak words that are not pure.

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

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

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

75. Strive to preserve your heart in peace and let no event of this world disturb it. Reflect that all must come to an end.

76. 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.

77. 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.

78. Never take a man for your example in the tasks you have to perform, however holy he may be, for the devil will set his imperfection before you. But imitate Christ, who is supremely perfect and supremely holy, and you will never err.

79. Seek in reading and you will find in meditation; knock in prayer and it will be opened to you in contemplation.

80. Once being asked how one becomes enraptured, the Venerable Father Fray John of the Cross, replied: by denying one's own will and doing the will of God; for an ecstasy is nothing else than going out of self and being caught up in God; and this is what he who obeys does; he leave himself and his desire, and thus unburdened plunges himself in God.

DEGREES OF PERFECTION

1. Do not commit a mortal sin for all there is in the world, or any deliberate venial sin, or any known imperfection.
2. Endeavor to remain always in the presence of God, either real, imaginative, or unitive insofar as is permitted by your works.
3. Do nothing nor say any notable word that Christ would not have done or said were He in the state I am, as old as I, and with the same kind of health.
4. Strive for the greater honor and glory of God in all things.
5. Do not omit mental prayer for any occupation, for it is the sustenance of your soul.
6. Do not omit examination of conscience because of any of your occupations, and for every fault do some penance.
7. Be deeply sorry for any time that is lost or that passes without your loving God.
8. In all things, both high and low, let God be your goal, for in no other way will you grow in merit and perfection.
9. Never give up prayer, and should you find dryness and difficulty, persevere in it for this very reason. God often desires to see what love your soul has, and love is not tried by ease and satisfaction.
10. In heaven and on earth, always the lowest and the last place and office.
11. Never interfere in what you are not ordered to do, nor be obstinate about anything, even though you may be right. And if, as the saying goes, they give you an inch, do not take a mile. Some deceive themselves in such matters and think they have an obligation of doing that which -if they reflect upon it well- in no way obliges them.
12. Pay no attention to the affairs of others, whether they be good or bad, for besides the danger of sin, this is a cause of distractions and the lack of spirit.
13. Strive always to confess your sins with a deep knowledge of your own wretchedness and with clarity and purity.
14. Even though your obligations and duties are difficult and disagreeable to you, you should not become dismayed, for this will not always be so. And God, Who proves the soul by a precept under the guise of a trial, will after a time accord it the experience of its own blessing and gain.
15. Remember always that everything that happens to you, whether prosperous or adverse, comes from God, so that you neither become puffed up in prosperity nor discouraged in adversity.

16. Remember always that you came here for no other reason than to be a saint; thus let nothing reign in your soul which does not lead you to sanctity.

17. Always be more disposed toward giving to others than giving to yourself, and thus you will not be envious of nor selfish toward your neighbor. This is to be understood from the viewpoint of perfection, for God is angered with those who do not give precedence to His good pleasure over that of men.

OTHER COUNSELS

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

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

3. Abandon evil, do good, and seek peace.

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

5. He is humble who hides in his own nothingness and knows how to abandon himself to God.

6. He is meek who knows how to suffer his neighbor and himself.

7. 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.

8. Anyone who trusts in himself is worse than the devil.

9. Anyone who does not love his neighbor abhors God.

10. Anyone who is lukewarm in his work is close to falling.

11. Whoever flees prayer flees all that is good.

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

13. Suffering for God is better than working miracles.

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

[The above excerpts are from the book: The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross, Published by the Institute of Carmelite Studies, Washington, D.C., Translated by Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D. and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D.]