



*Dear Faithful, Saint Francis de Sales wrote many letters...but of course never to our congregation...I am happy to give you this spiritual Wink today! An occasion to know better our Patron!*

*...A letter from Saint Francis de Sales to the congregation at Saint Walburge's!*

*To my dears sons of Saint Walburge,*

*I take up my plume this morning to address St. Walburge's with great affection. Although it will not be a cherub's feather, I hope our conversation will be entirely seraphic.*

*Yes, I write to you with affection, for I am very human!*

And it must be confessed, you are all very dear to me, since you are a my little children.

Indeed, I am the patron of your Institute; does not this patronage spread over your good flock? Certainly, you are not the good folk of Savoy, but kind and decent English people. . .and we need bees here and there to make the pollen of grace.

I was called the Doctor of Love; yet I was angry and carried away. Now, my son, I must indeed tell you the secret of that cordiality which has made me a doctor of charity.

I tell you everything: work to acquire sweetness or meekness of heart towards your neighbor!

Meekness you see, is the flower of charity, the sweet one, does not offend anyone, endures and endures willingly those who hurt him, finally suffers patiently the blows, and does not desire evil. He who is gentle is never troubled, but tempers all these words in humility, conquering evil with good. It is

better to have to account for too much meekness than too much severity - is not God all love?

God the Father is the father of mercy, God the Son is called a lamb, God the Holy Spirit shows itself in the form of a dove which is meekness itself. If he had something better than sweetness, Jesus Christ would have told us, and yet he only gives us two lessons to learn from him: meekness and humility of heart. Do you want to prevent me from teaching the lesson that God has given me? And are you more knowledgeable than God?

But I feel, my son, that your parishioners and you are wondering about the work of the grace in me. I am willing to go and confess that my gentleness was born at the foot of the cross. It is an assemblage of small modest and hidden virtues.

But which ones, will you ask?

Humility, patience, respectful courtesy and the sincere esteem of others - this esteem arises from the supernatural love of souls and the service of others.

Sometimes you may welcome someone resentfully, being a little unkind, with somewhat dry and derogatory comments... let me teach you gentleness!

But why are you not meek? Why? It is because you are unhappy. Dissatisfied with yourself, dissatisfied with others who are unfriendly or do not make you welcome.

Above all, you must work to have peace of mind within yourself. Of course, sometimes our neighbour will be unpleasant, and quite often we will not understand why!

His countenance, , and the tone of his voice... We have reasons to think him unpleasant: his tics, his manner of speaking, his differences of language, his ways of acting. We must consider our neighbor in God. You cannot separate love of God from love of neighbor. This sweetness of heart will cost you a lot: bearing with our brother is often crucifying.

Sometimes it is not paid back, but do not fear - in the heart of God all is grace! I would like to tell you a word about our first neighbor who is next to you: even a kind neighbor can irritate us. There will be these importunities, his different

opinions, his forgetfulness, his ways of showing affection - particularly if he is in our family or close to us. I do not hide from you, dear Saint Walburge's congregation, that we are more likely to fall and sin when it comes to a lack of patience and gentleness within ourselves, in our families, with those who live with us. It is here that we are careless and relax our efforts.

So the forgetfulness of a servant was enough to rush us into anger; Even his eagerness to please us irritates, and if we are tired or sick, we become intolerable and odious to those around us ... I still remember smiling when my servant one winter evening had forgotten to light my apartments. So I had to accompany up a dark staircase a great lord who had come to visit me! "Do you know my dear friend?", I later said to the oblivious servant, "that two bits of candle could have cost us this evening ten crowns of honor?"

You must acquire gentleness towards your own, and I mean in your household. Do not be soft but be gentle, and I say sweet and sweet. It is necessary to think of it, when entering the house, leaving it, being there in the morning, at 12:00, at

all hours. We must pay careful attention to this for a while, and the rest of the time almost forget it a little. Bear patiently the imperfections of those in the house and you will become saints.

In that struggle to obtain gentleness, let me recount you some traits of my life which I will illustrate, and the ardour with which I set out to battle, and the resistance of my nature.

I remember the day when the sacristan rang the bell before I finished my sermon! I got angry! One day under the insult I felt the anger bubbling in my brain like water in a boiling vase.

My dear children, how can you be a missionary if you are not gentle? I recommend to you the spirit of sweetness, which is the one that delights hearts and wins souls. One must have gentleness to the very end towards one's neighbor, even to the point of silliness, and never use revenge towards those who do not do as they should. Believe that if we lose something for this, our Lord will reward us well. It would be a miracle if

someone could truly convince us, that that gentleness and courtesy are incomparably more honorable than violence and pride.

My dear children, I must leave you, because teaching you sweetness, I guess at the same time your desire that this epistle ends and God knows that I would not rile you! I leave you in the arms of the meekest of the meek: "o dulcis virgo Maria."

Be gentle, be humble, and the reign of the heart of Jesus will come.

Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva. (interpreted by Canon Cristofoli...)