Maxims of the Little Institute

Jean Pierre Medaille, SJ, founder of the Sisters of Saint Joseph, composed one hundred short sayings to help the first sisters grow in virtue. The word virtue means strength and he wanted all to develop the habits of heart and mind that were "in Christ Jesus."

Father Medaille envisioned the "little design" to be the Congregation of God's great love. For the members that meant experiencing God's unbounded love for them and living that love in the service of the dear neighbor. The maxims were both practical and inspirational. Some have divided the maxims this way:

Structure of the Maxims of the Little Institute:

1-11 — present the spirituality of the Sisters of St. Joseph
12-43 — describe our relationship with God **GOD** SELF OTHERS
44-61 — describe our relationship with others **OTHERS** GOD SELF
62-90 — describe our relationship with self **SELF** OTHERS GOD
91-100 — provide a summary of the spirituality

Note that though we structure these maxims as emphasizing God, others, self, one facet is never seen as separate from the others

Text of the Maxims by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Updated version of the Maxims by the Students of Susan Wilcox, CSJ

Commentary on the Maxims by Mary Helen Kashuba SSJ

The Maxims of Perfection

Wisdom Sayings of Jean-Pierre Medaille SJ

Over three centuries ago, a young Jesuit priest, very enlightened in the interior life, wrote these pearls of wisdom under the inspiration of the Spirit of Love, for all persons who aspire to holiness of life in the midst of the world.

1. Keep always in mind the aim of your vocation which is sublime; and never do anything which contradicts the commitment to a life full of modesty, gentleness, and holiness.

2. Take it as a general rule for your inner being, for your virtues, and for your actions, that "you must be made perfect just as your God is perfect" (Mt. 5:48); that is to say, embrace in all things what will bring about the greater glory of God, be more conformable to God's holy will, and be more pleasing in God's sight.

3. Empty yourself continually in honor of the Incarnate Word who emptied himself with so much love for you (Phil.2:7). Make your commitment to live in the practice of the most sincere, true, and profound humility possible to you. Do so on all occasions, to everyone but especially to God, from who must come all the blessings of your institute.

4. Live, as much as you can, in such a way that your life, in honor of the Holy Spirit, may be a continual act of the most pure and perfect charity that you are able to practice toward God.

5. Esteem the world and its vanities no more than dung. (Phil. 3:8) Let the world be crucified to you and you to it; (Gal.6:14) that is to say, "despise the world which is only illusion" (1 Cor. 7:31) and reject its maxims which are full of deceit and impiety.

6. "Put aside your old self" so that you can put on the new," (Eph. 4:22-24) and accordingly lead a life dead to the world and to self-love, full of gentleness, humility of heart, true sincerity, modesty, interior and exterior peace, and of charity toward the neighbor; in a word, (a life) completely modeled on the holiness and the pleasing virtues of Jesus which you should develop in yourself. Thus you can by grace draw many people who will profit by your example and your conversations.

7. In the manifestation of zeal characteristic of your very humble vocation, imitate the fervor of the most zealous and embrace in desire the salvation and perfection of a whole world in a spirit replete with a true humility and a generous courage. This will bring you to wish to do everything, to suffer everything, and to undertake everything for the advancement of the glory of God and the salvation of the dear neighbor.

8. Root the strength of your resolutions and the hope of the success of your undertakings in the knowledge of your great weakness and the total mistrust of self, as well as in the firm and assured confidence you ought to have in God, for whom nothing is impossible and who will always assist you in everything you undertake for God's glory through the movement of God's grace and according to the orders of obedience.

9. Shun always and with repulsion all vanity, self-complacency, and infidelity to grace as plagues which infect good works and interfere with the action of divine grace on the living out of your life.

10. Speak neither well nor ill of yourself without necessity; have no esteem of yourself nor of what you do, since what you are and can do is nothing before God, and since anyhow you are full of imperfections which would make you despise yourself were they known to you.

11. Always speak favorably of others and value highly the good in them, excusing and covering up, in the best way you can, the deficiencies they might have.

12. Choose to bear all the evils of time rather than the least of eternity, all the evils of nature rather than the least deprivation of grace, since all kinds of reasons illumined by faith teach you to live according to this truth.

13. Consequently, accept without hesitation the loss of all good and the suffering of all evil, rather than the failure; however slight, to fulfill the holy will of God.

14. Be completely humble since whatever you are, whatever you have, and whatever you do for yourself and others depends on a pure mercy and an infinite condescension of God. If you are not humble in every way, you make yourself unworthy of these and of the assistance of God's graces.

15. Likewise, be very faithful to the grace of the Holy Spirit, listening attentively, obeying promptly and entirely, attributing to the Holy Spirit, as is indeed just, the honor resulting from the success of your good actions.

16. In everything and everywhere, have only God, God's will and God's glory before your eyes, and make no account of anything else.

17. Desire little in this world, and what you do desire, desire that very little. And better yet, live without desire and without set plans. Abandon yourself, surrendering very gently, to the very loving Providence of God your Love.

18. Make so perfect a sacrifice of self and of will that you are empty of self from this time on, and thus you will no longer be able to choose deliberately anything except that God's will be completely and perfectly accomplished in you, by you, and among all others.

19. Recognize and cherish tenderly this very loving will in all that happens in your life, whatever this may be, and in all the orders of your superiors, unless something manifestly sinful is commanded.

20. Apply yourself seriously and totally to perform with perfection the present will of God without diverting yourself from it, to the detriment of your obligations, by considering uselessly what will be intimated and manifested to you in due time and place.

21. Desire neither praise nor reward for your good works in this life and you will have deeper and fuller life in eternity.

22. On the contrary, behave in such a manner that your good actions are hidden in time and known to God alone, to appear only in eternity and even never to appear, if God so wills.

23. Love nothing but God and what can be called divine.

24. Be utterly given to God by a holy self-surrender, utterly for God by a love pure and completely unselfish, utterly in God by a continuing effort to be more conscious of God's presence, utterly according to God by a will, a life and everything conformed to God.

25. Be happy in all things about God's glory solely, regardless of who furthers it, and be happier yet when others seem noticeably to advance that glory more than you do.

26. Seek in everything God's contentment and not anything else, and the better to practice this, remember in the entire living out of your life, in desolation, in sickness, etc., to desire God's greater contentment without giving a thought to your own interests.

27. Seek out the interior and hidden life of Jesus in so far as the activities of zeal allow.

28. Be sad over the world's notice of you or affection for you and be convinced that such notice and affection are wasted on anyone who so little merits it; and, on the contrary, desire only that the preoccupation and affection of people be, like that of the angels, of God alone and for God alone.

29. Believe with St. Teresa the truths of your religion with a firmer faith when they are more difficult to understand. (Autobiography, Ch. XIX.)

30. And do the same in the practice of hope. When in your actions and plans there is little likelihood of success of human aid and more difficulties oppose you, trust in God far more.

31. In your greatest troubles and dangers hope with a firm confidence not that God will comfort or deliver you but that God will effect in you and through you God's holy and loving will and live perfectly at peace with this hope.

32. When you happen to be abandoned by creatures, and even by God if God takes away sensible graces, remember the abandonment of the dear Savior on the cross and tenderly cherish your own in consideration of his.

33. If it glorifies God, desire to be as pleasing to God by each of your actions as the (holiest) persons in this world would be by the practice of the same action.

34. In your undertakings, see to it that God alone is their inspiration and their goal; that in their execution you never turn aside from God's holy will, and as for the result, remain completely indifferent whether they succeed or not, desiring that in all and by all the will of God would be perfectly fulfilled, a will that you should equally recognize and love when your plans are delayed and even destroyed and when you see their advancement and successful development.

35. Convince yourself that wherever you are and whatever you do God sees you clearly and distinctly; do not do in God's presence what you would not dare to do in the presence of a person you should esteem.

36. Let your affections and actions be guided by reason and duty and not by caprice and natural inclinations.

37. Ask nothing and refuse nothing, unless you judge it absolutely necessary after having prayed to God. Even in that case let it be done as a simple proposal together with a complete resignation whether this proposal is accepted or not.

38. Never complain about anyone but yourself.

39. Be nothing to yourself and be utterly given to God and to the neighbor.

40. Love nothing that is not eternal.

41. Tend solely and lovingly to resemble the dear Savior perfectly and in all things. Let him live in you and you live utterly in him.

42. Long solely and constantly for the great love of God and of our Savior Jesus, but long for it without over eagerness.

43. Be, at least in desire, the poorest of people, the most humble and humbled, the most pure and obedient, in order to become like the One who was all that, the divine exemplar according to whom you should form yourself.

44. Never do anything which contradicts the pursuit of holiness.

45. Always be serious when you are with others, but let it be a joyful seriousness, courteous and full of a gentle and reserved simplicity.

46. Live with the Lord on the cross. Die to pleasures and to vanity. Live only for God and die completely to self.

47. When there is question of many things to be done at the same time in the community and the choice is given to you, choose what is more lowly and difficult, and leave to others what is easier and brings more honor.

48. Pursue above all the pure glory of God, your salvation and perfection, the salvation and perfection of the neighbor, and not the satisfaction and consolation often found in these pursuits.

49. Whenever there is no danger that God will be offended or less honored, manifest all the compliance possible towards the neighbor. Whatever difficulty you may experience in that, do not let it appear, showing a joyful countenance full of gentleness, as if you found great happiness in what is painful to you. Whatever you do for the dear neighbor, do it with the same feeling of devotion and of charity as if you were doing it for the very person of Jesus Christ.

50. Prefer always the will and the contentment of others to your own will and contentment and do so even with a happy and joyful heart, provided, of course, as has been said, that God is not offended by it not less honored.

51. Give all the happiness you can to those who give you a great deal of unhappiness, and give it willingly.

52. Interpret all things from the best possible point of view.

53. Keep an ever free heart which clings to nothing terrestrial, whatever might be the appearances of good.

54. Empty yourself of all human respect and of the least blameworthy concession, and declare, with a generous heart, never to yield in anything that would be against God's will.

55. When you work for the neighbor do it with a very unselfish love which expects no reward for its services, and aim at nothing other than helping him or her and being at the same time pleasing to God.

56. Be troubled instead of being complacent if it happens that what you do satisfies people, since, according to St. Paul, it seems that those who are pleasing to others are not the servants of Jesus Christ.

57. At the end of your good works, give all the glory to our dear Savior, who by his death has truly become the inspiration of your life and of your good works.

58. Convince yourself of this truth, that you scarcely do anything in this world but place drawbacks in the path of God's grace.

59. Believe, after success in your good works, that the sins you have committed while doing them will have caused much less progress than God had reason to expect from your cooperation.

60. Love and strive after, especially, the interior gentleness of your soul, living in peace and in the tranquility of all your passions, and outwardly doing all things without over eagerness and bearing what you must bear without any complaint or murmuring or anxiety whatsoever.

61. Strive also wholeheartedly after the peaceful and intimate union with God, very cordial charity and forbearance towards the neighbor, really innocent purity of heart, very perfect fidelity to grace joined to a peaceful death to all natural inclinations, very true humility, simplicity and sincere candor, the obedience of a child who looks for no reason, poverty completely stripped, continual joy of spirit appropriate to your Institute, IN A WORD, attain the pure and perfect love of God which explains all these things.

62. Be constant in the way of life and virtue you have chosen, changing nothing about it except to improve it.

63. Do not consider unfortunate events as obstacles but as aids and cherish them, whatever they may be, as effects of the gentle and loving Providence of God.

64. Strive to be kind always to everyone and unkind to no one.

65. Be exact and diligent to do what you are advised or what is required by your duties, especially when these are useful or necessary for the neighbor.

66. Be courageous to undertake what God wants of you and constant to persevere in what you undertake, never giving up, whatever difficulties occur and whatever obstacles may be placed in your path unless you become totally powerless against them.

67. Accordingly, pursue to the very end and with gentleness and vigor what you have once and for all resolved and what you prudently believe corresponds to the greater glory of God.

68. Consider as suspect any desire that is overeager and capable of distracting you from more necessary and obligatory occupations.

69. Never think of tomorrow unless it has some necessary link with today, but entrust it entirely to Providence.

70. Never be curious regarding the decisions superiors have in mind for you, but await them all from God's hand, and desire this knowledge only at God's appointed time without over eagerness to be informed sooner.

71. Live content with the work obedience gives you, applying yourself to do it carefully, unwilling to tolerate the slightest thought of change, until obedience orders it.

72. Be always ready to obey peacefully, indifferent to all that is not against God's will: to live ore to die, to be healthy or ill, happy or unhappy, loved or persecuted, finding always your complete contentment solely in fulfilling God's will.

73. Live out your life with one desire only: to be always what God wants you to be, in nature, grace, and glory, for time and for eternity.

74. Obey promptly, joyfully, and simply, without allowing, if you are able, a single thought of reluctance or refusal or without interjecting a single word between the order and the execution, unless it would obviously be a sin.

75. Desire that people have a modest opinion of you and a good one of others; be uneasy when you are considered important and very much at ease when others are.

76. Hide, as well as is possible to you, the ever so little grace God bestows on you; reveal, should an opportunity offer, what allows you to be less esteemed, but do this with discretion.

77. Fulfill all the duties of the great and true love of God, and you will fulfill the rest.

78. "Glory" in contempt, and accept embarrassment not only patiently but also joyfully and gratefully. It is, as a matter of fact, in embarrassment and in contempt that great souls find an endless source of grace, merit, and heavenly blessings.

79. Be undisturbed if others have more intelligence and ability than you, more grace and even more virtue when God has so willed it, finding your contentment only in the accomplishment of God's contentment.

80. Consider as certain that, when you commit fewer faults and practice virtue more easily, you are not more holy but only more indebted to God and to God's grace, such grace often makes beginners more devoted in good works and less prone to faults than holiness consists in something utterly hidden and known to God alone.

81. Whatever the virtue you recognize in yourself, never turn away from a true fear of God, conscious that God's judgments are unfathomable and that God's appraisals are quite different from ours.

82. Consider as certain that in the practice of zeal there is nothing so good as peaceful and disinterested desires for God's glory. God mercifully grants these desires to completely unworthy creatures.

83. However pure your intentions and your views seem, convince yourself that, in some hidden recess of these intentions, you are still seeking self.

84. Never go ahead of grace by an imprudent eagerness, but quietly await its movements, and, when it comes to you, go along with it with great gentleness, humility, fidelity, and courage.

85. Advance good works until they are almost finished; and then, whenever possible, let them be completed by someone else who will receive the honor.

86. Be above everything that is not God, not allowing yourself to be dominated by any earthly creature but keep all subject to reason.

87. Put no more value on any apparent virtues you may notice in yourself than on deceptive images, reminding yourself always that what is in you and from you is only illusion and sin, and that, even when you have done all, you are an "unprofitable servant." (Lk. 17:10)

88. Be careful about the good use of time which is so precious, not losing a minute of it, devoting and offering it to God unreservedly with very pure and noble intentions.

89. Profit from the opportunities that arise to practice the general virtues in their highest degree.

90. Accomplish with great diligence and perfection everyday actions and unexpected ones.

91. Be a person of such greatness that what is not God will be nothing, and embrace gently and eagerly great apostolic undertakings when the Holy Spirit urges you to this; but, according to this same maxim, whatever you do or suffer, let your heart find it a trifle, as indeed it is, in comparison with the grandeur of God and the worth of God's sovereign perfection.

92. Do not imagine that you have arrived at the true love of God before that holy love has entirely emptied you of every king of vanity, cowardice, heedlessness, sensuality, earthly attachment and affection; in a word, all natural inclination, in order to bring you to live by the movements of grace and by the maxims of the Church and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

93. For the three faculties of your soul desire this perfection: for the memory to forget things and self in order to remember little else but God; for the intellect, to see God in all things: God's glory, God's will, God's contentment solely; for the will, the one freedom to go to God, to love God, to embrace all the dictates of God's Providence with all the love of your heart.

94. Be watchful and take care not to be deceived; in living out your life, by the devil masquerading as an angel of light; the devil often incites us to take the movements of nature for the movements of grace and inner, somewhat deceptive instincts for true inspirations or revelations of God.

95. Develop fully in yourself indifference and resignation to the will of God; abandonment of self once and for all to the comforting bosom of Providence; a loving acquiescence to all the orders of God's good pleasure, whatever may be the circumstances of your life; a tender affection for the very pure will of God; an ardent desire to be entirely according to God's heart. All these expressions describe for you, in a variety of ways, the perfect conformity of your will to God's which constitutes your entire perfection.

96. When you are fortunate enough to possess the presence of grace and the desirable effects of God's love, remember that this great good is something lent rather than belonging to you, it belongs to the Savior Jesus, from whose merits this good comes, more than it belongs to you, this same Savior may take it away from you when he pleases without doing you wrong, and if he ever withdrew his graces, the goo in you would vanish like smoke.

97. When you meet contradictions, strengthen yourself against human fears, continuing to hope when everything seems to throw you into hopelessness regarding the success of your undertakings.

98. Furthermore, when burdened with great crosses, do not let your heart yearn for death. Let it be enough for you to be crucified with Jesus Christ, as much as and in a way that it is pleasing to God; and, regarding every circumstance of your life and death, let God decide.

99. For the understanding and the practice of the Maxims of Great Virtue, union with God is absolutely necessary because all virtue, ours and everyone else's, is nothing other than a continual influence of graces accompanied on our part by a faithful correspondence; and because these graces God communicates more or less abundantly according as one is more or less in union with God. Therefore, work tirelessly towards the total union with God. Therefore, work tirelessly towards the total union of your soul with God.

100. The virtues which will help you acquire and maintain this union and which will be a summary of your little institute are: a great and, I dare say, boundless purity of heart and of intention; a very profound and genuine humility in all things and in every situation a perfect mortification of self-love, of judgment, of will, and even (with discretion) of the senses, which should go far as emptying self of the slightest traces of natural inclination; a very faithful obedience to all the movements of grace; a sincere simplicity, accompanied nonetheless with a great prudence; a contempt of and total detachment from all creatures and a complete stripping of self; the peace and gentleness that endures and acts without anxiety and without over eagerness; the total self-abandonment into the hands of Providence with a dependence that is absolute; the love of solitude and of prayer, apart from the time set for the works of zeal; the very perfect love of neighbor, which loves every kind of person purely, constantly, and equally in God and for God; finally, the pure love of God which leads souls to dwell in thought of God and makes it difficult for them to live remote from God's presence.

Available in booklet form with reflections by Marcia Allen, CSJ, Sisters of Saint Joseph, Concordia,KS

Dude! Stay focused on what's important in life. Don't let the crazy stuff distract you.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 2

You are made in God's image.

It's a pretty spectacular heritage.
Live up to it!

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 3

Learn to see your ego and how it operates and then choose love.

Gentleness can rule the day!

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 4

Keep your relationships sacred!

It’s all that really matters, right?

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 5

Don’t worship money, status and power.

It always ends badly.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 6

Keep evolving yourself.

Other people find that attractive.

Adapted from Love's Design by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 7

Be courageous!
Don’t wimp out just because it’s impossible.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 8

Nobody achieved anything all alone.

A gratitude check is standard wellness practice.

Adapted from Love's Design by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 9

Avoid the plague of the unaware self.

It can be very ugly.

Adapted from Love's Design by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 10

Forget yourself.

Be transparent.

It’s so much easier.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 11

Look for the good in people. Even if it's hard.

It's there somewhere.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 14

Remember, God's love is holding you up, every second, no matter what.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 12

Adopt a positive worldview.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 13

Go out there and make the creator of the universe look amazing!

You can contribute something to 14 billion years of evolution!

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 15

Wait for it...

Listen for what you are being called to.

Then just do it!

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 16

Practice love and gratitude.

Everywhere.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 17

Abandon the desires
of the ego.
Be led…. by love.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 18

Be ONE with Love's Design!

History and Practice of Joy 101

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 19

Synchronicity happens. Cherish it and it will keep on happening.

Synchronicity: meaningful coincidence

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 20

Be serious to the task of being awake to your soul.

Seriously!

Adapted from Love's Designs by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 21

Don’t worry about getting credit for your good work, just enjoy the beauty of it.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 22

Desire a sense of self that doesn't need publicity.

Adapted from Love's Designs by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 23

Seek a heart fully engaged!

It’s full throttle, baby.

Adapted from Love’s Designs by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 24

Find God in all things.

It’s like being a treasure hunter.

Adapted from Love’s Designs by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 25

When someone takes off with what you have started.

Be grateful and joyful!

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 26

Keep heart, action and desire in alignment with Love's Design

Adapted from Love's Designs by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 27

Avoid mediocrity.

It’s really boring.

Adapted from Love’s Designs by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 28

On occasion give yourself a reality check--"I am not the center of the world."

Adapted from Love's Designs by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 29

In times of darkness, dig in deeper to find the light within you.

It's there. Really!

Adapted from Love's Designs by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 30

When someone tells you, “can’t be done”

prove them wrong :)

Adapted from Love’s Designs by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 31

In times of trouble, just open yourself to be an instrument of Love's Design.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 32

Don’t reject or judge what life is offering you.

Be present to it.

It makes all the difference.

dapted from Love’s Designs by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 33

Do have role models, but choose enlightened ones.

Enlightened: having a loving understanding of how people and creation should be treated.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 34

Nothing that you do for good is wasted even if it seems like it fell flat.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 35

God knows you fully.

So no need to act a fool unnecessarily.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 36

Tell yourself stories that keep your goal in sight.

Stay on track.

Adapted from Love's Designs by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 37

Do the best you can and then let it go.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 38

Don’t complain about anyone except yourself.

Yes, really.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 39

Be of service to the world!

The best service is one that shares your gifts and gives you life!

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 40

Devote yourself to what lasts forever.

Everything else is as temporary as that last common hour anyway.

Adapted from Love's Designs by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 41

Be gentle with yourself, the dear neighbor and creation.

We are <u>all</u> still evolving.

Adapted from Love's Designs by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 42

Live in the creative tension rather than your own headstrong impulses.

There are less headaches.

Adapted from Love's Designs by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 43

The way to the front of the line is to keep putting others ahead of you.

I know…it's a mystery

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 44

Remember, you're in a journey of love, not a rat race.

Adapted from Love's Designs by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 45

Mind your intentions when you are with others, but

DO have parties!

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 46

Let go of your ego to free your whole self.

It’s way less complicated.

Adapted from Love’s Designs by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 47

Let someone else be the star!

It won’t kill you.

Adapted from Love’s Designs by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 48

Don’t forget the end game: Love’s Design

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 49

Act, if only in behavior toward everyone, the same way you would act towards your beloved.

Just don’t be creepy with anyone.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 50

Orient yourself towards giving.

It can be contagious!

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 51

If someone disregards you, know that they probably have issues. Meet their disregard with regard!

It changes the dynamic.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 52

Interpret all things from the best possible point of view.

The universe will return the favor!

Adapted from Love's Designs by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 53

Don’t judge good or bad. Remember, God knows something you don’t know.

Plus it’s better to think outside a binary system.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 54

Yeah, you look good and are doing well, but strive for greatness of heart! It's way less trivial.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 55

Be in service to the dear neighbor without reward.

Love’s Design has it’s own reward!

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 56

Don’t go along to get along.

It’s more trouble than it’s worth.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 57

When things are popping in your life, don't think it's you that made it happen.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 58

Laugh at yourself.

It frees the heart for service.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 59

Being with God and the dear neighbor and all of creation is the same movement.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 60

Life has tension. Choose peacefulness.

It lowers your blood pressure.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 61

Be present to the moment.

The goal is a social order of love.

Minus the -isms.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 62

Your an incomplete work of art.
Don’t ever stop working on yourself.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 63

Don’t consider unfortunate events as obstacles.
Be creative.

Ask yourself--
what is the opportunity here?

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 64

Make a practice of being kind all the time.

Directions: Reflect on your actions and attitudes and let your past inform the present.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 65

Be a responsible person.

It pays off in the end.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 66

Don’t give up on Love’s Design until it’s totally obvious that this is the wrong direction.

Obstacles are to be expected when you’re trying to change the world.

Adapted from Love’s Designs by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 67

Remember who you are.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 68

There are a lot of distractions out there. Try not to get caught up in them.

Tweeting it, is not the same as doing it.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 69

Stay present to the moment and the future will take care of itself.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 70

God's timing is the priority. You will know what you need to at the right time.

It's still a good idea to turn your assignments in on time.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 71

Generally, respond to life with a joyful simplicity and with a sense of contentment.

Needless worrying and complexifying solves nothing anyway.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 72

Align your desires with
Love's Design
Be Peace!

Nothing is so strong as gentleness… (St. Francis de Sales)

Adapted from Love's Designs by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 73

Get caught up in Love's Design and revel in it!

You'll wake up joyful like a young child.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 74

Don’t resist Love’s Design.

Clue: If there’s resistance, there’s unchecked ego

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 75

Resist being put on a pedestal!

You could fall and break your neck.

Adapted from Love's Designs by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 76

Keep your rewards to yourself unless you are asked.

Bragging is not attractive anyway.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 77

Always keep in mind the goal of creating a social order of love and don't get lost in details!

Adapted from Love's Designs by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 78

Embarrassment and criticism sometimes serves to temper the ego.

Don’t worry or stress, it pretty much happens to everyone.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 79

Don’t stress if you notice that others are doing a better job than you in Love’s Design.

It’s a joint effort, not a competition.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 80

When good things happen to you, pay it forward!

And don't forget to act on behalf of
our Mother Earth.

Adapted from Love's Designs by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 81

Always remember that God knows something you don't know.

This is what we call mystery.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 82

We're all subject to the flaws of being human. God empowers us anyway.

It's good to be mindful... you can cause a lot of damage otherwise.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 83

Have good intentions in whatever you do but always mind your ego.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 84

Put on the brakes!

And wait for grace.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 85

Lead a project through and then step out and let someone else finish and get the credit.

It’s too cool for words.

Adapted from Love’s Designs by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 86

Be reasonable and don’t go off the deep end unless it’s for Love’s Design.

Adapted from Love’s Designs by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 87

Don’t project on yourself or others.

Projections aren’t accurate anyway.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 88

The moments of your life are precious. Use them well.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 89

Be your best as much as possible!

The returns are highest.

Adapted from Love's Designs by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 90

Love's Design calls you to your whole self to the best you are able.

The best things always do.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 91

Creating a social order based on love is the big time, so bring your A game!

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 92

God is never finished with you.

So never think that you've arrived.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 93

Be dynamic: keep focused, see God in all things, and embrace what comes.

Being static is boring anyway.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 94

Deceit is out there,

so

be awake!

Don’t overly stress about it though.

Adapted from Love’s Designs by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 95

Develop yourself as fully as possible!

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 96

All your beauties and talents are just borrowed.

Remember who owns them.

Adapted from Love's Designs by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 97

Sometimes life is tough, but you can handle it.

Develop a courageous heart.

Adapted from Love's Designs by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 98

When times are tough, find solidarity with those who suffer without having a voice.

Adapted from Love's Designs by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 99

God has a continual evolutionary, unfolding love!

It’s the sweet spot, reside there.

Sisters of St. Joseph Maxim 100

Everything in balance: heart, humility, ego, obedience, detachment, peace, gentleness, solitude, prayer, love of neighbor and God.

I see joyful people.

Adapted from Love's Designs by Marcia Allen, CSJ

Commentary on the *Maxims*

Beginnings are wonderful times. This is when dedication is at its height, when obstacles have no meaning, and failure seems impossible. Later on, the very best ideas become institutionalized; rules, formalized, and practices, stereotyped. Jean-Pierre Médaille recognized this profound truth and unconsciously predicted the fate of his own brilliant ardor, when it passed on to succeeding generations. He tells us that our initial burst of enthusiasm is due to grace (Maxim 80), and urges us to be always alert to the moment when God will visit us, as a sort of insurance policy against apathy and self-satisfaction. These and other spiritual counsels ensure the permanence of a message that has survived since the seventeenth century.

Jean-Pierre Médaille was born in Carcassonne, a medieval fortified city in southern France, in 1610, where he received his early education from the Jesuits. He joined them in 1626, and after his ordination served as teacher, assistant to the directors of schools, and missionary. In 1650 he guided the six women who became the first Sisters of St. Joseph. He excelled in spiritual direction and preaching. He died at Billom in 1669. His principal writings include the *Constitutions of the Little Institute,* the *Règlements (Rules),* the *Eucharistic Letter,* and the *Maxims.* While the first three pertain chiefly to the Sisters of St. Joseph, the *Maxims* reflect a spiritual message appropriate for all who seek union with God.

The first group of women who undertook the mission envisioned by Médaille were hardly distinguishable from their neighbors. They came from ordinary backgrounds, only two of them literate. Likewise, only two could promise any sort of meager dowry, one of the main reasons why they could not even consider entering a monastery. None of the first Sisters was a native of Le Puy, but came from the surrounding villages, noted for their poverty. The superior, Françoise Eyraud, could not read or write, but she did manage the hospice of Montferrand with such competence that she was elected a member of the Town Council! Moreover, the countryside around Le Puy in south-central France, is rugged and poor, and the climate harsh, hardly conducive to agriculture. Yet most people were, and still are, farmers. Le Puy has been a center of Marian pilgrimages since medieval times, thus receiving many travelers. Lace-making, practiced by the first sisters and many other townspeople, also contributed to the importance of the city. However, these factors did not alleviate the harsh conditions of the people. Thus the work of the new institute found fertile ground.

The women who composed the early congregations of St. Joseph in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries consisted of three groups: the more highly organized “city or town” members, the less-structured “country” members, and a third group of women, who lived in their own homes, but were associated with the first two in various ways. While the members of the first two groups tended at first to come from the working or peasant classes, and later from the rising middle class, the women associated with the congregation came from all social classes, some even affluent. Their wealth contributed to the success of the projects undertaken by the sisters. Their status according to the social norms of the time did not permit them to become full members, although Father Médaille seems to have considered them as such if they possessed the spirit of the congregation. Two centuries later, the Sisters of St. Joseph might never have come to America without the help of the Countess de la Rochejaquelin, who funded the expedition. Others participated in less dramatic, but equally important roles.

Mary Helen Kashuba

Commentary on the *Maxims*

When Médaille wrote the *Maxims*, a literary form popular at the time, he intended them for all three groups whom he called “daughters of St. Joseph.” While he does not speak of “sons,” it is hardly possible that the women “associates” did not share the same spiritual instruction with their husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons. In fact, Médaille recommends that the women in the confraternities guide their husbands in the practice of virtue. Naturally, this would be through the spirituality of the “Little Design,” so well summarized in the *Maxims*. They all partook of the same spiritual heritage which has inspired many generations.

Médaille used a literary form prevalent in his day, called a *maxim*. This is a short pithy sentence which expresses as clearly and concisely as possible a general truth or observation. Like proverbs, maxims can easily be memorized and repeated. The most famous Maxims of the period were published by Jean de La Rochefoucauld in 1665. Médaille wrote his in 1657, but they were not published until 1672 in a posthumous edition at Clermont by H. Jacquard, who praised the eminent sanctity of the author. Although Médaille’s *Maxims* contain many repetitions and abstract expressions, and are written in a somewhat archaic style, they reveal his gentle yet firm soul, his eminent respect for his readers, and his boundless trust in them. He has touched a nerve of truth in each of his Maxims, thereby enabling future generations to make the application to their own situation with relative ease.

In the *Maxims,* Médaille invites women and men to a life of holiness through simple means. He proposes a life-style that gives witness to kindness and simplicity. He emphasizes trust in God and attentiveness to grace at all times. While expecting his readers to aspire to great sanctity, he recognizes that they must proceed one day, and one moment at a time, and not worry about the future. He does not recommend unusual enterprises, but encourages everyday occupations done extraordinarily well. It is the attitude that counts. He believes in right relationships with others, in moderation, and humility. He calls all Christians to love of God and neighbor, through union with them.

In the first place, Médaille reminds his readers of the life-style they have chosen, and the witness they should give. While full of enthusiasm for their works of service, they should give God all the credit for what they accomplish. Their lives should radiate kindness, simplicity, and zeal. "Witness . . . humility," he tells them (3). "You profess (or witness) . . . a life of simplicity, of kindness, and holiness" (1). "Witness . . . before everyone that no one less than God has any power over you" (54). He also reminds his audience to perform their works of service, or zeal "carefully and diligently, "to trust God's grace and not their own merits, to imitate the most zealous people particularly in desire” (7). He tells them, "Serve your neighbor as you would Christ" (49); "Serve your neighbor out of pure love, without looking for any reward. Be motivated solely by a desire to be of service to others . . . “(55).

The great ideal of seventeenth-century France was the classical *aurea mediocritas,* the golden mean, or moderation, nothing to excess. Médaille was an educated man of his own era. His family had been recently ennobled and held a high position in the legal ranks; therefore he was well trained both before and after his entrance into the Jesuits. When he urges his readers to "govern (their) lives by reason and moderation" (86), he is echoing the great Greek thinkers, Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle, and his own contemporaries, such as Descartes and Pascal. These people considered moderation as the highest good. Therefore, in the same spirit, Médaille instructs his readers to "mistrust over-powering desires"

(68), in other words, to control their passions (60). He realizes that self-mastery leads to true interior greatness and makes one available to address the needs of the day (39).

However, moderation never means compromise. "Allow no exceptions on this point" (90) could follow every Maxim, for the spiritual life requires total giving. Thus words that mean: 'always', 'at all times', 'constantly', or 'everything', 'nothing', 'everyone' reappear throughout. There is no question of practicing any one of the virtues he counsels once or twice, or even most of the time. We must be alert at all times, always attentive to grace or to the needs of our neighbor, "always . . . aware of the reason why (we) practice a spiritual life" (1). We must always work for the glory of God, and never for our own interest. Although Médaille considers virtue as an absolute, it must be tempered by moderation and prudence. Especially in the practice of mortification, or penance, he recommends common sense and discretion (76), with no harsh fasts or deprivations.

The *Maxims* contain no rigidity or abrasiveness. They express another seventeenth-century ideal, the *honnête homme/femme*. This term refers to a person who manifests courtesy, refinement, and culture in his or her external conduct, but at the same time possesses a sense of values and is generous and loyal. In reading the *Maxims,* one cannot help noticing Médaille's own personal qualities, where the refined exterior reflects the virtuous soul. He thus becomes a model for his readers. He insists upon appropriate exterior conduct, but never makes this an end in itself. Rather, interior virtue must overflow into external behavior. Because of their union with God at all times, the women and men who follow his counsels will remain calm and at peace, never agitated or disturbed (60). Since they value God's glory and the service of their neighbor so highly, they will never give any outward indication of difficulty in serving others. Moreover, they will "look pleasant and gracious, as if what actually causes (them) pain really gave (them) great pleasure" (49). Their social interactions should provide occasions to be "discreet, but at the same time pleasant and respectful. Let (others) see how simple and gracious you are" (45).

The emphasis on external refinement excludes vanity or superficiality. On the contrary, Médaille never tires of calling his readers back to an ideal of humility which at first sight seems frightening and exaggerated. He uses the word *s'anéantir* which means literally "to make oneself nothing." In the longer version of the Maxims, he also uses *vider* which means "to empty." The modern concept of the self emphasizes the value of each individual, the necessity of believing in one's own worth. Consequently, Médaille's ideal of making ourselves into nothing or of emptying ourselves may seem outdated and irrelevant. However, a closer examination indicates that his advice reflects the timeless truth of the Gospel message.

The kenosis of Christ, "the Incarnate Word, who emptied himself because he loved you" (3) becomes the model of our self-emptying. Saint Paul (Phil. 2:6, 7) explains how Christ freely gave up his glory to become human, and that paradoxically he received everything back when God exalted him. His obedience even to the death on the cross is a sign of contradiction and a stumbling block to women and men, but it remains an inescapable condition for attaining perfection. As only an empty bottle can be filled with a liquid, so God can fill us only if we are empty. Grace cannot fill a soul that is bound by any attachment at all, or that contains a single overpowering desire. If we have any uncontrolled passions,

we are bound to something: to the place where we live, to a person we love, or an object we protect. This does not mean that we cannot love, enjoy, or possess, but it does mean that the inspirations God gives us, the values God indicates, and the sacrifices God inevitably requires must invariably take precedence. If Christ had wished to protect his reputation, or his family and friends, he would not have risked death by proclaiming a revolutionary and uncompromising message. This is the type of "self-emptying" Father Médaille preaches.

If we fail in humility, we are "incapable of receiving (God's) goodness and grace" (14). The many Maxims that urge us to be totally indifferent to the outcome of our projects, accepting success or failure with perfect peace of mind (34), reiterate the need for "self-emptying." The recommendation to welcome misunderstanding and opposition (78) merely means detachment from our opinions. Detachment means less "separation from" than transcendence, rising above everything that is less than God (86). Moreover, Médaille never tells us to despise ourselves, but rather to place no value on the seductions and attractions of the world (5). He places the greatest emphasis on the person, in urging us to serve others with love and devotion, but he warns us repeatedly against seeking our own advantage and interest. He adds that we should not have a high opinion of ourselves, for in reality everything we have and are comes from God (14), not from ourselves. What we have as our very own is sin and failure (87), imperfections, which would make us completely dissatisfied with ourselves if we knew them (10). At first sight this seems a harsh blow to self, yet Médaille recalls the power of God's grace.

If we were always completely faithful to grace, we would be perfect. However, Médaille observes that we often fail, placing self-interest above Gospel values. When we are responsive to grace, the credit is primarily God's, not ours. "Give God the credit he deserves when you succeed in any good work" (15); also, "If God withdrew grace for only a moment, all your good works would fade away like smoke" (96). This does not mean that our efforts are meaningless; on the contrary, our virtue "depends solely on the uninterrupted graces God offers us and on our own cooperation with them" (99).

The concept of grace has fascinated many scholars, and provoked frequent interpretations throughout the ages. In the seventeenth century Jansenists and Jesuits engaged in a famous controversy on this subject. The Jansenists maintained that human nature is basically evil and that grace alone, by itself and without human efforts, makes a person holy. God gives grace when and where he chooses, and decides from all eternity who is to receive it and who will be deprived of it. The Jesuits, on the other hand, taught that human nature has a tendency to evil, but that it is basically good, capable of virtue. Moreover, God gives grace to everyone, "as much as we are willing to accept" (99). Although grace must precede every good action, it is ineffectual without our active cooperation. Therefore it is vital to remain alert to grace at all times. We should be willing to suffer any evils in the natural order rather than resist grace, risk being deprived of it, or fail to respond to even the slightest indications of God's will (12,13).

Médaille's writings support the Jesuit concept of grace. In fact, he seems quite aware of Jansenist- Jesuit debate on the subject, and insists on our response and on the fact that God always gives us grace, while we must be alert to cooperate with it. He is wise enough to know, however, that we may fail to recognize it, so he urges us to be constantly attentive to God's inspirations. He also realizes that this constant state of vigilance may be very difficult to sustain, since we cannot foresee when God will

speak. Therefore he reminds us frequently not to be upset but to trust firmly in God, who can do everything and will always help us (8). This is far from the Jansenist anguish that shows human beings as eternally preordained to be saved or lost, but always ignorant of their fate. Father Médaille insists that we must work for our salvation, but that at the same time we should place all our trust in God whose providence will guide us.

In recognizing these difficulties of life, Father Médaille is realistic. He knew that he was dealing with ordinary people, who would probably never be involved in any great enterprise, much like his own work. We must not think of him as a great spiritual director who spent all his time setting up this new institute. On the contrary, he had other full-time work, and this was just a "little project." He was never missioned at Le Puy, but rather in less important cities, and preached chiefly in rural areas. When he assembled the first Sisters in 1648, he lived at Saint-Flour, about 60 km. (36 ml.) away, a good distance in those days, especially since the terrain was rugged. He mentioned one day to Bishop de Maupas a little plan he had. He had met some young women and widows in his travels throughout the outlying villages. They wanted to do something to serve God but were too poor to enter a monastery, as we have seen. After the group was assembled, Father Médaille seldom returned to Le Puy. In fact, he was assigned to Aurillac in 1650, about twice the distance as Saint-Flour. Evidently his superiors did not consider his "little project" as any more than an added activity, subordinated to his primary work of procurator at various private secondary schools directed by the Jesuits in the area. In a letter he wrote shortly before his death in 1669, he indicates his disappointment at failing to receive news from the Sisters, but at the same time he accepts this as God's will. He probably did not consider this foundation as anything great, but this did not prevent him from wanting each person in it and associated with it to become as holy as possible.

As a true spiritual guide, Médaille knew that the greatest accomplishments were to come from within, in the realm of desire. "Imitate the most zealous people particularly by your ardent desires" (7). Poverty of spirit supersedes actual poverty: “Wish to be the poorest . . . and most obedient (people), if you cannot be so in reality" (43). He encourages people to do the best they can: "Whatever you do, . . . ordinary or extraordinary, do it extraordinarily well" (90). He reminds all that they have a sublime vocation (1), but a very humble profession (7). In other words, the emphasis is on being, rather than on doing. He realizes that it is not what we do, but how and why we do it that will make us great, and that if we trust in God, God will bring us to our desired end.

The Maxims give no specific rules about the choice of work, but say much about how to work. People should look for no praise or reward for their good works (21), since God's glory is all that matters. They should be satisfied that good is done, but not worry about who does it. In fact, they should prefer to see someone else do it rather than themselves (25). Everything they do should conform to the ideal of holiness (44). They should be totally available to their neighbor, especially when he or she does not seem to appreciate their kindness (50, 51). Finally, their works of service should overflow from an interior life of prayer, which they should love to practice whenever their duties permit (27, 100). "Model your lives on Jesus whose holiness and virtues should shine forth in you. You can help many people in this way.” (6).

Obviously, these counsels are not for people who are interested in seeking their own advantage. Indeed, Médaille tells us not to seek our own pleasure but to put others ahead of ourselves at all times, to do what they want (50). Many Maxims apply particularly to our relationships. Here the same principle holds: choose the least appealing task for yourself (47), always affirm other people's good qualities (11), but let your own less desirable traits be evident (76). The rule of total selflessness, of availability, generosity, and complete respect for the sensitivities of others stands out in his recommendations.

On the other hand, it is hard, almost impossible, to place yourself always in a position of deference and consideration for others. Therefore you should not think of it in terms of always, but rather in the light of the present moment. He reminds us often not to "worry about the future, unless it is definitely connected with the present'' (69). We should not be concerned about our future work (70), otherwise our anxiety will work to the detriment of the duty at hand (20). His recommendations about the future are always combined with the assurance that God will help us and God's providence will guide us. Hope is very important, and we should trust in God the most when we seem least likely to succeed (30).

Médaille no doubt realized the difficulties in the spiritual program he proposed. Grounded in the spirit of the Gospel, he frequently recalls the presence of the cross in our lives. He reminds us to live a mortified life in honor of Christ Crucified (46), and speaks often of dying to the world and to self-love (6). He knows that we shall be abandoned as Christ was on the cross and urges us to accept our loneliness and sufferings as our Savior did (32). He encourages us to greatness of soul (91), and this invariably includes the cross. However, he makes no apologies or compromises for the austere doctrine he preaches, for he realizes that if God will not console or rescue us, God will inevitably accomplish his will in us and through us, and this alone is necessary (31).

Médaille's preaches a message uniquely his own, yet one with roots in the Scriptures, in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius and in the spirit of the seventeenth century. The motto of St. Ignatius, "for the greater glory of God," recurs frequently throughout the Maxims. The Ignatian spirit permeates them, for example, the concept of working as if the success of our enterprises depended on us alone, yet maintaining trust in God. Ignatius also encouraged the so-called third degree of humility, which makes us willing to be ill-thought of, opposed, and misunderstood for the love of God (75, 76, 78). We may also trace the emphasis on indifference to our state of mind or body and to the outcome of our efforts (72, 34) to the spiritual doctrine of St. Ignatius. Yet Médaille tempers this rather austere doctrine by emphasizing the importance of relationships modeled on the Trinity.

Médallle took his greatest Biblical inspiration from St. Paul. "Divest yourselves . . . of what you were, and be clothed anew" (6) comes from the Letter to the Galatians. There are four additional direct references to St. Paul, not to mention the doctrine of Christ's emptying or kenosis, which is based on the Letter to the Philippians. Finally, St. Paul's doctrine of freedom marks the Maxims profoundly. Although there are only two direct Gospel quotations, we cannot fail to recognize the evangelical doctrines of humility, detachment, and obedience among the most significant virtues which Médaille counseled.

Finally, Médaille extols the Gospel primacy of love. He tells us to love God as purely and perfectly as possible. In fact, our lives should simply be an act of love (4). If we love God with all our hearts, we

will do all that is necessary and automatically practice every other virtue (77, 61). This is the perfection that he not only encourages every person to attain but expects them to reach. Since they are truly free, unencumbered by self-interest, and completely dedicated to the service of others, he does not doubt that these ordinary people, who practice the simplicity he recommends, will attain true greatness, for their great love of God will compensate for any lack of natural gifts.

Above all, Médaille understood Christ's message, "Love your neighbor as yourself, and love God above all persons and all things." Every Maxim could be tested by this Gospel teaching, and not be found wanting. If we are to empty ourselves, it is because Christ gave us the example, and in following him we go to God in the perfect freedom of love. Unquestioning obedience (61, 74), recalls Christ's limitless love of the Father and of his will. If Médaille were living today, he would be pleased to meet ordinary people who in all humility accept themselves for what they are and aim for holiness by doing ordinary things exceptionally well. Finally, he would commend them for their love of God, for this automatically includes all virtues (61).