

**SELECTED LETTERS OF  
SAINT JANE FRANCES  
DE CHANTAL**

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Selected letters of Saint Jane Frances de Chantal by Jeanne-Françoise de Chantal

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**JEANNE-FRANÇOISE DE CHANTAL**

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SAINT JANE FRANCES  
DE CHANTAL**





ST. JANE FRANCES DE CHANTAL.

*(Foundress of the Order of the Visitation.)*

SELECTED LETTERS OF  
SAINT JANE FRANCES  
DE CHANTAL

TRANSLATED BY  
THE SISTERS OF THE VISITATION  
HARROW

WITH A PREFACE BY  
HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL BOURNE  
ARCHBISHOP OF WESTMINSTER

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1918

## PREFACE

WE are all apt so to idealise the Saints whom we love to study and honour, and strive to imitate, that we are in danger of forgetting that they possessed a human nature like our own, subject to many trials, weaknesses and frailties. They had to struggle as we have to struggle. The only difference is that their constancy and perseverance were greater far than ours.

Biographers are often responsible for the false tendency to which we allude. They like to give us the finished portrait of the Saints, and only too often they omit in great part the details of the long and weary toil that went to make the picture which they delight to paint.

In the case of some of the Saints we are able to come nearer to the reality by reading the letters which have been preserved, in which in their own handwriting they have set down, without thought of those who in later days might read their words, the details of their daily life and struggle. Thus in

the few selected Letters of the holy foundress of the Visitation which are now being published in an English translation we get glimpses of her real character and spiritual growth which may be more helpful to us than many pages of formal biography. In one place she excuses the brevity of a letter because she is "feeling the cold to-day and pressed for time." In another she tells a Sister, "do everything to get well, for it is only your nerves." Nerves are evidently not a new malady nor a lately devised excuse. She knew the weariness of delay: "still no news from Rome. . . . I think His Grace the Archbishop would be glad to help us. . . . Beg him, I beseech you, to push on the matter."

Haste and weather had their effect on her as on us: "I write in such haste that I forget half of what I want to say. . . . We will make a chalice veil for you, but not until the very hot weather is over, for one cannot work properly while it lasts."

What mother, especially in these days of sorrow and anxiety, can read unmoved the Saint's own words as she speaks of her daughter's death, and of her fears about her son. "I am almost in despair . . . so miserable am I about it that I do not know which way to turn, if not to the Providence of God, there to bury my longings, confiding to His hands not only the honour but even the salvation of this already



half lost child. Oh! the incomparable anguish of this affliction. No other grief can come near to it."

And then we feel her mingled grief and joy when at last she learnt that this, her only son, had given up his life, fighting for his King, after a humble and fervent reception of the Sacraments.

Thus in the midst of the daily small worries of life, and of the great sorrows that at one time or other fall to the lot of all, we see a brave and generous soul, with human gifts and qualities like to our own, treading her appointed path to God.

No one can read her words without carrying therefrom fresh courage for his life, and a new determination to battle steadfastly to the end.

FRANCIS CARDINAL BOURNE,  
*Archbishop of Westminster.*

FEAST OF ST. JANE FRANCES  
DE CHANTAL,  
*August 21st, 1917.*



## TRANSLATORS' PREFACE

THE letters here translated are, with a few mentioned exceptions, selected from "Sainte Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot de Chantal: Sa Vie et ses Œuvres," "First edition entirely conformable to the original manuscripts published under the supervision of the religious of the Visitation of Holy Mary at Annecy, by E. Plon and Co., rue Garanciere 10, Paris, 1877."

The rendering cannot be looked upon as entirely literal, but the translators have kept as closely to the original as was consistent with an easy rendering in modern English.

The circular letter to the Sisters of the Visitation (page 152) is a remarkable document worthy of the reader's special attention, as are also the letters to "Dom John of St. Francis" on St. Francis de Sales, and the subtle manifestation of St. Jane Frances' own state of soul in her letter to "A great Servant of God."

It has been thought better to leave the super-