



WHEN THE LORD  
*speaks*  
TO YOUR HEART

DAILY REFLECTIONS



Gaston Courtois



# WHEN THE LORD SPEAKS TO YOUR HEART

DAILY REFLECTIONS

By Gaston Courtois

Translated by Aloysius Owen, SJ

Foreword by James R. Mattaliano, SJ



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# Foreword

At the very beginning of his autobiography, *Confessions*, Saint Augustine, addressing and praising the Lord in prayer, acknowledges: “You have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they find rest in you” (bk. 1, chap. 1). In expressing this, Augustine recognizes the reality of our human existence as being completely dependent upon God who is the fulfillment of all our hopes and desires. Centuries before, King David expressed a similar sentiment when composing Psalm 62: “For God alone my soul waits in silence; / from him comes my salvation” (62:1). Saint Ignatius of Loyola likewise states in the “Principle and Foundation” of the *Spiritual Exercises* that “man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul.” All of these attest to the great longing of the human heart to be in relationship with God who is the source of our life and our hope.

Humanity was created for relationship. We were all created to be in relationship with God as he is in relationship with

himself and with us. Further, we were all created to be in relationship with one another. It is only from living out of this relationship that we find fulfillment and life everlasting. *When the Lord Speaks to Your Heart* by Father Gaston Courtois is precisely about this relationship and God's invitation to enter into and grow in intimate friendship with him.

In my studies in preparation for ordination to the priesthood, one of my professors posited that when God created us in his image and likeness, we were created immediately in his image, but creation in his likeness would be a lifelong process. It is the most fundamental and important pursuit of our lives as we continually conform our lives to his, our words and actions to his, our wills to his, and our hearts to his. Saint Augustine experienced this deep longing in his heart as he sought the Lord to fulfill this yearning. We are all called to rest our hearts in the heart of the Lord. Our hearts ache for this relationship, even if we are unaware of it.

Do we desire this? Do we cry out to God, seeking him with the deep longing and thirst that are depicted in Psalms 63 and 42? Are we willing to enter into a deeper and more intimate relationship with the Lord who constantly beckons us to draw closer? If our response is like that of Augustine, David, Ignatius, and so many others, the question then arises as to how this can be achieved. How can we grow into that deeper, more intimate, and ever richer relationship with the Lord?

First and foremost, we must listen. We must quiet ourselves in order to go within our hearts to where the Lord speaks—quietly, softly, tenderly, and with much love. We must attend to the “still small voice” (see 1 Kings 19:12) where deep calls to deep (Ps



42:7) so that heart can speak to heart. To grow deeper in intimacy with God is to allow ourselves to hunger and thirst for his word while ever longing to seek his presence.

His thoughts must become our thoughts. Thoughts enkindle desires; desires motivate and move us to action. Before a word or action comes into being it exists first as a thought. Words and actions are the perfections of thought. Our thoughts will either nurture our hearts to draw closer to God and the good, or harden our hearts and withdraw them from God, moving them toward evil. We must therefore open our hearts to seek God's Spirit who will speak to them. As the Apostle James encourages us in his letter (4:8): "draw near to God and he will draw near to you."

The very rich reflections that are contained within Father Gaston Courtois' classic book *When the Lord Speaks to Your Heart* provide much food for thought and meditation for the soul seeking to deepen his or her relationship with the Lord. These uplifting reflections are filled with hope, healing, comfort, encouragement, love, and friendship. The thoughts contained within these pages can be seen as his extended hand reaching out to yours to bring you ever further along the journey of going both higher and deeper. They will inspire your heart to join itself ever more fully with the Lord's heart in living a life of love: his love. I have long kept a copy of this book on my nightstand and I frequently take it with me on retreat. In its use, may it bring you an abundance of grace and blessings.

JAMES R. MATTALIANO, SJ

DIRECTOR OF CAMPION RENEWAL CENTER, WESTON, MA





# Preface

Father Gaston Courtois was drawn to a life of intimacy with God. This intimacy grew over the years, and the many tasks this man of action carried out never affected his inclination for profound prayer, one of his most notable characteristics. On the contrary, his interior life, comprised of listening to the Lord, of heart-to-heart talks and face-to-face moments with Jesus, motivated his entire pastoral activity. In the silence of prayer, he received not only ideas that filled his mind, but also the ability and means to carry them out.

For many years, Father Courtois carried notebooks in his pocket in which he wrote as if taking down the Lord's dictation. These notebooks (in addition to Courtois' many other works, most of them unfortunately out of print) contain his more personal interactions with the One who was his all. Father Courtois did not withhold from others what he thought came from God.

When someone would say to him, with a touch of envy, “You are lucky that the Lord speaks to you this way,” he would reply that he did not hear any “voice”: “I only express in my own words what I think he wants me to say.” At times he questioned the authenticity of these notes, as he once testified at the end of a retreat in 1959. Jesus responded to him: “What are you afraid of? An illusion? If my words sound like those in the Gospel, if they help you to be more humble, more obedient, more detached, more generous, more charitable, and more united to me, what have you to fear? My words are *spirit* and *life*. A tree is judged by its fruit. As for you, live in an attitude of conversation with me. This will be the best conclusion of your retreat.”

And another time he heard the Lord tell him: “Look at me. Speak to me. Listen to me most lovingly, so that you may become more like me. I will take care of the rest. Haven’t you learned that I can cast light in minutes, a light that the most scholarly books cannot cast—or, if they can, is it not because they were prayed over before being written and are the extension or echo of my own word? So, ask me questions. I will reply in my own way when I think best, but you will have an answer—a clear and forceful answer.”

Some years later Jesus told him that these intimate conversations might be useful for others as well. “You must grasp the ideas I give you and express them in your own words shortly after I give them to you. Otherwise, they will disappear in the mist of oblivion. If I cause them to well up in your mind, first of all it is for your sake, since they will help you think as I do, see things as I see them, and interpret signs as I want them to be understood in the

light and shadow of faith. Then they are for all your brothers and sisters in the world. Each one needs the light I give you, just as you yourself absorb the light I reflect in their words, in their writings, in their conduct. My inspiration will sustain not only your prayers but also your preaching by word or pen—*contemplata aliis tradere* (“give the fruit of contemplation to others”).

Father Courtois’ first title for his notebooks was *At the Master’s Feet*. In the last notebook, written between 1967 and 1968, he wrote this title on the flyleaf: *When the Lord Speaks to the Heart*. He chose this as the title for his notes to be published, believing it more in keeping with his purpose.

Father Courtois wanted and sought only to love the Lord as much as possible, and to strive with all his might to make him loved. May this posthumous message continue the mission of his entire life.

AGNÈS RICHOMME

BIOGRAPHER OF FATHER GASTON COURTOIS





# How to Use This Book

*When the Lord Speaks to Your Heart* is an English adaptation of the book *Quand le Seigneur parle au coeur*. As explained above, it contains the messages that Father Gaston Courtois received from the Lord Jesus. The thoughts are phrased in such a way that it is evident that Jesus is the one speaking.

In this edition, we have divided the material to cover each day of the year. The thoughts for each day, though short, contain profound material for reflection. To gain the most from it, you may wish to spend a few moments in prayer before reading it, and then reflect on it for a while and conclude with a prayer. If you read them in the morning, the reading can set the tone for your day and help you live it in union with Jesus. If you read a passage in the evening, you can recall it in the morning as you go about your daily work.

You may wish to use this prayer to the Holy Spirit:

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.

And kindle in them the fire of your love.

Send forth your spirit and they shall be created.

And you shall renew the face of the earth.

*Let us pray.*

O God, you instructed the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit; grant us in the same Spirit to be truly wise, and ever to rejoice in his consolation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.





# JANUARY



*I love that you know how to find me, recognize me,  
and perceive me in your brothers and sisters, in nature,  
in small or great events. All is grace and I am there.  
(117)\**

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\* The parenthetical citations following each quote refer to the corresponding reference numbers in the French edition.



## January 1

Listen. Understand. Ponder. Absorb. Put into practice. I know it is difficult to listen to me when other sounds fill your head. There must be silence, an experience of the desert. You are shocked by the aridity of the void. Yet if you are faithful, if you persevere, then your well-Beloved will make his voice heard. Your heart will burn, and this inner ardor will bring you peace and fruitfulness. Then you will relish just how gracious your Lord is, how light is his burden. You will experience, even beyond the time you devote exclusively to me, the reality of *dilectus meus mihi et ego illi* (“my beloved is mine and I am his,” see Song 2:16). (1)

## January 2

Despite obstacles, feelings of aversion, or temptations to faintheartedness, the more you seek me and desire to listen, the more you will perceive my response. My Spirit will animate you and suggest not only what I ask you to say, but what I propose that you do. Then what you say and do will be fruitful.

My word and the light it casts help everything find its true place within my immense love. (2–3)

## January 3

Look at me. Speak to me. Listen to me. I am not only the witness to truth but Truth itself. I am not only the way of life but Life itself. I am not only a ray of light but Light itself.

The one who communicates with me communicates with Truth. The one who receives me receives Life. The one who follows me walks along the pathway of light, and my light grows in that person.

Speak to me spontaneously about everything that troubles you. I allow plenty of room for your initiative. Do not think that I am indifferent to what troubles you, for you are mine. It is essential that you be mindful of me, and speak to me with the fullness of love and with all the confidence you can muster. (5–6)

### *January 4*

I speak within the inmost depths of your soul, where your mind is enriched through communion with me. You do not need to immediately discern what I say to you. What is important is to fill your mind with my thoughts. Afterward you will be able to interpret and express them.

Those who never hear me and who regrettably harden their hearts are to be pitied. Ah! If only they would come to me with the soul of a child. “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants” (Mt 11:25). If anyone feels thirsty, let him or her come to me and drink. Yes, let all drink the milk of my way of thinking. (7–8)

### *January 5*

Always be on the alert. It is I who can give you the light you so urgently need. My light will fortify your spirit and clarify your

thoughts, so that you may find solutions for the problems you face.

I would like to act through you more and more, so never stop directing your will toward me. Strip yourself of yourself. Take upon yourself the attitude of a member of my Body, having only me as your reason for living and the goal of your life.

Call upon me for help—gently, calmly, and lovingly. Do not think I am insensitive to the tenderness of affection. Yes, tell me you love me, but prove it to me even more. (9–11)

### *January 6*

Tell me how you spent the day. I know already, of course, but I love hearing it from you, just as a mother loves to hear the chatter of her child coming home from school. Let me know about your desires, your projects, your boredom, your difficulties. Can't I help you overcome them?

Speak to me about my Church, the bishops, your colleagues, the missions, nuns, vocations, the sick, sinners, the poor, and workers. Yes, speak to me especially of this working class that has too many virtues not to be Christian, at least in desire. Is it not among oppressed workers, often crushed by cares and woes, that profound generosity is found? Do they not have a greater tendency to answer "yes" to my appeals? (12)

### *January 7*

Speak to me of all those who suffer in their mind, in their flesh, in their heart, and in their dignity. Speak to me of all those

who have died, all those who know they are going to die and are frightened or peaceful, and all those who are going to die and do not know when it will happen.

Speak to me of my extension in the world; of what I work out within the innermost depths of hearts; and of what I also bring about in heaven to the glory of my Father, of Mary, and of the blessed. (13–14)

### *January 8*

Do you have any questions to ask me? Do not hesitate. I am the key to all problems. I may not give you the answer right away, but if your question comes from a loving heart, the response will come, either through the intervention of the Spirit or through the events that transpire in your life.

Do you want to tell me what you desire for yourself, for others, for me? Do not be afraid to ask me for a lot. By doing so, you hasten, in an undeniable yet invisible way, the hour when all humanity will be assumed into me. You will cause the level of love to rise and will extend my presence in the hearts of men and women. (15–16)

### *January 9*

I have many ways to make you understand; you will know only some of them on earth. But in order to perceive these truths—limited as they may be—you need to encounter me more. If you made yourself docile, I would speak even more often. To be docile one must first of all be humble, consider

oneself ready and willing to sit at the Master's feet, and above all be close to his heart where one can comprehend all without need of formulas. It means being attentive to the movements of grace, to the signs of the Holy Spirit, and to the ineffable breath of my thought. (18)

### *January 10*

May your life be an endless conversation with me. Nowadays people talk much about dialogue. Why not dialogue with me? Am I not there, at your very center, beholding every movement of your heart, attentive to your thoughts and the orientation of your desires? Speak to me quite simply, paying no attention to how you express yourself. I am much more concerned with what you want to express than with the words you use. (20)

### *January 11*

I am the Word. I am the Word who is never silent. If one listens attentively, one perceives my voice through the lowliest as well as the highest things in nature, through the most diverse beings, and through the most ordinary daily circumstances. It is a question of faith, a faith I must ask for your human brothers and sisters who have lost or not yet received it. Above all, it is a question of love. If one lived more for me than for oneself, that person would be attracted by the slightest murmur of my interior voice and would more easily establish a relationship of intimacy with me. (21)

*January 12*

Call upon me as the light that can clarify your mind, the fire that can inflame your heart, the force that can refresh your energies. Call upon me especially as your friend, who desires to share with you all that is your life; as your Savior, who yearns to purify your soul of its egotism; and as your God, who desires to unite you to himself as closely as possible here below, while waiting to embrace you fully in the light of eternity. (22)

*January 13*

Call upon me. Love me. Let yourself be flooded with the conviction of being passionately loved as you are, with all your limitations and miseries, so that you may become what I desire you to be: the living, burning coals of divine charity. Then instinctively you will think of me and others before living for yourself. You will live in divine communion with me and in universal communion with others, identified with me and at the same time with others. You will then allow me to serve as a bond between my Father in heaven and my brothers and sisters on earth. (23)

*January 14*

Speak *to* me before speaking *about* me. Speak to me in all simplicity, most familiarly and with a smile. Those who speak about me without my speaking through them—what can they say about me? So many false ideas circulate about me, even among Christians, and much more among those who do not believe in me.



Keep talking with me after our conversations in the chapel. Think about my presence—with you, in you. Do this while going about what you have to do, and from time to time lovingly lift your eyes toward me. . . . (19)

### *January 15*

Inner demons must be silenced: the demons of pride, the drive for power, the spirit of domination, aggressiveness, and eroticism, which obscure the mind and harden the heart.

Silence minor occupations, excessive concerns, and sterile lies.

Silence futile distractions, self-seeking, rash judgments.

But this is not enough. You must also desire that my thoughts permeate your spirit and gently impose themselves on your mind. (26–27)

### *January 16*

Above all do not be impatient or struggle. Instead be at peace and ready to keep my word, carrying it out with good intentions. It is the seed of truth, light, and happiness. It is the seed of eternity that transfigures the most lowly things and deeds of the earth.

When my word has been absorbed, savored, and profoundly relished, then its full worth will be understood. A person will then be ready to sacrifice all those seemingly necessary attachments. I carry out my work of peace and love in the Church through prayerful souls who are compliant with my action. (27–28)

## January 17

It is helpful to have enough time in which to become more aware of my presence.

*First*, ask me more earnestly to purge you of all that hinders you from listening to, hearing, pondering, absorbing, and putting my word into practice. Indeed I am he who is speaking to you. But you can only hear me if you listen to me. You can only listen to me if your love is truly unpolluted by self-concern and has the characteristics of a sacrificial love in communion with mine.

*Second*, be faithful, consecrating to me your innermost being, where I am ever-present, ever-acting, ever-loving.

*Third*, smile more and more at me. You know I love the person who gives with a smile. Smile at me. Smile at everybody. Smile at everything. A smile contains, much more than you think, the expressive tenderness of true love based on the giving of self. The more you give, the more I give myself to you in return. (30)

## January 18

You are not only to live face to face *with* the Lord, but *in* your Lord. The more you strive to have no feelings other than mine, the more you will be conscious of this marvelous living together, which through me unites you to the Trinity, to all the saints, and to all the members of my mystical Body. You are never alone. Your life is essentially communitarian. (31)

*January 19*

I stand at the door of your soul and knock. If you hear my voice and open wide the door to me, then I will enter within you and we will dine together (see Rev 3:20). Do not worry about the menu. I bring the greatest part of the banquet, along with joy—my joy, which is to see you relish it so that you may give more of me to your brothers and sisters. Think of them when you think of me. Include them in your prayer, offering yourself and them to me. Carry them with you as you let yourself be immersed in me. (32)

*January 20*

Think, pray, and act in me. I am with you, and you are with me. I desire this kind of intimacy with you.

Live with me as with a friend you would never abandon. Do not drive me away from your heart or your mind. (32)

*January 21*

Pay attention to my presence.

You know that I am near you and within you and others. But it is one thing to know that, another to perceive it clearly. Ask me often for this grace. Your humble and persevering prayer will not be refused. It is the most concrete expression of living faith and ardent charity. (32)

*January 22*

Pay attention to my gaze.

You know that you never leave my sight. If only you could see how I gaze on you, with such love, tenderness, and desire! This gaze, attentive to your innermost choices, ever-benevolent, encouraging, is always ready to sustain and help you! But hear this! You must encounter my loving gaze in faith, desire it in hope, and cherish it in love. (32)

*January 23*

Pay attention to my love.

You know that I am love, but I am even so much more than you know. Adore and have trust. The surprises I have in store for you will be even more beautiful than you can imagine. The time after death will be that of the victory of my love over all human limitations not deliberately willed as obstacles to it. From now on, ask for the grace of a keener, more intuitive perception of my immense love for you. (32)

*January 24*

Pay attention to my word.

You know that within you I am the very One who speaks; my word is spirit and life. But what does it serve to expound upon the Father's riches if your heart is not listening intently to accept and assimilate them? You know I speak in the ideas I cause to come to

light in your mind. On beginning, you must be faithful to my Spirit. On arrival, you must be intent on receiving the divine pearl. Then your life will be fertile. (32)

### *January 25*

Your life would be simpler and more fruitful if you gave me all the room I yearn for in your mind and heart. You yearn for my coming, my growth, and my taking possession.

First, take into account that you are nothing and can do nothing by yourself to increase by a single degree the intimacy of my presence within you. You must humbly ask it of me in union with our Lady.

Then, in the measure of the grace imparted to you, do not let any occasion go by to unite yourself to me, to vanish within me. Plunge into me confidently, and let me then act through you. (35)

### *January 26*

This statement of mine is not a laughing matter: "I want to feel my life throbbing within you. I want to feel my love burning in your heart." And now I add: "I want to feel my light shining in your mind." But this presupposes the denial of your ego as much as possible.

My gaze at you is true, lucid, and profound. Far from running away from it, seek it. It will help you discover any attachment and self-seeking that remains in you. It will inspire you to forget yourself even more for the sake of others. (36–37)

*January 27*

You should not be able to do without me, so that I can be with you as much as my heart desires. Yet if human nature is not constantly stimulated, it slackens its effort and becomes distracted. This explains the need for these constant moments of renewing contact with me. As long as you are on earth, nothing is ever over; you must always begin again. But each fresh impulse brings a rebirth and increase of love. (38)

*January 28*

*Desire me.* Am I not he who fully responds to the aspirations I myself placed in your heart? I will come to you. I will grow within you. I will work within you, as much as you desire. I am all that is lacking in you, and possessing me makes you sense the vanity of every other desire. Why want anything else save to live as one with me? How futile and disorderly are all desires that do not lead to me! (39)

*January 29*

Through all your occupations—from the time you rise to the time you retire, from the time you pray to the time you work, from the time you dine to the time you rest—let me feel the intensity of your desire. May you yearn for me; may your heart seek me; with all your being may you wish to be one with me.

Desire me for yourself, for without me you can achieve nothing effective or even useful on the spiritual plane.

Desire me for others. You only communicate me . . . inasmuch as it is I who act through you. (39)

### January 30

*Live in me:* you will live through me; you will effectively act for me; and your last years will efficaciously serve my Church.

*Dwell in me* as in your very own home. Remember, whoever lives in me bears much fruit.

*Live in my prayer.* Live in the ever-streaming flood of desires, praises, and acts of thanksgiving that surge from my heart.

*Live in my will.* Unite yourself to my will for you and to all my designs of love.

*Live in my wounds;* they remain open so long as the world is not completely united to me. Draw from my wounds the power to sacrifice on behalf of your sisters and brothers. Your choices can be decisive for many.

*Live in my heart.* Let me inflame your heart with the intense fire of love. If only you could be set aglow. (40–41)

### January 31

Think a bit more often about what pleases me: my dwelling in the souls of children; the purity of their hearts; their sacrifices of love, so generous at times; the simplicity and fullness of their self-giving. I blossom in many children's hearts. Nothing tarnishes the crystal of their souls, and teachers can lead them, guide them, and encourage them to come to me. (42)