

De Sales

SPIRITUALITY CENTER

"The Practice of Devotion"



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Mary D. Ford

We are called to live a devout life.

Sounds lofty, doesn't it? Seems unrealistic, doesn't it? Maybe that's because we don't understand the true meaning of devotion.

"True, living devotion," says St. Francis de Sales, "is nothing else than the love of God."

"Inasmuch as divine love adorns the soul, it is called grace. Inasmuch as it gives us the strength to do what is good, it is called charity. Inasmuch as it not only makes us do what is good but helps us to do so diligently, frequently and readily, it is called devotion."

In short, devotion is the habit of doing what is good in the eyes of God with as much diligence, frequency and passion as possible.

Simple, straightforward, and well within our reach.

Of course, with the help of God!

This devotion is not for a chosen few. It is meant for everyone, to be practiced in ways appropriate to our particular walk, state or stage of life. St. Francis de Sales maintains: "In the creation God commanded the plants to bring forth their fruits, each one after its kind. So does God

command all Christians, who are living plants of the Church, to bring forth the fruits of devotion, each according to one's character and vocation."

A consideration of what devotion is not may be just as valuable. "A person addicted to fasting may think himself very devout when he fasts, though his heart at the same time is filled with rancor. He scruples to moisten his tongue with wine, or even with water, because of his sobriety, but he makes no difficulty of drinking deep of another's blood by detraction and slander. Another person considers herself devout because she recites daily a multiplicity of prayers, although immediately afterwards she utters the most disagreeable, arrogant and injurious words in her home and among her neighbors. Still another draws alms out of his purse to give to the poor, but cannot draw meekness out of his heart to forgive his enemies. People such as these are commonly perceived as devout, while in fact, they are not."

Devotion is not something merely worn for others to admire: "Many persons make the world think they are truly devout by covering themselves with certain external actions that are associated with devotion. In truth, these

are nothing but images and phantoms of devotion."

Authentic devotion is striving to integrate the internal and external. Authentic devotion is striving to integrate the love of God with the love of neighbor. Authentic devotion, if you will, is both 'talking the talk, and walking the walk.'

Devotion is about being real. St. Jane de Chantal writes: "Try to make your devotion generous, noble, straightforward and sincere. Try to foster this same spirit in those with whom you come in contact, a spirit founded upon a deep humility which results in sincere obedience, sweet charity which supports and excuses all, and an innocent, guileless simplicity that makes us even-tempered and friendly toward everyone."

Those who practice devotion experience "a holy freedom of the Spirit," observes St. Jane de Chantal. "This makes them true children of God, since they do everything required by their Christian condition cheerfully, faithfully and with a good heart.

Living life cheerfully, enthusiastically, diligently, energetically, positively, productively, intentionally, all for the love of God and neighbor: now *that's* a devotion worth living!