

# De Sales

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## SPIRITUALITY CENTER

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*"The only time you have...the present"*



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Mary D. Ford

In his book entitled The Seven Secrets of Successful Catholics, author Paul Wilkes observes: "Ours is a life lived in the present tense. Memories may be precious or painful, plans lofty or low, but all we really have to live is today. Each day, each hour brings with it opportunities for our spirits to soar, for us to become the people we know we can be."

Do you have regrets about your past? Do you sometimes wonder how your life might be different if you had made different choices in the past? Do you frequently revisit painful or unresolved memories?

Are you anxious about the future? Do you worry about the things that might happen in the days, weeks and years to come? Do you spend time trying to anticipate what tomorrow will bring?

Welcome to the human race!

It is natural to live with an eye to the past. It is natural to live with an eye toward the future. However, focusing only upon the past or the future robs you the time that really matters.

The present.

The struggle to live in the present is nothing new. Our Lord Jesus himself addressed it in Mat-

thew's Gospel (MT 6: 25 - 34) when he said: "Do not worry about your life...Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life...? Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

St. Francis de Sales and St. Jane de Chantal frequently counseled people who were either (1) imprisoned by past sins, struggles and failures or (2) fixated upon future challenges, trials or tribulations. Some especially tormented souls were consumed by both.

The remedy for scruples flowing from the past? "The day that is past must not judge the day present; the day that is present must not judge the day past. It is only the Last Day that judges all."

The remedy for anxieties flowing from the future? "Let us be firmly resolved to serve God with our whole heart and life. Beyond that, let us have no care about tomorrow. Let us think of only living well today, and when tomorrow comes, it will be called 'today.' Then we can think about it."

Living in the present is good psychology. The present is the only place where you grow. As you grow, you can gracefully let go of a painful past. As you

grow, you can peacefully embrace an uncertain future.

In short, you experience forgiveness and fortitude.

Living in the present is sound theology. There is no beginning or end for God: there is only an eternal "now." To that end, you are most like God when you live in the present. As you grow in the image and likeness of God, you open yourself to the power of God's forgiveness. As you grow in the image and likeness of God you open yourself to the promise of God's providence.

In short, you experience redemption.

Maybe this is what St. Paul had in mind when he made the assertion: "I tell you, *now* is the time of God's favor, *now* is the day of salvation."

Experience healing from the past: see how the past has brought you to this point in your life. Experience confidence about the future: see how living today well is the best preparation for what life may have in store for you tomorrow.

Above all, recognize the opportunities that God brings each day, each hour, each moment 'to let your spirit soar, to become more of the person who God calls you to be...in the here and now...in the present.