

De Sales

SPIRITUALITY CENTER

"Ten Qualities for Holy Living"



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Salesian spirituality is optimistic. It affirms the innate, God-given dignity of each person. It offers the possibility of living a happy, healthy and holy life.

Salesian spirituality is relational. Growing in holiness does not occur in a vacuum. Rather, striving for Christian perfection takes place within the context of our relationship with God, ourselves and one another.

Salesian spirituality is practical, down to earth. What follows are ten characteristics or virtues that can help us to grow in holiness, that is, to grow in right relationship with God, ourselves and one another.

First, *have confidence in the goodness, love and compassion of God.* Trying to live a holy life can be frustrating. After all, we are not perfect people. Sin, fear, weakness, temptation and hosts of other experiences can cause us to stumble or fall. St. Jane de Chantal tells us, "Do not worry about your perfection, or about your soul. God will take care of it and fill it with all the graces" needed for your growth.

Second, *be humble: live in the truth of who you are in the sight of God.* Name your weaknesses; name your strength; most of all, name your need for God's love, mercy, and forgiveness.

"Sometimes," says St. Francis de Sales, "we so much occupy ourselves with trying to live like angels that we neglect to be good men and women."

Third, *be gentle: live in the truth of who you are in relation to yourself and others.* Put yourself in others' shoes. Treat others the way you want to be treated. Powerful is Francis de Sales' insight: "Nothing is so strong as gentleness; nothing is so gentle as real strength."

Fourth, *be patient.* Wanting things too quickly can be counterproductive. Be patient with yourself and with others. Take things as they come. St. Jane de Chantal observes that anything "borne quietly and patiently is a continual, very powerful prayer before God."

Fifth, *live in the present.* Don't dwell in the past. Don't obsess about the future. *Carpe diem*, that is, seize today, master the moment! "To advance well," St. Francis de Sales says, "we must apply ourselves to make good way on the road nearest to us, and to do today's journey."

Sixth, *roll with the punches.* Pick your battles. Be steadfast on principle, but flexible in detail. "Blessed are hearts that bend," observes St. Francis de Sales, "they will never break."

Seventh, *do little, simple things well.* Why wait for some one-time opportunity to do a great thing and risk missing the countless opportunities each day to perform simpler ones with great attention, passion and zeal? "We cannot always offer God great things, says St. Jane de Chantal, "but at each instant we can offer little things with great love."

Eighth, *remain focused on your own happiness, health and holiness.* You can't give what you don't have. We can be so concerned about others' welfare that we neglect our own. St. Francis de Sales cautions us: "Do not sow crops of good intentions in your neighbor's garden; rather, cultivate your own."

Ninth, *strive for balance.* Avoid extremes. "Salt and sugar are both excellent things," claims St. Francis de Sales, "but too much of either spoils the dish." Food for thought.

Finally, *make and maintain good friendships.* Don't be a lone ranger. Seek out others in friendship who can support you, encourage you, understand you and challenge you in your desire to grow in happiness, health and holiness. The book of Sirach (6:16) says it best: "A faithful friend is the medicine of life and of immortality."