

De Sales

SPIRITUALITY CENTER

"Recalling God's presence...all day"



Mary D. Ford

"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin shall be with child and give birth to a son, and they shall call him Immanuel, a name that means, God with us.'" (Matt 1:22-23)

Immanuel. God with us. A God who is always with us. A God who is with us all ways.

Yet why is it that God sometimes seems so distant? So illusive? So remote? Does God forget us? No, God can never forget us. However, we can forget God...and we frequently do.

Salesian spirituality offers us a practical approach for recalling God's presence throughout the day. Rather than look for a God who dwells in a faraway place, this "spiritual recollection" tells us that God dwells precisely where we find ourselves in the rhythm of each day.

First, upon waking, embrace the gift of a new day, thanking God for having preserved you doing the preceding night.

Second, consider that God gives you this new day to bring you one step closer to eternity. Intend to make good use of this new day.

Third, "foresee what business, what affairs, and what situations for serving God you will encounter on this day," says St.

Francis de Sales, "and to what temptations of offending God you will be exposed." In other words, plan your day. Anticipate the opportunities that you will have for accomplishing some good. Be aware of those circumstances in which you may be tempted to do otherwise.

Fourth, resolve to do your best in embracing this new day, both those experiences that you anticipate and those that may surprise you. Acknowledge your need for God's grace to accomplish good and to avoid evil this day.

Fifth, during the day "retire into the solitude of your heart while you are outwardly engaged in business or association with others," says Francis de Sales. In short, stay centered. Simple movements of the mind or heart in the midst of any activity achieve this.

Sixth, make a brief examination of conscience at midday. Are you living out your resolutions for living the day well? Ask for God's grace to continue your efforts. Have you been less than successful so far? Ask for God's grace, and make a new start.

Seventh, make a more detailed examination of conscience at the end of the day. Thank God for having preserved you during

the day. Examine your actions and attitudes: give thanks to God for what was good; ask for forgiveness for that which was sinful.

Finally, ask God to protect you during the night, to give you a restful sleep, and to help you embrace tomorrow with renewed enthusiasm and zeal.

As practical and powerful as these practices are, you should not spend inordinate amounts of time upon them. Rather, says St. Francis de Sales, they "must be made briefly and fervently."

Perhaps St. Jane de Chantal best describes the kind of awareness and attitude that these practices seek to establish: "As for the will of God's good pleasure, which we know only through the events of life as they occur, if these events benefit us, we must bless God and unite ourselves to the divine will which sends them. If something occurs which is disagreeable, physically or mentally, let us lovingly unite our will in obedience to the divine will which sends it."

By approaching the rhythms of each day with a prayerful outlook and intention, our daily triumphs and tragedies do not obscure the presence of God; no, they are the very places where we encounter the Divine.