

De Sales

SPIRITUALITY CENTER

"Divine Providence...and the Father's Care"



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"Do not think about what will happen tomorrow, for the same eternal Father who takes care of you today will look out for you tomorrow and always." Thus, St. Francis de Sales admonishes us with typically reassuring words to trust in Divine Providence at precisely the point where it most directly touches our lives—the present.

St. Jane de Chantal observes: "Herein lies our excellence, to see the loving Will of God in all things and to follow it." Salesian spirituality challenges us to see, taste and hear this Divine Providence precisely where we are.

Recent books on prayer have centered on "listening" to God but most of us find it difficult to "hear" the message. This is because the source of the "answer" may be the words or actions of a friend or colleague.

Let us consider more directly some of the varied ways in which St. Francis de Sales drives home the message of the real presence of God's love in his perpetual care for each of us.

One way of doing this may be by recognizing the opportu-

nity others present for our recognition of His message for us. "Live entirely for God and since you have to take part in conversations and social gatherings, try to be of some use to others." It is precisely in these "gatherings" that moments of care, trust and compassion can elevate ordinary experiences.

Second, recognize the Father's love in ordinary events. "So too if you gather and manage the goods of this world with one hand, you must always hold fast to your heavenly Father's hand with the other." When we cooperate with God's will our lives become more—not less—free.

Third, trust in God's care: "Be at peace, since you are one of God's children and let your restless, weary heart rest against the sacred, loving breast of the Savior who, by his gentle, tender love is a mother to them." This loving father/mother is the very description of unconditional love so vital to a healthy personality.

Fourth, stay centered. "Don't let anxiety take control of your heart. You have passed through a number of trials by the grace of God; the same grace

will be there for you in all the occasions to come." Most therapists rely on just such advice to assist clients to work through problems using the skills of experience. How much more does Providence provide for navigating "rough paths."

St. Jane de Chantal offers a beautiful image for being open to Divine Providence: "We should keep ourselves in the good hands of this great God like cloth in the hands of a tailor, who cuts it in a hundred different ways for use as the tailor pleases and designs: so, too, we should allow the powerful hand of God to cut, hammer and chisel us just as Divine Providence wishes, so as to make us a fitting stone for the adornment of God's" edifice, which is life and love.

If we were to forget all of these things, Francis advises in his letters, "Keep this maxim in mind: God is our Father because if he were not, Jesus would not have commanded us to say, 'Our Father'... What have you to fear if you are children of such a Father without whose Providence not even one hair of our head would fall?"