

De Sales

SPIRITUALITY CENTER

"Five Facets of Devotion...A Winning Combination"



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Mary D. Ford

Purify the Soul. Francis de Sales writes: "The flowers have appeared in our land, the time of pruning the vines has come," says the Sacred Scripture. "What other flowers do we have in our hearts, except good desires? We must take a pruning knife in order to remove from our conscience all dead and worthless works." This pruning requires two things: courage and patience.

Courage keeps us moving forward. "What a pity to see souls who perceive themselves still subject to imperfections after striving to be devout for a while and then begin to be dissatisfied, disturbed, and discouraged and almost let their hearts give in to a temptation to give up everything and go back to their old way of life."

Patience keeps us from getting too far ahead of ourselves. "On the other hand, there are those souls who are also in extreme danger who, by an opposite temptation, think themselves cleansed of every imperfection on the very first day of their new way of life, regarding themselves as perfect before they have scarcely begun, like trying to fly without wings."

Pray and Participate in the Sacraments. Francis offers us three ways to pray: (1) meditation, or prayer of the heart; (2) vocal prayer or prayer formulas; (3) prayer of good works.

Regarding the Sacraments, Francis gives special attention to: **Eucharist**—"It is the sun of all spiritual sacrifices, the center of the

Christian religion, the heart of devotion, and soul of piety, the great mystery that comprises within itself the deepest depths of divine charity, the mystery in which God really gives himself and gloriously communicates his graces and favors to us."

Holy Communion—"Two classes of people should receive communion frequently: the perfect, so that they might continue to be perfect, and the imperfect, that they might become perfect."

Reconciliation—"Our Savior gave us this sacrament so that we may be cleansed from all our iniquities no matter how often and how greatly we have been defiled by them. Never let your soul remain long infected by sin, since you have such a remedy so near at hand and so easy to supply."

Scripture—"Be devoted to the word of God whether you hear it in familiar conversation with spiritual friends or in sermons. Always listen to it with attention and reverence; make good use of it; do not let it fall to earth but take it into your heart like a precious balm."

Invoke the Saints—"You should also read stories about the lives of the saints for there, as in a mirror, you can see a picture of the Christian life and adapt their deeds to your use in keeping with your vocation. Not every act of every saint can be precisely reproduced, but they can indeed be followed either closely or from a distance. Some stories provide more light for the conduct of our lives than others do."

Practice Virtue. "Some virtues have almost general use and must not only produce their own results but also spill over into all other virtues. Occasions may not often present themselves for the exercise of fortitude, magnanimity, and great generosity, but gentleness, temperance, integrity and humility are virtues that must mark all our actions in life." These include flexibility, patience, humility, gentleness, poverty, chastity, obedience, prudence, honesty, and simplicity...to name but a few!

Resist Temptations. "While we must resist great temptations with unconquerable courage and while the victory we gain over them is the highest degree helpful to us, it may be that we will profit more by resisting small temptations." Why? "Although great temptations exceed in quality, small ones immeasurably exceed in number so that the victory over them may be comparable to that gained over greater temptations." Consider this: "Wolves and bears are certainly much more dangerous than flies but don't give us nearly as much trouble or try our patience as do flies."

Keep Your Eye on the Finish Line. "There is no clock, no matter how good it may be, that doesn't need resetting and rewinding twice a day. In like manner, every morning and every evening a person who takes care of his or her heart must rewind it for God's service and often reflect on his or her condition in order to reform and improve it."