

## St. Francis de Sales

*Have patience with all things, but chiefly have patience with yourself. Do not lose courage in considering your own imperfections but instantly set about remedying them - every day, begin the task anew.*

This is a quote from St. Francis de Sales, who has written many books as well as quotes. On January 24<sup>th</sup> we celebrate the feast day of our patron saint, St. Francis de Sales. How many of you know who St. Francis de Sales was or know about his life? Now, how many of you know who you were named after? Most all of us know about the names and history of our family, but much fewer know about the name and history of your church family.

*Be who you are and be that well.*

St. Francis de Sales was born August 21<sup>st</sup>, 1567 at Savoy in France. He was born into a noble family, and because of that, his father expected him to be a magistrate. He was the eldest of 13 children and his father wanted him to have the best education. He studied law at the colleges of La Roche and Annecy and was taught by the Jesuits, where he received a doctorate in both civil and cannon law. He refused the political office of senator and instead entered the service of the Church.

*Do not wish to be anything but what you are, and try to be that perfectly.*

In 1593, at the age of 26, Francis de Sales was ordained priest. He was sent to the Chablais region of the Savoy on a mission to persuade those who had fallen under Calvinist influence to return to the practice of Catholicism. He spent 4 long years laboring at this difficult task. More than once he was thrown out of his lodgings, and had to sleep in the open air. Many times he celebrated Mass in empty churches or continued preaching while the congregation walked out. While this was very

stressful, Francis kept his poise and kindness which led to the success of his mission. Within a few years the majority of the area's inhabitants had returned to the Catholic Faith.

*When you encounter difficulties and contradictions, do not try to break them, but bend them with gentleness and time.*

At the age of 32, in 1599, Francis was ordained auxiliary bishop, and then 3 years later he was installed as bishop of Geneva. For the next several years he labored to win souls back to the Catholic Church. He also found time to write some spiritual books, such as 'The introduction to the Devout Life' and the 'Treatise on the Love of God.' In addition to this, in 1607, together with his friend, St. Jane Frances de Chantal, he founded the Institute of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin, for young girls and widows.

*A quarrel between friends, when made up, adds a new tie to friendship.*

His zeal extended beyond the limits of his own diocese. He delivered the Lent and Advent discourses which are still famous. During his last stay in Paris in November 1618, to September 1619, he went to the pulpit each day to satisfy the pious wishes of those who wanted to hear him. "Never", said they, "have such holy, such apostolic sermons been preached."

In 1622 Francis de Sales was traveling in the entourage of the king and queen of France. But rather than stay in royal quarters, he lodged in the gardener's cottage on the grounds of the Visitation convent in that city. Fittingly for this apostle of the little virtues, he died in that modest cottage. On December 28<sup>th</sup>, 1622, Francis de Sales died of a cerebral hemorrhage in Lyons, France.

*There is nothing as strong as tenderness, And nothing as tender as true strength.*

In 1887 Pope Pius IX declared him Patron of the Deaf, and Doctor of the Church. Francis de Sales was canonized in 1665, only 43 years after his death. Then Pope Pius XI declared him Patron of Catholic Journalists and the Catholic Press in 1923.

*"Be at Peace." By Saint Francis de Sales*

*Do not look forward in fear to the changes in life; rather, look to them with full hope that as they arise, God, whose very own you are, will lead you safely through all things; and when you cannot stand it, God will carry you in His arms. Do not fear what may happen tomorrow; the same understanding Father who cares for you today will take care of you then and every day. He will either shield you from suffering or will give you unfailing strength to bear it. Be at peace, and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginations.*

Fr. Brian told me not to draw this out too long, and I immediately thought of another quote from St. Francis de Sales.

*If we say a little it is easy to add, but having said too much it is hard to withdraw and never can it be done so quickly as to hinder the harm of our success.*

*Thank you, Douglas P. Arnold*