

De Sales Discussions

INTRODUCTION TO THE DEVOUT LIFE

A Discussion Guide prepared by Bro. Edward F. Ogden, OSFS,
to accompany the great spiritual classic written by St. Francis de Sales,
including an earlier companion publication compiled and edited
by Rev. John J. Comny, OSFS

Published by



De Sales

SPIRITUALITY SERVICES

"practical paths to holiness"

www.oblates.org/dss

dss@oblates.org

~Table of Contents ~

Origin.....page 3
Background.....page 4
Style.....page 5
Reading Spiritual Classics.....page 6
Dedicatory Prayer.....page 7
Preface.....pages 7, 8
Part I, Chapters 1 – 4.....pages 9, 10
Part I, Chapters 5 – 8.....pages 11, 12
Part I, Chapters 19 - 24.....pages 13, 14
Part II, Chapters 1 – 9.....pages 15, 16
Part II, Chapters 10 – 13.....pages 17, 18
Part II, Chapters 15 – 18.....pages 19, 20
Part II, Chapters 14, 19, 20, 21.....pages 21, 22
Part III, Chapters 1 – 2.....pages 23, 24
Part III, Chapter 3 - 7.....pages 25 – 29
Part III, Chapters 8 – 10.....pages 30, 31
Part III, Chapters 11 – 16.....pages 32 - 34
Part III, Chapters 17 – 22.....pages 35 – 38
Part III, Chapters 23 – 25.....pages 39, 40
Part III, Chapters 26 – 30.....pages 41 – 44
Part III, Chapters 31 – 34.....page 45
Part III, Chapters 35 – 37.....pages 46 – 47
Part III, Chapters 38 – 41.....pages 48 – 49
Part IV, Chapters 1 and 2.....pages 50 – 51
Part IV, Chapters 3 – 10.....pages 52 – 54
Part IV, Chapter 11.....page 55
Part IV, Chapter 12.....pages 56, 57
Part IV, Chapter 13.....page 58
Part IV, Chapter 14 - 15.....pages 59, 60
Part V, Chapter 1.....page 61
Part V, Chapter 2.....page 62
Part V, Chapters 3 – 8.....pages 63 – 65
Part V, Chapters 9 – 16.....pages 66, 67
Part V, Chapters 17 – 18.....page 68

Origin of the Introduction to a Devout Life

We have all heard it said that: "Behind the accomplishments of every great man, there stands a woman." Indeed, it is often true! Very often, it takes just a simple suggestion on the part of someone, along with an expression of his or her confidence in us, to move us to some action - an action which, without that friendly encouragement, might never be undertaken. In one instance this certainly appears to have been the case in the life of St. Francis de Sales.

When first published in January 1609, Francis de Sales' Introduction to the Devout Life was instantly recognized as a major contribution to our understanding of the spiritual life. Written for the laity, this work assures all men and women that it was not necessary that they reside in a convent or monastery in order to live a "devout" or "holy" life.

As remarkable as this work is, it is interesting to note that, had it not been for the strong urging of one of his relatives and of her confessor, Francis de Sales might never have published this remarkable compendium of spiritual advice. During his lifetime, Francis gave spiritual direction to many individuals. Often, when distance prevented Francis from speaking personally with those he was advising, he would write long letters of instruction in which he answered their questions and gave them spiritual direction - from afar.

In early 1607, a cousin of Francis de Sales who was staying in Annecy, Madame Marie de Charmoisy, asked Francis to become her spiritual advisor. He agreed to advise Marie - and he continued to advise her by letter after Marie left Annecy to return home to Paris in late 1607. Marie was impressed with the letters Francis sent and felt that others could profit from their wisdom. She showed the letters to her confessor in Paris, Father Jean Fourier, S.J., and asked his opinion. Father Fourier, who had known Francis for many years and who was also very impressed with the letters, contacted Francis and urged him to publish them. Francis agreed. He arranged the content of Marie's letters, added the content of other letters written to other people, and then joined them together with a commentary. The manuscript was ready for printing in late 1608.

Background

Introduction to the Devout Life was first published in January, 1609, by Rigaud in Lyons, France. According to Andre Ravier, the book appeared at a time when Catholic Christians sorely needed it:

- The Church was in a difficult situation, agitated as it was by the often-legitimate reproaches of the Reformers and by their evangelical fervor.
- The best of the Catholics were in quest of a renewed asceticism or spiritual nourishment: one better suited to contemporary life, one more accessible to the Christian engaged in temporal affairs "les tracas du monde" (the busyness of life), and yet eager for a life of spiritual fervor.
- Before the appearance of the Introduction, what was available in France to satisfy this desire? There were four major currents in French spirituality between 1580 and 1610:
 1. Still significant from the late Middle Ages was the *devotio moderna* whose spiritual masterpiece is the Imitation of Christ. Its characteristics: Christ-centered spirituality, affective, concrete, personal, intimate, but more suited for the cloister than for people in "the busyness of life."
 2. The second current, coming from the Renaissance, is somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, there was a renewed fascination with Augustine, Bonaventure and others.. On the other hand, there was a desire to reconcile the Christian with the humanist.
 3. The third current came from the Rhineland-Flemish School of spirituality. It was the most powerful current and was popularized in France largely by Richard Beaucousin. This movement was very interested in mystics, such as then Blessed Teresa of Avila, who was seen as a model of the extraordinary mystical life.
 4. The fourth current appealed to the majority and came from Spain and Italy. In this movement spirituality was directed in the way of 'universal devotion' with his cry: "Monachus non est pietas!" (Devotion is not the exclusive domain of the monk!) Francis de Sales continued this tradition in an especially creative manner. Charles Borromeo, of this tradition, had a great influence on Francis de Sales because he was pastoral in his approach to bringing devotion to the Christian in the world. In general, this current was more joyful, upbeat and optimistic.
- Francis de Sales was very familiar with all of these currents. Additionally, he had been taught by the Jesuits and had made the Spiritual Exercises several times. In short, he was "permeated with what was in the air of the day." (Ravier, p. 7) How he would bring his spiritual genius to bear on all this will result in a new spirituality associated with his name and inaugurated in his Introduction to the Devout Life.

Style of the Book

Francis de Sales sensed intensely this age, its malaise, its needs and appeals. He recognized how various disciplines were attempting to respond to the age: theology, humanism, the Bible, the Reformation, mystical experience. He "assimilated, subsumed and transformed them," making them a response profoundly shaped by his own personality.

Francis was in full grasp of his theology, his thought and his language and "the truths he exposed were neither scholastic, nor dialectic, nor literary. Rather, they palpitated with life, faith, enthusiasm and cordiality. They came from the heart and spoke to the heart. They instructed and charmed."

Francis treated spirituality...

- in ordinary - often rustic - French, clearly and simply
- almost in a tone of confidentiality
- in short chapters, in firm but intimate structure
- enriched by psychological insights and presented in images from daily life, and popular and natural history.

Francis defined devotion in a way that distinguished it from other spiritualities that separated...

- contemplation and action
- interiority and exteriority
- piety and canon law of the spiritual life
- asceticism and mysticism
- service of God and service of neighbor
- the religious contemplative and the lay person.

Francis saw Christian perfection – the pursuit of holiness - as readily available to each and every Christian, regardless of vocation, temperament or age. In so doing, he ministered to the deepest desire of his age...and, as it turned out, in the age following the Second Vatican Council.

"Reading the Spiritual Classics"

Dr. Wendy M. Wright

- "Many readers come to the great texts of our heritage with what philosopher Paul Ricoeur termed 'first naiveté'. This does not mean that they read uncritically but that they also read with freshness and openness that allows them to be eager recipients of what they read." (p. 19)
- "Uncritical reading of words penned under circumstances very different from our own could lead to a kind of slavish literalism, intolerance, undue fearfulness (what used to be called scrupulosity), or narrow self-righteousness. Whatever the source, the wonderful sponge-like receptivity of the first naiveté can sometimes close in on itself. The heartbeat of God becomes obscured in the literal details of a text." (p. 21)
- "In reading the literature of our spiritual heritage it is best then to be aware that an author lived in an earlier century and wrote in a different language and thus comes to us as a historically bounded person rooted in a sociopolitical and ecclesial reality very different from our own." (p. 22)
- "We would do well to analyze the values - both explicit and implicit - that inform a particular piece of spiritual literature. We can do this adequately only by knowing something of the history of the period, the author, and the audience to which he or she was writing." (p.23)
- To read a spiritual classic with a critical mind means that we must be "willing to accept an author as a person of his or her moment in history." (p. 23) We can do this in two distinct ways:
 1. First, we must become "aware of values, images, and assumptions that are so specific to the author's time that they do not translate." (p. 24) This means that some of the language needs to be sloughed off. For example, the advice St. Francis de Sales gives about "hearing Mass". St. Francis provides his readers with a list of meditations to undertake while attending Mass because at the time in the church's history the liturgy was said in Latin and people were usually not conversant with the ecclesial tongue." (pp. 24-25)
 2. Second, "there may be concepts that appear foreign or distasteful but need to be lived with and lovingly contemplated...Let such language unfold." (p. 24) For example, consider the teaching that De Sales offers on "loving your abjections.". As Dr. Wright sat with this insight and let it unfold for herself, she began to understand it to mean this: "To love our abjections is to love ourselves in our wholeness, as we are loved by God, and thus it is to enter into God's infinite compassion." (p. 26)
- "Our task of reappropriation must be an active one. We must engage in it with energy as we would when cultivating an intimate relationship. We must be willing to be thoughtfully critical sloughing off some ideas and letting others unfold." (p. 28)

Dedicatory Prayer

"Live Jesus"

In Francis de Sales' words, to live Jesus was to have the name of Jesus engraved on one's heart. It was to allow that name to become one's own true name, to allow one's entire self - body, thought, affections, actions, decisions, work, and devotion - to be animated by the person known by that name. To allow Jesus to live, one did not simply learn about Jesus or pray to Jesus or even imitate Jesus. One surrendered the vital center of one's being, one's heart - understood as the core of a person's energy - to another. Authentic human living was for Francis the continual and ever-present bringing to life the living Lord who bears the name Jesus.

Counter-Cultural

Francis de Sales believed that living the life of Christ in the circumstances and events of daily life was counter-cultural: specifically, it would bring about a radical change of heart that would gradually transform a person from within, rather than beginning with exterior practices or appearances. Francis' spirituality was new to the extent that he invited people of all walks of life to live counter-cultural virtues and values in a modest, interior and hidden way in whatever situation they found themselves.

Preface

Metaphors & Images

In his preface, Francis de Sales speaks 'heart to heart' with his readers, extending an invitation to them to embrace the devout life. It is immediately apparent that Francis has a certain flare for employing metaphor and image in his writings. We need to keep two insights in mind here: one - communication in 17th century aristocratic society was more formal than most 20th century readers are accustomed to; two - Francis wrote this piece mainly for women like Madame de Charmoisy, for whom colorful allusions, such as the story of the flower-seller Glycera, would be appealing.

Universal Call to Holiness

Francis' purpose in writing this book is to make devotion available to all people: those who "live in town, within families, or at court, and by their state in life are obliged to live an ordinary life as to outward appearances. Frequently, on the pretext of some supposed impossibility, they will not even think of undertaking a devout life." Francis is very clear about his message: all people are called to holiness. All are called--not just priests and religious. Holiness is not restricted to those few who are privileged with extraordinary physical, intellectual and moral capabilities. It is everybody's concern, everybody's destiny.

There is a certain restricted image of holiness conceived by many people. They think of the calendar of saints and say: "I can hardly see myself on that list." They also see extraordinary human beings, who far surpass ordinary people and say: "That's not for me." Many others are frightened off by the words holiness and perfection. Perhaps this is so because holiness is considered an ideal, which is admirable, but too lofty. Perhaps this is so because perfection connotes people who always do what is exactly right-- so perfect that it discourages others.

Francis de Sales' reason for this universal invitation is simple but profound: "Holiness is not something one achieves on one's own." Holiness is a divine-human adventure: "It was God who entered human history and it is God who leads people into His own proper life." The first step in this journey is to welcome Jesus who comes to us on behalf of God, the Father. We are invited to listen so we know that "God is Love" and that God is madly in love with us. Jesus' actions and manner of living reveal God's love for the human family. He listens, heals, encourages; he brings peace, hope and joy. Jesus calls all to come to him, to be with him and to learn from him how to be like the God of love: "Come to me, all of you who labor and are heavy burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble of heart." (Mt 11:28 29)

Itinerary

In his own preface, Francis gives the itinerary of his Introduction:

- He begins by addressing his words to *Philothea* - anyone who desires to love God.
- First, there is his attempt to convert Philothea's simple desire for the devout life into a solid resolution. After "a general confession she at length makes this in the form of a firm protestation, followed by holy communion, in which she gives herself up to her Savior and happily enters into his holy love."
- In Part II, he treats the two principal means of deepening this union - the sacraments, by which God comes to us - and prayer, by which we go to God.
- In Part III, he deals with those virtues "most needed for her progress," and some advice on friendships.
- In Part IV, he points out some snares of the enemies – temptations - how to avoid them and how to press forward.
- In Part V, he encourages Philothea to step back a bit to refresh herself, to get back her breath and to recover her strength so as to "afterwards more successfully gain ground and advance in the devout life".

The First Part of the Introduction

The Devout Life

Chapter 1 - True Devotion

1. It is a virtue most pleasing to God.
2. It is simply true love of God.
3. It is love in action or charity.
4. It is spiritual agility and vivacity (liveliness) by which charity works in us.
5. When love of God makes us do good “carefully, frequently and promptly” it is called perfection.
6. It leads us to do not just what is commanded, but also what is counseled or inspired.
7. “Charity is spiritual fire and when it bursts into flames, it is called devotion.”

Chapter 2 - Excellence of Devotion

1. The world tries to say that devout people are unhappy - making devotion undesirable.
2. They do not see the inward devotion that renders sacrifice agreeable.
3. Devout people are happy and lovable and devotion is true spiritual sugar.
4. “Devotion is the delight of delights and queen of the virtues since it is the perfection of charity.”
5. Devotion is all the good things at their best.
6. Jacob's ladder is a true picture of the devout life.

Chapter 3 - Devotion is Universal

1. God invites all Christians to bring forth the fruits of devotion, each in his or her own position or vocation in life.
2. The practice of devotion must be adapted to the duties, strength and activities of each individual.
3. True devotion adorns and beautifies one's vocation or occupation.
4. “Every vocation becomes more agreeable when united with devotion”: care of family, love of husband and wife, service to neighbor, employment.
5. “It is an error, or rather a heresy, to wish to banish the devout life from the regiment of soldiers, the mechanic's shop, the court of princes, or the home of married people.”

Chapter 4 - Spiritual Director

1. Find a good person to guide and lead you.
2. He relates a spiritual director to a faithful friend: “the medicine of life and immortality...”
3. Director: “God will put into his (or her) mouth whatever is requisite for your welfare.”
Directee: “Open your heart to him (or her) with all sincerity and fidelity.”
4. Humbly ask God to send you the one God chooses for you.
5. Attitudes toward a director: obedience, confidence, reverence.
6. Once you have found him (or her), do not seek another: “go forward with simplicity, humility, and confidence for you will make a most prosperous journey.”

Review Questions:

1. What is the difference between charity and devotion? (chap. 1)
2. What is true devotion? (chap. 1)
3. What does devotion do for us? (chap. 1)
4. Why does devotion frighten some people? (chap. 2)
5. What does devotion really do? (chap. 2)
6. How is Jacob's ladder a true picture of the devout life? (chap. 2)
7. When is devotion false? (chap. 3)
8. Why does Francis say that it is "an error, or a heresy" to banish the devout life from the average person? (chap. 3)
9. What is the most important advice with regard to beginning the devout life? (chap. 4)
10. How should a person relate to his or her director? (chap. 4)

Reflections:

1. Reflect on the ideas you have of holiness. How did you acquire such ideas?
2. Would the practice of the devout life make your vocation and occupation more lovable and agreeable? Why or why not?
3. Consider Jacob's ladder, for it is a true picture of the devout life. Evaluate yourself by reference.
4. Do you have a spiritual director? If so, what is your attitude toward him or her? If not, consider how you might benefit from one.
5. Identify some examples of people today who are living true devout lives.

The First Part of the Introduction

Purgations

Chapter 5 - Purifying the Soul

1. Put off the old and put on the new - forsake sin and remove the obstacles to union with God.
2. Purifying the soul takes place little by little, an ongoing process.
3. We must have courage and patience.
4. Purifying the soul neither can nor should end except with our physical death.
5. "We must not be disturbed by our imperfections, since for us perfection consists in fighting against them."
6. To practice the virtue of humility will help us to deal with set-backs as we are engaged in this "spiritual warfare."
7. We are always victorious provided we are willing to fight.

Chapter 6 - Mortal Sin

1. The first purgation is of sin and the means is the "holy sacrament of penance."
2. A general confession of one's whole life is strongly recommended, but not absolutely necessary.
3. Ordinary confessions are often made with little preparation or contrition.
4. People go to confession with a tacit intention of returning to sin.
5. The value of a general confession:
 - summons us to know ourselves
 - assumes wholesome sorrow
 - makes us marvel at the mercy of God
 - brings peace to our hearts
 - calms our minds
 - excites us to good resolutions
 - provides our spiritual director with the opportunity to advise us better
 - helps us to reveal ourselves with confidence

Chapter 7 - Affection for Sin

1. Some have a reluctance to give up affection for sin.
2. "Affection for sin" means that one resolves never to sin again, but still desires the "fatal delights of sin."
3. Affection for sin causes "spiritual weariness," which increases the danger of falling again.

Chapter 8 - How to Purge Affection for Sin

1. The highest means to purge oneself of affection for sin is an intense contrition!
2. Increase contrition and repentance by a strong, living conviction of the evil sin brings upon us.
3. Extend this contrition and repentance to everything relating to sin.
4. To help “root out of your heart both sin and the affections for it”, practice the meditations, use them in the order given and take only one each day.

Review Questions

1. What is the usual way a soul undergoes purgation? (chap. 5)
2. Why are courage and patience necessary? (chap. 5)
3. Why should we not fear our imperfections? (chap. 5)
4. Wherein lies victory in this “spiritual warfare”? (chap. 5)
5. What is the major means of purifying ourselves from sin? (chap. 6)
6. What is a general confession and how is it helpful? (chap. 6)
7. What is meant by “affection for sin”? (chap. 7)
8. Why is it necessary to strive to purify our souls of affection for sin? (chap. 7)
9. What is the highest motive for the purging of affection for sin? (chap. 8)
10. What is the purpose of the meditations? (chap. 8)

Reflections:

1. Reflect on your experience of this “spiritual warfare.” What do these experiences teach you about yourself? Recall the times when the helping hand of God was most evident.
2. How do you feel about celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation?
3. How might a “general confession” help you purge yourself from sin?
4. Reflect on your own “affection for sin.” How has this “affection for sin” caused you “spiritual weariness”?
5. Is this a good time to examine your own soul with regard to “affection for sin”? Which of the meditations touches your heart the most; which the least? Can you give a reason?

The First Part of the Introduction

Purification of our Tendencies to Lesser evils

Chapter 19 - General Confession

1. "Don't let fears of any sort disturb you", make your confession with "candor and sincerity", and then place your confidence in the mercy of God.
2. Sin is only shameful when we commit it, but it is transformative when it is met with confession, repentance and contrition.
3. "Contrition and confession are so beautiful and have so good an odor that they wipe away the ugliness of sin and purify its stench."

Chapters 20 and 21- Resolution

1. This chapter is a prayer or "declaration" - a resolution to serve God in mind, body and soul. (chap. 20)
2. The declaration contains these major points (chap. 20):
 - Considers God's gracious mercy
 - Recalls our baptismal commitment
 - Acknowledges sinfulness against God
 - Implores God's grace
 - Renews pledge of fidelity
 - Resolves to serve and love God now and forever
3. Receive the Lord in communion as a seal upon your heart. (chap. 21)

Chapter 22 - Venial Sin

1. This chapter deals with the affections remaining in our souls for venial sins.
2. Venial sin is "a less serious infidelity to the will of God, sufficient to diminish one's character but not to reverse one's fundamental orientation toward God". (Richard P. McBrien, *Catholicism*, p. 1253)
3. "We can never be completely free of venial sin."
4. No matter how small, venial sins offend God.
5. These offenses are contrary to devotion because they entangle the soul in bad habits and inclinations, and imply a determination to offend God.

Chapter 23 - Useless and Dangerous Things

1. Sports, banquets, parties, fine clothes, comedies, dancing - these are indifferent acts, which are neither good nor bad.
2. "Although such acts are not always opposed to devotion, the affections are damaging to it."

Chapter 24 - Evil Inclinations

1. This chapter deals with “natural inclinations,” certain imperfections, defects, and human failings.
2. Some are naturally cheerful while others are gloomy; some are prone to anger while others, to love.
3. There is no nature so good that it cannot be tainted to evil by bad habits.
4. There is no nature so perverse that it cannot, first by God's grace and second by our own labor and care, be brought under control and overcome.

Review Questions

1. Why does Francis caution us against fear? (chap. 19)
2. When is sin transformative? (chap. 19)
3. Wherein lies the great value of the Declaration or Resolution? (chap. 20)
4. How does receiving communion set a seal upon your heart? (chap. 21)
5. Why are affections for venial sins so harmful to the soul and the devout life? (chap. 22)
6. When do “useless and dangerous things” become harmful to the devout life? (chap. 23)
7. What is meant by “natural inclinations” and what advice does Francis give for dealing with our human nature? (chap. 24)

Reflections:

1. Describe an experience in which your celebration of “reconciliation” was truly transformative.
2. Reflect on the conversion Christ wants from us, “Unless you change and become like a child, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 18: 2-3)
3. In what ways are you not Christ-like?
4. What effort have you made to overcome your faults?

The Second Part of the Introduction

Prayer and Forms of Prayer

Chapter 1- Prayer in General

1. The need: “nothing else so purifies our intellect of ignorance and our will of depraved affections.”
2. Two types of Prayer: mental – “the prayer of the heart” and vocal - “the holy prayers of the Church.”
3. Mental Prayer
 - By turning your eyes on Jesus, your whole soul will be filled with Him.
 - You will learn ways and pattern your actions after Him.
 - In Him, by Him and for Him that we must be instructed and enlightened.
 - We cannot go to God the Father except through Jesus.
 - His life and death are the most profitable subjects for ordinary meditation.
4. Vocal Prayer
 - Learn to appreciate the meaning of the prayers of the Church.
 - Do not hurry along but try to speak from the heart.
 - The rosary is a useful form of prayer if you know how to say it properly.
 - “If you find your heart drawn and invited to interior mental prayer, don't refuse to take it up.”
5. A guide for Practicing Prayer
 - If possible, set aside an hour for prayer every day.
 - If you can, spend the hour in Church, which is free of distraction/interruption.
 - Begin all your prayer in the presence of God.
 - Mental prayer substituted for vocal prayer is more pleasing to God and more profitable for your soul.

Chapters 2 - 7: Method for Meditation

1. Remote Preparation - place yourself in the presence of God (chap. 2)
2. Immediate Preparation - invoke the assistance of the Holy Spirit (chap. 3)
3. Considerations - use of the imagination (chap. 4) and intellect (chap. 5)
4. Affections and Resolutions - movement of the will and affections (chap. 6)
5. Spiritual Bouquet - conclusion of the meditation (chap. 7)

Chapter 8 - Advice on Meditation

1. Remember the resolutions you have made and put them into effect that day.
2. Seek occasions, great or small, to practice them.
3. Remain silent for a while after finishing your mental prayer.
4. Preserve as long as you can the feelings you have conceived.
5. Learn how to pass from prayer to the various duties of your vocation with so much ease and tranquility that your mind is not disturbed.

Chapter 9 - Dryness in Meditation

1. If you do not find joy or comfort in meditation, open your heart to the words of vocal prayer.
 - Express your sorrow to the Lord
 - Confess your unworthiness
 - Ask the Lord to help you.
2. “Turn to some spiritual book and read it attentively until your mind is awakened and restored within you.”
3. Make use of some act of exterior devotion to arouse your heart.
4. If you do not receive any consolation, do not be disturbed, but remain with a respectful bearing in His presence.
5. “Be content that it is the very greatest honor for us to stand before Him in His sight.”

Review Questions

1. What are the two basic forms of prayer? (chap. 1)
2. What form does Francis recommend and what should it center on? (chap. 1)
3. What advice does Francis give for practicing mental or vocal prayer? (chap. 1)
4. How should you begin all prayer? (chap. 1)
5. What are the basic steps used in the preparation for meditation? (chap. 2)
6. What does “invocation” mean? (chap. 3)
7. What is meant by the “composition of place” in regard to the subject of the meditation? (chap. 4)
8. What is the purpose of the considerations? How should they be approached? (chap. 5)
9. What is the purpose of the affections? (chap. 6)
10. What are the three acts of the conclusion? What do they mean? (chap. 7)
11. Why is it important to put the resolutions after the affections? (chap. 8)
12. What should you do when you experience “dryness” in prayer? (chap. 9)

Reflections:

1. Describe your prayer life. What prayer form is more dominant in your experience?
2. Practice the method of meditation that Francis suggests. Describe your experience in a journal type activity.
3. Recall a time in your life when you were unaware of God's presence but were suddenly reminded of it.
4. How do you pass from prayer to the various duties of your vocation?
5. Have you ever experienced “dryness” in prayer? If so, how did you deal with it?

The Second Part of the Introduction

Spiritual Exercises

Chapter 10 - Morning Exercise

1. Morning Prayer - "a general preparation for all the day's actions".
2. Give thanks to God for preserving you during the night.
3. Ask God for pardon if you committed any sin during the preceding night.
4. The present day is given to you "to gain the future day of eternity".
5. Anticipate the tasks and occasions for serving God you may meet this day.
6. Consider the potential temptations to which you may be exposed.
7. Humble yourself before God - by yourself you can do nothing.
8. All these acts must be made briefly and fervently before leaving your room.
9. It is important never to omit this exercise.

Chapter 11- Evening Exercise & Examination of Conscience

1. Evening Exercise
 - Set aside some time before supper.
 - Place yourself before Jesus Christ crucified.
 - Rekindle in your heart the fire of your morning exercise.
 - Arouse yourself to devotion by some new subject.
2. Examination of Conscience
 - Give thanks to God for keeping you during the day.
 - Examine how you conducted yourself during the day.
 - If you have done any good, thank God for it.
 - If you have done any wrong, ask God to pardon you.
 - Present to God your "body and soul, the Church, your relatives and friends".

Chapter 12 - Spiritual Retreat

1. This spiritual retreat is "one of the most certain means to spiritual advancement".
2. It consists in a withdrawal for a brief time in order to be with the Lord.
3. Make yourself aware of God's presence.
4. Allow your heart to choose a place with the Lord to refresh and restore yourself.
5. To allow for silence is an inner space for heart-to heart communing with God. Often possible in the midst of chores and noisy surroundings.
6. "Our tasks are seldom important as to keep us from withdrawing our hearts from them from time to time in order to retire into this divine solitude."
7. Converse with God "heart to heart" about the state of your soul.

Chapter 13 - Aspirations, Ejaculatory Prayers, Good Thoughts

1. Aspirations

- Aspirations to be with God and spiritual retirement support one another and both come from good thoughts.
- Make spiritual aspirations to God by short, ardent movements of the heart.

2. Ejaculatory Prayers

- This exercise may be spread among all our tasks and duties without any inconvenience and assist us greatly in what we do.
- Do not restrict yourself to a set form of words, but rather pronounce within your heart or with your lips the words love suggests to you at the time.

3. Good Thoughts

- Those who love God can never stop thinking about Him, longing for Him, aspiring to Him, and speaking about Him.
- Draw on nature: the ocean, shells on the beach, a rose, the stars, a tree, the mountains, or the bank of a pleasant brook, etc.

4. Take up these exercises with all your heart and never give them up.

Review Questions

1. What is the best means for preparing for the day? Briefly, what are the steps involved in this? (chap. 10)
2. What is the purpose of foreseeing the events of the day? (chap. 10)
3. What is the value of the evening exercise? (chap. 11)
4. When should the examination of conscience be made? How? Why should it never be forgotten? (chap. 11)
5. Francis says that we should make spiritual retreats frequently during the day. How is this done when you are surrounded by other people? (chap. 12)
6. What is meant by “aspirations”? Give an example. (chap. 13)
7. What is the value of “ejaculatory prayers”? (chap. 13)
8. Give some examples of how good thoughts arouse one to many flights and aspirations to God. (chap. 13)

Reflections:

1. Try the “morning exercise” and examine its helpfulness throughout the course of a given day.
2. How do you make time to separate the tasks of everyday living from time for silence?
3. What are some of the implications for daily living when a person takes time to make daily “spiritual retreats”?
4. Our Lord exhorts us to pray always. We shall, if we practice faithfully these spiritual exercises. How can creation help you to raise your mind and heart to its Creator?

The Second Part of the Introduction

Advice on a Life of Prayer

Chapter 15 - Communal Exercises

1. Assist at the Liturgy of the Hours as much as convenience permits on Sundays and holy days.
2. Join confraternities recommended by the Church.
3. "It is always a very charitable act to concur and cooperate with others in their good purposes."
4. God is more honored by exercises performed with others than by private ones, because of the union with others.

Chapter 16 - The Saints

1. Learn about the saints and turn to them for intercession.
2. "Honor, reverence, and respect with a special love the sacred and glorious Virgin Mary."
 - Run to her arms like little children with perfect confidence.
 - Invoke her maternal love.
 - Have true filial affection for her.
3. Have a particular love for the guardian angel of the diocese where you live, of those persons with whom you live, and for your own guardian angel.
4. "Choose certain particular saints whose lives you can best appreciate and imitate and in whose intercession you may have particular confidence."

Chapter 17 - The Word of God

1. Francis gives advice on how to hear the Word of God.
 - Be devoted to conversations on the Bible and homilies.
 - "Always listen with attention and reverence."
 - "Take it into your heart like a precious balm."
2. Always have at hand some approved book of devotion - spiritual reading.
 - Their actions cannot be followed strictly, but must be adapted to your vocation.
 - Some stories of the lives of the saints provide more light for the conduct of our lives.
 - Some stories contain more material for us to marvel at than to imitate.

Chapter 18 - Inspirations

1. "Influence of thought and strong feelings on actions, especially on good actions."
(*Webster's Dictionary*)
2. "All those interior attractions, motions, acts of self-reproach and remorse, lights and conceptions that God works in us."
3. These lead us to acts of virtue. There are three steps by which we ascend to virtue:
 - Inspiration which is contrary to temptation.
 - Delight taken in inspiration, which is contrary to delight taken in temptation.
 - Consent to inspiration, which is contrary to consent given to temptation.
4. "To find joy in inspirations is a great advance to God's glory."
5. It is consent that perfects the virtuous act.
 - Resolve to accept willingly all the inspirations that God sends you.
 - Before you consent to inspirations, consult your spiritual director.
 - Once consent is given, hasten to put the inspiration into practice.

Review Questions

1. What is the "liturgy of the hours"? (chap. 15)
2. Why does Francis say that communal prayer is always to be preferred to private prayer? (chap. 15)
3. What are confraternities? (chap. 15)
4. What is Francis' advice regarding invoking our Lady, the angels and the saints? (chap. 16)
5. How would Francis have us receive the Word of God, whether it comes to us in sermons or conversation? (chap. 17)
6. What is Francis' advice concerning spiritual reading? (chap. 17)
7. How does Francis define "inspiration"? (chap. 18)
8. What are the three steps by which we ascend to virtue? (chap. 18)
9. With what dispositions should we receive such inspirations? (chap. 18)
10. What precautions should we take before consenting to extraordinary inspirations to be sure they are from God? (chap. 18)

Reflections:

1. What is your experience, if any, of celebrating the "Liturgy of the Hours"?
2. Identify some of the confraternities of your parish and/or diocese. Do any of these appeal to you?
3. What are your reflections about the importance of communal prayer over private prayer?
4. Do you have any particular saints to whom you draw inspiration? How do you feel about guardian angels?
5. Do you read the Bible? With what disposition do you come to the Word of God to be inspired?
6. What kinds of devotional books do you read for inspiration?

The Second Part of the Introduction

The Sacraments

Chapter 14 - How to Attend Mass

1. The Mass is “the sun of all spiritual exercises - the most holy, sacred, and supremely sovereign sacrament and sacrifice”.
 - Center of Christian Religion.
 - Heart of Devotion
 - Soul of Piety
2. It is the mystery in which God gives Himself and gloriously communicates His graces and favors to us.
3. “Prayer made in union with this divine sacrifice has inestimable power.”
4. Make every effort to assist at Mass.
5. If you cannot be present in person, try at least to transport your heart to it and assist by your spiritual presence.
6. Francis suggests a sequence of pious thoughts, which follows closely the acts of the Mass.

Chapter 19 - Holy Confession

1. This sacrament is given to the Church so we may be cleansed from all our iniquities no matter how often and how greatly we have sinned.
2. A person who has consented to sin must:
 - Be sorrowful
 - Be washed clean as soon as possible.
3. “Make a humble, devout confession every week.”
4. In confession, you receive:
 - Absolution for sins you confess.
 - Great strength to avoid them in the future.
 - Light to see them clearly.
 - Abundant grace to repair whatever damages you have caused to happen.
5. “In the single act of confession you will receive more virtues than in any other act whatsoever.”
6. It is an abuse to confess any kind of sin without the will to be rid of it.
7. Examine the reason for the accusations and accuse yourself of the precise thing.
8. Do not be satisfied with confessing the mere fact of sin, but examine the motive that led you to commit them.
9. Spiritual Confessor
 - Give a full understanding of the nature of your sins.
 - Do not change your confessor needlessly.
 - “Tell the state of your inclinations even though you have not sinned because of them.”

Chapter 20 - Holy Communion

1. Our hearts are preserved from the corruption of sin when sweetened by the incorruptible flesh and blood of the Son of God.
2. Receive communion every Sunday, provided your soul is without any affection for sin.
3. If your spiritual director agrees, you can receive communion more often than every Sunday.
4. The longest time between communion should not exceed a month for those who wish to serve God devoutly.
5. To receive communion daily it is necessary that we overcome the great part of our evil inclinations and that we follow the advice of our spiritual director.

Chapter 21 - How to Receive Communion

1. Begin your preparation the previous evening.
2. Arise in the morning with great joy because of the happiness for which you hope.
3. Go with confidence and humility to receive this heavenly food.
4. After you receive Jesus, allow your heart to be moved by love.
 - Talk with Him about your inmost thoughts.
 - Reflect on the fact that He is within you.
 - Make Him as welcome as possible.
 - By your actions let others know and see that He is within you.
5. When you cannot enjoy the benefit of communicating in reality at Holy Communion, unite your heart and spirit to the life-giving Body of our Lord.
6. Your great intention in receiving Communion should be to advance, strengthen and comfort yourself in the love of the Lord.
7. Two classes of people should communicate frequently:
 - The perfect - to be strengthened on the journey
 - The imperfect - to strive for perfection
 - The strong lest they become weak.
 - The weak that they may become strong.
 - The sick that they may become healthy.
 - The healthy lest they fall sick.
8. Go often to Communion so that by adoring and receiving beauty, purity, and goodness itself in this divine sacrament, you will become wholly beautiful, good, and pure.

Review Questions

1. For St. Francis de Sales, why is the reception/celebration of the Sacraments so important?

Reflections

1. How important are the Sacraments to you at this point in your life? Why, or why not?
2. What needs in your own life might the Sacraments help you to address or pursue?

The Third Part of the Introduction

Choosing Virtues to Practice

Chapter 1 - The Choice of Virtue

1. A choice must be made:
 - “A great fault in many who undertake the exercise of some particular virtue is thinking they must practice it in every situation.”
 - “Meekness, temperance, integrity, and humility are virtues - and must mark all our actions in life.”
2. Each person must practice in a special manner the virtues needed by the kind of life to which he or she is called.
 - A bishop's virtues are of one kind.
 - A soldier's virtues are of another.
 - A housewife's are still another.
3. “Among virtues pertaining to our special duties we must prefer the more excellent to the more obvious.”
 - You should choose the best virtues, not the most popular.
 - The noblest, not the most obvious.
 - Those that are actually the best, not the most spectacular.
4. “It is helpful for everyone to practice some particular virtue to keep his (or her) mind better ordered and occupied.”
 - St. Francis Assisi loved poverty above all things.
 - St. Dominic loved preaching.
 - Tobias practiced charity by burying the dead.
 - St. Elizabeth had a special love for self-abasement.
 - St. Catherine of Genoa dedicated herself to work in a hospital.
5. “When attacked by some vice, we must practice the contrary virtue as much as we can and refer all the others to it.”
 - Example: If I have a problem with pride or anger, I should practice humility and meekness.
 - “By refining one of them (virtues) all are made more excellent and better polished.”

Chapter 2 - On Evaluating Virtues

1. Excesses: In the beginning of the devout life, excessive scruples may be a commendable virtue, but not for those advanced in the devout life.
 - We must have a good opinion of those we see practicing virtues, even though imperfectly, since we know that the saints have often practiced them in this manner.
 - How to avoid excesses: rely on the judgment of those whom God has given you for directors in practicing the virtues not only faithfully but also prudently.
2. Exceptional gifts: (ecstasies, raptures, etc)
 - These are favors, at times given to souls still imperfect.
 - They are in no way necessary to serve God - this should be our only intention.
 - Leave such super-eminent favors to lofty souls.
3. Let us concentrate on the little virtues: “patience, meekness, self-mortification, humility, obedience, poverty, chastity, tenderness toward our neighbors, bearing with imperfections, diligence, and holy fervor.”
4. Sometimes it happens that those who imagine themselves to be angels are not even good persons.

Review Questions

1. Why must a choice be made in the practice of virtue? (tip. 1)
2. Are there certain virtues, which must be universally practiced? (tip. 1)
3. In practicing virtues, which ones should we prefer? (tip. 1)
4. Why is it helpful for everyone to practice a particular virtue? (tip. 1)
5. What advice does Francis give when we are confronted by a particular vice? (tip. 1)
6. What should our attitude be toward excesses? (tip. 2)
7. How should we avoid them? (tip. 2)
8. What does Francis say about exceptional gifts (ecstasies and raptures)? (tip. 2)
9. Why does Francis exhort us to practice the "little virtues"? (tip. 2)
10. What are the little virtues? (tip. 2)

Reflections

1. Are there certain virtues demanded by your state in life that you have not practiced as you should?
2. Reflect on the virtues that Francis says ought to mark every Christian: meekness, temperance, integrity, and humility.
3. Is there any particular virtue which circumstances of your life demand that you practice?
4. Have you any special work (ministry, occupation) in which you try to exercise a particular virtue?

The Third Part of the Introduction

Patience and Humility

Chapter 3 - Patience

1. The more perfect our patience the more completely do we possess our souls.
2. Do not limit your patience, but extend it universally to all things God will send you or let happen to you.
3. The truly patient person bears up equally under trials as well as with honors.
4. To be criticized denounced, and treated badly by good people, by our own friends and relatives, is the test of virtue.
5. Be patient not only with the big things that happen to you, but also to the things accompanying them and accidental circumstances.
6. Complain as little as possible about the wrongs you suffer. The truly patient person neither complains about the present sufferings nor desires to be pitied by others.
7. Speak about your sufferings in a “natural, true, and sincere way, without murmuring, complaining, or exaggerating them”.
8. Special Tests:
 - When evil happens to you, apply whatever remedies you can and wait patiently for the results.
 - When an accusation is made -- if true, humble yourself and admit it; if false, deny it. If it continues, do not be disturbed and do not try to make them accept your explanation.
 - When you are sick offer up your grief, pain and weakness to the Lord. Follow the doctor's advice, desire to get well, and be patient.
9. Encouragements:
 - Remember that within your soul you have Jesus Christ.
 - We can never perform acts of greater patience than while we live amid afflictions.
 - Allow your sufferings to be made with that of Jesus who suffered on the cross for you.

Chapter 4 - Outward Humility

1. The value of humility in general:

- “To receive God's grace into our hearts they must be emptied of our own vainglory.”
- “Humility drives away Satan and keeps the graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit safe within us.”

2. The value of outward humility - it helps to avoid vainglory - "to whatever we assign to ourselves.”

- Something that is not actually in us - possessions, ancestry
- Something in us but not of us - good looks
- Something in us and of us - clever learning

3. Tests of outward humility:

- Observe whether a person's “abilities tend to humility, modesty, and obedience for in that case they will be truly good”.
- The real test is whether all the wonderful things in a person lead him or her closer to God.
- Humility is recognizing the truth about ourselves -our gifts are from God.
- A right attitude toward honors -those who aspire to virtue do not trouble themselves over honors.

4. Exceptions:

- “Everyone can take and keep his (or her) proper rank without damage to humility if this is done unaffectedly and without quarreling.”
- “I do not refer to (those) whose dignity concerns the public or to certain particular occasions attended with great consequences.”
- In these matters everyone ought to keep what belongs to him or her with prudence and discretion.

Chapter 5 - Interior Humility

1. Does not demand blindness to our blessings:

- The true means to attain love of God is the consideration of his benefits. The more we know about them, the more we shall love God.
- “Nothing can so effectively humble us before God's mercy as the multitude of his benefits.”
“Nothing can so deeply humble us before his justice as our countless offenses against them”.

2. Remember that none of the good in us comes from ourselves.

- "If we reflect on what we did when God was not with us, we will easily perceive that what we do when he is with us is not the result of our own efforts.”

3. Advice on appearing humble:

- True humility does not make a show of it and hardly speaks in a humble way.
- Let us not lower our eyes except when we humble our hearts.
- Let us not make a show of wanting to be the lowest unless we desire to be such with all our heart. Good manners require that we show precedence, which may be refused.
- To say certain words of respect which may not be strictly true may be appropriate under certain circumstances.

- Our words should always be suited as closely as possible to what we feel, so that in all things “we may maintain heartfelt sincerity and candor”.

4. Humility in relation to:

- Striving for perfection - when God desires to give us His graces, it is pride to refuse them. God's gifts obligate us to accept them, and it is humility to obey and comply as nearly as we can.
- Generosity - to lower ourselves in God's eyes involves a trust in God's unconditional love and mercy.
- Charity - this virtue is the “true sun of all the virtues” and should have dominion over them. Acts of humility that are offensive to charity are certainly false.
- Public Opinion- If people think foolish of you because of your true devotion, “humility will cause you to rejoice at such fortunate criticism for its cause is not in you but in those who make it”.

Chapter 6 - Love Your Abjections

1. “In all things and through all things you should love your own abjection.”

- Abjection is lowliness, meanness, and baseness in us even if we are not aware of that fact. Humility is true knowledge and acknowledgment of our abjection.
- True humility consists in willingly admitting our abjection, but not “loving and delighting in it”.

2. There are certain virtues that are abject and virtues that are honorable:

- Worldly people consider patience, meekness, simplicity, and humility abject.
- Worldly people hold prudence, courage, and liberality in high esteem.
- Giving alms and forgiving injuries are both charitable acts. Everyone holds giving alms in honor. Worldly people despise forgiving injuries.

3. Correcting Abjections:

- “Although we love the abjection that follows an evil, we must not forget to correct by just and lawful means the evil that caused it.”
- “It sometimes happens that charity requires us to remove the abjection for the good of a neighbor before whom our good name must be preserved.”
- “The best kinds of abjections are.....those which come to us accidentally or because of our state in life.”

Chapter 7 - How to Preserve our Good Name

1. Humility prevents us from seeking after praise, honor and glory. However, “charity requires and humility agrees that we should desire to have a good name and carefully preserve it”.
2. Reasons:
 - It is one of the bases of human society.
 - The duty of preserving our reputation is the urgings of a generous spirit to go forward with a strong and agreeable impulse.
 - Although love of God is the principal preservative of our virtues, we can also employ our good name as very proper and useful for that purpose.
3. Guidelines:
 - “Those who try too carefully to maintain their reputation lose it entirely.”
 - “Contempt for injuries causes them to vanish.”
 - “We must prefer the fruit before the leaves, that is, the interior spiritual graces above all external goods.”
 - If another harms your reputation, do not be disturbed. It will return, not only as beautiful as before, but much stronger.
 - “The root of a good name is virtue and probity,” honesty and integrity.
4. Calumny:
 - “If we are condemned unjustly, let us oppose truth to calumny.”
 - “If the calumny continues, let us continue to humble ourselves.”
 - “By surrendering our reputation together with our soul into God's hands, we safeguard it the best way possible.”

Review Questions

1. What does Francis mean by “extending patience universally to all things”? (chap. 3)
2. To what extent should we practice patience? When should we resist the evil? (chap. 3)
3. How should we deal with just accusations - false accusations? (chap. 3)
4. What advice does Francis give for dealing with illness? (chap. 3)
5. Generally speaking, what is the value of humility? (chap. 4)
6. What is meant by “vainglory”? (chap. 4)
7. How do we recognize true goodness - the true test of outward humility? (chap. 4)
8. How should we handle honors and glory? (chap. 4)
9. Why does humility not prevent us from recognizing our giftedness? (chap. 5)
10. What does Francis say about the appearance of humility or false humility? (chap. 5)
11. Why is it not contrary to humility to aspire to perfection? (chap. 5)
12. Can charity to our neighbor overrule certain practices of humility? (chap. 5)
13. What does “loving your own abjections” mean? (chap. 6)
14. When should abjections be corrected? (chap. 6)
15. How can you reconcile the practice of humility with keeping a good name? (chap. 7)
16. How can you practice this care for a good name? (chap. 7)

Reflections:

1. How often do you tend to complain about the particular circumstances of your life?
How might you extend patience to all the aspects of your present lifestyle?
2. How do you tend to react when others make accusations against you - whether justly or falsely?
3. Identify those aspects of yourself that might tend toward "vainglory." How might the advice of Francis help you here?
4. How do you deal with receiving and giving praise, glory, and honor?
5. What are your own personal abjections that the Lord is calling you to love? How can the advice of Francis help you achieve this end?
6. In what ways can the advice of Francis help you preserve a good reputation?

The Third Part of the Introduction

Meekness and Peace of Mind

Chapter 8 - Meekness Toward our Neighbor

1. Jesus says: “Learn of me for I am meek and humble of heart.”
 - Humility perfects us with respect to God, and gentleness with respect to neighbor.
 - Balm: sinks deeper than any other liquid - symbolizes humility.
 - Olive Oil: always rises to the top - symbolizes meekness and mildness (“meekness rises above all things and stands out among the virtues as the flower of charity”).
2. “When humility and meekness are good and true, they preserve us from the inflammation and swelling that injuries usually cause in our hearts.”
3. If we are proud and enraged when we are stung, it is a sure sign that in us neither humility nor meekness is genuine but only apparent and superficial.
4. Remedies for Anger
 - It is better to attempt to find a way to live without anger than to pretend to make a moderate, discreet use of it.
 - When we find that we are angry, we must call for God's help. He will command your passions to cease and there will be a great calm.
 - Prayers directed against present and pressing anger must always be said calmly and peaceably.
 - We must repair our anger instantly by a contrary act of meekness. Fresh wounds are quickest healed.
 - When your mind is tranquil and without cause for anger, you build up a stock of meekness and mildness.
 - We must develop polite conversation with strangers, our neighbors and our own family.

Chapter 9 - Meekness Toward Ourselves

1. The best exercise in meekness that we can perform is with ourselves. “We must not fret over our own imperfections.”
2. We should be displeased and sorry when we commit a fault, but “refrain from bitter, gloomy, spiteful and emotional displeasure”.
3. Reasons for this advice:
 - Fits of anger against ourselves tend to pride and spring from self-love.
 - We must be sorry for our faults, but in a calm, settled, firm way.
 - Violent repentance does not proceed according to character of our faults, but according to our inclinations.
 - A parent's gentle, loving rebuke has far greater power to correct a child, than rage and passion.

Chapter 10 - Care about our Affairs

1. Advice: Be careful and attentive to all the matters God has committed to your care, but without worry and anxiety.
2. Reasons for this advice:
 - Care need not disturb our inner peace. Worry and anxiety always do.
 - A job done too eagerly and hurriedly is never well done.
 - Worry and anxiety disturb the reason and good judgment and so prevent us from doing well the very things we are worried about.
3. How to accomplish this goal:
 - “Undertake all your affairs with a calm mind and try to dispatch them in order one after the other.”
 - “In all your affairs rely wholly on God's providence.”
 - “Be sure that if you have firm trust in God, the success that comes to you will always be that which is most useful to you.”
 - “In ordinary affairs and occupations that do not require strict, earnest attention, you should look at God rather than at them.”

Review Questions

1. How does meekness differ from humility? (chap. 8)
2. How can you tell if meekness and humility are true? (chap. 8)
3. What is Francis' position on giving way to anger? How does he justify this position? (chap. 8)
4. How would he have us act when provoked to anger or if we have given way to anger? (chap. 8)
5. How can we strengthen ourselves against anger? (chap. 8)
6. What happens when we become overly upset about our own imperfections? (chap. 9)
7. What is the proper and most practical way we should become sorry for our imperfections, faults and sins? (chap. 9)
8. How are care and diligence different from worry and anxiety? (chap. 10)
9. How can we handle our affairs and maintain peace of mind? (chap. 10)
10. What role should reliance on God's providence play in our affairs? (chap. 10)

Reflections

1. Identify ways in which you can bring meekness and mildness to your everyday interactions with co-workers, neighbors, friends and family.
2. How do you deal with anger? How might the advice of Francis assist you to handle anger with “peace of mind”?
3. Consider how you deal with your own imperfections. What advice of Francis might help you to be gentler to yourself?
4. Do you tend to worry about the many duties and responsibilities that God has committed to your care?
5. How might the advice of Francis assist you to undertake your affairs with “peace of mind”?

The Third Part of the Introduction

The Evangelical Counsels

Chapter 11- Obedience

1. The Evangelical Counsels

- Charity alone can bring us to perfection, but obedience, chastity and poverty are the principal means to attain it.
- Obedience consecrates our heart, chastity consecrates our body, and poverty is the means we take to God's love and service.
- "All of us are obliged to practice these three virtues, although not all in the same way."

2. Necessary obedience

- We must obey our ecclesiastical superiors - pope, bishop, parish priest, and those commissioned by them.
- We must obey our civil superiors - president, governor, mayor, etc.
- We must obey our domestic superiors - father and mother.

3. Advice on obeying our superiors:

- "None of us can exempt himself from the duty of obeying superiors to whom God has given authority to command and govern us."
- Obey them in something you like, in indifferent things, in matters disagreeable, severe and difficult. This is perfect obedience.
- "Obey meekly and without arguing, quickly and without delay, cheerfully and without complaining. Above all, obey lovingly out of love of Him."
- To learn to obey your superiors with ease, "adapt yourself easily to the will of your equals by giving in to their opinions in what is not sinful."

4. Voluntary obedience

- It is voluntary "when we obligate ourselves by our own choice and when this choice is not imposed on us by someone else".
- Example: We choose our own confessor and spiritual director.
- "Blessed are the obedient for God will never let them go astray."

Chapter 12 - Necessity of Chastity

1. As a rule it is never licit to desire pleasure from our bodies in any way whatsoever except in lawful marriage.

- 1st degree: Do not give in to any condemned and forbidden pleasure.
- 2nd degree: Refrain from useless, unnecessary pleasure even though lawful.
- 3rd degree: Do not set your affection on pleasures that are commanded.

2. Advice for the different states of life:

- Widows: they need to practice extraordinary devotion, for they are more susceptible to impure allurements.
- Virgins: they must be on their guard and never doubt that chastity is finer than anything incompatible with it.

- Married: they need two kinds of chastity - absolute abstinence when separated and moderation when together.
3. Chastity is necessary for all states of life. "Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God."

Chapter 13 - Advice on How to Preserve Chastity

1. "Be very quick to turn away from whatever leads or allures to lewd conduct."
2. "Human bodies are like glass vessels that cannot be carried about while touching one another without risk of breakage."
3. "Chastity depends on the heart as its source, but looks to the body as its subject."
4. "The devout soul must be chaste, clean, and pure in hands, lips, ears, eyes, and all its body."
5. "Chastity may be lost in as many ways as there are immodest and wanton acts."
6. "Do not associate with immodest persons, especially if they are loose in speech, as is generally the case."
7. "Associate with chaste, virtuous people and often think and read about sacred things."
8. "Always keep yourself close to Jesus Christ crucified, both spiritually by meditation and really by Holy Communion."

Chapter 14 - Poverty of Spirit

1. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
2. "Your heart must be open to heaven alone and impervious to riches and all other transitory things."
3. "Whatever part of (riches) you may possess, you must keep your heart free from the slightest affection for them."
4. "You can possess riches without being poisoned by them if you merely keep them in your home and purse and not in your heart."

Chapter 15 - The Practice of Genuine Poverty

1. Have a great care for material things, and at the same time a great contempt.
2. A great care:
 - Our possessions are not our own. God has given them to us to cultivate.
 - We perform a service to God by taking good care of them.
3. A great contempt:
 - Frequently give up some of your possessions by giving it with a generous heart to the poor. "Nothing makes us so prosperous in this world as to give alms."
 - "Love the poor and love poverty, for it is by such love that you become truly poor."
 - Make yourself the servant of the poor by helping the sick, feeding the hungry.
 - Rejoice if on occasion you have to suffer some lack or inconvenience.
 - "Accept your losses meekly and patiently and by courageously submitting to such impoverishment." "When our goods do not cleave to our hearts and we think of them only because of such care as God wants us to have for them, we don't lose reason or peace of mind if they are taken from us."

Chapter 16 - The Practice of Richness of Spirit

1. If you are really poor, then out of love of God you must be poor in spirit as well.
2. Your poverty enjoys two great privileges, and by their means you may win great merit.
 - “It has come not by your choice but solely by God's will.” God has made you poor without any concurrence of your will.
 - “It is a poverty that is truly poor.” Poverty that is praised, esteemed and supported is closely allied to wealth. Poverty that is despised, rejected and abandoned is truly poor.
3. Advice about being poor in spirit:
 - “If poverty displeases you, you are not poor in spirit.”
 - “Don't complain about your poverty.”
 - “Don't be downcast at not being cared for as might seem necessary.”
 - “Don't be ashamed of being poor or of asking alms in the name of charity.”

Review Questions

1. How are the evangelical counsels related to charity? (chap. 11)
2. What role does humility play? (chap. 11)
3. There are two kinds of obedience. Name and define them. (chap. 11)
4. To what extent are we to obey our superiors? How can we learn to obey them? (chap. 11)
5. What is the value of voluntary obedience? (chap. 11)
6. What is the value of chastity? (chap. 12)
7. What are the three degrees of the virtue of chastity? (chap. 12)
8. Why is the virtue of chastity necessary for the widow? The virgin? The married? (chap. 12)
9. Married people have two kinds of chastity? Why? What are they? (chap. 12)
10. What is poverty of spirit? (chap. 14)
11. How can we practice poverty of spirit in the midst of riches? (chap. 15)
12. What are the signs that one has lost the spirit of poverty? (chap. 15)
13. What is the value of being poor not by your own choice? (chap. 16)
14. Why should we not complain about our poverty? (chap. 16)
15. Why should we not be ashamed about being poor? (chap. 16)

Reflections

1. Do you make good use of the gifts that God has given you?
2. How well do you use and preserve the gift of your sexuality?
3. How well do you use your ability to relate with others?
4. Do you listen for/to God's will in the midst of your daily activities?
5. Do you consider other people in your life as potential instruments of God's will for you?
6. How well do you listen to other people?
7. Do you care for the gifts and talents that you have?
8. Do you care too much about some of the gifts, talents or things that possess?
9. Does anything that you possess actually possess you?
10. How generous are you with the riches, the gifts and abilities that you possess?

Third Part of the Introduction

Friendship

Chapter 17- On Friendship

1. Friendship is the most dangerous of all types of love, for it is based completely on intercommunication and we can hardly have such communication with a person without sharing in its qualities.
2. Requirements for love to become friendship:
 - The love must be mutual.
 - It must be mutually known.
 - It must be fostered by communications.
3. Types of friendship:
 - Friendships differ according to the variety of goods exchanged. The better the goods are, the better is the friendship.
 - Friendship based on the exchange of carnal pleasure alone has no right to the name of friendship. Friendships proceeding from the senses are termed sensual, vain and frivolous and deserve to be called folly rather than friendship.

Chapter 18 - Fond Loves

1. Defined: A playful friendship between persons of different sexes with no intention of marriage.
 - These are only phantoms of friendship and deserve the name neither of friendship nor love by reason of their deep vanity and imperfection.
2. Danger: By them the hearts of men and women are caught and entangled in empty, foolish affection.
 - They open the way to sin, although many years may pass before anything contrary to bodily chastity may occur.
3. Why people engage in such love:
 - “Some have the sole purpose of satisfying their hearts with loving and being loved.”
 - “Out of vanity others get involved, for they esteem it no small glory to capture and bind hearts by love.”
 - “Others are led away by their enormous inclinations and by vanity.”
4. Tragedy: “God has reserved for himself the whole love of our souls in acknowledgement for our creation, preservation, and redemption and he will demand a most strict account of all the mad deductions we make from it.”

Chapter 19 - True Friendship

1. “Love everyone with a deep love based on charity, but form friendships only with those who can share virtuous things with you.”
2. “The higher the virtues you share and your exchange with others, the more perfect your friendship will be.”

3. If your mutual and reciprocal exchanges concern charity and devotion - how precious the friendship will be because "it comes from God...leads to God...and its bond will endure eternally in God".
4. An exception: I refer to friendships you must make for yourselves, for you must not give up friendships that nature or earlier duties oblige you to cultivate with parents, relatives, benefactors, neighbors and others.
5. An objection: Many say that we should not have any particular friendships, since it fills our heart, distracts our mind and causes envy.
 - "For those who live in the world and desire to embrace true virtue it is necessary to unite in holy, sacred friendship."
 - "By this means they encourage, assist, and lead one another to perform good deeds."
 - We must go separate ways from those in the world who do not have the same mind and contract friendships according to different purposes.
 - "Perfection consists not in having no friendships, but in having only those which are good, holy, and sacred."

Chapter 20 - Difference between True and Vain Friendships

1. We must be on guard against deception in friendships especially when they are between persons of different sexes.
 - Satan often tricks those who are in love.
 - It may begin with virtuous love, but
 - Without prudence fond love will first be injected,
 - Followed by sensual love and then carnal love.
2. Signs that a spiritual love is deteriorating:
 - There is a "great perfusion of honeyed words".
 - There are "improper looks, sensual caresses, deep sighs, little complaints about not being loved, etc."
 - The judgment is impaired, so that those afflicted believe they are acting correctly.
 - Those afflicted fear the light and love darkness. They seek to hide their relationship.
 - It leaves a bitter taste, leads to carnal demands, and, if refused, leads to bitterness and hatred.
3. Signs that a good friendship is not intended:
 - When a person struts about, wheedles, and bargains with no intention of lawful marriage.
 - When young people use postures and words they would not otherwise use with their parents, spouses, or confessors.

Chapter 21- Advice Against Evil Friendships

1. As soon as you are aware of what is happening, turn right away. Guard well against making any compromises.
2. "Remember that you have vowed your heart to God and that since your love has been sacrificed to him it would be a sacrilege to take its least part away from him."
 - Sacrifice it again to God by repeated resolutions.
 - Call on God - He will help you and take you under His protection.

3. If you are already caught in the web of fond love:
 - Acknowledge before God your misery and repudiate any promises made.
 - Determine to end the attachment.
 - Avoid the object of such love. If possible, go far away.
 - If impossible to avoid the person, break off all ties.
 - “Change of scene contributes greatly to allaying the heat and pain of both grief and love.”
 - “Do not enter into any compromises.”
4. If you have any evil inclinations because of imperfect repentance:
 - Read devout books with greater concentration.
 - Go to confession and communion regularly.
 - Speak humbly and sincerely to your director or to some prudent person.
 - Do not doubt that God will deliver you from all your passion.

Chapter 22 - Further Advice on Friendship

1. The imperfections of our friends: Do not let the imperfections of a friend enter your soul.
 - “Everyone has enough bad inclinations of his (or her) own without being burdened with another's.”
 - Friendship obliges us to aid and assist one another to free ourselves from every kind of fault.
 - We must not lead our friend into faults.
2. With regard to sins:
 - “We must neither occasion them nor tolerate them in our friends.”
 - “Genuine, loving friendship cannot continue in the midst of sin.”
 - “A friend who would lead us into sin has become our enemy.”
 - Friendship based on mutual material profit is not true friendship, since it is not based on true love.

Review Questions

1. Why is friendship the most dangerous of all types of love? (chap. 17)
2. What are the requirements for love to become friendship? (chap. 17)
3. Why does Francis say that the exchange of carnal and sensual pleasures is a passing thing? (chap. 17)
4. What advice does Francis give us concerning "fond loves"? (chap. 18)
5. How do our hearts give and receive love? What two images are used to illustrate this point? (chap. 18)
6. With whom shall we form friendships? What is shared in true friendship? (chap. 19)
7. Why are particular friendships necessary for those living in the world? (chap. 19)
8. Why is prudence needed in friendship? (chap. 20)
9. What are the signs that a true friendship is becoming an evil one? (chap. 20)
10. What should we do about an evil friendship? (chap. 21)
11. Why is it important to be aware of imperfections in friendship? How must we regard our friend's faults? (chap. 22)
12. How should we deal with sinfulness in friendship? (chap. 22)

Reflections

1. Reflect on your relationship with your closest friend and carefully examine that friendship. How present are the three requirements for true friendship?
2. Have you ever experienced a friendship that is described as a "fond love"? What effects did it have on your life?
3. Do you have any particular friendships? How might the advice of Francis assist you?
4. How do you deal with "evil" friendships? How might the advice of Francis help you?
5. How do you deal with the imperfections of your friends? How might the advice of Francis help you?

The Third Part of the Introduction

Moderation and the Mature Person

Chapter 23 - Exterior Mortification

1. "Since the heart is the source of our actions, as the heart is so are they."
 - We ought to begin on the inside.
2. "I have wished above all else to engrave and inscribe on your heart this holy and sacred motto, Live Jesus!"
 - "As our beloved Jesus lives in your heart, so too will he live in all your conduct."
 - "It is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me." (Gal. 2:20).
3. Even the heart must be instructed on how it should model its outward conduct so that by it others can see devotion, great wisdom and prudence.
4. Types of exterior mortification:
 - Fasting - on certain days in addition to those prescribed by the Church.
 - It elevates our spirit.
 - It keeps the body in subjection.
 - It helps us practice virtue.
 - It is valuable for restraining gluttony and sensual appetites.
 - "The enemy has great fear of us when he sees that we can fast."
 - Work - takes precedence over the pains of fasting.
 - Renunciation of choice: "Eat what is set before you. It is a greater virtue to eat without preference what is put before you."
 - "We renounce not only our taste but our choice as well."
 - "It is no little mortification to adapt our taste to all kinds of food."
 - Exception: Foods that may injure one's health or badly affect one's spirit.
 - The discipline of a hair shirt - on special occasions they may be used with the advice of a prudent confessor.
 - Vigils - use the night for sleep each according to his or her disposition, in order to spend the day usefully.
5. With regard to fasting and all exterior mortification -it is necessary to have a program that is "balanced and in keeping with the duties and tasks to which their state in life obliges them".

Chapter 24 - Society and Solitude

1. "Seeking familiar conversations with others and avoiding them are two extremes and both are blameworthy in devout people living in the world."
 - To avoid such conversation shows disdain and contempt for our neighbor.
 - We must love our neighbor as ourselves.
 - To show that we love our neighbor we must not shun his or her company.
 - To show that we love ourselves we must dwell within ourselves.
2. "If you are not obliged to go out into society or entertain company at home, remain within yourself and entertain yourself within your own heart."

3. "If people visit you or if you are called out into society for some just reason, go as one sent by God."
4. Types of social gatherings:
 - Evil - Those made with an evil intention must be avoided.
 - Recreational - We may devote to them the time put aside for recreation.
 - Obligatory - We must modestly do our duty.
 - Virtuous - To frequent such gatherings can be of great help.
5. Qualities to have at social gatherings:
 - Sincerity, simplicity, meekness and modesty.
 - A moderate cheerfulness.
 - Without insolence or mocking.
6. "Besides mental solitude to which you may retreat even in the midst of the highest society....you must also love real, physical solitude."
 - Remain for some time alone in your room or some other place.
 - Withdraw your spirit into your heart and refresh your soul with some pious meditations, holy thoughts, or spiritual reading.

Chapter 25 - Propriety in Dress

1. Propriety depends upon appropriate decency, which in turn depends upon:
 - Cleanliness - it should always be present.
 - Style - it must be in accord with circumstances of time, age, rank, company and occasion.
 - Neatness – "Don't allow anything negligent and careless to be about you."
2. Simplicity and modesty
 - "As far as possible keep always to the side of simplicity and modesty, for this is undoubtedly beauty's greatest ornament and the best excuse for its lack."
 - "For my part, I would have devout people, whether men or women, always the best dressed in a group but the least pompous and affected. As the proverb says, I would have them adorned with grace, decency, and dignity."

Review Questions

1. Where should mortification begin?
2. What does Francis de Sales recommend regarding corporal mortifications?
3. Francis considers service to others as more important than mortification. Why?
4. Which mortification does Francis prefer above all others? Why?
5. What qualities should mark our associations with others?
6. How should we dress? Why is this important?
7. What is the value of moderation?

Reflections

1. Where does real and lasting change begin?
2. What does it mean for you to live moderately? Be specific.
3. In what ways might you be living immoderately? Where might you need more self-discipline and direction?

The Third Part of the Introduction

Speech

Chapter 26 - How we must speak of God

1. “By your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned.”
2. If you are truly in love with God, you will often speak of God in familiar conversation with friends and neighbors.
3. “Your tongue should always be sweetened with its God and find no greater pleasure than to taste the praise and benediction of his holy name flowing between your lips.”
4. How we must speak of God:
 - Reverently and devoutly.
 - Not with outward show of affection.
 - In a spirit of meekness, charity and humility.
 - Pray to God in the secret places of your soul and heart.
 - Never speak of God in a routine or thoughtless manner.

Chapter 27 - Modesty in Speech

1. “Be careful never to let an indecent word leave your lips.”
 - An evil word falling into a weak heart grows and spreads like a drop of oil on a piece of linen cloth. What poison the heart gets in and through the ear, and the tongue that utters it is a murderer.
2. “Those who have modesty and chastity, the angelic virtue, within their hearts, always speak with chaste and modest words.”
3. “When immodest words are subtly and hypocritically concealed, they become much more poisonous.”
 - The sharper an obscene word, the more deeply it penetrates the heart.
4. “To scoff at others is one of the worst states a mind can be in.”
 - God detests this state of mind.
 - Nothing is so opposed to charity and devotion than to condemn one's neighbor.
5. “Certain good-humored, joking words, spoken by way of modest and innocent merriment.”
 - These belong to the virtue eutrapelia.
 - To take friendly, virtuous enjoyment in the amusing situations with which our humanity provides us.
 - Don't be too sensitive, too touchy.

Chapter 28 - Rash Judgment

1. Condemnation – “Judge not, and you shall not be judged.”
2. Reasons why judgments are rash:
 - We usurp the office of our Lord.
 - Malice depends on intentions and we do not know “the hidden things of darkness”.
 - We never do what is imposed on us, namely, judge ourselves.

3. We judge people rashly:

- From a naturally sour and bitter disposition.
- Through pride - by lowering other's honor, they seek to raise their own.
- For the self-satisfaction of feeling that they are better than others.
- To excuse themselves and soften remorse of conscience.
- To philosophize and probe into other's moods and morals.
- Through passion - to judge well the things they like and ill of the things they hate.
- Exception - the jealous judge harshly those they love.

4. Cure: "Drink as deeply as you can of the sacred wine of charity."

- The sin of rash judgment is spiritual jaundice and causes all things to appear evil to the eye of those infected by it.
- To be cured the remedy must be applied to the affections.
- If your reflections are kind, your judgments will also be kind.
- If your affections are charitable, your judgments will be the same.

5. Exceptions:

- Judges must pass judgment, but they must do so as God's representatives.
- To see or know something is not to pass judgment on it.
- To doubt is not to judge, but do so only in so far as the facts warrant.

6. "It is the part of an unprofitable soul to amuse itself with examining the lives of other people."

- Look to yourselves in regard to your own conduct.
- Exemption: Those who are in charge of others within a family or in the state.

Chapter 29 - Slander

1. Slander is the true plague of society - it is a form of murder. It consists in harming directly or indirectly the good name of our neighbor.

2. There are three kinds of life:

- Spiritual - it consists of God's grace and it is deprived us by sin.
- Corporeal - it depends on the body and it is taken away by death.
- Social - it consists of our good name and it is taken away by slander.

3. "By a single stroke of the tongue the slanderer usually commits three murders:"

- A person kills his or her own soul.
- A person kills the soul of anyone who hears and joins him or her.
- A person takes away the social life of the one he or she slanders.

4. Slander at its worst: "to lie and harm your neighbor at the same time."

5. The most destructive types of slander:

- To begin by praising the victim so as to seem to utter the slander reluctantly.
- Slander spoken in a joking way, which is the cruelest.

6. "We must never draw conclusions from yesterday to today, nor from today to yesterday, and still less to tomorrow."

- A single act does not constitute a habit.
- God's grace can change us in a moment.

7. We must freely and frankly speak of evil and condemn such things that need condemnation. By doing so we glorify God provided that:
 - To speak rightly against another's vices it must be for the profit of either the person spoken about or the persons spoken to.
 - If I am one of the principle members of the group, it is my duty to speak out, so that I am not seen to approve.
 - I must be careful not to say a single word too much.
8. Exceptions:
 - We can speak openly of infamous, public, notorious sinners, provided it is in a spirit of charity, and compassion and not arrogantly and presumptuously.
 - It is our duty to denounce as strongly as we can heretical and schismatic sects and their leaders.
9. On condemning groups: we must not take the liberty to condemn public officials and nations (and races) according to the attitude we have toward them.
 - Beside the offense against God, it can get us into a thousand quarrels.
10. "When you hear anyone spoken ill of, make the accusation doubtful if you can do so justly."
 - If you cannot, excuse the intention of the accused party.
 - If that cannot be done, express sympathy for him or her and change the subject of the conversation.

Chapter 30 -Additional Advice on Conversation

1. "Your language should be restrained, frank, sincere, candid, unaffected, and honest."
 - It is never permissible to speak against the truth.
2. Become accustomed never to tell a deliberate lie remembering always that God is the "God of truth".
3. In extreme cases, we may discreetly and prudently hide the truth by an equivocal statement.
4. "Fidelity, simplicity, and sincerity of speech are certainly a great ornament of the Christian life."
5. We should not contradict anyone, unless sinful or harmful to agree by our silence.
6. To speak little does not consist in uttering only a few words but in uttering none that are useless.
7. If possible, do not engage in confidential conversation in the presence of others. It can arouse suspicion.

Review Questions

1. How does speech reflect the state of one's soul?
2. How should we speak of God? How should we speak of others?
3. How should we deal with our own improper speech or that of others?
4. What is the worst offense we can commit with speech against another person?
5. How does Francis de Sales feel about joking conversations?
6. Why does Francis condemn rash judgments? What prompts them? How are they cured?
7. Why is slander a form of murder?
8. What is the difference between lying and deceiving?
9. Is it ever permissible to avoid telling the whole truth? If yes, when?

Reflections

1. Read Sirach 4:24
2. Read Romans 2: 1 - 8
3. How restrained, frank, sincere, candid and unaffected is your speech?
4. In what ways might you be guilty of gossip, slander or rash judgment?
5. How do you use the power of speech everyday? Toward God? Toward others?

The Third Part of the Introduction

Recreation

Chapters 31-34

1. It is necessary and good to relax both mind and body through recreation, which helps eliminate stress.
2. To not allow recreation for others or ourselves is a sign of extreme strictness that stifles a soul.
3. Some recreations are better than others. There are three counsels to help guide our recreational activities:
 - Use common sense that gives a proper order, time, place and intensity to all things
 - Games which reward skill are fine, as long as we play in moderation (time spent and intensity of concentration)
 - Do not make any recreation a priority above everything else- they are only a means to an end
4. De Sales advises that any game in which winning depends on chance is objectionable, since relying on chance offends reason, the game is not true recreation (it brings sadness and tension instead of happiness and relaxation), and the only pleasure is winning (which depends on the bad fortune of someone else).
5. There are some recreations that are legal but still dangerous to us. Parties, balls and dances are morally indifferent but can lean towards evil depended on the way they are conducted.
6. If you go to such an event, conduct yourself properly (in dance, drink, etc., be moderate, dignified, and keep a good intention). Afterwards, consider good and holy things in order to avoid temptation.
6. On some occasions it may be fine to join your friends in such activities, using your common sense and discretion. To be agreeable is a part of charity and makes indifferent things good.

Review Questions

1. Why does Francis de Sales praise recreations?
2. What cautions are offered for all activities?
3. What makes an activity good or bad?

Reflections

1. What is your favorite recreation? Is it relaxing for mind and body?
2. Would you pursue this activity if Jesus were visibly at your side? Why or why not?
3. Can family and friends share this time with you? Will it improve your relationship? Can you afford it?
4. If you are a parent, what is your attitude towards your child(ren)'s recreation time? Is it relaxing for their mind and body? Does it dominate their life (or yours) in some way?

The Third Part of the Introduction

Three Basic Guidelines

Chapters 35-37

1. We must be faithful to both great and little tasks.
2. We must pay attention to serving God in both great and lofty matters as well as trivial, unimportant things. God loves when we do something (big or small) with love.
 - We must suffer many great hardships for God. Resolve to give Him whatever you hold dearest if He were to ask it- your parents, your spouse, your children, your health or your life. Prepare your heart to give these things.
 - Be patient with all the little things that happen everyday- the slight insults, the inconveniences or inconsequential losses. These small trials please God when they are embraced with love.
 - Draw strength by training yourself in prayer, meditation, receiving the sacraments, inspiring others to love God and by fulfilling the important works of your vocation.
 - Always practice the little humble virtues: helping the poor you meet, visiting the sick you know, taking care of your family, etc.
 - The great opportunities to serve God are rare, but the little ones are quite frequent. Whether you sleep or take recreation or work, you will profit greatly in God's sight by doing all things as God wishes you to do them.
3. We must preserve a just and reasonable mind.
4. Self-love clouds our thinking and unnoticeably directs us to many little dangerous acts of injustice and iniquity.
 - We disapprove of our neighbors' actions but excuse ourselves for the same things.
 - We want the best deal when we buy something, and the highest price when we sell.
 - We want justice for others, but mercy for ourselves.
 - We want our words to be taken in good faith, but are touchy about what others say.
5. We must try to be fair and just in all actions- big and small. Always put ourselves into our neighbor's place and we will judge fairly.
6. Also, we should resolve to examine our hearts often, to see if we are following the Golden Rule.
7. How to handle our desires.
 - What not to desire: evil or dangerous things, honors, visions, temptations or greater sufferings. This refers to strong desires (simple wishes are of no damage).
 - “No one should desire means of serving God that he [or she] now lacks but rather should diligently use those he [or she] actually has.”
 - Be careful not to overburden your soul with too many desires, worldly (which can corrupt) or spiritual (which can cause difficulty).
 - As for good desires, choose with help from your director those that you can currently practice and satisfy. Francis states the wish everyone should have is “to cultivate his [or her] character such as it actually is”.

Review Questions

1. What are the two reasons we must be faithful in both little and great tasks?
2. What leads us to be unreasonable? Why is it important to be on guard against unreasonable actions?
3. What can we do to help prevent the tendency to be unreasonable?
4. How would Francis have us handle our good desires?

Reflections

1. What is your attitude towards the little obligations of your life?
2. Do you often reflect on your tendency to be unreasonable in little ways?
3. Do you think that there are desires in your heart which Francis would consider harmful (that lead you away from God or your present means to serve God)?

Third Part of the Introduction

States in Life

Chapters 38-41

Marriage

Marriage is a great sacrament that is honorable to all people, in all people and in all its parts. The preservation of marriage is of greatest importance to society, since it is the birthplace and source of all society.

Requirements for a good marriage:

- Reflect on the dignity and holiness of the sacrament. Invite Jesus to be present in the relationship.
- Have the mutual love that the Holy Spirit recommends in the Bible. This has three effects:
 1. a fundamental and indissoluble union of hearts
 2. the inviolable fidelity to each other
 3. the birth and raising of children

Advice on the practice of this mutual love:

- It must be complementary: preserve a tender, constant, heartfelt love for the other.
- Husbands: if you want your wives to be faithful, teach by example. Be chaste towards them—show your love with respect instead of using her.
- Wives: be modest and pure, giving no reasons for others to doubt your faithfulness, avoid all questionable compliments or advances from other men.
- Demonstrations of affection and love do not bind hearts together, but will unite them and help make everyday life easier and more peaceful.

Advice and comments on the family:

- Offer up your children, before they are born and continually through their lives.
- Both parents must carefully attend to passing on their faith to their children, teaching them to personally relate to God by word and example.
- Many believe the wife's devotion has a greater influence than the husband's.
- A believing husband and believing wife sanctify each other in their fear and love of the Lord.
- Try not to be angry with each other at the same time, so that fights and arguments occur much less often.
- Use your wedding anniversary to re-center your marriage in Christ.
- Use common sense and moderation with regard to your sexual relationship.

Instructions for Widows

To love a husband so much that one remains faithful to him and chaste after his death is a high degree of love belonging to true widows (those who will remain widows). Widows should take care of their children, if needed, and conduct themselves peaceably. Be persistent and continual in prayer. The proper virtues for widows are perfect modesty, renunciation of honors, instructing young girls in devotion and visiting the sick and poor. Be clean and simple, never judging those who enter another marriage.

A Word to Virgins

Find a guide who will help you decide the best way to dedicate your body and soul to God. If you choose to marry, remember to continue your strong, individual relationship with God. If you choose religious life, Francis prays that with all possible care you keep your love for this Divine Spouse.

Review Questions

1. What are the two conditions for a good marriage?
2. What are the three effects of mutual love?
3. What advice does Francis give on the raising of children?
4. How can marriage partners be of most support to one another?
5. What does Francis consider the proper virtues for a holy widow?
6. What two options does Francis consider for virgins? What is his advice to them?

Reflections

1. How can you and your spouse “try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord” together?
2. If a couple wishes to follow Francis' advice in today's society, what difficulties do you think they encounter? How can they overcome these obstacles?
3. How would you relate the state of divorced women today to the holy widows of Francis' day?
4. What help should virgins seek?

The Fourth Part of the Introduction

Counsels Against the Most Frequent Temptations

Chapters 1 – Criticism of the World

1. The most vicious of the worldly people will slander your conversion as hypocrisy, bigotry and trickery and say that having been rebuffed by the world, you have turned to God.
2. Your friends will raise objections which they consider prudent and charitable:
 - You will become depressed.
 - You will lose your reputation in the world.
 - You will be unbearable.
 - You will grow old before your time.
 - Your home life will suffer.
 - You can save your soul without going to such extremes.
3. How to react
 - Remember, those people are not interested in your health or welfare.
 - The world (your peers) will never be satisfied unless you capitulate to its ideas.
 - The world (evil) will look at you with an evil eye, and therefore we can never please it, and it will wage war on us, whatever we do, watching all our actions.
4. Proof of conversion:
 - Perseverance will prove whether we sincerely sacrificed ourselves to God and dedicated ourselves to a devout life.
5. Value of such criticism:
 - It is no little assistance for a sure start in devotion if we suffer criticism and calumny because of it.

Review Questions

1. St. Francis de Sales warns us about the reaction of the worldly to the decision to lead a devout life. What reactions should you expect?
2. What should be your response to such taunts?
3. Can taunts of the worldly be of spiritual help to us? How?

Reflections

1. Do you recall such misunderstandings or taunts in the life of St. Francis de Sales? St. Jane de Chantal? How did they handle them?
2. Reflect on such taunts in the life of our Savior: in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-30); before Herod (Luke 23:8-12); crowning of thorns (Matthew 27:27-31).
3. How do you deal with similar experiences in your own life?
4. Read Psalms 5 and 23: how can you relate them to your own life?

Chapter 2 – We must have Firm Courage

1. Reasons:

- Things will seem a little strange because they are new. When such feelings pass, you will receive countless blessings.
- You will miss the things you gave up. If you persevere, it will not be long before you obtain consolations so delicious and pleasing that you will acknowledge that the world is mere gall compared to such honey and that a single day of devotion is better than a thousand years of worldly life.
- The mountain of Christian perfection may seem too high, but is climbed one step at a time. In the meantime, let us feed on honey found in works of instruction that devout persons of ancient days have left us.

Review Questions

1. St. Francis de Sales warns of the problems you may face as you try to adjust to the new, devout life style. What are the feelings you might expect?
2. What virtue will help us most during this transition period?
3. St. Francis de Sales warns that you might feel overwhelmed by the task you have taken on: that "mountain of Christian perfection!". What practice will help you at this time?
4. What considerations will help you to not look back on your decision to live a devout life?

Reflections

1. In what ways do you feel overwhelmed?
2. What are the relationships or situations that you find most challenging?
3. What strategies do you employ for maintaining strength and courage?

The Fourth Part of the Introduction

Temptations

Chapter 3 – Steps Toward Sin

1. When Satan, the world, and the flesh see a soul espoused to the Son of God, they send temptations to it. The steps include:
 - Sin is proposed to the soul (*temptation*).
 - It is either pleased or displeased by this proposal (*delight*).
 - Either it gives consent or it refuses (*consent*).
 - Sin does not depend on:
 - The duration of the temptation.
 - Its intensity.
 - The degree to which it is felt.
2. The difference between feeling temptation and consenting to the temptation
 - We may feel temptations even though they displease us, but we can never consent to them unless they please us.
3. There are two parts in the soul:
 - Inferior.
 - Superior.
4. The inferior part does not always follow the superior part but acts apart by itself. Hence it often happens that the inferior part takes delight in the temptation without actually giving consent and does so even against the will of the superior part.
5. When we remain steadfast in our refusal to consent, we can be sure that the delight that pleases the outward man displeases the inward person. Even though it surrounds the will, it is not inside it. Such delight is involuntary and as such cannot be sinful.

Chapter 4 – Two Good Illustrations on This Subject

1. A young man who bit off his tongue, it being the only part of his body under his control, in protest of the enticements of a depraved woman.
2. St. Catherine of Siena was assailed by an evil spirit making every kind of impure suggestion to her heart. By our Savior's help her will alone resisted, showed grief, displeasure, and detestation of the evil proposed to her and steadfastly refused to give consent to sins on every side. She felt at times that she was abandoned by our Lord.

Chapter 5 – Encouragement for a Soul Being Tempted

1. God permits violent assaults and strong temptations such as these only in souls whom He desires to raise up to His own pure and unsurpassing love.

2. However, you must always remain humble and fearful, for your only assurance that you will be able to overcome little temptations even after you have prevailed over great ones is by constant fidelity to His Majesty.
3. As long as the act of refusal remains within our heart we may rest assured that charity remains within us and that Jesus Christ is present in our soul, although His presence is hardly perceptible during the temptations.

Chapter 6 – How Temptation and Pleasure Become Sinful

1. If we are the cause of the temptation or pleasure, there is sin.
2. If the pleasure could have been avoided and was not, there is always some sin, according to the amount of time it is dwelt on and the pleasure taken in it.
3. If the pleasure occurs accidentally, but we carelessly delay for some time and dally with the pleasure, there is sin.
4. If we voluntarily resolve to take pleasure in the temptation, this deliberate purpose is of itself a great sin if the object in which we take delight is also very evil.

Chapter 7 – Remedies Against Great Temptations

1. As soon as you are conscious of being tempted:
 - Turn to God and implore His mercy and help.
 - Run in spirit to embrace the Holy Cross as if you saw Christ Jesus crucified before you.
 - Turn your thoughts to some good, commendable activity.
 - The sovereign remedy against all temptation, whether great or small, is to open your heart and express its suggestions, feelings and affections to your director. In His inspirations, God requires that we make the temptations known to our superiors and directors.
 - A soul though tempted can never sin as long as it says no.

Chapter 8 – We Must Resist Small Temptations

1. Small temptations immeasurably exceed in number so that victory over them may be comparable to that gained over great temptations.
2. It is easy enough to refrain from adultery - not so easy to guard one's glances, and this is true of many small temptations.
3. These little temptations to anger, suspicion, jealousy, envy, fond love, frivolity, vanity, affection, craftiness, and evil thoughts continually attack even the most devout and resolute.

Chapter 9 – Remedies Against Small Temptations

1. Our best defense is not to disturb ourselves too much over them. Disregard them if possible.
2. If they affect you, be content to quietly reject them by performing some actions of a contrary character, especially acts of love of God. The best way to overcome the enemy in small as in great temptations is to make these acts of love for God, especially to turn your heart gently toward Jesus Christ crucified and lovingly kiss His sacred feet.

Chapter 10 – Strengthening Our Hearts Against Temptations

1. Consider from time to time which passions are most predominant in your soul.
2. Adopt a way of life completely opposed to them in thought, word and action.
3. Denounce them and you will bring yourself to hate them.

Review Questions

1. What are the three steps of temptation?
2. What does not determine the sinfulness of the temptation? What does?
3. What does not determine the sinfulness of the delight we may experience in a temptation? What does?
4. What is the “finest flower of perfect heavenly love”?
5. What is the value of great temptations? How do we overcome them?
6. What is the value of small temptations? How do we handle them?
7. How do we strengthen our hearts against all temptations?

Reflections

1. What are the kinds of temptations that you experience at this time in your life?
2. What are the occasions of these temptations?
3. How do your temptations present themselves?
4. What are your strategies for identifying or resisting temptations?

The Fourth Part of the Introduction

Natural Sources of Temptation

Chapter 11 – Anxiety

1. Importance: Anxiety is not a simple temptation but a source from which and by which many temptations arise.
2. How it develops:
 - It begins with the sadness the soul experiences when faced by an evil thrust upon it.
 - The soul immediately desires to be free of it.
 - If motivated by love of God, it will seek to do so patiently and humbly, and look for deliverance by God's providence rather than its own efforts.
 - If motivated by self-love, it will depend on its own efforts. If not successful, it will wear itself out in its search for means of escape.
3. How it is debilitating:
 - With the single exception of sin, it is the greatest evil that can happen to a soul.
 - The soul loses the strength necessary to maintain the virtues it has acquired and the means to resist temptations.
 - There is nothing that tends more to increase evil and prevent enjoyment of good.
4. How to handle it:
 - Avoid disorderly passions and excessive affections, subjecting all your affections and desires to the direction of the divine will.
 - No matter how small or trivial your desires, do not let them disturb you. If they do, recommend yourself to God, and do nothing until your mind has regained peace. If you must act, try to moderate your desires as much as possible and to act, not according to your desires, but according to reason.
 - Reveal your anxiety to your spiritual director, or to some faithful and devoted friend. This is the remedy of remedies.

Review Questions

1. How do anxieties arise?
2. Why are they such a serious threat?
3. How do you avoid anxieties?
4. How do you handle them?
5. Are you troubled with anxieties? What are they? How serious are they?
6. Do you know what causes them?
7. What have you done to banish them, to prevent them in the future?

Reflections

1. Do you recall any anxieties in the lives of St. Francis de Sales, St. Jane de Chantal, or other saints? Can you think of biblical figures who struggled with anxieties?
2. A key to avoiding anxieties is to make a loving surrender to Divine Providence. Reflect on the parable of the lilies of the field: (Luke 12: 22-31), on the calming of the storm: (Matthew 8:23-27), on Psalm 27, or other Scripture to which you may be led.

Chapter 12 – Sorrow

1. Sorrow produces two good effects:

- Compassion
- Repentance

2. Sorrow has six evil effects:

- Anxiety
- Sloth
- Wrath
- Jealousy
- Envy
- Impatience

3. The evil one uses sorrow to set temptations before good people.

- He tries to make good people grieve over their virtues and good works. He cannot turn us away from good except by making it look disagreeable.
- By means of sorrow he:
 - Disturbs and upsets the soul.
 - Arouses inordinate fears.
 - Creates disgust for prayer.
 - Stupefies and oppresses the brain.
 - Deprives the mind of prudence, resolution judgment and courage and destroys its strength.
 - Takes all sweetness away from the soul.
 - Renders the soul disabled and impotent in all its faculties.

4. Remedies:

- Prayer is the sovereign remedy for it lifts up the soul to God who is our only joy and consolation. Use words and affections that tend to confidence in God.
- Persevere in your good works.
- Sing spiritual canticles, for the evil one has often ceased work because of them.
- Occupy yourself in exterior works and vary them as much as possible.
- Perform fervent external actions even though it may be without relish.
- Corporal mortifications are helpful at such times. Receive communion frequently.
- Humbly and sincerely reveal to your confessor all the feelings, affections and suggestions that proceed from your sadness. Resign yourself into God's hands and be ready to suffer patiently this distressing sadness as a just punishment of your vain joys.
- Do not doubt that after God has put you on trial He will deliver you from this evil.

Review Questions

1. Why can sorrow be a real danger to our spiritual life?
2. St. Francis de Sales proposes many remedies. From his treatment of this and similar trials, which would you consider his favorite remedies?

Reflections

1. Pray and reflect upon the following Scripture: Sirach 30:21-27; Romans 8:31-39; Job 1:21.
2. How do you experience sadness?
3. In what ways do you express sadness?
4. How do you tend to work your way through or out of sadness?

The Fourth Part of the Introduction

Spiritual Sources

Chapter 13 – Changes in Our Spiritual Life

1. The ups and downs of life:

- God conserves this great world in existence amid constant change.
- We must try to keep our hearts equable during such great inequality of events.
- An inviolable resolution never to forsake God and His love must serve as a balance to keep the soul in a holy equilibrium.

2. Sensible consolations (the “ups”):

- They are not identical with true devotion.
 - Many souls experience these tender feelings and still remain very vicious.
 - They are often tricks played by the enemy to divert souls from the search for true devotion.
 - They at times issue from a soft nature susceptible to such impressions.
- They can have value:
 - They can arouse and strengthen the soul and give it a holy joy in its devotion.
 - They are foretastes of the immortal delights God gives to souls that seek Him,

3. How to distinguish the good from the bad.

- By their fruits. Do they produce virtues or vices?

4. How to use good consolations:

- Humble yourself, confessing God's goodness to you.
- Let us acknowledge that we are little children who still need milk.
- Let us esteem these favors, not so much for what they are in themselves, but because God's hand put them in our hearts.
- Let us kiss the hand that gives them (i.e. - obey Him and follow His desires).
- We must declare that it is not such things that we seek, but God Himself and His holy love.
- If you experience such consolations in abundance, consult your spiritual director.

Review Questions

1. Wherein lie the dangers of consolations?
2. What is the value of sensible consolations?
3. How may we distinguish the consolations that come from God from those that come from nature or even the enemy himself?
4. How should we react to good consolations?

Reflections

1. Read Matthew 7:15-29: the good tree and the bad.
2. Being a good sport is not only about avoiding being a sore loser; it is also about being a gracious winner. When you win or succeed, how gracious are you toward others?
3. Read the story of Job: can you relate to the story?

Chapter 14 – Spiritual Dryness (the “downs”)

1. Sometimes you will find yourself deprived and destitute of all feelings of devotion.
2. Danger:
 - This is a time of great pain.
 - The devil mocks the soul in an effort to drive it to despair.
3. What to do:
 - See if we have caused the condition. This can happen in many ways:
 - Because of a foolish complacency (presumption) with regard to our consolations.
 - Because of a failure to gather our consolations at the proper time.
 - Because of an unwillingness to give up sensual pleasures and fleeting consolation to follow unhesitatingly God's invitations to return to spiritual exercises.
 - Because of duplicity in our confessions and spiritual communications.
 - Because we have steeped ourselves in worldly pleasures.
 - Because we did not use our consolations to advance in virtue.
4. This examination is not to be made with anxiety or in too much detail.
5. If you do not discover a cause, then:
 - Humble yourself before God in recognition of your own nothingness.
 - Call on God and beg Him for comfort.
 - Open your heart to your confessor.
 - Do not have too much desire and longing to be rid of this affliction.
 - Do not lose courage; rather multiply your good works; keep up your spiritual exercises. To remain faithful to God at such times is the true mark of love.

Review Questions

1. Are periods of dryness to be expected?
2. Are they always a punishment?
3. What can we do to help ourselves in this condition?

Reflections

1. Reflect on the Parable of the Talents: Matthew 25:1 - 30.
2. Reflect upon Psalms 63, 143, and 119:73 - 77.
3. Pray through Job 1:2 - 21.
4. Athletes, writers, artists and others go through dry spells. Do you? How do you deal with them? How do you ride them out?

Chapter 15 – Illustrations and Reflections

1. To illustrate the states of consolation and of dryness and what to do at such times, he gives the example of Geoffrey of Peronne as found in the life of St. Bernard.
2. There is one added suggestion with regard to periods of dryness. He points out that they can be related to physical factors, such as fatigue. These physical factors must then be cared for. Don't overlook some of the obvious sources of exhaustion: get/stay in good health.

Review Questions

1. How would you summarize the example of Geoffrey Peronne as St. Bernard recounts it??
2. What does the story of Geoffrey illustrate?
3. Why is his story important?
4. What four lessons did St. Francis de Sales glean from this story?
5. In what ways are God and Satan at odds?

Reflections

1. How does this story speak to you?
2. In what areas of your life do you find leading a devout life most difficult or challenging?
3. Are there any areas of your life in which you are presently experiencing fatigue?
4. Are there any areas in your life in which you are experiencing discouragement?

The Fifth Part of the Introduction

Exercises and Instructions for Renewing the Soul and Confirming It in Devotion.

Chapter 1 – Necessity of Renewal

The renewal St. Francis de Sales has in mind is a rededication to the devout life; that is, to a life of love for God, manifested in a doing of His will promptly, carefully and perseveringly. The key to renewal for him is a reassertion, ever more complete, of our resolution to live such a life. Hence he sees three stages in renewal

- *An examination of the resolution we have taken.*
- *An examination of our failings in regard to it.*
- *A rededication to living that resolution.*

1. The necessity of renewal:

- The flesh rests heavily on the soul and constantly drags it downward unless the soul frequently lifts itself up by fervent resolutions.
- Spiritual falls always cast us down to a lower state.

2. How to make this renewal (*Analogy of the clock*)

- Every morning and evening a person who really takes care of his or her heart must rewind it for God's service by means of spiritual exercises.
- They must often reflect on their condition in order to reform and improve it.
- At least once a year they must take it apart and examine every piece in detail, that is, every affection and passion, in order to repair whatever defects there may be.
- They must anoint it with the sacraments of confession and Holy Eucharist.
- Withdrawing a little more into both spiritual and actual solitude than usual, meditate once, twice, or three times on the points listed in the following chapters.

Review Questions

1. Why is renewal necessary?
2. How do you accomplish the daily renewal?
3. How do you accomplish the annual renewal?

Reflections

1. Do you consider the analogy of the clock a good one?
2. How does this image relate to your own experience?
3. Renewal is something very positive. It is not sufficient to put our house in order. Reflect on Matthew 12:43-45; Luke 11:24-26. Where does St. Francis de Sales find that positive element?
4. Reflect on Isaiah 18:24-32.

The Fifth Part of the Introduction

An Examination of the Resolution We Made

Chapter 2 – Various dimensions of the resolution

1. Consider what a good resolution it was:
 - To give up mortal sin.
 - To consecrate your soul, heart, body, and all your faculties to God's love and service.
 - To immediately rise from any fall, with God's help.
2. Consider to whom it was made: if words given to men under reasonable conditions impose strict obligations on us, how much more those which we have given to God.
3. Consider in whose presence it was made: the whole of the heavenly court.
4. Remember what led you to make that resolution. Were you not summoned by the sweet attractions of the Holy Spirit? Were not the cords by which God drew your little boat to this blessed shore woven out of love and charity?
5. Consider when He called you. Did his love call you in your youth to save you from sin, or in your old age, to save you from eternal death?
6. Consider the effects of this calling: the change it has made in your life.
7. Thank God for your good affections and considerations, but make no resolutions until after the second part.

Review Questions

1. What did we resolve to do?
2. What makes the obligation a solemn one?
3. How were we moved to make it?

Reflections

1. Read and reflect upon Hosea 11: 1-5.
2. Through your resolution you have entered into a covenant with the Lord, for God has promised help to those who obey Him. Reflect on the Old Testament covenant: Exodus 19 and 20; and on the New Covenant: Hebrews 8 and 9.

The Fifth Part of the Introduction

Renewal, Continued

Chapter 3 through 8 – An Examination of Conscience

1. Second Part: The examination as to our failings.
2. Method of examination:
 - The different points can be considered at different times.
 - They can be considered while on one's knees, while walking around, or while in bed.
 - All points in this second part should be considered within two or three days so as not to lose their force by being stretched out too long.
 - There should be some period of retirement. Go earlier to bed and get the bodily and mental rest necessary for reflection.
 - During the day invoke the help of God, our Lady, the angels, etc.
3. To make the examination:
 - Place yourself in the presence of God.
 - Invoke the Holy Spirit. Protest that you do not wish to learn of your progress in order to rejoice in yourself but solely to rejoice in God and to glorify Him.
 - Protest that you will not become discouraged over your failure, but that relying on God's help, you will strive harder.
4. Examine yourself with regard to your behavior towards God:
 - Have you been guilty of mortal sin? Are you firmly resolved not to commit one?
 - Do you love the commandments? "My child, if a person's sense of taste is in good condition he loves good food and rejects the bad."
 - Are there any venial sins to which you have an inclination? An affection or love?
 - Are there any spiritual exercises you find repugnant? Look for the source of such dislike.
 - Does your heart run out to meet God? Do you take delight in thinking about Him?
 - Do you place your happiness in Jesus Christ, God, and man?
 - How is your heart toward our Lady, the saints, the angels?
 - Do you love to speak about God, to sing His praises?
 - In your work, do you sincerely seek God's glory?
 - What have you given up out of love for God?
5. Examine yourself with regard to your behavior toward yourself:
 - What kind of love do you have for yourself? Is it a love bound up with your life here on earth, or on the life to come?
 - Do you have a well-ordered self-love (i.e. - a love which puts: the soul above the body, the virtues above earthly value, glory in heaven above glory and honor on earth?)
 - With regard to your heart, do you cater to its weaknesses or do you strive to control its passions?
 - Are you humble? Remember: humility consists in not esteeming yourself above others and in not desiring to be esteemed by others.

- In your speech, do you flatter yourself in one way or another? In your activities, do you engage in useless pleasures that are contrary to good health?

6. Examine yourself with regard to your behavior toward yourself

- Is your love towards those near to you (husband, children, relatives, friends) a sweet, peaceful, firm and steady love, and because God wills it so?
- With regard to troublesome and disagreeable persons, do you love them with your whole heart and out of love for God?
- Have you done any wrong to your neighbor, directly or indirectly? Here consider your remarks.

7. A shorter examination

- We must not delay too long on these points, but very calmly consider our state of heart with regard to them.
- We can shorten the examination by considering these passions:
 - **Love:** with regard to God, the neighbor, ourselves.
 - **Hatred:** Do we hate sin in ourselves and others?
 - **Desire:** Do we long for riches, pleasures, honors?
 - **Hope:** Do we rely too much on the world and creatures and too little on God and things eternal?
 - **Sadness:** Is it excessive over useless things?
 - **Joy:** Is it excessive over unworthy things?

8. Conclusion of the examination

- Thank God for the improvement ascertained.
- Humble yourself that you have not corresponded better with God's grace.
- Promise to thank Him eternally for His Grace and the improvements ascertained.
- Ask pardon for infidelities.
- Offer your heart that He might be its sole master.
- Beseech Him to make you more faithful.
- Invoke our Lady and the saints to help you.

Review Questions

1. What is St. Francis de Sales' advice concerning the best circumstances for this examination (i.e. - place, time, solitude, etc.)?
2. What is St. Francis de Sales' advice regarding the invocation of our Lady, the angels and saints?
3. How should you begin the examination? With what dispositions should you carry it through?
4. St. Francis de Sales proposes a detailed examination of ourselves with regard to God, the neighbor and ourselves. In what other way may this examination be made?
5. Would St. Francis de Sales have you look at the progress you have made as well as at your sins or failings?
6. Why is it important to keep your heart peaceful and calm in the midst of this examination, trusting in his mercy and goodness?
7. What are the proper affections to be formed following the examination?

Reflections

1. Read Psalms 51, 40, 143, 16, and 150.
2. Read Joel 2:12-18.
3. Read 2 Colossians 5:20-6:2.
4. Read Matthew 4:1-11.
5. Read 2 Colossians 6:14a.
6. Read 1 Colossians 9:2~25.
7. Reflect on what you discovered while reflecting upon these and/or other spiritual readings.

The Fifth Part of the Introduction

Strengthening Our Resolutions

Chapter 9 through 16 – Considerations

Confer with your spiritual director or spiritual companion with regard to the failings noted and the remedies. Use these considerations to strengthen you in your resolves, taking one a day, in place of your mental prayer, using the method for meditations.

1. First Consideration: The Value of our Soul - Chapter 10.
 - It has a mind to know God and His works, and a will to love Him.
 - Our heart can rest solely in God; no creature can ever satisfy it. Yet it will seek happiness in creatures.
2. Second Consideration: The Excellence of Virtue - Chapter 11.
 - Virtues have the wonderful quality of delighting our soul whereas vices leave the soul infinitely weary and distraught.
 - Virtues, however few, bring contentment, whereas vices, however many, bring only discontentment.
3. Third Consideration: The Example of the Saints - Chapter 12.
 - Consider the Saints - there is nothing they have not done in order to love God and be His devoted followers.
 - Consider the Martyrs - unconquerable in their determination. Consider their courage.
 - The Confessors - so invincible, that nothing could daunt them. Yet they were what we are.
4. Fourth Consideration: The love of Christ for us - Chapter 13.
 - His sufferings won for us the graces we need, the strength to form our resolution. How precious that resolution is, for it is the daughter of such a mother, my Savior's passion.
 - His love was personal for each one individually. On the Cross, he prepared for each one of us what each would need. "God's loving heart has thought of Philothea, loved her, and brought her countless means of salvation, so many that it would seem there had been no other soul in the world for him to think of."
5. Fifth Consideration: God's Eternal Love for us - Chapter 14.
 - When did His love for us begin? "It began even when He began to be God."
 - Among other things, He thought of enabling you to make your resolution to serve Him.
6. The supreme value of these resolutions – Chapter 15
 - Beloved resolutions, you are the fair tree of life that God with his own hands has planted within my heart; the tree my Savior desires to water with His blood and make fruitful.
 - O fair and holy resolutions, if I keep you, you will keep me; if you live in my soul, my soul will live in you. Then live forever, O resolutions, which are everlasting in the mercy of my God. Live eternally in me, and let me never forsake you.

- Practical helps to maintain these resolutions: frequency in prayer, the sacraments, good works, amendment of faults, avoiding occasions of evil, following the counsels given, protestations of fidelity.
- Finally: make your confessions, covering all since your last general confession. Write and sign your protestations, and then receive Communion.

7. The Conclusion - Chapter 16.

- Often in the days that follow repeat the words of St. Paul: “No, I am no longer my own. Whether I live or die, I am my Savior's.”
- Turn quietly back to your ordinary occupations, so that the precious liquor of your resolutions is not suddenly spilled. It must penetrate every part of the soul, but without any mental or bodily strain.

For help on how this transition can be done quietly, confer: a) Introduction, Ch. 8, Book II, on meditation; b) Introduction, and Ch. 9, Book IV, on small temptations.

Review Questions

1. What makes possible the formation of our resolution to serve God above all things?
2. What moves us to make such a resolution?
3. What helps us to keep such a resolution?
4. Wherein lies the value of such a resolution?

Reflections

1. With regard to the first question, reflect on the story of the dove that Noah released: Genesis 8:8-12; on the story of the prodigal son: Luke 15 :11-20; and on the woman at the well: John 4:4-21.
2. With regard to the second question, reflect on Jeremiah 1:5 and Galatians 2:20-21.
3. Reflect on how personal is the love expressed in the Song of Songs.
4. For the value of these resolutions, reflect on Colossians 1:15-20; Romans 6:4-14; Ephesians 2:1-10.

The Fifth Part of the Introduction

Chapters 17 and 18 – Conclusion

A. TWO OBJECTIONS TO LIVING A DEVOUT LIFE

1. FIRST OBJECTION

- The exercises are so many as to take up too much time.

2. Answer

- If we did nothing else, we would still do enough, for we would be doing what we ought to do in this world.
- It is not necessary to perform them except at the proper time and place, each one according to the opportunity for it.
- Many busy Saints performed many more exercises (e.g. - St. Louis, David).
- Perform these exercises confidently, and God will give you sufficient leisure and strength to perform all your other duties.

3. SECOND OBJECTION

- Living a devout life presupposes the gift of mental prayer, which some people do not have.

4. Answer: Perhaps on the face of it, true; however, deeper reflection suggests that...

- Almost everyone could obtain it with direction and effort.
- The few who can not, should use other forms of prayer.

B. THREE FINAL COUNSELS

1. First Counsel:

- On the first day of every month, renew your protestation.
- Recite it whenever you are troubled by any disorder of mind or heart.

2. Second Counsel: Say openly that you desire to be devout. Good results...

- God is honored by open avowal.
- Prevents many arguments and advances.
- Binds us in honor to strive to be such as we profess.
- If some argue that one can be devout without so many exercises, admit the possibility, but confess that you need them.

3. Third Counsel: Continue and persevere in this blessed enterprise of the devout life. Look up to heaven and do not forfeit it for earth.

Review Questions

1. What are your personal experiences with regards to the two objections to living a devout life?
2. How do you evaluate yourself with regard to the practice of these final counsels?

Reflections

1. Read Luke 12:1-8.
2. Reflect on the steps by which God drew you to the devout life and the special graces God has given to you. May this love of Christ for you press you to continue to run in God's ways.

General Discussion Guidelines and Hints

A discussion is a group of people engaged in conversation. This is a natural human activity: an interesting, exciting and creative experience. Discussion is a shared pursuit of responsive understanding -- of yourself, others and the material under consideration.

The purpose of leaders is to be a catalyst. They are present to help everyone (1) make a thoughtful examination of the meaning of the material to be discussed and the problems it presents, (2) clarify their thinking and feeling about the problems, and (3) decide their individual response. It is not presumed that leaders necessarily know more about the subject under discussion, but that they are trained and prepared to lead this discussion and offer this special kind of assistance to the group.

Don't expect pre-packaged or 'right' answers. Neither the leader nor a member of the group will provide a conclusive answer at the end of the discussion. Each of you will try to find personally satisfying answers; your pursuit of answers may continue long after anyone discussion period ends. The discussion provides information and deepened understanding, but the real answers will be your personal response to life and the world.

What Happens Before the Discussion?

Read over the text selection at least once and preferably twice, first for general comprehension and second for attention to specifics. On the second reading, underline words and phrases you consider important, and make notes in the margins of anything you did not understand; questions you would like to ask your group, and examples or applications that occur to you; What important ideas does it convey? How? Do these ideas conflict with other ideas or feelings you have? Are problem situations presented? How would you behave in such situations? Why?

What can I do to participate well in the discussion?

- Be committed and involved in the group.
- Treat others in the group with support and respect, even if you disagree with their views.
- Express support and agreement with others when appropriate.

- Be mindful of your nonverbal communication and behavior when you are not speaking
- Stick to the point.
- Say it in the group (not before or after to a few friends).
- Respect the confidentiality of others' disclosures.
- Make the meetings. It's difficult to re-create the discussion experience for you, and the group suffers from your absence and input when you're not there.
- Stay on the subject. Speak about the text, your reactions and others' responses.
- Speak to the entire group, not just one person.
- Seek your own understanding. Don't accept another's view as your own unless it makes sense to you.
- Be sure you understand what another is saying. This is especially true when you disagree with him or her.

(Adapted from E. W. Flynn and J. F. La Faso, Group Discussion as Learning Process: a Source book. Paulist Press, 1972)

Evaluation
A Discussion Group on the
Introduction to the Devout Life

1. In broad strokes, my experience of this discussion program was

Poor 2 Good 4 Excellent

2. What I learned during this discussion series was...

Not useful 2 Useful 4 Very Useful

3. During this discussion program, I really liked...

4. I would have enjoyed the discussion program more if...

5. Would you like to see a program like this to continue? If so, what Salesian topics or works would you like to explore?

6. Would you suggest any changes to the time, duration, and frequency of the discussion group?

Your Name _____ Date _____

Name of Parish/School/Ministry _____