

January 24, 2024



# Daily Reflections

## CIRCLING BACK

By Julie Mussché

### A Quote

*"In short, devotion is simply a spiritual activity and liveliness by means of which Divine Love works in us, and causes us to work briskly and lovingly."*

**ST. FRANCIS DE SALES, INTRODUCTION TO THE DEVOUT LIFE**

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### Reflection

Last July, in writing about the pilgrimage to France that I participated in last May, St. Francis de Sales was introduced through the exploration of Annecy. Today we celebrate his feast day blessings to you on this special day. Should one desire to remember St. Francis today, there is wisdom to be gleaned for our time.

Francis lived during a period of great division, not too unlike our time, but in this case between Protestants and Catholics, and the influences of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. He lived during the French Wars of

Religion and no doubt witnessed the devastation of such a conflict. This is why, although St. Francis was the Bishop of Geneva, he served and preached in Annecy as Geneva was a Protestant city and Catholics were basically run out of town. St. Francis handled the existing discord with gentleness, courage and aplomb and is sometimes referred to as the “gentleman saint.”

He was known to be an inspiring homilist and central to his preaching was that devotion was not exclusive to clergy or religious, but to “every vocation and profession” (*Introduction to the Devout Life*). He encouraged engagement of a spiritual guide to help grow in that spiritual journey. Also significant to any spiritual undertaking was living a virtuous life that included deep humility and patience.

Francis was also a well-respected theologian and writer during his life; his two well read works are *Introduction to the Devout Life* and *Treatise on the Love of God*. His writings influenced many people, including Father Jean-Pierre Medaille, founder of the Sisters of St. Joseph; St. Francis is one of their patrons.

It would be negligent to not mention that Francis, who was born into privilege and comfort, and might have taken an entirely different path, was imprinted by his own spiritual struggles as a young man. Wrestling with scruples and his own sinfulness, he sank into darkness. In the depth of despair, his intercessions to Our Lady helped him find the truth within the word of God: “God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.” (1 John 4: 16-18)

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St. Francis de Sales Cathedral in Annecy  
Photo by Julie Mussché

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## For Pondering

Once again you are invited to walk through and reflect upon some quotes from St. Francis de Sales.

- "What we need is a cup of understanding, a barrel of love, and an ocean of patience."
- "Every Christian needs a half-hour of prayer each day, except when he is busy, then he needs an hour."
- "We must fear God out of love, not love Him out of fear."
- "Great occasions for serving God come seldom, but little ones surround us daily."
- "True progress quietly and persistently moves along without notice."

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## For Prayer

*Loving God,  
thank you for saints, living and dead, who help to guide us toward you.  
May we open our hearts to each other  
and be your loving presence in the world.  
Amen.*

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