

Daily Reflections



Center for Spiritual Development

MEMORIAL OF SAINT JANE FRANCES DE CHANTAL, RELIGIOUS

By Sr. Jeanne Fallon, CSJ

Today's First Reading and Gospel

When one finds a worthy wife, her value is far beyond pearls. Her husband, entrusting his heart to her, has an unfailing prize. She brings him good, and not evil, all the days of her life. She obtains wool and flax and makes cloth with skillful hands. She puts her hands to the distaff, and her fingers ply the spindle. She reaches out her hands to the poor and extends her arms to the needy. Charm is deceptive and beauty fleeting; the woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. Give her a reward of her labors, and let her works praise her at the city gates.

PROVERBS 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31

The mother of Jesus and his brothers arrived. Standing outside they sent word to him and called him. A crowd seated around him told him, "Your mother and your brothers and your sisters are outside asking for you." But he

said to them in reply, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking at those seated in the circle he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

MARK 3:31-35

Reflection

The scripture readings quoted above have been chosen for the Memorial of St. Jane Frances de Chantal, the saint we remember today. Proverbs, one of the Wisdom Books, speaks of the incomparable value of a worthy wife to her husband: it is to her that he entrusts his heart. The valiant woman is one who gives honor and reverence to the Lord and reaches out her hand to the poor. In the Gospel, Mark describes a moment in Jesus' ministry when his mother was at the entrance of the patio where his followers gathered near him, listening to the Word of God. When the message reaches Jesus that his mother is outside, his response appears harsh when he asks the question, "Who are my mother and brothers?" Actually, Jesus wanted to emphasize that those at his feet, desiring to follow the will of God, are his real spiritual family, his kin -- just like his mother, who follows God's will.



Who is Saint Jane Frances de Chantal?

1572-1641

Jane was a French Catholic noblewoman, a widow and a nun who, with Saint Francis de Sales, founded the Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary in 1610. Born in 1572 in Dijon, France, Jane later married Baron de Chantal and had six children, three of whom died in infancy. Baroness de Chantal was known for her works of charity to the poor, her nursing care, and her zeal to help those in need spiritually and practically. During these years, Jane developed a mystical spirituality that continued to blossom during her long life. After only eight years of marriage, Jane's beloved husband was tragically killed in an accident. During her time of great loss, she struggled to care for and protect her young children, and experienced conflict with her elderly father-in-law. Jane eventually met Saint Francis de Sales and he became her spiritual director. With all her heart, she desired to follow God's will to become a nun and several years later, Jane and Saint Francis de Sales began the Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary, a cloistered community. The charism of the Visitation Nuns is "to strive to live the Gospel in a spirit of profound humility before God and a great gentleness toward our neighbor." The Visitation Nuns grew with new monasteries in France and Europe and even to North and South America. Jane is the patron of forgotten people, widows, and parents who are separated from their children.

For Pondering

St. Jane Frances de Chantal was a widow; a valiant woman with a family; a contemplative; a religious superior; and a spiritual writer. She desired to follow God's will as it unfolded in her life. As you ponder her story, is your heart moved to follow her in any way?

WHEN ONE FINDS A VALIANT WOMAN
HER VALUE IS FAR BEYOND PEARLS
SHE PICKS OUT A FIELD TO PURCHASE;
OUT OF HER EARNINGS SHE PLANTS A VINEYARD
SHE IS GIRT ABOUT WITH STRENGTH
AND STURDY ARE HER ARMS.
SHE ENJOYS THE SUCCESS OF HER DEALINGS.
AT NIGHT HER LAMP IS UNDIMMED...
SHE REACHES OUT HER HAND TO THE POOR,
AND EXTENDS HER ARM TO THE NEEDY...
SHE IS CLOTHED WITH STRENGTH AND DIGNITY,
AND SHE LAUGHS AT THE DAYS TO COME.
SHE OPENS HER MOUTH IN WISDOM,
AND ON HER TONGUE IS KINDLY COUNSEL.

HER CHILDREN RISE UP AND PRAISE HER.
"MANY ARE THE WOMEN OF PROVEN WORTH,
BUT YOU HAVE EXCELLED THEM ALL."

GIVE HER A REWARD OF HER LABORS
AND LET HER WORKS PRAISE HER AT THE CITY GATES.

PROVERBS 31:10-31

On the St. Joseph Center campus in Orange, there is a monument called Valiant Women with a quotation from Proverbs. The words were dedicated to the first Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange who served in the Western U.S.

Photo by Alicia Rodriguez

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