

Salesian Seminar



Francis De Sales: Finding God Wherever You Are

Introduced & Edited by Joseph F. Power, OSFS

Published by



De Sales

SPIRITUALITY SERVICES

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**A Discussion Group on the
Introduction to the Devout Life
And
Treatise on the Love of God**

**Using the selected texts from
*Francis De Sales, Finding God Wherever You Are***

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Fr. Power gives a very nice introduction to St. Francis de Sales in his book through page 26. It contains in part why we are suggest to using his selection of texts from the Introduction to the Devout Life and the Treatise on the Love of God.

Most of us are familiar with the background provided by Fr. Power in his introduction, so we had not planned on discussing it. We thought for our first session we could discuss pages 29 through 34 that are the Preface and Part I, 1 (Genuine Devotion) and I, 3 (Varieties of Devotion for Varieties of People) of the Introduction along with letters to Madames Brulart and Limojon that relate to the Devotion. If time allows, we could discuss any points from pages 7 through 25.

After you have read each section, ask yourself...

- 1) What touched you in that section?
- 2) What are the most important points, feelings, truths that you want to hold on to, to incorporate in your own life?
- 3) How does this confirm what you already believe?
- 4) How does this challenge you to look at things in a new way?

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 any particular 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)

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**Session 1:
Pages 29 to 34**

1. What is the difference between...

a. Grace and charity?

b. Charity and devotion?

c. Sinners, good people, and devout people?

2. What affect does devotion have on your life? Why is there such a difference in the judgment of the worldly and of the saints on its effects?

3. Why is devotion so adaptable? How does it affect our vocation or occupation?

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Pages 35 to 45**

1. What are some of the methods/ways that you have found helpful in placing yourself in the presence of God at prayer time, during the day?

2. What are some of the critical elements that can make prayer effective for our lives?

3. How is the act of praying, in many respects, similar to meeting an old friend?

4. What are the most important points, feelings, truths that you want to hold onto, to incorporate in your own life from this section?

6. What do you think/feel of Francis' catalogue of unfair and unreasonable attitudes and his remedies?

7. Why is friendship the most dangerous love of all?

8. What do you think of Francis' treatment of friendship?

9. Are there any thoughts or feelings you'd like to share on this sections reading?

6. According to Francis what are the characteristics of recollection? Think about, recall any moments when you have experienced the loving presence of God. Give thanks for them.

7. How can we preserve this “prayer of quiet or tranquility?”

8. How does the story of the statue apply to us?

6. How shall we go about making decisions in important matter and how should we look at our “wrong” decisions?

7. What does Francis mean by the Will of God’s Good Pleasure?

8. How do we recognize it?

9. How should we accept it?

10. What does Francis mean when he says we are always novices in the practice of virtue?

11. God has permitted sin. What is our attitude toward the sin & the sinner?

6. What paragraph or phrase made the most impact on you in the section "Is Love Hampered by Lack of Great Opportunities?" [151]

7. According to Francis, how can we bring love to everything we do [152]?

8. What would you say was the most important thing you learned from this book and/or the discussion?

9. What was the most challenging for you to accept, understand and/or apply to your own lived experience?

Evaluation
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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 _____