For Personal Reflection

?

1. How do I define success?
2. How do I measure success?
3. What are the ways or areas of my life in which I experience success?
4. What are the ways or areas of my life in which I experience a lack of success?
5. How much of my success is about my effort?
6. How much of success is about the ultimate outcome?
7. How does the Salesian notion of success strike me? In what ways do I agree? In what ways do I disagree?

Further Reading

Introduction to the Devout Life: St. Francis de Sales. Part III, Chapter 36.

St. Francis de Sales. Selected Letters. Elisabeth Stopp. Harper Brothers, 1960.

Reflections of St. Francis de Sales on Living Jesus. Father Andrew V. Masters, SVD. Gerard J. Quinlan, ed. Fraternity Group of the Association of St. Francis de Sales. 2000

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How To Succeed...

SALESIAN PERSPECTIVES

In the Business of Life

"The one who can preserve gentleness in the midst of sorrows and sufferings and peace in the midst of the multiplicity and busyness of affairs: that person is almost perfect."

You may be sure that if you have firm trust in God, the success that comes to you will always be that which is most useful for you."

Francis de Sales clearly understood that we work out our salvation in the midst of the busyness and business of life. A successful outcome (or lack thereof) in our endeavors is measured not only by the result of our efforts but also by the manner in which we pursue our endeavors.

Success relies upon our willingness to pursue our dreams and goals as well as the dreams and goals that God has for us. But no matter how important, we must work for our goals in as calm and deliberate manner as possible. Francis de Sales wrote: "Rivers which flow gently through the plains carry large ships and rich merchandise; rain that falls softly on the fields brings forth grass and corns. By contrast, rushing torrents are useless for shipping and overflow their banks, ruining the land nearby, just as violent rains lay waste fields and meadows." (Living Jesus, p. 443)

Put another way, anything done well enough is done fast enough. By contrast, work done hastily is never done well.

Sometimes we get it in our heads that success is a question of winning that one big contract, making that one big conquest, or getting that one big promotion. While these things do come into play, Francis reminds us that fidelity to little things — attention to detail — is crucial for success. "Flies trouble us by their numbers, not their strength. In the same way, little things trouble us more than great things by their sheer number. Accept all the duties that come your way peacefully, taking them in order one by one. If you try to do them all at once they will weigh you down and disturb you so much that you will probably be unable to do anything." (*Ibid*)

"If God gives you good result we shall bless God for it; if the result is not God's good pleasure, we will bless God all the same."

Success relies upon our patience. Success relies upon our diligence. Success does not, however, always mean achieving our desired result. Francis de Sales wrote: "If God gives you good result we shall bless God for it; if the desired result is not God's good pleasure, we will bless God all the same. It will be enough for you that you tried your best in complete good faith, since our Lord and divine reason do not demand results (as measured by purely human reason) in the tasks that we undertake, but only our faithful and whole-hearted cooperation, endeavor and diligence. The latter depend upon us, whereas the outcome depends on God." (Stopp, Selected Letters, p. 196)

Make no mistake. We need to be concerned about "all the matters that God has committed to our care. God has confided them to us, so God wishes for us to have great care for them." The challenge is to pursue them while not allowing haste, anxiety or disappointment to consume us." (Introduction, Part III, Chapter 10)

"We must work for our goals in as calm and deliberate manner as possible…"

Bottom line? "In all your affairs rely entirely on God's providence through which alone you must look for success. Nevertheless, strive quietly on your part to cooperate with God's designs. You may be sure that if you have firm trust in God, the success that comes to you will always be that which is most useful for you, regardless of whether, in your private judgment, it appears either a win or a loss...Thus God will work with you, in you, and for you, and after your labor consolation will follow." (*Ibid*)

Regardless of the results.

There are many ways to measure success in business, in the busyness of life and, most important, in life itself. In the eyes of God, success seems to be more a function of the patience and diligence with which we work and less about the 'bottom line'.

What's your formula for success?