

# De Sales

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## SPIRITUALITY CENTER

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*"Heaven: Down-to-earth values"*



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Mary D. Ford

We are made in God's image and likeness. Therefore, all of us share a common dignity: we are sons and daughters of God. Made in God's image and likeness, all of us share a common destiny: to live forever in that love with God and one another.

Recognizing this, we treat each person (including ourselves) with profound respect and reverence. In the midst of an all-too-frequently violent society – at school, in the workplace, at home, on the street -- Salesian spirituality calls us to respond (rather than react) to our world and the people in it in a gentle, balanced way.

We are challenged live *gently*, first of all, with *ourselves*. Francis reminds us not to become upset, obsessed or discouraged by our failings. Rather, Francis desires that we seize the courage to pick ourselves up and move on after we fail. He

counsels: "Be patient with everyone, but above all with yourself."

Gentleness with *ourselves* leads to gentleness with *others*. We learn to let go of judgmental attitudes and become more compassionate. The desire for retaliation or revenge--the source of so much violence in our world--gives way to forgiveness. By striving to live this way we become peacemakers in our homes and in the community at large.

Salesian spirituality recognizes that for *each of us* each person is *unique* and unrepeatable. Since each has a different character and different gifts, holiness will feel – and look -- differently for each of us.

How, then, do I become holy? Quite simply, says Francis de Sales, by doing God's will, that is, by living in ways that display our

God-given dignity and destiny. He exhorts: "Do not wish to be anything but what you are, and try to be that perfectly."

Recognizing that God's will for us is embedded in the state and stage of life in which we find ourselves, Salesian Spirituality *stresses* the importance of embracing the *ordinary* demands and responsibilities of our vocation -- a challenge indeed, for each of us, for all of us. Stretched by the demands of family and job, beset by financial concerns, regretful about the past, worried about the future, we may want to run away--in our effect, at least, if not actually in fact.

Perhaps we will find God in some less hectic setting! Maybe we'd be happier somewhere else, doing something else or being someone else. Francis reminds us, however, that God is closest to us precisely in

the busyness of our vocation. our human potential: to be-  
"It is not tranquility which come lovers of God and  
brings God close to our neighbor, to grow in holiness  
hearts... it is rather the fidelity — to bring to fruition the di-  
of our love," he says. vine nature and image in our-  
selves...and with one another!

Following God's will  
calls for ongoing, prayerful  
*discernment*. In Salesian way  
of looking at life, discernment  
often involves a balancing. On  
the one hand, we need a cer-  
tain openness, or flexibility, to  
respond when the Holy Spirit  
calls us to new ways of think-  
ing and acting.

On the other hand, *per-  
severance* (which includes  
planning and determination) in  
one's vocation is essential for  
spiritual growth. Francis re-  
minds us: "Just as a shrub that  
is often transplanted cannot  
take root and as a result cannot  
come to maturity and yield the  
desired fruit, so that soul that  
transplants its heart from plan  
to plan cannot profit or gain  
proper growth in perfection,  
since perfection does not con-  
sist in beginnings but in ac-  
complishments. "

When fear and doubt  
close in on us, Salesian Spiri-  
tuality points to signs of *hope*  
— yes, even *joy*. True, sin and  
its terrible effects are real in  
the world. But sin is not the  
final word. God has spoken  
his final word in Jesus. Jesus  
offers us the grace to fulfill