For Personal Reflection

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1. How do I define peace? How do I experience peace? What things or activities help me to remain at peace?
2. In what areas of my life do I lack peace? What things cause me to lose peace? How might I need to strive for peace in my life?
3. How peace-filled are my relationships? Are there any relationships in my life that are in need of peace?
4. What can I do to promote peace at home? At work? Among my neighbors? Among my relatives and friends?
5. In what ways am I an effective peacemaker?
6. How do I need to be a better peacemaker?

Further Reading

Stopp, Elisabeth. Selected Letters. Page 138; pp. 194—195. *(out of print)*

Letters to Religious. St. Francis de Sales. Dom Mackey, OSB, editor. (*Out of print*)

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Volume 4 **Number 4**

Salesian Perspectives is a series of pamphlets published by De Sales Spirituality Services. The series offers practical approaches to holiness based on the lives and legacies of St. Francis de Sales and St. Jane de Chantal. Subscription information is available by contacting De Sales Spirituality Services. © 2005 by De Sales Spirituality Services. All rights reserved.

Sons And Daughters Of God

SALESIAN PERSPECTIVES

Blessed Are Peacemakers

The Sermon on the Mount is the first of five great discourses in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus begins this discourse with the well-known Beatitudes, one of which is: "Blessed are the peacemakers, they shall be called children of God."

Making peace is about establishing, maintaining and nourishing right relationships: right relations with God, with self, with others and with the created order. Peacemakers strive to create places in which evil, violence and injustice are diminished and righteousness, healing and justice are increased. They are committed to making peace even in the face of misunderstanding, resistance and hostility. Peacemakers work for integration, health, wholeness and holiness, especially with the people with whom they interact every day.

"Live in peace. Often say to Our Lord that you want to be whatever God wants you to be..."

Francis de Sales gives us much food for thought—and action—when it comes to making peace. He wrote: "We must in all things and everywhere live peacefully. If trouble, exterior or interior, comes upon us, we must receive it peacefully. If joy comes, we must receive it peacefully, without a throbbing heart. If we need to avoid evil, we must do so peacefully, without disquieting ourselves; otherwise, we may fall as we run away and give time to our enemy to kill us. If there is peace to be promoted, we must do that peacefully; otherwise, we might commit many faults in our hurry. Even our repentance itself must be made peacefully." (Letters to Religious, p.62)

"We must in all things and everywhere live peacefully. If trouble comes upon us, we must receive it peacefully. If there is peace to be promoted we must do that peacefully. Even our repentance itself must be made peacefully..."

Of course, we know from human history (and from our own personal experiences) that peacemaking seems to bring with it its own share of trouble. Peacemaking is not only its own reward, sometimes it is its own punishment. Ever heard the expression that "no good deed goes unpunished"?

In order to shed light on this truth, St. Francis de Sales offered the following observation: "Our Lord is called the Prince of Peace; therefore, wherever Christ is absolute master, all is peace. Yet, it is true that before giving peace he causes war, separating heart and soul from our dearest, most intimate and most common affections (Mt 10: 34), such as inordinate love of self, confidence in self, complacency in self, and the like. Now when our Lord separates us from such fondly cherished passions, it seems as if our hearts have been flayed alive. Nevertheless, notwithstanding all this writhing in spirit, it is not without peace. So long as we keep our will nailed to God's will, while in no way repudiating our obligations nor the brave fulfillment of them, we do not lose peace. To be at peace amid wars and to live in sweetness amid bitterness is to be truly Prince of Peace." (Letters to Religious)

To be sure, then, peace is not the same as the absence of conflict or difficulty. It is about remaining grounded in the love of Christ, who is the source of all true and lasting peace.

"Our Lord will give us peace when we resolve to live humbly and gently in a state of war…"

Peace is something for which all of us deeply hope and long. Yet, peace sometimes seems so very elusive. How can we effectively promote peace for ourselves and others? Francis de Sales offered this advice: "Let us do three things and we shall have peace. First, let us have a thoroughly pure intention of desiring the honor and glory of God in all things. Second, let us do the little we can for that end and according to the advice of spiritual companions. Third, let us leave to God the care of all the rest." (Letters to Religious, p. 60)

Live in peace. Walk in peace. Share it with others...peacefully.