For Personal Reflection

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1. On a scale of one to ten, how strong is my desire for justice?
2. Do I treat others in ways that I would want them to treat me?
3. What are the circumstances or situations in which I am more frequently tempted to be easy on myself but tough on others?
4. In what ways do I need to be more single-hearted? How might I be better at judging myself and others by the same standard?
5. Can I think of a time when I really tried to do the right thing? How did it feel? How was it satisfying?
6. How good am I at living and practicing the Golden Rule?

Further Reading

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

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That Which Truly Satisfies...

SALESIAN PERSPECTIVES

Hungering for what is right

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 those who hunger and thirst to see right prevail; they shall be satisfied."

Think of all the things for which we hunger and thirst: love, acceptance, success, peace, forgiveness, happiness, truth, joy. Where on our list do we find righteousness, or justice?

To follow Christ is to hunger and thirst for what is right, for what is just. How deeply do we want and work for righteousness? How much is this desire a part of our everyday lives? How important is this in our relationships with others? Is our hunger and thirst for justice so strong that we sometimes think we can actually taste it?

"We lose nothing by living generously, nobly, courteously and with a royal, just, reasonable heart...."

Jesus promises us that there is satisfaction—not only in later heaven, but already right here on earth—when we want and work for righteousness and justice. However, it's not about doing more or doing extra; it's really about being true to our God-given nature.

St. Francis de Sales observed the following in Part III, Chapter 36 of his Introduction to the Devout Life: "We are human solely because we possess reason, yet it is indeed a rare thing to find people who are truly reasonable. This is because self-love leads us away from reason and directs us imperceptibly into countless small yet dangerous acts of injustice or iniquity."

It is in our nature to hunger and thirst for justice. Unfortunately, the effects of original sin—and our own personal sins— make it far more difficult for us to make the dream of justice a reality.

"How deeply do we want and work for righteousness? How much is this desire a part of our everyday lives? How important is this thirst for justice in our relationships with others? Is our hunger for justice so strong that we can actually taste it?"

The great enemy of justice and righteousness is living life with a double standard. Francis de Sales wrote: "We condemn every little thing in our neighbor but excuse ourselves of important things. We want to sell for top dollar but want to buy at bargain prices. We want everything we say to others to be well received but we are very tender and touchy about what others say about us. We rigorously demand our own rights, but want others to be considerate when demanding theirs. We complain easily about our neighbors, but we never want them to complain about us…" And the list goes on and on. (*Ibid*)

The truth is that hungering and thirsting for justice isn't limited to marching in a parade or a protest; it's not only about doing volunteer work in a third-world country; it's not about picketing or boycotting. Most days, it's about simply treating others the way we want to be treated: not very complicated, but no less demanding.

"Examine your heart to see how it is toward your neighbor...."

"Be just in all your actions," wrote De Sales. "Always put yourself in your neighbor's place and your neighbor in yours, and then you will live rightly. Imagine yourself the seller when you buy, and the buyer when you sell: then you will sell and buy justly." (*Ibid)*

Curiously, at least for Francis de Sales, hungering and thirsting for righteousness is closely related to another beatitude: being single-hearted. He concludes: "We lose nothing by living generously, nobly, courteously and with a royal, just and reasonable (single) heart. Examine your heart often to see if it is such toward your neighbor as you would like your neighbor's to be toward you." (*Ibid*)

Hunger and thirst for righteousness; live each day with a single heart; put yourself in your neighbor's place; find satisfaction in treating others justly...and live a satisfying life.