For Personal Reflection

?

1. Is there harmony in my life among my faith, my relationship with God, my relationships with family and friends, my work, or do I feel conflict?
2. Do I sometimes feel as though am I just acting, just putting on a show, rather than saying and doing what is really in my heart?
3. How transparent am I willing to be? Am I willing to allow people to know me, to see who I am?
4. Where do my energies go? Are they scattered and dissipated, or are they channeled toward being who God calls me to be?
5. Do I know who God is calling me to be, or do I need to spend more time with God in prayer and discernment?

Further Reading

Introduction to the Devout Life. St. Francis de Sales. Part I: Chapter 1—3; Part III: Chapter 23.

Treatise on the Love of God. St. Francis de Sales. Books 7—9.

Letters of Spiritual Direction.

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Being Yourself...

Kathleen Hope Brown

SALESIAN PERSPECTIVES

Being Authentic...

Salesian spirituality is lived from the inside out. It begins in the heart and flows outward. When love of God is inscribed in our hearts, all of our actions will be authentically loving.

Since the heart is the source of all our actions, as the heart is, so are they.

Actions that do not flow from a loving heart, while they might be outwardly admirable, are hollow.

...a person considers herself very devout because she recites daily a multiplicity of prayers, although immediately afterwards she utters the most disagreeable, arrogant and injurious words in her home and among her neighbors. Still another draws alms out of his purse to give to the poor, but cannot draw meekness out of his heart to forgive his enemies. People such as these are commonly perceived as devout, when in fact, they are not.

Our spiritual life is not something extra, not something added onto our everyday lives. Our spiritual life is integrated into every part of our lives.

St. Francis De Sales taught that a life of true devotion is *authentic*. True devotion comes from the heart. There is no conflict between the inside and the outside. Our spirituality permeates our whole being. Authenticity means that the love of God invades our soul, takes root there, grows, and bears fruit.

We find a model of authenticity in the life and ministry of Jesus. Wherever he went, Jesus attracted people because there was something trustworthy about him, something in his manner and message that touched people's hearts. His ministry reflected a deep and intimate relationship with his Father and was nourished by a life of prayer. Jesus lived his life from the inside out. It was precisely because of this congruity between Jesus' inside and Jesus' outside that he taught and spoke "with authority." People found Jesus to be not only informative; more importantly, they found him to be believable.

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Authenticity for us means allowing the Word of God to enter our heart and transform us. A life of faith, love, and service in imitation of Jesus will be the fruit of that transformation. The Spirit will be able to work in and through us in ways that go far beyond our everyday expectations.

Integrity is another way to think of authenticity. Our spiritual life is not something extra, not something added onto our everyday lives. Our spiritual life is integrated into every part of our lives. Our actions give expression to the love that is in our hearts.

We are called to be holy and authentic whatever our state in life. We need to *know* who we are and to *be* who we are.

Be who you are and be that well.

When we are authentic we are in right relationship with ourselves. There is integrity, wholeness and harmony among all of the parts of the complex universe within us. Our focus is sharpened because our motives and actions are pure and unambiguous. Being authentic—being real—with ourselves enables us to be authentic—to be real—with others. We can allow them to see who we truly are and to know who we truly are. We, in turn, are better able to see and accept others for who they really are.

Ultimately, such authenticity, such honesty, such integrity allows us to accept the truth of who we are in the eyes of God. Accepting the truth of who we are better enables us, with God's grace, to accept the truth of who we might yet become.

When we are authentic we are in right relationship with ourselves.

The fruit of knowing and being authentic is inner harmony, inner peace.

Engrave and inscribe on your heart this holy, sacred maxim, LIVE JESUS! I am sure that your life, which comes from the heart just as the almond tree comes from its seed, will after that