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Happy feast day, journalists

Tom Gallagher | Jan. 24, 2013 NCR Today

Today is the feast day of St. Francis de Sales [1], the patron saint of journalists.

Here's a brief overview of Francis' extraordinary life from the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales [2]:

The Catholic Church at that time was losing many of its people to the new churches of the Protestant Reformation. Francis set out to restore Catholicism in the region around Lake Geneva known as Chablais. Tirelessly and patiently preaching the ancient faith, writing leaflets that clearly explained the Catholic view, he gradually re-established a strong Catholicism in that area. In 1602, he was appointed Bishop of Geneva.

From his residence at Annecy, he organized his diocese and with a winning gentleness ministered to his people. His encouragement and wise counsel inspired many people to a better way of life. In 1608, his most famous book, An Introduction to a Devout Life, was published and soon circulated throughout the world. In 1610, he founded the Order of Visitation with St. Jane Francis de Chantal, whom he guided in the spiritual life.

Francis de Sales was convinced that God sees humanity as a great and varied garden, each person beautiful in his or her uniqueness. The various callings of life ? soldier, prince, widow, married woman -- are like the various flowers of the field; God loves them all. Through his or her own calling, each person can find a way to a deeper friendship with his or her creator. Francis approached people with genuine respect and gently guided them to recognize the unique path they would take in life. He made the journey to God joyful and possible for everyone to make. Above all, he advised against despair and the burden of fear.

He died at Lyons on December 28, 1622.

Go courageously to do whatever
you are called to do.
If you have any fears, say to your soul:
"The Lord will provide for us."
If your weakness troubles you,
cast yourselves on God, and trust in him.
The apostles were mostly unlearned fishermen,
but God gave them learning enough
for the work they had to do.
Trust in him, depend on his providence;
fear nothing.

St. Francis de Sales

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[1] http://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=51
[2] http://www.oblates.org/dss/francis/