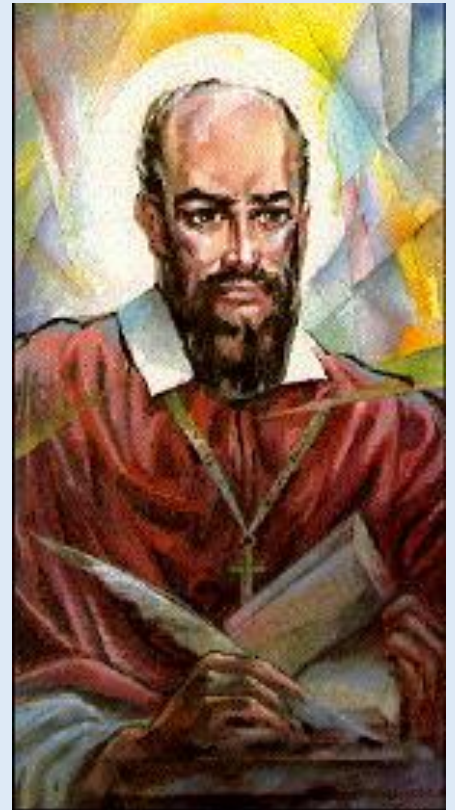


St. Francis De Sales

We joyfully celebrate the Feast of one of our patrons today, St. Francis De Sales, 'The Gentleman Saint'

What do we know of this holy man of God?

Francis was born into a noble French family in France on 21st August 1567. He was educated at the Capuchin College in Annecy and the University of Padua. His father desired that he become a magistrate and marry a lady of his choosing.



At the age of seventeen Francis experienced a long, deep crisis of faith that almost completely overwhelmed him. In his search for truth he visited the parish of Saint Etienne De Gres in Paris and consecrated himself to Our Lady. He later took a vow of Celibacy and continued to listen to God's call to him. He was ordained priest on 18.12. 1593 and consecrated bishop of Geneva on 8.12. 1602. Filled with the Holy Spirit and an awareness of God's infinite love for him he became one of the leading spiritual teachers and Doctors of the church. He encouraged people to grow in holiness through prayer, sacraments and gentle relational living. He did this through Spiritual Direction and through his writings both in script and a sign language that he developed to meet the needs of the deaf.

What is the gift that he offers us today and how can he help us to draw closer to Jesus?

Francis was a missionary man of prayer who wished to share the joy of the Gospel with all. His Feast-day is celebrated in the post- Christmas period and shortly after the World Day of Prayer for Peace and the Week of Christian Unity. The streets of our world are soaked in blood – prayer for peace and unity are most urgent. Our congregational Mission Statement expresses our desire to live in gentleness and to work for peace. Through our deepening life of prayer we grow closer to our God and receive the grace to move out in loving service to the cry of the poor. We desire to live in gentleness and reconciliation with each other as we honour the life of Christ in those with whom we live and minister each day. While acknowledging our limitations and ongoing need for conversion, we place ourselves at the mercy of God as we remember Francis' wise words, 'Have patience with all things, but, first of all with yourself.' We desire to be faithful to our Religious Vows as we echo the prayer of the psalmist, 'My Vows to the Lord I will fulfil, I will call on the Lord's name.' (Psalm 116:14) The prayer of Mary, Mother of the Church and our community prayer and Eucharist help us to be faithful to our call.

As Apostolic Religious, we listen for the new emerging needs of our world and ask for the courage and grace to respond in ever new ways. We participate in the new Evangelisation of the church and empower the laity to live out their baptismal call to mission and to experience a fuller joy of the Gospel.

We honour the sacredness of life from conception to natural death and act as well-informed advocates for those who are most vulnerable. We give thanks for the wonderful advances in medical research and the timely responses of our health systems to the ill amongst us. We

continue to campaign for better services and greater equity of service provision across the world for all who suffer.

We uphold the beauty of creation and act as responsible caretakers of God's earth. We respect its resources and give thanks for its amazing beauty. We hold all in trust for generations yet unborn so that they too like the psalmist may sing out their praise to God.

St. Francis De Sales wished to help others to grow closer to God and supported by St. Jane De Chantal, founded a women's congregation, Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary.

Saint Francis De Sales died on 28th December 1622 and is buried in Annecy. He was canonised in 1665 and declared a Doctor of the Church in 1877. He is the patron saint of writers, journalists and the deaf.

'Nothing is so strong as gentleness, nothing so gentle as real strength.' St. Francis De Sales
24th of January 2018