

St. Francis de Sales

Feast Day: January 24

All Grades



Francis de Sales knew how to maximize his efforts. He used creative approaches to spread God's Kingdom to the widest number of people most effectively.

Francis was born into a family of nobility and enjoyed many advantages. He studied at the University of Paris for six years and then went to the University of Padua, where he received a doctorate in civil and canon law. Besides being well educated, Francis was a skilled swordsman, who enjoyed fencing, an expert horseman, an a superb dancer. He was expected to take up a career in government and to marry well. But through his studies, Francis had gradually grown in a life of prayer and decided to share his love for God with other people by being a priest.

Francis and his cousin Louis, who was also a priest, volunteered to work in Chablais, where religious wars were taking place. They visited homes, preached the Word of God, and sought new converts. The work went so slowly that after four months, Louis became discouraged and left. Then Francis needed to multiply his efforts. He began to write and distribute a weekly essay explaining some doctrines of faith. For two years he had these essays printed and padded them on to as many people as possible. Why was this a new tactic? In

Francis's time the printing press was thought to be mainly a means of preserving the best thoughts of the past. It only gradually occurred to people that it could be used to bring new ideas to people and to encourage them to follow Christ.

Francis preached with power and charm in a simple, clear language. His gentleness and love were too appealing that he drew many hearts to God. The final result of his printing and preaching was that the majority of the Chablais inhabitants accepted the Catholic faith. When Francis was appointed Bishop of Geneva, he discovered other ways to maximize his efforts for the Lord. First, he worked with the priests. He encouraged the active priests and made sure that candidates for ordination were fit for this vocation. In this way Francis helped form good leaders for the Church. Second, he gave laypeople an active part in spreading the Kingdom. When visiting each parish, he celebrated the sacraments, instructed people and set up catechism classes for the young people. The classes would be held every Sunday and on holy days, and he trained laypeople for the role of teaching them. To help people grow in their relationship with God, Francis often had individual conferences with them and gave spiritual guidance.

In 1610 Francis helped Jane Frances de Chantal found the Visitation Sisters, an order of religious women. Once again his efforts multiplied. To reach more people, Francis wrote books.

For his writings Francis was declared a Doctor of the Church and the patron of journalist and writers. For his gentleness and patience and for his dedication to bringing others to the love of God, he was declared a saint.