



Servants of Christ
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Beautified

Colossians 3: 12 "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another..."

Mother Teresa once said, "If you want world peace, go home and love your family." Wow, that's it? I thought there would be more involved. We know it *sounds* easy but we also know it is not always that way. I have seen many Zoom calls where a mom is at her wit's end with her children, and each week the dead end of the 'wit' seems closer and closer. Parents who normally send their children to some or many summer camps for enrichment and a little time away now learn that they, the parents, have become camp counselors whose weekly recycling box seems to have a lot more empty wine bottles. So, the go home and love the family and we'll all sing 'Cumbaya' around the campfire may involve more than we previously thought.

But there's good news. In the 1500's a 'tall, handsome, well-built man with blue eyes' named Francis enjoyed the good life in France. When he was 17 years old, he experienced a huge crisis of faith and despair that lasted for two years. At rock bottom, he went to a church to pray and God took away the despair. He

became Saint Francis de Sales and devoted his life to God. He once said that since God is love, then God must want love for him and his life. He wrote about devotion to God, mentioning that if we love God that will make us want to do good in the world.

We can expand on his idea of devotion and apply it to our work and family. His greatest work, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, was written especially for laypeople, not religious. St. Francis de Sales wrote, "Care of one's family is rendered more peaceable, love of husband and wife more sincere, service of one's prince more faithful, and every type of employment more pleasant and agreeable." So, in our devotion to God we seek to live our lives by being devoted to those around us, and our lives are "beautified."

Devotion is largely about attitude and simple practice. *How* do we do things? *Why* do we do the things we do? Every action or inaction can be viewed as devotion to God and one another. Doing the laundry can be holy. What? Stay with me. Coming up with a creative meal that involves the extra tuna and green beans in the pantry can be a holy act. Unloading the dishwasher can be an act of grace. I can definitely, definitely tell you from my retreat in a monastery that *everything* is seen as God-ordained: cutting the rosemary for the dinner, eating your Wheaties in silence during breakfast, chopping wood, teaching, celebrating with a big party every Sunday because every Sunday is Easter is so wonderfully holy. (During said party I introduced jalapeno poppers to a monk in his 70's who had watched Washington, DC burn in the 1960's. "Mmm, I have never had these," he said).

So, perhaps Mother Teresa was on to something. Doing normal, loving acts for those around us, family included, will bring us more peace and contentment no matter our circumstances.

World peace? Family peace? Loving God leads to loving and caring for others in the most ordinary, dreary of tasks. And that leads to more peace experienced. And our humble lives can be beautified.

St. Francis de Sale's Prayer called, "Be at Peace"

*Do not look forward in fear to the changes in life;
rather, look to them with full hope that as they arise,
God, whose very own you are, will lead you safely through all things;
and when you cannot stand it, God will carry you in His arms.*

*Do not fear what may happen tomorrow; the same understanding Father who
cares for you today will take care of you then and every day.*

*He will either shield you from suffering or will give you unfailing strength to bear
it.*

Be at peace, and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginations.