Palm Sunday of Holy Week

WRATH

"Never be in a hurry; do everything quietly and in a calm spirit. Do not lose your inner peace for anything whatsoever, even if your whole world seems upset". - Saint Francis de Sales

ST FRANCIS DE SALES

St. Francis de Sales struggled with the deadly sin of wrath and said it took him twenty years to control his temper. His father was a senator from the province of Savoy in France and he wanted Francis to become a lawyer and eventually take his place. Francis used to fall into episodes of wrath when his father would not agree to him becoming a priest. After a long period of persistent urging on Francis' part, his father finally agreed to let Francis become a priest, and Francis was ordained in 1593. His first assignment was to the region of Chablis in Switzerland which was a Calvinist stronghold. At first when he tried to be controlling and fell into wrath his preaching efforts were unsuccessful. However, he gradually surrendered more control to God and became extremely patient instead of wrathful. He preached and wrote pamphlets explaining the Church's teaching in patient language, doing much to counteract the hatred of Catholicism which had developed following the Protestant Reformation.

Francis was a great spiritual advisor and his books Introduction to the Devout Life and The Love of God are still widely used. He emphasized very strongly the call to holiness which all Christians possess, stating that sanctity must be a part of daily life, regardless of one's profession. Our greatest faults can provide the greatest opportunity for developing virtue. Learning to control his fierce temper allowed St. Francis to become known for his gentleness and patience. St. Francis de Sales converted many Protestants back to Catholicism not by attacking their religious beliefs, but by lovingly bearing witness to the truths of the Church. As he often said, "A spoonful of honey attracts more flies than a barrelful of vinegar."

The deadly sin of wrath has control as its false god. We all have moments when we feel out of control and that is when wrath can enter in. Wrath has two forms. The more familiar form is yelling and hitting where we express the wrath out loud. The less familiar form is when we give the silent treatment and withhold hugs or basically act passive-aggressively. We like to be in control because we feel control will protect us from getting hurt. However, the more controlling we become the more we hurt others and ultimately ourselves. God is the one we should surrender all control to like the saints and Jesus did. In what ways do you show wrath in your daily life?

For your prayer

St. Francis would have prayed with Matthew 26:14-27:66. Use your imagination as you slowly read Matthew 26:14-27:66. Please reflect on how Jesus never gave into wrath during all of his Passion. Reflect on how Jesus can teach you to surrender to God and so avoid wrath.