



On St. Francis de Sales, patron saint of the Diocese of Baker

On January 24, we celebrated the feast of St. Francis de Sales, Patron Saint of the Diocese of Baker. Years ago I discovered in his writings a life-shaping guidance based on realism, gentleness, and humility.

St. Francis helps us face life as it is, not as we'd like it to be "When we find ourselves surprised into anger," for example, "it is better to drive it away speedily than to enter into a discussion with it. If we give it ever so little time, it will become mistress of the place, like the serpent who easily draws in his whole body where he can once get in his head." Illness brings a need for similar realism: "we must have patience not merely to be sick, but to accept the sickness that God wishes, in the place He wishes, among the people He wishes, and with the inconvenience that He wishes."

Yet, St. Francis' realism is always colored with gentleness. "Nothing is ever gained by harshness," he says. "Everything must be done through love, nothing through force." And we must extend this gentleness to ourselves: "Do not worry about not being able to serve God in your way, for in making the best of your troubles you will serve Him in His way - and that is better than yours."

Recognizing God's way as better - that's humility. "We must be humble," St. Francis says, "but that humility which discourages is not a good humility." Humility must always be coupled with confidence in God, for "the more miserable we know ourselves to be, the more occasion we have to confide in God, since we have nothing in ourselves in which we can trust."

We can trust the realism, gentleness, and humility of St. Francis de Sales. The way he teaches leads to the Kingdom of God.