

OUR STORY

St. Jane Frances de Chantal

Imagine living in a beautiful castle in France surrounded only by the sky, trees, and meadows where the cattle stand grazing by the river. This was the home of St. Jane Frances and her husband, Baron Christophe de Chantal. Because Christophe served in the king's army, Jane Frances managed the estates.

Jane Frances was especially kind to the poor. Beggars would come to have their bowls filled with the soup that was always on the stove. She nursed the sick and cared for neglected old people.

Then one sad day her husband was killed in a hunting accident, and suddenly Jane Frances was a widow with three children. She felt very alone. Christophe's father demanded that Jane and the children come to live with him. In order to provide for the future of her small children, Jane Frances went to his home. She gathered all the children on the estate for lessons and she taught them the catechism and their prayers. She also helped the sick and the poor. During this time, she was increasingly attracted to religious life. In 1604, Jane Frances heard a sermon by the bishop of Geneva, Francis de Sales. This was the beginning of a spiritual friendship that would help both of them to grow in holiness.



Jane Frances de Chantal

Courtesy The Catholic Community Forum

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The Sources and Way of Prayer

In growing up, we are usually told that boasting is something that we should not practice. It is a sign of egotism and possibly self-centeredness, and has a tendency to make us come across as better than others. Yet in Romans 5:1-5, Paul seems to have no problem with boasting at all. As a matter of fact, Paul seems to relish it as an indication of what it means to be in relationship with God and to be justified by God.

"Justified" by God simply means that God has first loved us totally and completely. Jesus came to manifest that total love to us, even when we, sinners that we are, did not merit or deserve it. It is the recognition and acknowledgment of this overwhelming reality that encourages Paul's boasting.

Boasting is Paul's way of publicly acknowledging what God has and continues to do for us in Christ. Paul boasts in hope of the glory of God. But Paul also boasts in his afflictions because, properly handled, afflictions can become a source of strength leading to greater union with God.

Why boast even in our afflictions? When we experience affliction, pain, or injustices in our lives, we often question the goodness of God. We find ourselves asking why God is doing this or allowing this to happen in our lives. Those times have the potential of moving us away from God, or even moving us toward losing hope or confidence in God. So, especially during such times of affliction, Paul encourages us to boast in the Lord even more. The Lord is our sure hope and confidence, no matter what life brings.

In prayer, in all that we do, we are to boast of that love that God continues to give totally and freely. We can never lose that love. God never gives up on us. Such love brings us peace and confidence in the Lord. Thus Paul encourages us to boast constantly and continually so that we may never give up on God, but rather continually praise, thank, and acknowledge God as our Lord and our lover.

Reflect

- Name times when you were deeply aware of God's love for you. What feelings surfaced and how did you respond?
- During times of affliction and suffering, how have you related to the Lord?
- How do you feel about publicly boasting in the Lord?

Biagio Mazza

BLESSINGS

O my God, if our souls seek you only and claim only your love,
why should we be displeased if our house is changed for us,
since we carry you with us and find you in places wherever we go.

Jane Frances de Chantal

Our Story

Continued from the front...

A few years later, Francis de Sales told her of his plan to begin a new religious order. The sisters were to divide their time between work and prayer. They would go out to visit the poor and nurse the sick.

In 1610, Jane Frances and three other women began a new life. Their order was called the Visitation of Holy Mary, and their day was spent in prayer, work, silence, and recreation. Many others came to join them. Soon under the direction of St. Francis de Sales, she began houses of the Visitation Order in other cities. The Visitation Order grew. When Jane Frances died, there were more than eighty convents of Visitation Sisters.

Kate Dooley, O.P.

TABLE TALK

- What is your favorite food? What are some of the traditional recipes you enjoy for celebrations?
- What are some kinds of prayer “recipes” that you know or use? Which do you like?

Pondering the Word

“Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ....”

Romans 5:1

Faith is God’s gift. Our peace comes through Christ. Pray for peace and growing faith. Share your faith and peace.

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PARENTING

Family Renewal



Courtesy Deirdre Malacrea

The essence of family renewal is tradition. In addition to renewing personal family relationships, the family needs to nurture its common vision, values, and social awareness. This can be accomplished through these family “traditions.” You reinforce the feeling of belonging, of being supported, and of being understood. Your physical, social, mental, and spiritual growing

are involved. It is important to review and develop your family “traditions.”

Below are some for consideration, evaluation, and addition.

1. Family dinner
2. Family night
3. Family vacation
4. Family holidays
5. Extended family activities
6. Learning together
7. Working together
8. Serving together
9. Having fun together
10. Worshipping together, including daily Scripture sharing
11. One-on-one “dates” (with children writing the agenda)
12. _____

Adapted from Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families*, Golden Books Adult Publishing

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Books for Spiritual Growth

1. *8 Spiritual Heroes: Their Search for God*, B. Hill, St. Anthony Messenger. A compelling and inspiring book on eight modern spiritual leaders.
2. *Praying with Ignatius of Loyola*, J. Bergan & M. Schwan, St. Mary’s Press. This book combines storytelling, prayer, and reflection in an interesting and enriching manner.
3. *A Retreat with Teresa of Avila*, G. Hutchinson, St. Anthony Messenger. A pleasant retreat with Teresa who was brilliant yet practical, prayerful but not pious, and had a nourishing sense of humor.
4. *A Retreat with John the Evangelist*, R. Brown, St. Anthony Messenger. Spending time in prayer with John the Evangelist with the help of Father Raymond Brown, a noted scripture scholar.

“The invocation of the holy name of Jesus is the simplest way of praying always.”

Explore the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. See paragraph 2668.

“I have chosen you...do not fear, for I am with you,
do not be afraid, for I am your God....”

Isaiah 41:9-10