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.

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?

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
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 Renewal Books for Spiritual Growth

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.

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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