

Readings for Thursday, December 11, 2025

Francis de Sales – *Bishop* *and* **Jane de Chantal – *Vowed Religious***

Psalm 34

- 1 I will bless the LORD at all times; *
his praise shall ever be in my mouth.
- 2 I will glory in the LORD; *
let the humble hear and rejoice.
- 3 Proclaim with me the greatness of the LORD; *
let us exalt his Name together.
- 4 I sought the LORD, and he answered me *
and delivered me out of all my terror.
- 5 Look upon him and be radiant, *
and let not your faces be ashamed.
- 6 I called in my affliction and the LORD heard me *
and saved me from all my troubles.
- 7 The angel of the LORD encompasses those who fear him, *
and he will deliver them.
- 8 Taste and see that the LORD is good; *
happy are they who trust in him!
- 9 Fear the LORD, you that are his saints, *
for those who fear him lack nothing.
- 10 The young lions lack and suffer hunger, *
but those who seek the LORD lack nothing that is good.
- 11 Come, children, and listen to me; *
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

- 12 Who among you loves life *
and desires long life to enjoy prosperity?
- 13 Keep your tongue from evil-speaking *
and your lips from lying words.
- 14 Turn from evil and do good; *
seek peace and pursue it.
- 15 The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, *
and his ears are open to their cry.
- 16 The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, *
to root out the remembrance of them from the earth.
- 17 The righteous cry, and the LORD hears them *
and delivers them from all their troubles.
- 18 The LORD is near to the brokenhearted *
and will save those whose spirits are crushed.
- 19 Many are the troubles of the righteous, *
but the LORD will deliver him out of them all.
- 20 He will keep safe all his bones; *
not one of them shall be broken.
- 21 Evil shall slay the wicked, *
and those who hate the righteous will be punished.
- 22 The LORD ransoms the life of his servants, *
and none will be punished who trust in him.

Judges 6:11-24

Now the angel of the Lord came and sat under the oak at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press, to hide it from the Midianites. The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, 'The Lord is with you, you mighty warrior.' Gideon answered him, 'But sir, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our ancestors recounted to us, saying, "Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?" But now the Lord has cast us off, and given us into the hand of Midian.' Then the Lord turned to him and said, 'Go in this might of yours and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian; I hereby commission you.' He responded, 'But sir, how can I deliver Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.' The Lord said to him, 'But I will be with you, and you shall strike down the Midianites, every one of them.' Then he said to him, 'If now I have found favour with you, then show me a sign that it is you who speak with me. Do not depart from here until I come to you, and bring out my present, and set it before you.' And he said, 'I will stay until you return.'

So Gideon went into his house and prepared a kid, and unleavened cakes from an ephah of flour; the meat he put in a basket, and the broth he put in a pot, and brought them to him under the oak and presented them. The angel of God said to him, 'Take the meat and the unleavened cakes, and put them on this rock, and pour out the broth.' And he did so. Then the angel of the Lord reached out the tip of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened cakes; and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened cakes; and the angel of the Lord vanished from his sight. Then Gideon perceived that it was the angel of the Lord; and Gideon said, 'Help me, Lord God! For I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face.' But the Lord said to him, 'Peace be to you; do not fear, you shall not die.' Then Gideon built an altar there to the Lord, and called it, The Lord is peace. To this day it still stands at Ophrah, which belongs to the Abiezrites.

Mark 12:41-44

He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, 'Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.'

Collect:

Most gracious God, who has bidden us to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before you; Grant that we, like your servants Francis and Jane, may see and serve Christ in all people, and know him as the giver of all good things; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Francis de Sales

Bishop, 1622

and

Jane de Chantal

Vowed Religious, 1641

Francis de Sales served as the Roman Catholic bishop of Geneva from 1567 to 1622, but today he is primarily known for his writings on prayer and spiritual direction, particularly his work *Introduction to the Devout Life*.

As a young man, Francis studied for a political career, but he was deeply anxious for his salvation, prone to melancholy and despair, and was convinced that he has been predestined for damnation. In 1587, however, while a visitor at a church in Paris, he had a profound experience of the love of God. This sense of God's love and mercy would mark his writings on the spiritual life from that time forward. In response to this overwhelming sense of God's love, Francis changed his trajectory and resolved to become a priest.

In 1602 he became bishop of Geneva, although he was forced to remain in the parts of his diocese that were outside of the city, since Geneva itself was under Calvinist control. He wrote a number of books on the spiritual life which stressed the importance of love for God and neighbor rather than focusing on sin and penance, and which were notable in being directed toward laypeople. The influence of his *Introduction to the Devout Life* was not limited to Roman Catholic circles, but informed Protestant spiritual writers as well, including many Anglicans. In addition to his writing, Francis worked with Jane de Chantal in her foundation of a new religious order for women, the Congregation of the Visitation.

Jane de Chantal was a wealthy young widow with four small children. In her grief, she resolved never to remarry. She devoted herself instead to caring for the poor and the sick, to raising her children, and to managing her late husband's estates. Francis de Sales would become her spiritual director in 1604.

In 1610, Francis and Jane established the Congregation of the Visitation. Initially devoted to serving the poor and the sick, the order gradually evolved in a more contemplative direction. During Jane's 31 years in the community, she gave spiritual direction to a number of women and men in the form of letters, many of which have been preserved. Unusually, her order actively welcomed women as sisters who would not be considered by other orders because of their poor health or advanced age. When others questioned the wisdom of this decision, Jane merely replied, "What would you have me do? I rather like sick people myself. I'm on their side." By the time she died in 1641, the order had already grown to include 34 houses.