

Live Jesus!

## THE SPIRITUAL DIRECTORY TODAY

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### TWO PRELIMINARY REFLECTIONS

Before beginning my presentation on *The Spiritual Directory Today*, I would like to say something about the importance of a union of hearts in the Salesian doctrine of a union of wills. I would also like to say a brief word about the distinction between informative and performative language so as to better appreciate the Founder's teaching on the Spiritual Directory.

In one of his first letters to the Wilmington-Philadelphia Province following his election as Provincial, Father Jim Greenfield quoted these words from the late Jesuit Superior General, Father Pedro Arrupe:

“Nothing is more practical than finding God, that is, than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you will do with your evenings, how you will spend your weekends, what you read, who you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in love, stay in love and it will decide everything.”

(Ronald Modras, *Ignatian Humanism: A Dynamic Spirituality for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2004), p. 245.)

We will speak much today about the union of our wills with God's will for us. But for St. Francis de Sales, as for Father Arrupe, we must first fall in love with God. Recall the foundational importance of the *Song of Songs* in the young teenager and student, Francis de Sales. Two young lovers somehow get separated from one another. Each runs through the streets of Jerusalem frantically searching for the other. When at last they find each other, they embrace, kiss, and utter those beautiful words that are now our Oblate motto: “*tenui nec dimittam*,” “I have hold of you now and I will never again let you go!”

That simple love story was in its original form probably a few love songs that were sung at Jewish weddings. In time they became sacred Scripture. From the Song of Songs Francis was to learn many things about God and the human family. Most importantly, he was to learn that divine love is a searching love. Throughout the entire sweep of human and especially sacred history, God has been searching for his Beloved who had become separated from Him and was now lost. From that short biblical book Francis also became convinced -- as he wrote in Book 1, chapters 15-18 of the *Treatise*-- that we in the human family have been created in such a manner as to be continually searching for the Beloved as well. Without God, we can be neither whole nor holy. Thus, each of us is searching for what Francis calls our “other half.” It is in the Incarnation, which Francis describes as God's “kiss to creation,” that the two lovers finally find one another. Each promises

never again to be separated from the other. For Francis de Sales, salvation history is nothing more and nothing less than a story of love lost and of love found. This why, in the spirituality that takes his name, love -- as union of heart, will and live-- will become its overarching and integrating principle.

For Francis de Sales, then, it is vital that we first fall in love with God before we can fully appreciate what he wants us to learn from his doctrine of love as a union of wills. Our practice of the union of wills must first be centered in a personal and loving union of hearts with God.

This explains the importance of prayer, especially mental prayer, in his teaching and writings. Prayer is where we experience an immediate, personal and loving of union with the Beloved. For this reason, Francis leads Philothea in prayer before introducing her to the sacraments and the practice of virtue. For this same reason, in Books 6 and 7 of the *Treatise* he teaches Theotimus all about meditation, contemplation and many other prayer forms before showing him, in Books 8 and 9, how to unite his will to the divine will in “life and action,” that is, in the love of conformity, the love of submission, and the pure love of holy indifference. In Salesian spirituality, then, union with the will of God must always be situated in the deeper context of a loving, personal relationship with the Beloved that is experienced in and deepened through daily prayer, especially mental prayer.

Love of God as union with the Beloved is, for us Oblates, that which will --again in the words of Father Arrupe-- “decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you will do with your evenings, how you will spend your weekends, what you read, who you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in love, stay in love and it will decide everything.” Union of wills is first and foremost a union of hearts, a union that leads in turn to a oneness with the Beloved in meaning, purpose, mission and life.

Pope Benedict XVI has recently issued his second encyclical, *Spe salvi*. Early in that encyclical on hope he speaks of the distinction between informative and performative language:

“Christianity was not only “good news”—the communication of a hitherto unknown content. In our language we would say: the Christian message was not only “informative” but also “performative.” That means: the Gospel is not merely a communication of things that can be known –it is also one that makes things happen and is life changing.” (#2)

I believe that what the Holy Father says about informative and performative language is a very helpful tool for understanding what the Founder wants to bring about in us Oblates when he speaks again and again of the central role of the Spiritual Directory in our spiritual identity and apostolic mission. Over the course of many years, Father Brisson took as theme for countless spiritual chapters, instructions and retreat conferences some

aspect or other of the Spiritual Directory. When reading those reflections in the Tilburg or Millenium edition of his works or in his *Commentaire du Directoire*, one is struck by the repetition of similar themes orchestrated with slightly different nuances over the course of many years. It is important for us to remember that he is almost always using performative language when speaking to us of the Directory. That is, he is not speaking principally to our minds or to our intellects. He is not telling us something new each time he speaks to us of the Directory. Rather, he is speaking to our hearts. He wants our daily practice of the Directory to change our hearts so as, in turn, to change our lives and, in that way, to make a gospel difference in our world today. For Father Brisson, the faithful practice of the Directory makes an Oblate both a holy person as well as an effective apostle.

### INITIAL REFLECTIONS

After those two preliminary reflections, I would like to turn to today's topic.

We are the daughters and sons of Father Louis Brisson. During these special days of celebration, remembrance and thanksgiving, our Founder has been the focus of our grateful prayers and thoughtful reflections. We have gathered here in Troyes to thank God for this good and holy man, this man of God and this man of action. Thanks to the initiative of Father General, our Founder's life and work will remain the focus of our prayers, reflection and study through a novena of themes in his memory during this centenary year of his death.

As we all know, one of our Founder's strongest desires was that we Oblates of both Congregations would live the spirit of St. Francis de Sales and generously share his doctrine with our world today. And, as we also know, in his capacity as Founder he insisted that we are to attain the spirit of St. Francis de Sales principally through our faithful practice of the *Spiritual Directory for Daily Actions*. Therefore, all of us Oblates embrace the Directory for what our Founder intended it to be for us. It is, as Constitution 14 expresses it, our "*specific means* of retracing in ourselves the image of St. Francis de Sales, who was himself an image of our Lord"

The topic of this morning's reflections is "The Spiritual Directory Today." From the time I was a young Oblate, I was struck by the suggestion, often expressed, that Christian, Salesian and Oblate holiness all rested --at least for us Oblates-- on the slim shoulders of a short Preface, ten brief Articles and a few concluding words of Advice and Counsel that constitute the *Spiritual Directory for Daily Actions*. Even then I wondered whether --in the whole history of Christian spirituality-- so monumental a spiritual weight had ever rested on so slight a frame!

I never doubted that claim. Indeed, I accepted it as the Gospel truth for us Oblates. Still, I always wanted to substantiate it for myself. Therefore, for nearly fifty years of reading, writing, reflecting and teaching in our Oblate Salesian tradition, I have frequently looked for connections and relationships between Christian spirituality, Salesian spirituality and the spirituality of the Directory. By looking at the expression, "Live, Jesus!" I will give

but one example of where my efforts along these lines have led. Many more could be given.

#### HOW IT ALL BEGAN

Before beginning those reflections on “Live Jesus!” and its intimate connectedness with Christian, Salesian and Directory holiness, I want to speak of the genesis of the Founder’s lasting respect, even reverence, for the Spiritual Directory.

All of us here know that the Spiritual Directory was everything for our Founder. Frequently and emphatically he urged its faithful practice on the first Oblates of both Congregations. How did he come to his unshakable conviction that the Spiritual Directory was central to our identity as Oblates and equally central to our specific mission in the world today?

For an answer, let us return to that Monday morning long ago, February 24, 1845. On that day the Lord appeared to our “Reluctant Founder.” Fifty-five years later, during the celebrations honoring his diamond jubilee of priesthood on December 20, 1900, Father Brisson spoke of that appearance. He distributed holy cards with the words of the *Nunc dimittis* written on the back of them. Afterwards, he explained why the words, “*my eyes have seen your saving deed*,” had been capitalized and highlighted. “In that way,” he told those present, “I affirm the appearance with which I was gifted by Our Lord. It was the dominant fact of my life...It was this appearance which told me what I must do” with my life (Prosper Dufour, OSFS, *Le Très Révérend Père Louis Brisson* (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1936; page 283).)

At that moment of celebration, Father Brisson chose to speak to those earliest Oblates as both Father and Founder. One February day five and half decades earlier Jesus had appeared to him, looking somewhat stern and saying nothing. Still, Jesus had clearly conveyed to him what he “must do” from that day forward.

From a careful reading of the rest of his life and work, I am convinced that the Lord’s appearance to him led Father Brisson to three lasting and life-directing convictions: (1) that our foundation was God’s will; (2) that the Good Mother was a saint; and that (3) the central role that the Directory had played in her life and holiness was to play an equally central role in the life, holiness and mission of the members of the Congregations of which he was destined to be the Founder. It is this last life-directing conviction --the central role of the Spiritual Directory in Oblate identity and mission-- that is our focus during these days.

Over and over again, the Founded reminded the first Oblates that the faithful practice of the Directory is what makes an Oblate an Oblate. “With [the Directory],” he once insisted, “we are everything; without it, we are nothing...” And, again, “Without [the Directory] you will be nothing; you will be less than nothing, beings without a name, without an identity, without a purpose, without a goal.” Stated positively, the Directory

is what defines us as Oblates. It is what gives us our identity, purpose and goal. (See the Tilburg edition of the Works of Father Brisson, vol. 4, pp. 189-90.)

The Founder made many beautiful claims for the Directory. For him, it is the Gospel of Jesus in action and its practice embraces the essence of both Christian holiness and Salesian spirituality. With its faithful practice Oblates and all the people with whom they share it have all that is necessary to become holy people and effective apostles in the world.

My hope is that something of what I will say this morning and of what we will discuss together will reinforce our own convictions regarding the Directory along the lines of those of our Founder.

### PERSONAL WITNESS

There were many fits and starts in what I am about to present to you. I read, researched and wrote much, intending at first to write a scholarly paper such as one delivers at an academic symposium. But in the end I decided on a generally different approach. I wish to stand before you this morning as a personal witness to the truth, the beauty, and the value of the *Spiritual Directory for Daily Actions*. Like all of you, I have tried to live out my Oblate vocation by valuing the Directory as much as the Founder did and by making its practice what Oblate Sister Marie-Espérance Charlier rightly asserts it to be: *un chemin de vie*, “a way of life.” “The Directory” she writes, “is the daily route that Saint Francis de Sales proposes to us so that we might not lose sight of our intended goal [union with God] nor distance ourselves [along the way] from the Savior’s company.” (*Le Directoire spiritual, chemin de vie*, in *La Lettre de RES*, number 13, August 2007).

The Directory, then, is a particular way of life that leads those who embrace it to a union with God that is the essence of all Christian holiness. In his *Instructions*, the Founder assures us that “fidelity in following [the Directory] is *the* means of attaining union with God [for us Oblates]. There may be other means. [Indeed, there are many other means.] And doubtless it is well to follow one’s attraction, but the Directory is the *first* for us. It is the *main path* by which we are to reach God” (Oct. 23, 1847, in *Instructions*, June 1847-Pentecost 1859, p. 18, emphasis mine). The Good Mother promises that through the practice of the Directory Jesus will be born in us and in our actions he will be seen once again walking upon this earth. Taken together, the Congregation’s “Founder” and its “Inspiration” promise that our faithful practice of the Spiritual Directory will lead us to a Jesus-centered union with God and to a continuation of his saving mission in our world today. Thus, the Spiritual Directory is best understood not so much as a spiritual book but as a way of life or a spiritual strategy for attaining continual union with God similar to what Jesus himself experienced. It is our way of living as Jesus lived and of continuing his saving work.

Thus, Christian, Salesian and Directory spirituality all have one and the same goal: union with God, a union that is realized by following or living Jesus. For the Christian, the

Salesian and the Oblate, then, union with God and living Jesus will always be inseparable components of the same reality-- indeed, two sides of the same coin.

“LIVE JESUS!”

The principal point that I want to make in my reflections this morning is this: Christian, Salesian and Directory spirituality are all intimately inter-related. There are many ways in which the close relationship among them could be shown. Today I want to speak about how they all relate to the central theme of what St. Francis de Sales describes as this “holy and sacred motto,” “Live, Jesus!”

Christianity begins and ends with Jesus. Belief in Jesus saves. Following Jesus sanctifies. The person, word and example of Jesus are central to Christian life and holiness. Indeed, his human manner of relating to the Father and to the divine will for him becomes the master paradigm for all Christian praxis. It is for this reason that the expression, “Live, Jesus!” represents a master paradigm for our Salesian tradition as well. Here is the classic expression of that paradigm as found in the *Introduction to the Devout Life*:

“Philothea, I cannot approve the methods of those who try to reform someone by beginning with outward things....For this reason, dear Philothea, I have wished above all else to engrave and inscribe on your heart this holy and sacred motto, “Live, Jesus!” ...As our beloved Jesus lives in your heart, so too he will soon live in all your conduct and he will be revealed by your eyes, your mouth, your hands, yes even the hair on your head. With St. Paul you can say these holy words, “It is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me. In short, whoever wins a person’s heart has won the whole person.” (*Introduction to the Devout Life*, Part III, chapter 23)

In the Gospels, Jesus tells his disciples how they are to follow him. Daily, they are to take up their cross and follow in his steps (Luke 9:23). As with Jesus himself, shouldering the daily cross of Christian discipleship will lead to both death and to new life in us, to a daily dying to self that is, at the same time, a daily rising to new life in God.

It is in Baptism that Christians are first immersed into the dying and rising of Jesus. Throughout the rest of their lives every day and every passing present moment present opportunities for them to increasingly appropriate the dying and rising of Jesus. They will accomplish this by putting to death the old Adam of disobedience and by being clothed with the new Adam whose entire human life was one of loving union with the Father in both prayer and in what Francis calls “life and action.”

A classic New Testament passage describes the Christian’s dying and rising with Jesus: “I have been crucified with Christ, and the life I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me.” Galatians 2:19-20 is both the spiritual biography of St. Paul as well as the pattern for all Christian discipleship. As we saw above, this is also a favorite passage of the

Jesus-centered spirituality of St. Francis de Sales. It describes Christian discipleship as being crucified with Christ so that He might come alive in us and live and act in our world through us.

Central to *Christian* perfection, then, is one's daily appropriation of the dying and rising of Jesus. This dying and rising is also central to Salesian spirituality and to the spirituality of the Directory as well. Let us see how.

#### DYING AND RISING WITH CHRIST

The whole history of Christian spirituality can be viewed from the perspective of how believers actually take upon themselves the dying and rising of Jesus in the daily praxis of Christian living.

For the earliest Christians, martyrdom was the literal imitation of the dying of Jesus and the experience of the new life of his resurrection. With the official state recognition of Christianity in the early 4<sup>th</sup> century with the Edit of Milan, the asceticism and mysticism of the desert became for many the locus for a daily dying and rising with Jesus. Centuries later, the desert experience was largely transferred to the silence, hiddenness and ascetical and mystical practices of the monastery. Later still, the mendicant orders combined the practices of the monastery with the pastoral needs of the people. In that context, the dying and rising of Jesus were encountered in the daily demands of community life, prayer and pastoral practice. In modern times, the mendicant spirit was adopted and further adapted by congregations of apostolic religious such as our own. In all these expressions of the dying and rising of Jesus, the laity participated to a greater or lesser extent. But it was not until the rise of the lay movements that are associated with *devotio moderna*, the Rhineland mystics, and especially with the spiritual genius of own Patron, that a spirituality arose that is particularly suited to the lay vocation and to life in the market place.

How is the daily dying of Jesus appropriated in Salesian spirituality? It is not through a martyr's death. Nor is through the ascetical practices of monks, mendicants or religious, although it can be practiced by all of those groups and indeed is practiced in all of them. In the Salesian tradition, our dying with Jesus—which is, at the same time, new life in him-- is brought about through what Francis de Sales calls in Book 9, chapter 13 of the *Treatise on the Love of God* the “death of the will.”

The goal of the whole sweep of the *Treatise* up to its central Book 9 is to convince Theotimus of three things. (1) The first is that we have been created precisely for union with God, our supreme Good. (2) Secondly, God truly desires our union with him in this life through grace and in the next life through glory. (3) Finally, Francis painstakingly shows Theotimus how to actually experience union with God through prayer and daily life. In Books 6 and 7 of the *Treatise* he teaches him all about prayer as affective union, greatly expanding upon what he taught Philothea. In Books 8 and 9 he teaches him how to practice effective union through the love of conformity, submission, or holy indifference to the divine will.

It is very important to note that up until Book 9, Francis speaks of love in terms of a “*union of wills.*” With intention and attention to what God wills or permits at each succeeding present moment, we actively unite our will to whatever God wills for us. Indeed, as he urges in Book 12, chapter 9 “at hundreds of times during the day let us join our life to God’s love.”

With Book 9, however, a very different kind of union emerges. The frequent, active and intentional act of uniting of our wills to God’s will for us is, through God’s grace, gradually transformed into something altogether different. This is why in Book 9 Francis begins to speak of *unity*. Through practice, our will has become so completely one with the will of God that it no longer exerts itself except according to the divine good pleasure. At least in the high point of its spirit, it is wholly indifferent to whatever God wills as long as it is the Beloved who wills it. Like a babe in its mother’s arms, we are now content simply to rest in the arms of divine Providence and to go wherever God carries us. Here is how Francis describes this state of unity:

“We simply let ourselves be carried by his divine good pleasure, just as a little child is carried in its mother’s arms, by a certain kind of admirable consent which may be called the union, or rather *unity* of our will with that of God” (Book 9, chapter 14).

In practice, our will has now ceased to function independently of God’s will. Like Jesus, we now do only and always what God wills for us. For all practical purposes, our own will has died. Francis remarks, “The will that is dead to itself so as to live in God’s will is without any particular desire, and remains not only in conformity and subjection but is totally annihilated in itself and is converted into God’s will” (Bk 9, ch 13). Admittedly, this is strong language. In chapter 13 of Book 9 Francis repeats the oft-cited Galatians 2:20 and Colossians 3:3 to underscore the biblical foundations for his teaching on the death of the will: “I have been crucified with Christ and the life I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me” (Galatians 2: 19-20). “After all you have died! Your life is now hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3).

In that key chapter 13 of Book 9, Francis is quick to affirm that our will, being spiritual, can never really die. And he uses a beautiful image to explain how, while it does not actually die, the will nevertheless behaves as if it had died. What, he asks, becomes of the light of the stars with the coming of dawn? Their light does not vanish “but is ravished and absorbed into the sun’s supreme light with which it is happily intermingled and joined.”

With the death of the will, then, the old Adam has died in us. With that death, we have “made room” within us for the new Adam. Jesus’ way of living is now our way of living: “*I do always the will of the One who sent me.*” And his intimate and loving union with the Father is now our own experience as well: “*The Father and I are one.*”

In the death of the will, the third petition of the Lord’s Prayer, “May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” is now fully realized in what the Good Mother calls “the earth of



my own life.” I now participate in Jesus’ loving and intimate relationship with the Father. In response to the divine will for him, Jesus went forth from nights of prayerful union with the Father into days of active ministry on behalf of the Kingdom of God. His life pattern will become our own. Daily, we too will go from the contemplative core of prayerful union with God into the active ministry of our apostolic lives.

The death of the will, then, is how those of us in the Salesian family daily take upon ourselves the dying of Jesus. But our dying is simultaneously also our rising, and the losing of our false selves at the same time the discovery of our true selves. For as Jesus says in Matthew 10: “He who seeks only himself brings himself to ruin whereas he who brings himself to nought for me discovers who he is” (Matthew 10:39). Thus, with the death of the old Adam, the new Adam comes to birth in me. And with the birth of Jesus within us we truly begin to live Jesus “in all our outward conduct” and, in that way, to continue his saving work in our world today! (*Introduction*, III, 23).

#### THE DIRECTORY

The high point of the *Treatise on the Love of God*, then, is a state of pure disinterested love of God brought about through the death of my will and the simultaneous birth of Jesus within me.

What our Patron desires for Philothea in the *Introduction* and teaches Theotimus in the *Treatise*, Father Brisson promises us through the faithful practice of the Directory. For he assures us that our practice of the Directory will bring about the death of our will, union with God, and the life of Jesus. In short, it will bring about in us the Christological transformation promised by St. Paul in Galatians and Colossians.

#### SPIRITUAL DEATH

We are all familiar with how The “Preface to the Directory” speaks of the death of the will: “This book will prove bitter to your interior, for it will lead to the perfect mortification of your self-love.”

#### UNION WITH GOD

The strong desire of both our Patron and our Founder for our perfect union with God is expressed by the Directory’s “Intentions and Wishes” in this way: “The intention of our holy Father was that our whole life and all our works be dedicated to union with God.”

When the principal goal of the Directory is understood as our union with God, its various articles are best seen as *the specific means* by which we Oblates realize that goal in daily practice. In a letter written four years after the publication of the *Treatise* to the Mother Superior of Lyons, St. Francis de Sales writes that the practice of the Directory will lead in time to the same degree of *unity* with God that he speaks of in Book 9 of the *Treatise*. That brief letter became a significant part of the Directory that St. Jane de Chantal compiled after his death and is now found in our Directory as the “Advice of St. Francis de Sales on the Spiritual Directory.”

Francis writes in that letter that the Directory does indeed propose many exercises but that such spiritual discipline is a good thing, especially at the beginning of the spiritual life. In time, though, he assures her, “this multiplicity of exercises will coalesce into an exercise of great simplicity such as the love of complacency, or the love of benevolence, or the love of confidence, or of the (continual) union and reunion of our heart with God’s will.” “In this way,” he concludes, “the multiplicity [of exercises] will in time be transformed into [loving] unity” (letter of 22 February 1620, OEA, XIX, 147).

#### THE LIFE AND WORK OF THE SAVIOR

The Directory’s “Intentions and Wishes” also speak of our participation in the renewal and mission of the Church and strongly suggest that there is an intimate relationship between union with God and ministerial efficacy. “The intention of our holy Father was that our whole life and all our works be dedicated to union with God, *so that we might assist in the renewal of the Church and the salvation of our neighbor.*” Inner Union with God that expresses itself outwardly as an active participation in the saving work of the Church is what both Francis and our Founder “*desired [for us] more than anything else.*” Thus, both union with God and ministerial efficacy are mediated to us through the practice of the Directory.

Our specific ecclesial mission as Oblates is to teach the spirit of the Directory to our world today. That is, we are to teach others that fidelity to the duties and responsibilities of their particular vocation in life is the principal means by which they too will attain to union with God and, like us, replicate in their lives the life and mission of Jesus. All of us who live the Directory, both lay and religious, are to habitually and consciously direct our intention to the accomplishment or acceptance of God’s will for us as it is manifested in each passing present moment and circumstance of life. With time and through grace this practice will lead us to a state of continual and loving union, even unity, with God similar to what Jesus enjoyed and from which he ministered to his world and saved it.

Understood in this sense, the various articles of the Directory are simply specific applications by which we Oblates join the various concrete aspects of our daily lives as apostolic religious to God’s love. Through one or the other of the three means that Francis recommends in chapter 9 of Book 12 of the *Treatise* – (1) ejaculatory prayers, (2) the direction of intention, or (3) spiritual retirement-- we intentionally, consciously and generously join to God’s love our rising and sleeping, our preparation of the day, our Mass, prayer, meals, work and play -- *everything!*

Thus, in Salesian spirituality there really is no such thing as an insignificant action, or an inconsequential moment or an unimportant circumstance. Whatever is part and parcel of our state in life as it unfolds over the course of each succeeding present moment is the manifestation of God’s holy will for us, whether it is his direct will, his permissive will or the will of His good pleasure. To join that action or that moment or that circumstance to God’s love by some expression of intentionality is to love God in that action and at that moment and, thus, to be continually one with Him in heart, will, life and action. This is what the faithful practice of the Directory brings about in us, and in others through us.

This is how all of us live Jesus and how Jesus lives in us and is seen once again walking upon this earth!

#### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

I began these reflections with the often repeated claim that the essence of Christian holiness as well as the essential teachings of Salesian spirituality rest on the slim shoulders of a short Preface, ten brief Articles and a few concluding words of Advice and Counsel that constitute the Spiritual Directory. Father Brisson agrees with that claim. In *Commentary on the Directory*, he writes:

“When one reads the Directory for the first time, one finds nothing extraordinary in it and it doesn’t really seem to say anything truly substantive...But what about the Gospel? It is one of the shortest books that have ever appeared. Still, every marvelous and wondrous thing about Christianity is contained within it. It is the greatest and most extraordinary thing the good God has done....The Rule of St. Augustine does not seem to be much either! And yet it is an entire system capable of producing –indeed, *has produced*–the greatest results in many diverse Orders...The Directory is: the rejection of our own will so as to accomplish and to be faithful only to God’s will at each moment; [it is] to live continually in God’s presence and in his love; [it is] the renunciation of ourselves in every act and at every moment throughout the day in order to “make room” for the will of the Savior; [it is], thus, union with the Savior so as to let him direct our every step...And, in this way, our soul attains –in so far as possible–a perfect resemblance to our Lord...” “Believe me,” Father Brisson adds, “for a long time I have worked at this!” (Commentaire du Directoire, pp. 4-9)

The Directory is our special way –it is the *Oblate* way-- of appropriating the life and spirit of Jesus and of bringing him and his saving Gospel to our world today! It is our *privileged means* of attaining to the heights of pure disinterested love as described so powerfully and beautifully in Book 9 of the *Treatise* which is, in turn, the very heart of that spiritual masterpiece. Such a love is the deepest union with God that is possible here on earth and under grace. It is the life that Jesus lived; and it is how we now live Jesus. It is what sanctifies us as Oblates as well as what brings about any good that we accomplish in our apostolic ministries. Thus, the Directory is not only the Founder’s gift to us. Through us, it is also his gift to the Church and to our world today.

For this gift we are forever grateful to our Founder. May we express our gratitude to him by an ever-greater fidelity in living the Spiritual Directory ourselves and in generously sharing its spirit with our world today!

May God be Blessed!