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- The Mystery of Encounter in Christian Humanism: From the Mystics of the Low Countries to Ignatius Loyola and Francis de Sales
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- Dying and Death in the Life of St. Francis de Sales and of St. Jane de Chantal
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- Meeting Saint François de Sales in Word and Image: Adrien Gambart's Emblem-Book (1664)
- Picturing the Way of Perfection: Gregory de Hargé’s Engravings of St. Jane Frances de Chantal (1664) in Their Tertiary Context
- Salesian Encounters and Their Consequences: Mother Marie de Sales Chappuis—Father Louis Brisson—Léonce Française de Sales Axant
- Salesian Youth Spirituality: The Encounter between Don Bosco and Dominic Savio
- St. Francis de Sales and Víctor E. Frankl: Salesian Ministry and Logotherapy
- Ecumenical Relationships and Dialogue Today: Insights from the Salesian Tradition

As the 2003-2004 year ends, Fr. Jean Goyet, OSFS, of the French Province, concludes his long, distinguished, and exemplary service on the ICSS. We extend our deepest, heartfelt Salesian fraternal thanks to Fr. Goyet for his indelible and always generous and gracious collaboration in the work of the ICSS. Fr. Goyet ushered Salesian studies into the digital age by his pioneering and indispensable CD-ROMs of the works of St. Francis de Sales and Fr. Brisson, and of Salesian iconography. We pray that the Congregation will continue to benefit from his singular Salesian expertise and extraordinary gift for languages for many years to come, and to Fr. Goyet, we say "Ad multos annos!"

The Superior General and his Council have approved Fr. Dirk Koster, OSFS, of the Dutch Province, as the new member of the ICSS. We extend a warm welcome to Fr. Koster, and thank him for generously accepting this appointment, to which he brings great enthusiasm and energy for our Oblate mission and Salesian charism.

Progress Report

ICSS Special Project for 2004-2005

The response to the call for proposals for submissions for the book of collected essays, Human Encounter in the Salesian Tradition, being sponsored and published by the ICSS to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the initial meeting of St. Francis de Sales and St. Jane Frances de Chantal in 1604, has exceeded all expectations. Proposals were submitted by more than twenty Salesian scholars from an impressive international array of institutions: Université de Limoges; Université de Haute Alsace, Mulhouse; Ruhr-Universität Bochum; The Catholic University of Leuven; ICSS; Franz von Sales Verlag, Monastery of the Ruhr-Universität Bochum; The Catholic University of de Limoges; Université de Haute Alsace, Mulhouse; and indispensable CD-ROMs of the works of St. Francis de Sales and Fr. Brisson, and of Salesian iconography. We pray that the Congregation will continue to benefit from his singular Salesian expertise and extraordinary gift for languages for many years to come, and to Fr. Goyet, we say "Ad multos annos!"

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It would be difficult to exaggerate the long-term significance and impact of the meeting for the first time of Francis de Sales, the 37-year-old Savoyard prince bishop of Geneva resident at Annecy, and Jane Frances de Rémy the Baroness de Chantal, the 32-year-old Burgundian widow of three years with four small children, on Friday, 5 March 1604. It has been observed that without that encounter and the subsequent friendship between Francis and Jane that flowered, perhaps there would not be the Salesian charism as we know it, the Visitation Order and other institutes and communities, such as the De Sales Oblates, Oblate Sisters, Salesians of Don Bosco, and Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales, would not have been founded, and Francis may not have been canonized a saint and declared a doctor of the Church.1

The initial encounter of Francis and Jane took place in the Sainte-Chapelle in Dijon, the ancient city of the dukes of Burgundy. Lent and Advent were the two most important preaching seasons of the year, and in the major cities of Europe, it was the custom to invite a preacher of renown to spend the duration of these seasons, preaching at least three times a week, if not daily or in some cases several times a day. Francis had been invited to preach the Lenten season of 1604 in Dijon.

Francis’s sermons were greatly anticipated by the populace of Dijon, and on that 5 March, Jane was among the crowd surging into the Sainte-Chapelle to hear the bishop. Jane had her chair placed opposite the pulpit. When Francis mounted the pulpit to begin his sermon, Jane recognized him as the figure she had seen in her vision in the meadow on the estate of Bourbilly where she had lived with her husband. For his part, Francis took note of the young widow’s presence and close attention to his sermon, later questioning his host, André Frémyot, the archbishop of Bourges and Jane’s brother, about this woman. André was pleased to introduce her as his sister.2
preacher must have been like for his contemporaries. The principal hallmarks of Slesian spirituality are salient in Francis’s ministry of preaching, including the primacy of the heart, the importance of adaptability, the indispensability of human relationships, and the practice of the relational virtues of humility and gentleness (see “The Salesian Charism and the Second Vatican Council,” ICSS Newsletter, No. 13 (Dec. 2003-Jan. 2004): 1-3).

Francis was equally at ease preaching to a small flock or a large congregation, to his Visitation sisters or the court. Sometimes the number of people who turned out to hear him was so great that he had to wade through the crowd to get to the pulpit. In Paris in 1618, the crowd who came to hear him preach in the church of the Oratorians on the feast of St. Martin of Tours was so immense that Francis could not make his way to the building at all, and was forced to reach the pulpit from outside by means of a ladder to the nearest window.

With his characteristic personal balance, Francis always kept such events in proper perspective. For example, June recounts “One day when he came back after preaching to a large and distinguished congregation, I asked him whether he was satisfied with his sermon. ‘No,’ he said, ‘without the least concern for the world’s esteem, but does it really satisfy me? No,’ he said, ‘No, the congregation saw the seven-foot 13th-century Crucifix facing towards which he labored rather by way of the love of God than by the fear of hell. . . . [T]he whole of his sermon was so judicious that I could have a very precise memory—it would have been easy for me to remember with a minimum of effort all that he had said. His language was clear, vigorous, persuasive. . . . Not only that: his mind abroad with beautiful thoughts. So fertile was he in his ideas, that many great and well-reputed people have confirmed that they never listened to his preaching without heaving much that was new quite new to them, and which they had never before read in any book or heard from any speaker” (CFdV, 14-15).

So effective was Francis’s preaching that, during his missionary work in Dijon, the local newspaper warned its readers to avoid encountering this dangerous man adept in the arts of black magic who cast a spell over his listeners by his bewitching language. During that Lent of 1604 in Dijon, Francis “won all hearts” (TSC, 104). At his departure a large crowd gathered to bid him farewell, and some shouted that he was a thief because he was stealing away every heart in Dijon; as indeed he did, for he found a place deep in all their affections” (TSC, 148).

“Heart speaks to heart”: Recovering the Biblical Model of Communication

“Of course, he was a great thief because he was stealing away every heart in Dijon; as indeed he did, for he found a place deep in all their affections” (TSC, 148).

Adaptability to Circumstances and People in Their Particularity

In day-to-day interaction with people, Francis was at ease with “most approachable and very easy of access to anyone who wanted to talk to him” (TSC, 138). Simply put, he loved people. This attention to and care for people in their particularity was also characteristic of Francis’s preaching, which was never generalized or abstract, but adapted to the concrete needs of the listeners seated before him. “He displayed admirable judgment in his exact observation of the actual circumstance, whether of place, time, or personal audience” (CFdV, 85). Thus Francis’s preacher must have been like for his contemporaries. "My heart and soul was personally being addressed, and elicited a response of warm affection and trust from all” (TSC, 105).

Francis spent time getting to know the people to whom he was preaching. During that Lent of 1604, he was not only a frequent guest in the homes of the first families of Dijon, but also many people “were at home to anyone who wanted to see him, he heard many very confessions, gave many talks, taught people the ways of the life of the spirit, visited hospitals, prisoners and the sick. I myself witnessed all this when he was at Dijon” (TSC, 104). "I see why of way of life was [deemed] as in effect, a sermon as his doctrine” (TSC, 104). A Living Image of the Son of God

The overwhelming impression that Francis made on those who encountered him, whether in the pulpit or on the street, was that “his face was all gentleness and peace when he looked at you” (TSC, 49). Francis’s gentleness made tangible his generous heart, the importance of love and grace, and conscious dramatically with the severity of Calvinism and its doctrine of predestination. It was precisely this attribute of Francis that led Vincent de Paul to exclaim: “How good you are, O God, my God, how good you are, since indeed in my Lord Francis de Sales I have found a place deep in all their affections” (Vdp, 91). Indeed, it was widely held by Francis’s contemporaries that he revealed what our Lord must have been like in His interaction with people, that he "reflected the Son of God in a living image," and “in seeing them he seemed to see our Lord on earth.”

A Picture Worth a Thousand Words

It is a truism that a picture is worth a thousand words. This reflection began with the image of Francis preaching on 5 March 1604 in Dijon (Figure 1). We conclude by focusing on another image of Francis preaching (Figure 2). While Francis was preaching in the church of St. Dominic in Chambery, the centuries-old capital of his native Savoy (before the capital was transferred to Turin in 1563), on Good Friday, 24 March 1606, the congregation saw the seventh-13th-century Crucifix facing Francis project rays of light that enveloped him.

Unlike that other great lover of the cross of Christ, his patron saint Francis of Assisi who received the stigmata in the rustic solitude of Mount Alvernia, Francis de Sales is illuminated by the crucified Savior in the midst of an urban parish church filled to capacity, as he faithfully carries out his primary responsory as a bishop to preach the Word of God. Concurrently Francis reflects this illumination to his hearers by his ministry of the Word, which, as Francis counseled André Frémoyt, is, above all, “the word of reconciliation” (C1 5:19; Oeuvres, 104). Finally, this episode would have confirmed the perception by his contemporaries that, by his gentleness, Francis was a living image of the Son of God on earth.

References


1. This topic will be the focus of the essay “The Flowering of a Friarhood,” to appear in the ICSS volume of collected essays Human Encounter in the Salesian Tradition.

2. A more detailed account of this episode may be found in W. M. Wright, Bond of Perfection: Jeanne de Chantal & François de Sales, new enlarged ed. (Stella Niagara, NY: De Sales Resource Center, 2001), 33-36.

3. W. M. Wright, Seeking God’s Will Together: Discernment in the Salesian World of Hales (Wilmington, Del.: Wilmington-Philadelphia Province, Observancy of St. Francis de Sales, 2003), 5.


SALESIAN STUDIES WORLDWIDE

ICSS Website

In our last issue, we introduced you to the new webmaster of the ICSS website, Fr. Herbert Winkelhner, OSFS, of the Austrian/South German Province and a member of the ICSS. He has been steadily working on improving the organization and appearance of the site and adding a wealth of new materials, making it more international in scope. For example, under “Salesian Links,” he has included a number of new links for the Vocations Sisters, especially a very attractive site of the Vocation in Italy. This site contains not only the addresses of the 30 Italian monasteries, but also the Visitation monastery worldwide. In addition, there are links to Salesian centers in Bosnia, Croatia, the Czech Republic, and the Slovak Republic. Moreover, to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the encounter of Jane and Francis, he has included the German version of the early letters of Francis to Jane. Scholars will be interested in perusing a 1665 edition of a French translation of Storopoli’s Spiritual Combat, which has been digitized by Fr. Jean Gayet, OSFS. The rejuvenated site is really worth a good look and can be accessed at www.franz-von-sales.de or www.desales.de/salesian.

Asian Region

The Indian Journal of Spirituality published in its July–September 2003 issue an article by Fr. Anthony Ceresko, OSFS, on “To Reward Them Afterwards…: Eschatology and St. Francis de Sales.” This is a follow-up article to his “St. Francis de Sales’s ‘Direction of Intention’ or ‘Right Intending of Deeds.’”

Blood Mission

In the more recent article, Fr. Ceresko examines the Direction of Intention in the light of eschatology and sees it as a powerful way of being counter-cultural in striving to create a new society by bringing about God’s kingdom of justice, love, and peace in this world. He clearly demonstrates how this practice, which is at the heart of Salesian spirituality, takes on a fresh and fuller meaning. He concludes by suggesting we say this prayer before each of our daily actions: “My God, give me Your grace. I offer You all the good that I shall do in this action and all the pain and suffering to be found in it. Stay close to me and help me to see how what I am doing can advance Christ’s blessed hold upon the universe.” Amen.”

Oblate Haitian Mission

The world’s spotlight was recently turned on all the turmoil in this postage-stamp sized and poverty-stricken Caribbean country. Very little appears in the mainstream media of the heroic efforts of missionaries—lay, religious, and priests—to ease and alleviate the pain and suffering of the many poor and oppressed Haitians and to improve their quality of life by not merely helping them to have more, but, in the words of Pope John Paul II, “to be more.” The vivid impressions recorded by Fr. Patrick O’Connor, OSFS, pastor of St. Brendan’s parish, Shallotte, North Carolina, of his visit to this country give a good idea of what Fr. Thomas Hagan, OSFS, has accomplished there in a very short time.

… I write this because I went to Haiti for eight days. The first three days I was in shock. I passed through the shock, that I discovered what a blessing my decision to go to Haiti really was… The first part of my trip seemed to be visions of rough roads, garbage, poverty beyond belief, and of being a very white minority in a seemingly dangerous population of very black people. I kept asking myself: What the hell did you get yourself into, and how are you going to stay here eight days? I slept in a hot room, on a small cot, and it did not like that a bit…

After the initial feeling of fear, Fr. O’Connor experienced a strong desire to get close to the people of Haiti. Their need aroused in him a reciprocal need.

Each day I would go with Tom to have Mass with Mother Teresa’s sisters. That was a real joy. It was powerful to go and participate with them in their ministries. The first day I was there, I went into their orphanage, where there were 170 children. I was afraid to touch the babies, many of whom had HIV and AIDS, and was really just horrified by the sight of all those scores upon scores of malnourished and sick babies in their metal cribs. By day four and five, the doctor I was travelling with and I had gone back and we were playing with the kids for hours, chasing them around the orphanage, laughing, carrying them in our arms, and on our shoulders. It was really something wonderful. I went to a wound clinic the monks sponsored, and they worked rapidly and efficiently cleaning the most horrible wounds I have ever seen on hundreds of patients. You know what? I joined right in and helped them. I really felt like I was doing something profoundly good.

We went and saw the schools Tom had built, and it was really something seeing schools with the names of our patrons: St. Francis de Sales and St. Jane de Chantal, and to see the portraits of them, and Louis Brison, and Mother Chappuis, and St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. I bet Mickey McGrath has no idea that Haiti had so many copies of his paintings! I felt very proud to be an Oblate: that we have allowed Tom to bring our spirituality to a people—poor, suffering to be found in it. That was a real joy. It was powerful to go and participate with them in their ministries. The first part of my trip seemed to be visions of rough roads, garbage, poverty beyond belief, and of being a very white minority in a seemingly dangerous population of very black people. I kept asking myself: What the hell did you get yourself into, and how are you going to stay here eight days? I slept in a hot room, on a small, thin cot, and did not like that a bit…

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French Province

Fr. Michel Tournade, OSFS, Provincial of the French Province, gave two in-service days: one to 152 principals, and the second to 200 teachers of schools, conducted under the auspices of the Congregation of the Oblate Sisters in France. His presentation, given on both occasions at the motherhouse of the Congregation in Troyes, France, centered on Salesian pedagogy.

The Oblate Sisters in cooperation with the Oblates launched a volunteer program for young people who want to spend a little time—one, two or six months, or a year—in social work or education with the Oblate Sisters or the Oblates in South Africa, Namibia, or Ecuador. The young people have found these experiences to be very positive, and more and more of them are asking to go abroad to devote some time to be with the poorest of the poor. A team of Oblates and Oblate sisters consisting of Fr. Tournade, Fr. Jean-Luc Lenoir, OSFS, Mother Françoise Isabelle (the late Mother General of the Oblate Sisters), and two other Oblate sisters, and a young person who had volunteer experience in Ecuador met twice last year to give the program a more formal structure based on lived experiences. The program has been given the name “With les Oblate et les Oblates de Saint-François de Sales, Jeunes Volontaires Salesiens Vers d’autres cultures” (With the Oblates and Oblate Sisters, Young Salesian Volunteers Reaching Out to Other Cultures). Eventually the volunteer opportunities will extend to Brazil, Brunei, and India.

During Founders’ Days, the chapel of Notre-Dame de Lumière (Our Lady of Light), the crypt of Saint-Gilles, the reception area of the sisters’ motherhouse with its stained-glass windows and the map of the worldwide foundations of the Oblates and Oblate Sisters, the famous astronomical clock constructed by Fr. Louis Brison, founder with St. Léonie Aviat, of both congregations, and of their founders. Since the canonization of Mother Aviat, the motherhouse of the Oblate Sisters in Troyes has had an increased number of visitors who come to learn more about the Salesian-Oblate charism.
German-Speaking Region

AUSTRIAN/SOUTH-GERMANY PROVINCE

Fr. Willem Spann, OSFS, of the Netherlands Province is the new editor of the Jahrbuch für Salesianische Studien (Yearbook for Salesian Studies), which is published annually by the Arbeitsgemeinschaft für salesianische Studien (Workgroup for Salesian Studies). The next edition (volume 36) is to be published in the fall of 2004. ICSS wishes Fr. Spann success in his new position of disseminating Salesian spirituality in the German-speaking world. His predecessor, Fr. Gottfried Printz, OSFS, who will celebrate his 80th birthday this year, has pledged his support to Fr. Spann with his long experience as editor from 1996 up to 2004. The Arbeitsgemeinschaft now has its own homepage: www.franz-sales-verlag.de/ags

Under the leadership of Fr. Franz Wehrli, OSFS, the Salesian collection of the Salesian Institute in Eichstätt has been computerized over a period of 10 years. It is now possible to search online for the books and to borrow them. There are currently almost 700 books, whose titles are electronically accessible at www.franz-von-sales.de, under the heading “Libraries.”

On the occasion of the 400th anniversary of the first meeting of Jane de Chantal and Francis de Sales, an article by Fr. Johannes Krim, Vienna, Austria, extended an invitation to their Oblates: Fr. Thomas Guenther, Fr. Alois Halbbaier, Br. Hans Leidenmuhler, Fr. Eugen Saba, and Fr. Anton Steinberger. Additional information about the activities of the De Sales Oblates of this parish may be obtained at www.pfarre-krim.at.

Fr. Herbert Winklerknecht gave days of recollection for women of the Catholic employee movement of the diocese of Eichstätt, Bavaria, on 18-21 March 2004. His topic was: “Bloom Where You Are Planted: The Spirituality of St. Francis de Sales.”

In the Annakirche (Church of St. Anna) of the De Sales Oblates in Vienna, Austria, “a Sales Runde” (De Sales Group) meets monthly with Fr. Joseph Bartling, OSFS, to discuss Salesian topics. Fr. Maximilian Hofinger, OSFS, also has a Philothea Group that meets monthly to study selected texts on the devout life. Further information about these two groups is available at www.annakirche.at.

A discussion group headed by Fr. Johannes Haas, OSFS, and Monika Rash meets during the spring semester at the Salesian Center in the Salesianum, Eichstätt, Bavaria. The topic is “Spiritual Friendship” with the group discussing the letters of Francis de Sales to Jane de Chantal.

At this year’s Katholikentag (“Meeting of the German Catholics”) in Ulm, Germany, Fr. Johannes Haas spoke on the topic: “From Heart to Heart: Spiritual Friendship Between Two Saints: Jane de Chantal and Francis de Sales.” The talk was given on 18 June 2004 at the Spiritual Center. More information about the program can be found at www.katholikentag.de.

Over the many years that Fr. Alois Eckertorfer served as a missionary in South Africa, he established very cordial relations with the Calvinists. Through these relationships he personally experienced the power of St. Francis de Sales’s well-known saying, attributed to him by his very close friend, Bishop Campus: “You can catch more flies with a spoonful of honey than with a barrel of vinegar.” During his departure from Augrabies, his former mission station, his work was recognized by the Calvinists in a liturgical celebration. According to Fr. Eckerttorfer, this may have been the first time in the history of the Church in South Africa that a Catholic priest was publicly honored in a liturgy conducted by Calvinists.

GERMAN PROVINCE

From 4–11 July 2004, accompanied Salesian retreats took place at the Salesian Centre at Zangberg, Bavaria. A team of religious and lay people from the Salesian family conduct these retreats with one team member assigned to one retreatant. Texts of St. Francis de Sales and from the Sacred Scripture are the basis for these retreats. For further information, contact in Germany: Fr. Konrad Euser, OSFS, Haas Overbusch, D-52454 Jülich-Bamen, Tel: (+49) 0261-930152, email: FKonrad.Euser@osfs.de; in Austria: Br. Monika Leidenmuhler, OSFS, Erntinghausenweg 1, A-1190 Wien, Tel: (+43) 01-3202097, email: Leidenmuhler_jfolksf@.

As we have seen in the pages of this Newsletter, pilgrimages are still very popular among the Germans. From 22–29 August 2004, a pilgrimage will be conducted to sites important to the Salesian Family. The pilgrimage will travel to Annecy, Faray-Le-Montal, and Tyniec. These pilgrimages are intended for older adolescents and adults who are interested in the founding and work of the De Sales Oblates and in Salesian spirituality. They are organized and conducted by Fr. Konrad Euser, OSFS. See above for how to contact him.

Oblate Sisters of St. Francis de Sales

The Oblate Sisters of St. Francis de Sales are celebrating the 100th anniversary of their foundation in Linz, Upper Austria, with many different events. The centenary opened on 3 December 2003 with a festive Eucharistic liturgy celebrated by Bishop Maximilian Aschner, ordinary of the diocese of Linz, with Fr. Konrad Hauffer, OSFS, Provincial of the Austrian/South German Province, and Fr. Roger Baudelacq, OSFS, former Superior General of the De Sales Oblates, concelebrating. Mother Françoise-Isabelle Stiegler, the late Superior General of the Oblate Sisters, also participated. The story of this anniversary appeared in the diocesan newspaper and was headlined by a saying of the founder of the Oblate sisters, St. Léonie Aviat, “Linz Is Our Small Sunbeam.” You can learn more about the Oblate Sisters of Linz at www.computromanica.at/home/oblatenmnf/

Daughters of St. Francis de Sales

The German-speaking Swiss group of the Daughters of St. Francis de Sales found a new spiritual director recently: Fr. Antony Kolencherry, a member of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales from India. They are planning to set up a convent with four Indian sisters in the Swiss city of Solothurn.

On 1 May 2004 the Group Austria-East had the great pleasure of receiving a new member, Gabi Maier. The celebration will take place at Seckau. Another woman is also interested in becoming a member of the Daughters of St. Francis de Sales and has already begun her two-year formation.

Netherlands Province

Congratulations to the Dutch Province on setting up its own website. In addition to a brief history of the Oblates, there is a report on Namibia from Fr. Martin Avaruid, OSFS, pictures of the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Province and of important Salesian sites in Annecy. Unfortunately, the site is all in the Dutch language. It would be helpful if some of these materials were also available in English, French, and German. For more detailed information, visit the site at www.oblaten.osfs.nl.

Visititation Sisters

On the German version page of the ICSS homepage (www.franz-von-sales.de), there is a detailed description of the Visititation sisters. Among other things, this includes an overview of the Visitation monasteries in Austria, Germany, Switzerland, and throughout the world. Also former monasteries are listed.

Italy

The Visitation Sisters of Salò, Brescia, write that they have discovered in reading the ICSS Newsletter “a big, very lively Salesian world,” and have informed the other 29 Italian Visitation monasteries of the existence of this Newsletter. In the last issue, we noted two works published by the Salò Visitation. The sisters are in the process of making an Italian translation of the ICSS Booklet, Leadership in the Salesian Tradition, and plan to distribute this version to the other Italian monasteries, as well as to the Italian Oblates. Their enthusiasm for materials dealing with Salesian spirituality is truly inspiring.

Toledo-Detroit Province

The Joseph F. Power, OSFS, 22nd Annual Conference on the Spirituality of St. Francis de Sales and St. Jane de Chantal will be held this year from 5-8 August at the St. Louis Vocation. This very informative conference consists of presentations, common prayer, beautifully prepared Eucharistic liturgies, discussion groups, a Salesian marketplace, and used book sale. “Encounters” is this year’s theme. Workshops are the highlight of the first meeting of Jane and Francis on 5 March 2004. The presenters and their topics are as follows: Fr. James Cryan, OSFS, “Biblical Encounters”; Dr. Wendy Wright, “Close Encounters of the Salesian Kind”; Rev. Bernard Bangley, a retired Presbyterian Minister who exclaims that he is “in love with Francis, a wonderful friend,” “An Encounter With God”; Fr. Joseph Bonci, SDB, “Encountering Others: The Forever Unfinished Treatise”; and Jeanne Hunt, “Weaving a Post-Modern Fabric.” This conference promises to be a very engaging and exciting one. For further information and registration, consult the website of De Sales Resources and Ministries: www.desalesresource.org/conference.asp.

As noted in the last issue of this Newsletter, Fr. James Cryan, OSFS, former Provincial of this Province, spent the past academic year as the first Salesian Scholar in Residence at the Salesian Center for Faith and Culture at De Sales University. Fr. Cryan gave an open lecture on the fruit of his Salesian research, entitled “Ethical Action in an Age of Globalization,” on 26 April 2004.
In the Winter 2004 issue of Boundings, the Province’s newsletter, there is Part I of a very thoughtful article on “Salesian Virtues: Surrendering to God’s Will” by Fr. William N. Dougherty, OSFS. It was one of three papers presented at a special session on “Verbal and Visual Images of St. Joseph in Early Modern Catholic Art and Literature” organized by Fr. Chorpenning and sponsored by Saint Joseph’s University Press, where he is editorial director.

South American Region

The Spanish translation of the edition millennium of Fr. Brison’s conferences is steadily progressing under the guidance of Fr. Laurentius van der Raadt, OSFS. He reports that volume four has been translated, and work on volume five has begun. In addition, a new Portuguese version of “Praying the Rosary with St. Francis de Sales” is underway and will include the Luminosa Mysteries.

Fr. van der Raadt has put together a set of picture cards of the OSFS Superior General. He would be happy to send a copy of this set, via e-mail attachment, that may be downloaded onto a CD-ROM, to any Oblate who would like to have it. His e-mail address is: carazosfs@annex.com.br.

Salesians of Don Bosco

As more experience is gained, the Center will be poised to offer an average enrollment of eight per course from many different states.

Perspectives

The District of Wilmington-Philadelphia Province

The Province has published the keynote address presented by Dr. Wendy M. Wright, professor of Theology and holder of the John C. Keneff Chair in the Humanities at Creighton University, at its quadrennial convocation in June 2003. It is entitled Seizing God’s Will Together: Discernment in the Salesian World of Hearts.

Under the dynamic leadership of Fr. Michael Murray, OSFS, the De Sales Spirituality Center has developed a number of new programs and services. Among these new programs are: “Chisel or Chainsaw? Living a Gentle Life,” “Size Matters: Salvation and the Little Things,” “Spirituality for Lay Ecclesial Leaders,” “Supreme Blessedness: The Beatitudes Revisited,” “Gifts That Matter: A Salesian Retreat for Confirmation and Adulthood,” “Lay Leaders of Worship: Spirituality and Skills,” “ AAA: Avoiding Anger and Anxiety,” “Faith Foundations: A Salesian Approach to Ministry.” In addition to serving Oblate apostolates, the Center is extending its programs through its five Regional Directors to non-Oblate parishes, diocesan directors of adult formation, and other diocesan ministries. The Center’s site has added a host of new materials, such as a Spanish translation of the Spirituality Directory, “A Month With Mother Avis,” and free discussion guides for certain well-known Salesian books. It also has vol. 3 of Salesian Perspectives translated into Spanish. Visit this site at http://osp-salesians.org/spiritual/, and be richly rewarded.

On 22 January 2004, the Salesian Center for Faith and Culture on the campus of DeSales University was blessed and dedicated by Fr. Bernard O’Connor, OSFS, University President. The Center, a recently renovated private dwelling, houses a library in the reception area dealing with both Salesian spirituality and works on diocesan ministries. The Center continues to beinstar Congregationis Oratorii de Urbe

We refer the reader to the following sources for further information on the subject:


Another interesting news item supplied by Fr. Boenzi is that the Oratorians consider St. Francis de Sales as one of their patron saints. Fr. Boenzi learned that the Oratorians “point to the Holy House at Thonon established by Francis and the decree of 1599 of Pope Clement VIII, naming him superior ad munere Congregatioi Oratorii de Urbe.” It is from this date, that he has always been considered an Oratorian. Another View of Francis and Beza, by Fr. Boenzi, is available from De Sales Resources and Ministries at wesde-salesresources.org.

New Publications

English

Wendy Wright’s eagerly anticipated book, Heart to Heart: The Salesian Spiritual Tradition, has been published in Oblates Books’ series “Traditions of Christian Spiritualty,” and is available from De Sales Resources and Ministries. This work brings light to a very flourishing Salesian spiritual tradition that has been described as “a 19th-century France that has been called the ‘Salesian Penteceot.’”

Mgr. Charles M. Murphy. Belonging to God: A Personal Training Guide for the Deeper Catholic Spiritual Life. This is a reworking of the popular works to a De Sales Life, John P. McCameron, SJ, Prentice Hall, 1986. It is a clear account of the history of the Salesian Institute in Berkeley will resume with Fr. Thomas Prendiville as editor. Fr. Prendiville is also the new Director of Salesian Studies.

Another View of Francis and Beza

Here is the way a Reformed Church of Calvinist writers view the attempts of Francis to convert Theodore Beza, Calvin’s successor: “Repeatably the namers of his return to the bosom of Rome were spread far and wide. In fact, specific efforts were made to persuade him to return to the Roman Church. On one occasion, when Beza was an old man (1997), a certain Francais came to Geneva to do this. He was only thirty, young, zealous, skilled in debate, and the winner of countless encounters with adversaries. But all his skill failed to move Beza. When argumentation failed, he tried bribery and offered Beza in the name of the pope a yearly pension of 6000 gold crowns and a sum equal to twice as much as the value of his personal effects. This Beza could not tolerate. Politely but emphatically Beza told him: ‘Gio, sir: I am too old and too deaf to be able to hear such words!’” (wngfl.org/beza.htm).

Interestingly, this article looks upon Francis’s offer of living expenses if Beza were converted as a bribe. In those days, to convert to Catholicism in Calvinist-held territories could result in being deprived of all one’s income, property, and possessions.

Rare Books Acquisitions

The Head Librarian of De Sales University, Debbie Malone, successfully bid on eBay for the well-known two-volume work on the life of St. Francis de Sales authored by Chastoin J. J. S. Marolli. The book, originally published in 1700, is entitled La vie de François de Sales, Prince et Evêque de Genève, Institutteur de la Vinition de Sainte Marie (Paris: chez Gregoire du Puis, 1777). It has a dedication to Madame de Maintenon, who greatly admired and the Vitation sisters. She had a great influence on her husband, King Louis XIV. Through another successful bid on ebay, the Trelux Library has obtained a 1665 English translation of the Introduction to a Devout Life.

In the Winter 2004 issue of Boundings, the Province’s newsletter, there is Part I of a very thoughtful article on “Salesian Virtues: Surrendering to God’s Will” by Fr. William N. Dougherty, OSFS. He notes in striking imagery the obstacles to surrender, and then focuses on the foundational virtue of humility as understood by St. Francis de Sales in the sense of an honest appraisal and acceptance of our strengths and our weaknesses.

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Forthcoming publications

The Franz von Sales Verlag is planning to publish two essays of the German writer Reinhold Schneider on Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal. Reinhold Schneider (1903-58) is considered one of the most important German-speaking writers of the 20th century. In 1956 he was honored for his work with the Peace Award of the German book-trade. The two essays have been out of print for many years, and will be published in Fall 2004.

In Fall 2004, the CD-ROM edition of the 12 volumes of the works of St. Francis de Sales in German is scheduled to be published.

Erich Hehberger is working on a book entitled Die Darstellung des Franz von Sales im Kupferstich des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts (Portraits of St. Francis of Sales in the Engravings of the 17th and 18th Centuries), that studies images made to commemorate the canonization of St. Francis de Sales in 1665. The planned publication date is 2005.

Book Review: Oblate-Salesian Patrons

The new edition of the New Catholic Encyclopedia, (New York: Thomson, Gale, 2002), published in association with The Catholic University of America, contains articles on Francis de Sales, Jane de Chantal, Mother Mary, Léonie Aviat, Mary de Sales Chappuis, and Father Brisson. Unfortunately, the only new articles are those on Francis de Sales and Léonie Aviat. The others, regrettably, are mere reprints, and in two instances (Mother Mary and Jane), some more recent bibliographic information has been added either by the editors or the author of the article. A rather unscholarly and unreliable manner of proceeding.

The article on Francis de Sales, written by Fr. Joseph Power, OSFS, is the most extensive. Fr. Power circulated drafts of this article among several frequent participants in the Salesian Scholars Seminar, which he founded. The biographical section contains the highlights of Francis’s life and is presented in a well-organized and very readable fashion. It draws on the most up-to-date research on the saint. In dealing with his writings and teachings, the great importance of his spiritual friendship with Jane de Chantal is emphasized. The author rightly points out how this and other pastoral experiences profoundly shaped his spirituality.

The bibliography reflects Fr. Power’s extensive knowledge of the saint, and hence represents a judicious selection of worthwhile works relating to this great spiritual writer.

By contrast, the reprinted article on St. Jane de Chantal, by the late Fr. Edward Carney, OSFS, now seems out of date. It fails to mention the devastating effect that the accidental death of Jane’s husband had on her and does not, in this writer’s view, emphasize the rich and enriching reciprocity in the renowned spiritual friendship of Jane and Francis. This is not surprising since the updated bibliography that reflects this reciprocity contains works published after Fr. Carney’s death in 1989. So it is obvious that Fr. Carney, who authored the original article, did not update the bibliography. However, Fr. Carney apparently was not familiar with the groundbreaking work of Henri Bremond’s Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France, where Bremond convincingly demonstrates in volume two (published in 1923) the influence of Jane on Francis’s ideas on prayer. One very important resource understandably lacking in the bibliography, because it is not a publication of the Bollandists, is the six-volume correspondence of St. Jane’s correspondence edited by St. Mary Patricia Burns, VHM, Archivist of the Annecy Visitations. Recent research being done on the 400th anniversary of the initial encounter of Jane and Francis should provide additional resources on this remarkable relationship for a future article.

Fr. Carney has also authored the brief notices on Fr. Brisson and Mary de Sales Chappuis that are also reprints. Space limitations for both of these Oblate founders were no doubt dictated by the editors and account for their brevity. The Fr. Brisson article is unchanged from the one that appeared in the previous edition and contains the same error. His middle name is listed as Alexandre instead of Aloysius. Fr. Carney did not have the benefit of recent research on both of these candidates for sainthood. The documentation begins on Fr. Brisson written by Fr. Beaudoin, OMI, former consultant to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, sheds new light on the priest’s painful and strained relationship with his ordinary, Bishop Cotter, and shows how Fr. Brisson understood and implemented the social Gospel. Fr. Carney does not mention that Mary de Sales Chappuis, affectionately known as the Good Mother, was considered by Fr. Brisson to be the foremost interpreter of the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales in her day. This is the way he puts it in his book, The Good Mother is “the most experienced interpreter and most faithful reflection of St. Francis of Sales,” (Le well la vie de Mme de Sales Chappuis [Paris, 1891], 84). The article does mention questions raised about her saintliness, but merely states that her teachings, despite the contrary claim, “did not...profess to make the journey of grace.”

This is followed by a series of works on Fr. Brisson that are actually compendia, compiled in a work published by the ICSS, The Cause of the Good Mother. Since her cause for canonization is in “limbo,” Fr. Carney was being very guarded here.

Although the article on Mother Aviat by Katherine Rahensteine, one of the contributing editors, notes the date of her canonization, the entry is listed as “Aviat, Francesca Salesia, BL.” Also, the same entry noted above, lists Fr. Brisson’s first name as Alexandre instead of Aloysius, a good example of how errors are easily compounded. Even though there is precious little written on the saint, the bibliography lists only one short biography mistakenly noted as translated into German from the Italian instead of from the original French version: M. aubier entretien. Mère Françoise de Sales, 1844-1914, fondatrice des Oblates de Saint François de Sales (Troyes, 1991) by Marie-Aimee d’Esmagas, with a preface by the then Superior General of the Oblates, Fr. Roger Baldacchini. The English version of this work is unfortunately not noted. Their absence might have been overlooked, difficult to come by, as Fr. Watrigant has been effectively refuted by Fr. Roger Balducelli in a work published by the ICSS, Histoire des Oblates de Saint François de Sales, 1844-1914 (Rome: Imprenta Poliglotta Vaticana, 1928). Another work which was submitted for the process of beatification of Mother Aviat, was printed in the Salesian publications of the Salesian Salesiae (in saec: Leoniae Aviat) Fundatricis Congregationis Sororum Oblaterum S. Franciscae Salesiae (1844-1914) (Roma: Tipografia Guerra, 2000). The two latter works are in the Salesian collections of the De Sales University library.

M. L. Lyons’s article on St. Margaret Mary Alacoque is another reprints with an updated bibliography most likely done by the editors. The bibliography could be enriched by noting the importance of the imagery of the heart in Salesian spirituality as described by Wendy M. Wright in her perceptive article, “That Is What It Is Made For! The Image of the Heart in the Spirituality of Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal,” in Spiritualities of the Heart (New York: Paulist Press, 1992). Also her book, Sacred Heart: God at God, contains several important works not mentioned in the bibliography of this entry. These works place the devotion to the Sacred Heart in a wider and deeper theological and historical context. The astonishing influence that this devotion had on the history of France, especially in the 19th century, as pointed out by Wright, makes us better appreciate how extensive this devotion was.