



ICSS NEWSLETTER

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A VISUAL BIOGRAPHY OF ST. JANE FRANCES DE CHANTAL

Within three years of the death of St. Jane Frances de Chantal (1572-1641), two biographies of the saint were published that laid the groundwork for the process leading to her eventual canonization (1767). Both biographies were based on the *Mémoires* of Mère François-Madeleine de Chaugy (1611-80), who was Jane's secretary and confidante. The first biography, sponsored by the Annecy Visitation and published simultaneously in Paris and Lyon in 1643, was by the Jesuit Alexandre Fichet (1588-1659), whose sister, Marie-Adrienne, was a nun of the Annecy community. The second, under the patronage of the First Paris Visitation, was by Henri de Maupas du Tour (1606-80), bishop of Le Puy and chief almoner of Anne of Austria, Queen Mother and Regent. Published in 1644 at Paris, it was dedicated to Anne, whom Jane had visited on her last trip to Paris in 1641.¹

While Fichet's biography includes an unsigned engraving—an “authentic portrait”—of Jane, Maupas du Tour's biography, entitled the *Life of the Venerable Mother Jane Frances Frémyot*, is illustrated by a suite of three engravings by Grégoire Huret (1606-70), one of the finest engravers in seventeenth-century France. During his lifetime, Huret produced more than 500 prints of religious and allegorical subjects that are distinguished by their inventive composition and confident execution.² For Maupas du Tour's biography, Huret executed three engravings of Jane that are luxurious in their attention to texture, complex architectural settings, and elegantly posed figures. The carefully calibrated portrait that Huret draws of Jane offers a visual biography that complements and is the counterpart of Maupas du Tour's *vita* of the future saint.

The forthcoming volume of essays, *Human Encounter in the Salesian Tradition*, to be published by the International Commission for Salesian Studies (ICSS), includes a study of Huret's engravings that examines, for the first time, their rich iconography in relation to the texts of Mère de Chaugy and Maupas du Tour, as well as to their broader cultural and

ecclesiastical context. Dr. Christopher C. Wilson of The George Washington University in Washington, D.C., an art historian who is a specialist in the art of the early modern Catholic reform, undertook this investigation at the invitation and with the encouragement of the ICSS. His paper is entitled “Picturing the Way of Perfection: Grégoire Huret's Engravings of St. Jane Frances de Chantal (1644) in Their Teresian Context.” As this title indicates, a number of important links are identifiable between Huret's depiction of Jane and the portrayal in the visual arts of St. Teresa of Ávila (1515-82; canonized 1622), who was the constant point of reference for assessing female sanctity during the early modern period.

It is impossible to do justice to the richness and depth of Dr. Wilson's findings in this brief essay. Nonetheless, we want to share with our readers Huret's extraordinary suite of engravings of Jane, together with a brief commentary based on Dr. Wilson's thoughtful analysis and occasionally other sources. Perhaps this “appetizer” will whet our appetite for the fuller presentation on this topic that is offered in Dr. Wilson's paper in our ICSS volume, as well as assist us in preparing to celebrate Jane's feast day (18 August in the Americas, and 12 December elsewhere).



Figure 1. Grégoire Huret, *St. Jane de Chantal Inscribing the Name of Jesus on Her Breast*, in Henri de Maupas du Tour, *La vie de la venerable Mère Jeanne Françoise Frémyot* (Paris, 1644). Courtesy Salesian Library, Wilmington-Philadelphia Province, Oblates of St. Francis de Sales, Washington, D.C.

The Teresa of France

Canonized a saint in 1622, Teresa of Ávila was popularly regarded as the ideal female model of sanctity during the Counter-Reformation. The writings of seventeenth-century nuns, as well as biographies by authors promoting celebrated pious women, amply attest to this point. The legitimacy of women's interior lives and external activities was judged on the basis of their conformity to the Teresian prototype. Jane's contemporaries clearly perceived her in this light. Francis and Jane's close relationship with the Teresian Carmel has been studied extensively by scholars. Here, however, it suffices to recall that, as the mother foundress of the Visitation who

traveled throughout France to make new foundations, Jane was called and looked on as the “Mother Teresa” of her native country.³

Huret’s first engraving of Jane (Figure 1) introduces the initial section of Maupas du Tour’s biography which treats Jane’s life in the world prior to the foundation of the Order of the Visitation (1610). The engraving illustrates a well-known episode from Jane’s life. Her father had proposed a second marriage, which Jane steadfastly declined, as she had resolved to belong entirely to God; to give greater weight to her resolution, while kneeling before a crucifix, Jane branded the name of Jesus on her breast above her heart with a small pointed steel instrument.⁴ Huret proffers what may be described as a Teresian interpretation of this episode: Jane is shown falling to the ground in an ecstatic swoon while engraving the name of Jesus on her breast; Christ Himself guides her hand that holds the stylus, while an angel supports her from behind.

This composition visually underscores Jane’s association with Teresa by echoing the iconography of the Spanish saint’s most well-known mystical experience, her vision of the piercing of her heart, or transverberation (from the Latin *transverberare*, meaning “to thrust through, pierce through, transfix, perforate”). Teresa’s account of this vision is recorded in her autobiography (begun in 1562, completed in 1565, and first published in 1588):

I saw close to me toward my left side an angel in bodily form . . . [In] his hands [was] a large golden dart and at the end of the iron tip there appeared to be a little fire. It seemed to me this angel plunged the dart several times into my heart and that it reached deep within me. When he drew it out, I thought he was carrying off with him the deepest part of me; and he left me all on fire with great love of God.⁵

Huret’s engraving has striking parallels with two early seventeenth-century Flemish engravings of Teresa’s transverberation. In an engraving by Adrien Collaert and Cornelis Galle, one angel supports Teresa from behind, while another aims the point of an arrow at her heart. Transported outside herself during the ecstatic moment, Teresa leans backward and gazes toward heaven. Similarly, in Huret’s engraving the figure of Jane falls in a diagonal swoon, as an angel props up her back. Huret’s composition also has elements in common with a print by Antoon Wiericx. In both images the female subject kneels on a rounded stage-like platform, seen frontally in Wiericx’s print and in profile in Huret’s engraving.

Jane’s act of inscription becomes her own transverberation, with the pointed stylus guided by Christ replacing Teresa’s arrow as the piercing tool that fills her with divine love. Huret places an altar in the background of his composition, suggesting that Jane is in a church or chapel interior. Likewise, in the engraving of the transverberation by Collaert and Galle, an altar is visible through a doorway in the background. The altar’s presence in these portrayals of Teresa and Jane connects their mystical experience to the liturgy and sacraments,

underscoring that the institutional church is the context in which their pursuits of holiness unfold.

There is yet another facet of the transverberation that merits comment. In the seventeenth century, Teresa’s transverberation was interpreted not only as a mystical experience, but also as a form of martyrdom. For example, this is the interpretation given in the *Treatise on the Love of God* (1616). According to Francis, God “is ever drawing arrows from the quiver of His infinite beauty, to wound the souls of those who love Him, to bring it home to them that their love for Him is nowhere near the love that He deserves” (trans. V. Kerns [London: Burns & Oates, 1962], 256; Bk. 6, ch. 13). This wounding, which for Teresa occurred in the transverberation, henceforth made her suffer from lovesickness—a protracted martyrdom that ended only with her death (Bk. 6, ch. 15). Thus, Teresa was a martyr of divine love: “The saintly Mother Teresa of Jesus . . . revealed after her death that she had died from a vehement assault of love; so intense was it, her natural constitution had been unable to bear it, and her soul departed after the beloved on whom her heart was set” (trans. Kerns, 302; Bk. 7, ch. 11). The equation of love with physical deterioration and death is also conveyed by the inscriptions from the Song of Songs on the engravings by Wiericx (“Sustain me with flowers and surround me with apples, for I am sick with love” [Sg 2:5]) and by Huret (“Set me as a seal on your heart, as a seal on your arm, for love is strong as death” [Sg 8:6]).

Both Teresa and Jane explicitly instructed their nuns that their lives were to be a martyrdom of love: Teresa, in her *Way of Perfection* (1566?), chapter 22; and, Jane, on the feast of St. Basil in 1632:

Saint Basil and most of the fathers and pillars of the Church were not martyred. . . . I believe that there is a martyrdom called the martyrdom of love in which God preserves the lives of His servants so that they might work for His glory. This makes them martyrs and confessors at the same time. I know . . . that this is the martyrdom to which the Daughters of the Visitation are called. . . . [Divine] love thrusts its sword into the most intimate and secret parts of the soul and separates us from our very selves.⁶

Teresa’s transverberation and Jane’s inscription are emblems of this martyrdom of love.

An Obedient Daughter

A recent study has highlighted that biographies of illustrious holy women in seventeenth-century France focused on character traits that stressed traditional gender roles—female obedience to male spiritual directors and authority figures—while quickly passing over aspects of a subject’s life that deviated from this norm.⁷ The result was that “women’s active role in shaping Catholic institutions and values in seventeenth-century France began to be obscured by a literature that emphasized submissive obedience” (ibid). Thus, female collaborators were demoted to the status of compliant

protégées and subordinate partners charged with executing the designs of brilliant men, in whose shadow they stood (*ibid.*, 245-46).

There is no question that this occurred in the case of Jane. It has only been during the last four decades of the twentieth century when, thanks to the pioneering scholarship of Elisabeth Stopp, Wendy M. Wright, and Sr. Marie-Patricia Burns, VHM, that Jane's particular contribution to the Salesian tradition has been recovered.⁸ By contrast, Huret's second engraving (Figure 2), which precedes the section of Maupas du Tour's text chronicling Jane's life in religion, presents the relationship of Francis and Jane in terms of early modern gender roles.

By the time of Francis's death in 1622, thirteen Visitation monasteries had been founded, and Jane had personally supervised the foundation of nearly all of them; by the time of her death in 1641, eighty-seven monasteries were in existence. It was Jane who oversaw, guided, and managed the prodigious growth of the Visitation:

Her lot was almost continual travel, on horseback or in a stuffy carriage, making foundations, negotiating the purchase of houses, talking to people about the affairs of the order, helping and counselling the superiors of new foundations, writing many hundreds of letters, battling against every sort of practical difficulty while she herself was in spiritual darkness, defending her order against evil intrigue, living through times of war and pestilence.⁹

Huret's engraving does not reference Jane's pivotal role in the Visitation's rapid expansion. On the contrary, her role is condensed into an image of obedient discipleship. Huret depicts a disproportionately large figure of Francis, seated authoritatively in a chair raised on a platform and enshrined beneath a baldachino, presenting the rule of the Visitation to the kneeling figure of Jane, who humbly bows her head while receiving the book and Francis's blessing. In a small scene in the background, a tiny figure of Jane in turn presents the rule to her first two companions, Jeanne-Charlotte de Bréchar and Marie-Jacqueline Favre. The inscription makes explicit this transmission of the rule from Francis to Jane, and from Jane to the other nuns: "Follow this way, my very dear daughter, and have all the souls that God has destined from eternity for this happiness follow it also." This image conveys that Jane's status within the new order rests on her following

Francis's leadership; he is the active founder, and she is the responsive pupil. In the company of her nuns, she is an extension of Francis, transmitting what he has already dispensed to her. She is simultaneously scaled down and ennobled by her connection with him.



Figure 2. Grégoire Huret, *St. Francis de Sales Presenting the Rule of the Visitation to St. Jane de Chantal*, in Henri de Maupas du Tour, *La vie de la vénérable Mère Jeanne Françoise Frémiot* (Paris, 1644). Courtesy Salesian Library, Wilmington-Philadelphia Province, Oblates of St. Francis de Sales, Washington, D.C.

It is worth noting that seventeenth-century hagiographers, including Jane's, undoubtedly learned from the difficulties that had complicated Teresa of Ávila's path to canonization. During her lifetime, Teresa had not only traveled throughout Spain founding some seventeen convents of her sisters, but had also established a male branch of her order for friars, whom she instructed in the primitive Carmelite rule. This apparent reversal of gender roles resulted in bitter negative criticism of Teresa by several prominent ecclesiastical authorities, including the papal nuncio and a member of the Inquisition. During the process of inquiry for Teresa's canonization, this criticism was countered by her confessors and devotees, who insisted on her humble and absolute obedience to ecclesiastical superiors and the institutional church. Huret's engraving of Jane receiving the rule from Francis may have been designed to avoid the issue of women's problematic association with leadership and teaching functions, thus defusing any potential perception of her as an independent woman who acted outside the parameters of obedience.

The Visitation as the Flower Garden of the Little Virtues

Huret's third engraving (Figure 3) introduces the section of Maupas du Tour's text focusing on Jane's heroic virtues. Unlike the previous two compositions, which are set within church or convent interiors, here the figures are gathered in the *locus amoenus*, "lovely or pleasant place": an idyllic meadow, with a ring of trees in the background and flowers in the foreground. Jane and Francis stand on either side of the crucified Christ, amid a group of Visitandine nuns who gather flowers labeled as the "little virtues" of humility, simplicity, charity, purity, and gentleness (see *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Pt. 3, chs. 1-2). The scene seems to visualize Francis's words in *The Interior Spirit of the Religious of the Visitation*, a text that may have circulated in manuscript before it was first published in Maupas du Tour's 1657 biography of Francis: "[The Visitandine Nuns'] hands are only occupied in gathering at the foot of the cross the little virtues of humility, meekness, and simplicity, that grow there, and which are sprinkled with the blood of their Beloved. . . ."¹⁰ The association of flowers with religious symbolism was a popular *topos* in Baroque

literature, sermons, and visual arts.

The placement of the Crucifixion in a garden-like setting evokes associations with the Garden of Eden and the identification of Christ as the new Adam (1 Cor 15:45-49). Moreover, in Patristic and medieval monastic literature, the monastic life was characterized as a return to Eden: the monastery is a *hortus conclusus*, an enclosed garden, where the individual lives on intimate terms with God, as humankind did in the earthly paradise. In continuity with this tradition, Huret's engraving envisions the world of the Visitation as an earthly paradise. This interpretation accords with early Visitandine history. For example, a key element of *la Galerie*, the first home of the Visitation, was an extensive orchard, where, in good weather, Francis gave talks to the nuns. And on the day the first Visitandines made their vows, the chapel of *la Galerie* was simply but profusely decorated with small bouquets of sweet-scented flowers from the orchard, so that it was "like going into a garden" (Stopp, *Madame de Chantal*, 115, 139).

Huret's symmetrical composition may seem, at first glance, to present Jane and Francis as co-founders and co-directors, mutually encouraging their nuns. However, closer examination reveals that, as in the second engraving, Francis is accorded a status of preeminent authority. He occupies the traditional position of honor at Jesus's right, just as the Virgin Mary typically does in artistic representations of the Crucifixion, with the Apostle John in the lesser position at Jesus's left. Christ leans His head as if gazing admiringly down in Francis's direction, while the diagonal swath of loincloth directs attention to Francis's face. While Jane's right hand is partially hidden behind the nun who holds the flower labeled "purity," Francis's left hand and fingers are almost entirely visible, giving him a more forceful, directive presence. His semi-closed hand gesture—with an outstretched index finger and other fingers slightly bent—echoes that of the crucified Christ; while Christ points to heaven, Francis gestures to the earth, where his Visitandine nuns work to create a heaven on earth by their cultivation of the little virtues.

It was widely held by Francis's contemporaries that he revealed what our Lord must have been like in His interaction with people, that, as Jane recounts in a letter of 1623, he "reflected the Son of God as a living image," and "in seeing him they seemed to see our Lord on earth" (*Correspondance*, 2:310; *Lettre* 630). Similarly, Huret's third engraving portrays Francis

as the earthly reflection of Christ. If, in the first engraving of this series, it is Christ who guides Jane's hand, thus steering the course of her spiritual life, in the second two prints Francis acts as a stand-in or mediator for Christ, directing Jane and his Visitandine nuns in the way of perfection. Moreover, Francis is the living embodiment and exemplar of the "little virtues" that grow at the foot of the Cross. The composition's inscription reads: "It is on the sacred mount that the chaste bees gather the honey of divine virtues on these lovely flowers." These words are based on a passage in Mère de Chaugy's *Mémoires* that suggests

Francis's personification of the virtues growing in this garden of the Visitation: "[This] chaste bee [Jane] was only thinking of feeding her soul with the honey of the thousand consolations which she gathered from the flowers of the virtues of our Blessed Father" (Pt. 2, 226). Francis is the proprietor of the garden of the little virtues, and Jane is his most brilliant pupil, whose accelerated and advanced spiritual progress makes her a worthy mother for her nuns.

The Viewer as a Link in the Salesian Flower Garland


Baroque art has a strongly rhetorical quality. Just as rhetoric aims to persuade an audience of the validity of the speaker's arguments through rhetorical or literary devices, the visual rhetoric of Baroque art has a similar persuasive purpose and function. One of the principal visual devices that Baroque art employs to achieve its goal of persuasion is drawing the spectator into the work of art by making him/her an active participant in the "spectacle" depicted by the artist and beheld by the viewer.¹¹

In Huret's third engraving, we should note our own position as spectator. The nuns form a semicircle around Christ, as if each were a link in a flowering garland, like those surrounding the Virgin or saints in Baroque garland paintings. Considered from this perspective, the nuns personify the flowering little virtues that they cultivate. The position of the spectator is at the opening of this semicircular arrangement and closes the spatial gap. Thus, we become a link in the garland of figures and flowering virtues. Drawn into the composition, we stand in close proximity to Jane, where we can admire and imitate her virtues.

Huret's three engravings refuse to allow the spectator to remain passive; rather, they work to create an audience of impassioned witnesses to Jane's sanctity who have entered his carefully constructed world. For the contemporaries of Huret



Figure 3. Grégoire Huret, *Crucifixion with St. Francis de Sales, St. Jane de Chantal, and Visitandine Nuns*, in Henri de Maupas du Tour, *La vie de la venerable Mère Jeanne Françoise Frémiot* (Paris, 1644). Courtesy Salesian Library, Wilmington-Philadelphia Province, Oblates of St. Francis de Sales, Washington, D.C.

and Maupas du Tour, this meant amplifying public devotion and the momentum toward Jane's inevitable canonization. For us today, more than 360 years later, Huret's engravings open a window on the culture and times in which Jane lived, thus enhancing our understanding and appreciation of how her image as a saint was constructed, as well as how it has changed and developed over the centuries. 

REFERENCES

1. See E. Stopp, "Changing Views of a Saint," and "From Mère de Chaugy's *Mémoires* to Modern Times," in her *Hidden in God: Essays and Talks on St. Jane Frances de Chantal*, ed. T. O'Reilly (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's Univ. Press, 1999), 31-68; M.-P. Burns, *Françoise-Madeleine de Chaugy: Dans l'ombre de la lumière de la canonisation de François de Sales* (Annecy: Académie Salésienne, 2002), 50-51; and S. Rouez, "La Visitation et la diffusion de la dévotion à sa fondatrice: La publication et la circulation des *Vies* de Jeanne de Chantal," *Siècles*, no. 16 (2003):103-18.
2. R.-A. Weigert, *Inventaire du fonds français: Graveurs du XVII siècle* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1968), 294-391; E. Brugerolles and D. Guillet, "Grégoire Huret, dessinateur et graveur," *Revue de l'art* 117 (1997): 9-35.
3. E. Stopp, "Spanish Links: St. Francis de Sales and St. Teresa of Ávila," in her *A Man to Heal Differences: Essays and Talks on St. Francis de Sales* (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's Univ. Press, 1997), 171-82, at 177.
4. See E. Stopp, *Madame de Chantal: Portrait of a Saint* (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1963), 82-83.
5. *The Book of Her Life*, ch. 29; English trans. by K. Kavanaugh and O. Rodríguez, *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Ávila*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1987), 252. St. Francis de Sales reproduces this description of Teresa's transverberation almost verbatim in the *Treatise on the Love of God*, Bk. 6, ch. 14.
6. Quoted in W. Wright, *Bond of Perfection: Jeanne de Chantal & François de Sales* (1985; Stella Niagara, N.Y.: De Sales Resource Center, 2001), 154.
7. B. Diefendorf, *From Penitence to Charity: Pious Women and the Catholic Reformation in Paris* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2004), 21. (A review of Diefendorf's book appears in this issue of the *ICSS Newsletter*.)
8. See Stopp's *Madame de Chantal* and *Hidden in God*; Wright's *Bond of Perfection* and numerous subsequent articles on Jane; Burns's critical edition of Jane's *Correspondance*, 6 vols. (Paris: Cerf, 1986-96), and the collection of her articles and essays that is in preparation (to be published by De Sales Resources & Ministries).
9. E. Stopp, "St. Chantal and St. Francis de Sales: The Founding of the Visitation," in *Hidden in God*, 9-27, at 23-24.
10. Quoted in the introduction to the English trans. of Mère de Chaugy's *Life of St. Jane Frances de Chantal* (London: Richardson and Son, 1852), xix-lxxx, at xxxviii.
11. See, e.g., V. Minor, *Baroque & Rococo: Art & Culture* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999), 20, 24-25, 173-77; and on rhetoric as an explanatory model for Baroque art, see E. Levy, *Propaganda and the Jesuit Baroque* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2004), 48-52.

Book Review

***From Penitence to Charity: Pious Women and the Catholic Reformation in Paris.* By Barbara B. Diefendorf. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.**

Barbara Diefendorf's meticulously researched and compellingly written new book is brimming with fresh insights into women's contributions to early modern Catholicism in France. Focusing on Paris in the aftermath of the sixteenth-century Wars of Religion, Diefendorf examines women as founders, patrons, and spiritual leaders of religious institutions ranging from convents of contemplative orders (including the Discalced Carmelites, Capucines, and Ursulines) to semi-religious communities that aided the poor, such as the Daughters of Charity. She highlights the leadership roles of elite pious women, called *dévotés*, who used their economic means, political influence, and elevated social status to spearhead religious reform. Throughout the book, it is clear that the history of these women, including St. Jane de Chantal, is synonymous with the history of Catholic renewal in France. Working with the support of prominent members of the clergy, their efforts helped shape seventeenth-century French female piety, which evolved from a model that was intensely penitential and apocalyptic in response to wartime crisis, to a brand of spirituality that combined the contemplative life with charitable functions.

Readers interested primarily in Salesian history will welcome Diefendorf's substantive discussion in chapter six of the origins of the Visitation Order and the 1619 establishment of the order in the French capital. She sets out to correct what she perceives as unfair assessments of Francis and Jane's project, especially the assumption that the founders' original vision for the order was regrettably thwarted by the enforcement of monastic enclosure: "Departing from the usual view of the Filles de la Visitation, or Visitandines, as an order whose initial purpose of charitable service in the community was frustrated by the enclosure forced on the nuns when they expanded from their first Savoyard convent into France, [this chapter] emphasizes rather the founders' intention of providing a place where lay women could engage in religious retreats" (25). She recounts the events of 1616, when a group of *dévotés* in Lyon asked to establish themselves on the Visitandines' model and received the encouragement of Francis and Jane, who recognized an important opportunity to extend the new order into France. The archbishop of Lyon, however, insisted that the foundation could be made only if the women accepted enclosure. Diefendorf responds to historians who have criticized Francis and Jane for acquiescing to this request that ended the nuns' ability to leave the convent for charitable endeavors:

These historians have missed the point: community service was never the central purpose of the Visitandines' foundation. Rather, it was always intended as a voluntary activity to be undertaken on a limited basis and by only some of the Visitandines. . . . Nor is it true that Jeanne de Chantal and François de Sales strenuously objected to the principle of religious enclosure. Quite the contrary; like



SALESIAN STUDIES WORLDWIDE

ICSS

REPORT ON THE ICSS MEETING IN ROME, 15-17 APRIL 2005

The ICSS met at the De Sales Oblate Generalate in Rome, 15-17 April 2005. As always, the welcome and hospitality extended by Fr. Francis J. Blood, OSFS, religious superior of the Generalate Community, could not have been warmer and more gracious. This was the first face-to-face meeting of the ICSS in many years. As it happened, the dates for this meeting fell between the funeral of Pope John Paul II and the election of Pope Benedict XVI. On the first day of their meeting, the members of the ICSS (representing the Congregation) concelebrated the 15 April *novendiale* Mass for the repose of the soul of Pope John Paul II at St. Peter's Basilica. This Mass was primarily for members of religious institutes and congregations (consecrated life).

Among the other highlights of this meeting were:

- **Update on *Human Encounter in the Salesian Tradition*.** Editing of the papers submitted for publication in this volume commemorating the 4th centenary of the initial encounter of St. Francis de Sales and St. Jane de Chantal is in progress. Publication is expected in early 2006.
- **Evaluation of ICSS Grant Proposals for 2005-2006.** Grant proposals for 2005-2006 were evaluated. These proposals and the evaluations by the ICSS have been submitted to Fr. General and his Council.
- **Preparation of Proposals for the 2006 General Chapter.** The ICSS formulated three proposals for submission to the

2006 General Chapter. These include (1) the ICSS's Five-Year Strategic Plan (2006-2011); (2) amendments and deletions to the *Statute of the International Commission for Salesian Studies* (revised 1998); and (3) Congregational sponsorship of the biography of Fr. Brisson being written by ICSS member Fr. Dirk Koster, OSFS (the Dutch version of this book will be completed in 2007, so that it can be translated into other languages in time for the 100th anniversary of Fr. Brisson's death in 2008). These proposals have been submitted to the Preparatory Commission for the 2006 General Chapter.

- **Varia.** A number of other topics were also discussed, including the importance of the Archives of the Congregation, particularly the pioneering and ongoing sterling work of the Congregation's archivist, Fr. Roger Balducelli, OSFS; assistance by the ICSS webmaster to the regions of India and Africa and the Italian Province to develop their own Salesian websites; and a recommendation to the Major Superiors concerning the priority of the ministry of pursuing a doctoral degree in Salesian studies, especially with a view to the common good and viability of the Congregation and its mission to disseminate the spirit and doctrine of St. Francis de Sales (Constitution 11).

The rich experience and outcomes of this meeting underscored the importance of the ICSS gathering to meet on a regular basis. Thus, the ICSS has determined that it will come together for a face-to-face meeting every three years. The next meeting is scheduled for 2008; this will provide an opportunity to evaluate progress of and, if necessary, make adjustments to its Five-Year Plan, as well as to consider other business. In the interim between regularly scheduled meetings, ICSS members are in

constant (sometimes daily, often weekly) contact via e-mail, and will also avail themselves of the opportunity to gather when circumstances make that possible, such as the 2006 General Chapter and summer meetings of the Major Superiors.

Web News

Fr. Herbert Winklehner, OSFS, ICSS Webmaster, has launched a new website devoted to Fr. Brisson, with the domain name www.louisbrisson.org. The millennium edition of Fr. Brisson's works, prepared by Fr. Roger Balducelli, OSFS, will gradually be added to this website, together with translations of this text in English, German, Spanish, and Portuguese. ICSS's goal is to have these texts on this website by 2008, the centenary of the death of Fr. Brisson.

www.wikipedia.org is a free-content encyclopedia on the World Wide Web, where anyone can offer—free of cost—information on different subjects and in different languages. This website is among the 500 most used sites worldwide. Presently on this website are a number of articles on Salesian topics, including St. Francis de Sales, the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales, Louis Brisson, Franz Reisinger, Mother Mary de Sales Chappuis, St. Jane Frances de Chantal, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, and the Sisters of the Visitation. Anyone interested in Salesian spirituality is invited to contribute to this encyclopedia in his/her native language with new Salesian articles and/or to correct the articles already posted. On this site, the biography of St. Francis de Sales is available in English, French, German, Spanish, Japanese, and Polish. This free encyclopedia offers a good medium for disseminating Salesian spirituality.

Asian Region

INDIA

The Oblates of Samparnaram have established a hostel to provide a healthy environment and wholistic education for young boys. The hostel has been named "Brisson Bala Bhavan" and is under the supervision of Fr. Shaju Kanjiramparayil, OSFS. The dormitories, dining hall, and study hall were ready for the students when they arrived at the beginning of June. Twelve boys were accepted and are attending the 1st standard of St. Francis de Sales High School in English medium in Hebbagoddi. The boys come from the states of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Two women, one teacher and a caretaker will assist Fr. Shaju in looking after the boys. If the necessary funding becomes available, the plan is to increase the size of the hostel so that it can house twenty boys.

Fr. Bernard O'Connor, OSFS, president of De Sales University (DSU), accompanied by Fr. John O'Neill, a member of the DSU Board of Trustees, visited Samparnaram with a view to extending DSU's educational outreach programs in India and the possibility of having the collaboration of the Indian De Sales Oblates in this venture.

PHILIPPINES

The Philippines foundation is progressing. Fr. Josef Koeltringer, OSFS, is mastering the local language, Tagalog. Together with Fr. Anthony Ceresko, OSFS, he is attempting to find a benefactor to donate the land for the mission. Fr. Koeltringer is also busy spreading Salesian spirituality by giving days of recollection as well as retreats to local religious communities.

With a grant from the ICSS and the support of the Indian Institute of Spirituality, Fr. Ceresko has published the book *St. Francis de Sales and the Bible*. This book collects nine of Fr. Ceresko's previously published articles on the saint. It is available from De Sales Resources & Ministries at www.desalesresource.org.

Brazil/South America Region

On 28 May 2005 Luciano Marcos Demarco Rosetto, OSFS, was ordained to the priesthood at his home parish Santa Terezinha/Palmeira das Missões by Bishop Zeno Hastenteufel. The following day, 29 May, he celebrated his First Mass in the parish church of Novo Barreiro. Since the beginning of 2005, Fr. Rosetto has been director of formation for the seminarians in Jaboticaba. He is also the regional director for vocations. For further information about the De Sales Oblates in the South America Region, see <http://osfs.e1.com.br/>

Europe

SALESIANS ANALYZE CHALLENGES IN EUROPE

As reported by Zenit News, Father Pascual Chavez, SDB, rector major, met with the Salesian provincials of Europe to find hopeful and optimistic ways of dealing with the challenges of a growing secularism that is hostile to anything Catholic. After pointing out various positive developments, Fr. Chavez noted several negative aspects, such as a lack of a clear definition of what Europe is and a rising tide of moral relativism. "The greatest concern is the conviction that behind the current anti-Catholic secularism there is the idea that humanism and Christianity are mutually exclusive," he said. "Even more, that between Catholic Christianity and the principles to be found in Europe as an institution there is a fundamental incompatibility." This anti-Catholic sentiment results in "the irrelevance of the Church, the breakdown of the family, a break in the link between the transmission of the faith and of values, a rejection of everything Catholic." Fr. Chavez is hopeful that "the faith, the Gospel, and the Salesian charism are a patrimony that we must hand on since they are a gift from God to the Church and to the young."

FRENCH PROVINCE

La Lettre RES no. 10 contains a wealth of Salesian material under four main headings: Mother Françoise Isabelle, Superior General of the Oblate Sisters of St. Francis de Sales; Salesian Exchanges on the *Treatise on the Love of God*; the 400th Anniversary of the Encounter of Francis and Jane; and the Salesian Conference of

Benin held in 1997. The section on Mother Isabelle contains the homily of Bishop Stenger of Troyes at her Mass of Resurrection, a tribute from The Most Rev. Louis Fiorelli, OSFS, Superior General of the De Sales Oblates, and a letter of condolence from the Ecuadorian Ambassador to France. The commentaries on the *Treatise* deal with the last sections of Book 11 and the beginning of Book 12. Philippe Legros's paper is entitled, "Exercice des vertus et 'choses de peu'" (The Practice of the Virtues and the "Little Things"); Sr. Thérèse-Dominique, OSFS, discusses "Vertus et amour divin: Livre XI, Ch. 3, 4 et 5" (The Virtues and Divine Love: Bk. 2, chs. 3, 4, and 5); Jean-Luc Leroux, OSFS, treats "Amour, passions de l'âme et joie: Livre XI, Ch. 20 et 21 (Love, the Passions of the Soul, and Joy: Bk. 11, chs. 20 and 21); Philippe Legros comments on "Le sacrifice d'Abraham: Livre XII, Ch. 10" (The Sacrifice of Abraham: Bk. 12, ch. 10). There is also a reprint of an article, "Une théologie de l'amour de Dieu et de l'homme" by Fr. André Brix, OSFS, which first appeared in *François de Sales prophète de l'amour* (Epinay sur Seine: CIF, 1982) presented and slightly recast by Dr. Hélène Bordes.

The presentations given last summer complete the commentary on the *Treatise* begun in 1988 at the annual Salesian Exchanges. For the future, RES has decided to have papers focus on a Salesian theme. This year's theme is "Un Monde à aimer: L'amour, au coeur de l'optimisme salesien, une réponse aux attentes des hommes d'aujourd'hui" ((A World to be Loved: Love at the heart of Salesian optimism, a response to the expectations of people of our day). The conference will be held at the Centre Jean XXIII of Annecy-le-Vieux, 11-15 July 2005.

Also noteworthy in RES no. 10 is a section on Bossuet and St. Francis de Sales compiled and presented by Dr. Hélène Bordes. Among other things, it contains Bossuet's panegyric on the occasion of the beatification of Francis de Sales.

German-Speaking Region

AUSTRIAN/SOUTH GERMAN PROVINCE

The parish of St. Francis de Sales in Vienna, Austria, administered by the De Sales Oblates, now has its own website www.pfarrefranzvonsales.at. On this site information is available about parish events, as well as its patron.

The De Sales Oblates will offer a pilgrimage "In the Steps of St. Francis de Sales," to Annecy and its environs, 28 August-3 September 2005. For further information and registration, see www.osfs.at.

The church of St. Anne in Vienna, Austria (www.annakirche.at) has announced a fall 2005 series of lectures on Salesian spirituality: "Assiduousness: The Art of Perseverance," Fr. Thomas Muehlberger, OSFS, 25 October, 7.00 p.m.; "Love: Source and Goal of All the Virtues," Fr. Alois Haslbauer OSFS, 8 November, 7.00 p.m.; "Optimism: A Virtue for the Future?,"

Sr. Maria Brigitta Kaltseis, OSFS, 13 December, 7.00 p.m. Every third Friday of the month, there is a discussion group that focuses on different texts from the *Introduction to the Devout Life*.

The next meeting of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft für salesianische Studien (Workgroup for Salesian Studies) is scheduled for 21-23 October 2005 at the Salesian Center of the Salesianum Rosental in Eichstätt, Bavaria (www.salesianum-rosental.de). The primary focus of the meeting will be the German translation of the letters of St. Jane de Chantal.

From Friday, 2 December, to Sunday, 4 December, 2005, Salesian days of recollection will take place at the Exerzitienhaus Maria Hilf (Retreat Center) at Passau, Bavaria. For further information and registration, see www.osfs.at

In 2006 the Salesian magazine *LICHT* will celebrate its 100th anniversary. In 1906 *LICHT* was founded by Fr. Joseph Lebeau OSFS, first provincial of the Austrian-South German Province, at Vienna, Austria, to inform the German-speaking world about the De Sales Oblates and Salesian spirituality. Since then this magazine has been published monthly and/or bimonthly, except from 1939 to 1945, when its publication was forbidden by the National Socialist government in Germany. Immediately after the war, at the beginning of 1946, *LICHT* resumed publication, with the permission of the U.S. military government of Germany. A special edition of *LICHT* is planned to celebrate this centenary.

In 1906 the establishment of the Austrian-South German Province of the De Sales Oblates was officially ratified by Pope St. Pius X. The Province's centenary will be celebrated on 26 March 2006 at the Salesianum Rosental in Eichstätt, Bavaria, and on 27 May 2006 in Vienna, Austria, its place of foundation. At the beginning of the General Chapter of the De Sales Oblates on 30 July 2006, this anniversary will also be commemorated.

Since 1984 the "Gesellschaft der Katholischen Publizisten Deutschlands" (Society of Catholic Publicists of Germany) has annually awarded the "Franz von Sales-Tafel" (St. Francis de Sales Plate) to a person who has excelled in the area of Catholic journalism. Fr. Albert Keller, SJ, is this year's recipient of this prestigious award in memory of St. Francis de Sales, the patron of journalists and writers. For further information on this Salesian award, see the society's website: <http://www.gkp.de/Salestafel/Salestafel.php>.

GERMAN PROVINCE

During World Youth Day 2005 in Cologne, Germany, there will take place "Days of international encounter with the De Sales Oblates for young people between 16 and 30 years of age," in Haus Overbach, near Jülich, Germany (www.overbach.de) from 11-15 August 2005. Further information is available at www.osfs.at, link "Wjt2005."

OBLATE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

On the occasion of the centenary of the Oblate Sisters in Linz, Upper Austria, a group of Oblate Sisters, De Sales Oblates, lay teachers, and friends of the congregation made a pilgrimage to the original sites of the founders Louis Brisson and Léonie Aviat (Troyes, Plancy, Paris, etc.), 3-8 May 2005. A summary of this trip is posted on the website of the Oblate Sisters: <http://schwwestern.oblatinnen.at/> under the link "Mitteilungen."

DAUGHTERS OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

During spring 2005, the Austrian group and the German group of the Daughters of St. Francis de Sales made retreats, with the former led by Prof. Stephan Mueller, who teaches moral theology at the Catholic University of Eichstätt, and the latter directed by Fr. Karlheinz Vogler, the spiritual director of the daughters of St. Francis de Sales at Dortmund, Germany. At the former retreat, the new general leader A. Trabichet and Mrs. Helen Dora-Fehr of the Swiss group spoke about the tsunami damages in India, where the SMMI sisters are working to help the victims of the tsunami, especially the homeless. The Sisters of SMMI are the religious branch of the Daughters of St. Francis de Sales. The forthcoming meeting of the leaders of the Daughters, in Rastatt, Germany, will be led by Fr. Herbert Winklehner, OSFS, who will reflect on "The Mysticism of St. Francis de Sales for Today."

The website of the Daughters www.franz-von-sales.org has been very successful. For the past three years, every week a new passage from the writings of St. Francis de Sales has been posted; this website has had about 8000 visitors. During the same period, the "passage of the week" was sent, via e-mail, to about 3500 people. Serious consideration is being given to how the Internet can be used even more effectively to attract vocations.

SISTERS OF THE SACRED SCIENCES

The congregation of the Sisters of the Sacred Sciences was founded in 1997, in the Diocese of Mysore, India, by Fr. Anthony Kolencherry, MSFS. This new congregation has as its model St. Francis de Sales, who was a master of the spiritual life and doctrine. Its mission is to encourage young women to serve God in consecrated life by sharing with others theological knowledge and spirituality. All candidates study the Bible, theology, philosophy, or allied scientific fields. With the foundation of this congregation, the Salesian family has been enlarged. Further information is available from Sisters of Sacred Sciences, Kloster Visitation, Grenchenstrasse 27, 4500 Solothurn, Switzerland, e-mail: sacredscience@bluemail.ch.

United States

TOLEDO-DETROIT PROVINCE

"Live Jesus: Today's Challenge" is the theme of the Joseph F. Power, OSFS, 23rd Annual Conference on the Spirituality of St. Francis de Sales and St. Jane de Chantal under the auspices

of the De Sales Resources & Ministries Center. It will be held in Durham, North Carolina, 4-7 August. The keynote speakers and their topics are as follows: Fr. Barry Strong, OSFS, "Salesian Living in the Modern World"; Olivia Wills Kane, "Reality Religion: Loving Our Real Church Imperfect and Incomplete"; and Bro. Michael O'Neill McGrath, OSFS, "Poor Widows, Village Folk, and Children of Light." There will be other presentations to smaller groups. They include the following topics and facilitators: "Live Jesus...In Marriage and Family: Divinity in Disguise: Unmasking God in Everyday Living and Loving," Kevin Anderson; "Live Jesus...In Being with the Poor: An Incredible Experience and An Unbelievable Journey," Fr. William Auth, OSFS; "Live Jesus...In Time of Conflict: A Salesian Response Provoking Peace in Time of War," Fr. Mark Plaushin, OSFS; "Live Jesus...In the Business World: Living Our Beliefs in the Workplace," Ann Doody Wiedl. Further information may be found at www.desalesresource.org.

The excellent Salesian book collection housed at the De Sales Resources & Ministries Center (DSRMC) in Stella Niagara, New York, can now be searched by utilizing the online catalog of the Trexler Library of De Sales University at <http://trexler.desales.edu/search/>. The DSRMC continues to make available very difficult to find resources for Salesian scholars. In addition, DSRMC keeps updating its catalog and reprinting books on Salesiana that are out of print. DSRMC is one of the most effective disseminators of Salesian spirituality. For more details about the invaluable resources it offers, access its URL above.

WILMINGTON-PHILADELPHIA PROVINCE

Both the De Sales Spirituality Center (DSC) and the Salesian Center for Faith and Culture (SCFC) at De Sales University have received grants to further their work in promoting Salesian thought and spirituality. The Koch Foundation awarded the DSC \$10,000 as seed money for a Salesian Discipleship Program. The objective of this four-year program is to train teams of lay collaborators to develop and deliver various kinds of Salesian programs in each Oblate apostolate. Fr. Michael Murray, OSFS, Executive Director of the DSC, has distributed a draft proposal for this ambitious project to members of his Advisory Board and the five DSC Regional Directors to solicit their input. This program revives and expands one of the DSC's original programs, and, if successful, should become a model for lay collaboration with the Oblates. Fr. Murray clearly sees that, among other things, greater financial resources will be needed to bring the program to fruition. Of course, the DSC continues to offer many programs—days of recollection, retreats, parish missions, etc.—as well as to enhance its website with numerous resources that assist both individuals and groups to promote the Oblate-Salesian Charism. Fr. Michael Donovan, OSFS, assists Fr. Murray greatly in developing a number of these resources, especially study guides for Salesian books. For a fuller idea of what is available, visit the DSC site at www.oblates.org/center.

A \$40,000 grant from the Frank and Jane Ryan Foundation has enabled the SCFC to pilot a Salesian Leadership Institute. A team of five Oblates (Frs. Thomas Dailey, Chair; Doug Burns, John Hanley, Peter Leonard, and Alexander Pocetto) are working with the Catholic Leadership Institute (CLI) staff to imbue CLI materials with Salesian principles. Fourteen students have been selected by the SCFC for this institute, which consists of two weekend retreats and ten monthly meetings, along with a series of materials for personal reflection and practice.

The Salesian Studies On-Line program, under the auspices of the SCFC, offered six courses to twenty-six students in eleven states and one foreign country. De Sales University is planning to build a new \$5 million Salesian Center for Faith and Culture. Fr. Dailey, Executive Director, has reviewed the preliminary plans and is working to identify possible donors. For further information about the SCFC activities and programs, go to <http://www4.desales.edu/SCFC/>.

The Nativity School, a recently launched new apostolate of the Province to educate young disadvantaged boys, was featured in *The New York Times*, 24 November 2004. The school was praised for its “rigorous curriculum, unstinting standards, small class size, and individualized attention.” Of course, underlining the whole pedagogical approach is the Salesian spirit. Congratulations to Bro. Ed Ogden, OSFS, Principal, Fr. Richard DeLillio, OSFS, Executive Director, the teachers, staff and students of Nativity for its very successful beginnings!

To kick off a yearlong celebration of De Sales University’s 40th anniversary, presentations on the University’s history and Salesian-Oblate mission were made to faculty and staff by Fr. Daniel G. Gambet, OSFS, President Emeritus, and Fr. Alexander T. Pocetto, OSFS, Senior Vice President (retired). Full-time faculty and staff were also given copies of the new history of the University, entitled *Drawing Out the Goodness: From Allentown College to De Sales University (1964-2001)* and authored by Fr. Pocetto. This book is available from the University’s bookstore.

The English version of the video of the life of St. Francis de Sales, prepared by Fr. A. Robert McGilvray, OSFS, and based on André Ravier’s *Sage and Saint*, is now available for purchase from De Sales Resources & Ministries (www.desalesresource.org). The video is divided into eight sections of 15-20 minutes in length.

John Paul II and Benedict XVI on the Primary Salesian Biblical Mystery of the Visitation

In his reflection “Mary and the Year of the Eucharist” in the *General’s News XXIV* (April-May 2005), 1-4, Fr. Lewis S. Fiorelli, OSFS, Superior General of the De Sales Oblates, offered an excellent overview of Pope John Paul II’s reflections on Mary

and the Eucharist in his encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (On the Eucharist in Its Relationship to the Church), chapter 6. Among the many important points to which Fr. Fiorelli directs our attention is John Paul’s insight into the Eucharistic implication of the mystery of the Visitation: “When, at the Visitation, [Mary] bore in her womb the Word made flesh, she became in some way a ‘tabernacle’—the first ‘tabernacle’ in history—in which the Son of God, still invisible to our human gaze, allowed Himself to be adored by Elizabeth, radiating His light as it were through the eyes and voice of Mary” (n. 55). *The General’s News XXIV* is available on the ICSS website: www.franz-von-sales.de.

The Vatican News Service reported that on 31 May 2005, the Feast of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary, Pope Benedict XVI also reflected on the Eucharistic dimension of this primary Salesian Biblical mystery. Speaking to a group of the faithful who had just concluded praying the Rosary in the Vatican Gardens, Benedict recalled his predecessor’s description of Mary as the “Eucharistic woman,” adding: “Carrying the recently conceived Jesus in her womb, Mary goes to visit her elderly cousin, Elizabeth. . . . In a certain sense, we can say that her trip was—we like to underline it in this Year of the Eucharist—the first Eucharistic procession in history.”

Briefly Noted

An article on Bro. Michael O’Neill McGrath, OSFS, who enjoys a national reputation for his work of combining art and spirituality, appeared in the 14 April 2005 issue of the *Catholic Standard*, the newspaper of the Archdiocese of Washington.

To commemorate the feast of St. Francis de Sales, the newspaper of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, *The Catholic Standard and Times*, published the article, “Be Who You Are and Be That Well: What Salesian Spirituality Teaches College Students,” by Erin Maguire, a student at De Sales University.

Two very attractive booklets, “Educating the Mind and Heart in the Visitation Tradition” and “Justice Shall Flourish” have been published by the Sisters of the Visitation. Fr. Kevin Nadolski, OSFS, collaborated on the latter booklet.

Paul Haffner, *The Mystery of Mary* (Heredforshire: Gacewing, 2004), 234-35, 224, assesses positively St. Francis de Sales’s explanation of Mary’s death and assumption (*Treatise on the Love of God*, Bk. 7, chs. 13-14). He also notes the correspondence between Francis’s thought on this topic and Pope John Paul II’s.

The 2 Jan. 2005 English edition of *L’Osservatore Romano* featured an article by Archbishop Angelo Amato, SDB, entitled “The ‘Four Pillars’ of Salesian Spirituality.” It appeared on a full page, with the Turin portrait of St. Francis de Sales. The four pillars are (1) devotion to Mary, Help of Christians; (2) devotion to Jesus in the Eucharist; (3) an educational system based on joy and hope; and (4) devotion to the Church and the Vicar of Christ.

New Publications

ENGLISH

Msgr. Charles M. Murphy, *Belonging to God: A Personal Training Guide for a Deeper Catholic Spiritual Life* (New York: Crossroad, 2004). This is a recasting of the *Introduction to a Devout Life* and is available from De Sales Resources & Ministries Center. A discussion guide for this book is available at the De Sales Spirituality Center website: www.oblates.org/spirituality/desales_discussions/dis_belonging_to_god.pdf.

St. Francis de Sales, *Sermons on the Eucharist*, trans. Alexander T. Pocetto, OSFS, with a commentary by James F. Cryan, OSFS (Center Valley, Pa.: Salesian Center for Faith & Culture, 2005). This publication makes available in English translation Francis's three dogmatic sermons on the Eucharist of 1597. The translated text is complemented by Cryan's seminal essay, "Francis de Sales, Mystagogue: A Commentary on the Dogmatic Sermons on the Eucharist (July 1597)."

Juliana Devo, RGS, "Learning to Live Serenely: The Wisdom of Francis de Sales," *Review for Religious*, 64 (2005): 184-93.

Madeleine Grace, CVI, "St. Francis de Sales: Gentle and Sainly Sage," *Emmanuel*, (Mar./Apr. 2005): 148-59.

John Sankarathil, OSFS, "Called to Be Prophets of Holiness: Challenges and Dynamics of Prophetic Witness in the Indian Context," *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 69 (Jan. 2005): 42-56.

GERMAN

Franz von Sales, *Philothea. Anleitung zum frommen Leben* (Introduction to the Devout Life). This paperback edition of the *Introduction*, translated into German by Fr. Franz Reisinger, OSFS, and published by Franz Sales Verlag, Eichstätt, Bavaria, has already sold over 90,000 copies. This bestseller had now been reprinted. For more information, see www.franz-sales-verlag.de.

Franz Wehrle, *Die Schriften des hl. Franz von Sales* (The Writings of St. Francis de Sales) (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 2005). A comprehensive and in-depth study of the history of the writings of and about St. Francis de Sales, from the saint's first publications during his lifetime through the twentieth century. It is unfortunate that one of the newest publications of the twenty-first century, i.e., the groundbreaking biography by Fr. Dirk Koster, OSFS, is not mentioned. The book is available, via the Internet, at www.echter.de.

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Heiligenpredigten* (Sermons about Saints) (Munich: Wewel Verlag, 1997). Pope Benedict XVI published a great many books as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. In this book, a collection of his sermons on saints, one is pleased to find a sermon on St. Francis de Sales. This sermon may also be read on the ICSS website, www.franz-von-sales.de, under "Articles."

Forthcoming Publications

Dr. Viviane Mellinghoff-Bourgerie is completing, in collaboration with Frieder Mellinghoff, an international Salesian bibliography, entitled *Bibliographie des écrivains français—François de Sales (Saint)*. This nearly 500-page work of almost 3500 entries (many of which are annotated) will be published in the series "Bibliografica. Bibliographie Thématique des Littératures Francophones Européennes" by Éditions Memini, Paris-Rome, in late 2006 or early 2007. For further information about the work of Dr. Mellinghoff-Bourgerie, see her website: <http://homepage.rub.de/Viviane.E.Mellinghoff-Bourgerie/>

Franz von Sales Schmid, a retired German engineer, is preparing an illustrated book on St. Francis de Sales and the Visitation from the hundreds of photographs of Salesian paintings that he has taken during visits to many Visitation monasteries and other places of Salesian interest throughout Europe.

The Visitation Sisters of the German Federation are planning a German edition of the book *Le Coeur de saint François de Sales au monastère de la Visitation de Trévise* (The Heart of St. Francis de Sales in the Visitation Monastery of Treviso) by Pedro Fernández Rodríguez, OP. This book recounts the story of rescue of the relic of Francis's heart during the French Revolution and its transfer from Lyons to Treviso. (English readers will find this story recounted in *I Leave You My Heart: A Visitandine Chronicle of the French Revolution*, trans. and ed. Péronne-Marie Thibert, VHM, introduction by Jo Ann Kay McNamara [Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2000].)

The ICSS NEWSLETTER was founded in 1997 and is published biannually by the International Commission for Salesian Studies (ICSS) of the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales (Joseph F. Chorpenning, OSFS, Chairman; Herbert Winklehner, OSFS; Dirk Koster, OSFS). Its primary purpose is to disseminate on a global scale information dealing with Salesian Studies (St. Francis de Sales; St. Jane Frances de Chantal; Fr. Louis Brisson, founder of the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales; the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales; the Oblate Sisters of St. Francis de Sales; the Visitation of Holy Mary; Lay Institutes and other Religious who are members of the Salesian Family).

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Book Review, continued from page 5

others of their time, they admired cloistered convents as the highest form of religious life (177-78).

Diefendorf calls attention to innovative and inspired aspects of the founders' scheme by quoting from Francis's letter to Mère Marie-Jacqueline Favre, who had been sent to serve as superior of the Lyon foundation: "I willingly assent that it should be a religious order, provided that, by the mildness of the Constitutions, frail girls might be received, widows find retreat, and secular women find some refuge [to pursue] their advancement in the service of God" (178). Readers can appreciate the significance of the last portion of Francis's directive, giving lay women the right to enter the convent for spiritual edification among Visitandine nuns, by recalling Diefendorf's discussion in earlier chapters of the close but often unwieldy relationship that existed between lay elite and cloistered female religious. The pious women who organized and financed the founding of new convents in Paris—often wives or widows of wealthy aristocrats and officers of the king—expected vigorous participation in the religious communities that they patronized, including entrance into the enclosure. Some nuns, such as the Spanish Discalced Carmelites who founded the order's first French convent in Paris in 1604 (and with whom both Francis and Jane had close ties), feared that the intrusion of lay benefactors inevitably corrupted the enclosed nuns' lives of austerity and constant prayer. Nevertheless, the Carmelites, like other monastic communities, found it impossible to resist these types of visits, since they brought tangible rewards that aided the order's expansion throughout France.

Francis and Jane took what had been a problematic situation and turned it into a positive one. In keeping with the core Salesian conviction that every individual is called to holiness, they developed a formula that catered to the spiritual needs of women, whatever their station in life. The presence of lay women in the convent was not a necessary but regrettable concession to pious benefactors, but instead became an integral part of the Visitandine mission: "The apostolic vocation that de Sales envisioned for the Filles de la Visitation lay not in nursing the sick or assisting the indigent

but in sheltering and offering spiritual counsel to lay women"(179). This feature was to be widely imitated by other French religious communities. Diefendorf effectively points out that Francis and Jane's plan, allowing the Visitandine nuns to offer guidance and retreat to secular women, was an implicit defense of a female apostolate.

The most important aspect of Diefendorf's fine book is its reevaluation of the place of women in the Counter-Reformation church. Contradicting the common characterization of early modern women as hapless victims of a rigid and repressive patriarchal structure, her study demonstrates that, in France at least, they were a powerful engine that pushed forward Catholic renewal. She acknowledges, however, that assumptions about gender and gender roles have served to downplay women's remarkable contributions and argues for a reassessment of female leadership, including that of Jane de Chantal:

Traditional histories have obscured women's active part in shaping the institutions, spirituality, and value system that characterized the Catholic Reformation in France by concentrating too narrowly on the achievements of a handful of great men. Even those women whose names have made it into the standard texts appear as subordinate partners charged with executing the designs of brilliant men. Jeanne de Chantal stands in the shadow of François de Sales, ...the male saints receive more credit than do the female for founding the religious orders their collaborations produced (245-46).

Diefendorf's study goes a long way toward recovering ways that women, as well as men, steered the development of early modern Catholicism.

Christopher C. Wilson

A specialist in early modern Catholic art, Christopher C. Wilson received his Ph.D. in art history from The George Washington University, where he presently teaches in the Department of Fine Arts and Art History. He is also a member of the Institutum Camelianum in Rome. His essay "Picturing the Way of Perfection: Grégoire Huret's Engravings of St. Jane Frances de Chantal (1644) in Their Teresian Context," will be published in Human Encounter in the Salesian Tradition, to be published in 2006.