30th Anniversary of the International Commission for Salesian Studies

This year (2006) marks the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the International Commission for Salesian Studies (ICSS) by the directive of the 14th General Chapter of the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales (1976). This milestone provides a welcome opportunity to review the work of the ICSS over the past three decades, as well as to consider its future direction.

Origins

The General Chapters in the years immediately following the Second Vatican Council were known as “chapters of renewal” because their work was in direct response to Vatican II’s call for the “appropriate renewal of religious life.” Perfectae Caritatis, the Council’s Decree on the Up-to-Date Renewal of Religious Life, indicated that such renewal involved “two simultaneous processes: (1) a continuous return to the sources of all Christian life and to the original inspiration behind a given community and (2) an adjustment of the community to the changed conditions of the times” (n. 2). Thus, the Council envisioned that religious communities were to go back to their foundational sources to retrieve their charism with a view to making it applicable and attractive to the contemporary world. With this in mind, the General Chapter of 1972, held in Eichstätt, Germany, authorized the Superior General to establish a commission to develop a statute for an International Commission for Salesian Studies for presentation at the next General Chapter. The then Superior General, Fr. William Ward, appointed Frs. Anton Nobis, Daniel Gambet, and Alexander Pocetto to accomplish this task. Their work was approved by the 14th General Chapter (1976).

The Statute approved by the Chapter describes the scope of Salesian Studies as those “relative to St. Francis de Sales, St. Jane de Chantal, Father Brisson, Mother Mary de Sales Chappuis, the Sisters of the Visitation of Holy Mary, the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales, the Oblate Sisters of St. Francis de Sales, the De Sales Secular Institute and the entire Salesian family.” Moreover, the scope of Salesian Studies is defined in terms of three concentric circles: the innermost core or circle is basic research; from this center radiate two wider circles—the popular, which “[makes] the findings of basic research available to people not interested in scientific research, but interested in knowing and living Salesian doctrine,” and the pastoral, which includes “people who are actively engaged in disseminating Salesian thought and spirit through the press, the media, preaching, and spiritual direction” (ICSS Statute, I).

Figure 1. The ICSS was established in 1976 as part of the response by the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales to the Second Vatican Council’s call, in Perfectae Caritatis (left), for the renewal of consecrated life by religious communities returning to their foundational sources to retrieve their charism with a view to recovering its significance and message for the contemporary world. On the right is the 1998 edition of the Statute of the ICSS (in English, French, and German), published by Franz Sales Verlag in Eichstätt, Germany.

The principal vehicle for promoting Salesian Studies on a worldwide level was an International Commission consisting of three Oblates, “preferably experts in Salesian Studies,” each representing the major languages of the Congregation: “One of them is to represent the English-speaking areas, one the French and Italian, one the German and Dutch” (ICSS Statute, II.1). Members of the Commission are appointed by the Superior General after consultation with the respective Provinces and Regions.

Historical Retrospective: 1976-2005

Fr. Anton Nobis of the Austrian-South German Province was appointed as the first chairman of the ICSS. He was succeeded by Fr. James Langelaan (1985-92), who was a charter member of the Commission. The third chairman was Fr. Alexander Pocetto, who served from 1992 until 2002, and was succeeded by Fr. Joseph Chorpenning. Other Oblates who
have served on the ICSS are Frs. Bernard Baussand, Jean Brachet, Michel Tournade, Jean Gayet, Konrad Eßer, Herbert Winklehner, and Dirk Koster.

To encourage Oblates to work on projects in Salesian Studies, the ICSS Statute made provision for the awarding of modest grants. Applications for these grants are submitted to and evaluated by the ICSS, whose recommendations are then forwarded to the Superior General and his Council for approval. Over the years, a number of grants have been funded that fit into one of the three concentric circles set forth in the Statute of the ICSS. These grants helped finance projects such as the publication of the Jahrbuch für salesianische Studien of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Salesianische Studien founded by the Austrian-South German Province and the Salesian Scholars Seminar initiated by Fr. Joseph Power. Other grants provided support for multimedia projects that could be used in a variety of ways to promote and teach Salesian Studies.

On its own initiative, the ICSS translated and published for private distribution in 2000 the groundbreaking scholarly study, by the Congregation's archivist, Fr. Roger Balducelli, of the Good Mother's cause for beatification, which masterfully refutes Fr. Wattrignant's baseless charges. To commemorate the 400th anniversary of the episcopal ordination of St. Francis de Sales as well as the 125th anniversary of his declaration as a Doctor of the Church, the ICSS published the booklet Leadership in the Salesian Tradition in 2002. Yet another initiative undertaken by the ICSS is the sponsorship and preparation of a volume of original essays by Salesian scholars to commemorate the 4th centenary of the initial meeting in 1604 of St. Francis de Sales and St. Jane Frances de Chantal: Human Encounter in the Salesian Tradition. The response to the call for submissions exceeded all expectations. This volume, containing twenty essays in the three languages of the Congregation (English, French, and German), will make available a wealth of information and material, together with a great variety of methodological approaches, for reflection and dissemination at several levels: the scholarly, the popular, and the pastoral. It will be published in 2006.

In 1997, the General Council expressed concerns about the nature and scope of some of the grants being sought, and advised the ICSS to revise its Statute to limit the number of years for funding ongoing projects to three and to make sure there was not an overemphasis on the Internet and electronic means for accomplishing its mission. Revisions reflecting these concerns, as well as other changes in keeping with the way the ICSS actually functioned, were made in the ICSS Statute. In 2005, the ICSS proposed that several amendments and deletions be made to its Statute, which were subsequently approved by the General Council.

One of the important responsibilities of the ICSS is to collect and disseminate information on “institutions, activities, studies and plans inside and outside the Congregation” in the area of Salesian Studies worldwide (ICSS Statute, III.2.a). With this purpose in mind, Fr. Pocetto, as editor, and ably assisted by Frs. Winklehner and Gayet, inaugurated in November 1997 the publication of the ICSS Newsletter, which is translated into French, German, and, more recently, Spanish and Portuguese. Technical and design assistance was generously provided by Mr. Thomas McNamara, director of publications at De Sales University.

When Fr. Chorpenning became chairman of the ICSS and consequently editor of the Newsletter, its design and printing began to be done at Saint Joseph’s University Press in Philadelphia, where he also serves as editorial director. Beginning in January 2004, the ICSS Newsletter was given a new design, format, and style. Each issue now has a lead essay, in addition to the usual news items from throughout the Salesian world, as well as other features, such as Salesian bibliography and the occasional book review. The guiding idea behind the lead essay is that it presents a reflection on a substantial, and perhaps neglected or unexplored, theme of our Salesian heritage that is both grounded in scholarship and accessible to a wide general audience so as to nurture and support those engaged in the popular and pastoral dissemination of our Salesian charism. With characteristic graciousness and generosity, Fr. Pocetto, who played such a pivotal role in the inception and development of the ICSS over so many years and was the Newsletter’s founding editor, accepted his successor’s invitation to serve as the Newsletter’s News Editor.

Prior to the publication of the ICSS Newsletter, a website was developed by Fr. Pocetto in 1995, with the assistance of the expertise and extensive computer facilities of De Sales University. The site was one of the first to promote Salesian Studies on a worldwide basis. In 2003, Fr. Winklehner, a member of the ICSS, assumed the responsibilities of webmaster. Building on the pioneering work of Fr. Pocetto, he re-designed the website, making it even more attractive and user-friendly, and does an outstanding job of maintaining it. The ICSS website (www.franz-von-sales.de) makes available a great many Salesian resources (bibliographies, a virtual library of several works of St. Francis de Sales in various languages, articles, archived newsletters, music, and iconography), as well as links to numerous Oblate and related Salesian sites. The Annecy edition of the Oeuvres is currently in the process of being added to this website. Recently, Fr. Winklehner has launched a website dedicated to Fr. Brisson (www.louisbrisson.org) that will eventually contain the edition millénaire of the works of the founder of the De Sales Oblates. By means of these initiatives, Salesian Studies has become part of the electronic age as it had not previously been, and all under the auspices of the ICSS.

The ICSS Enters Its 4thDecade

As the ICSS commences its fourth decade, it will continue to communicate, by means of its biannual Newsletter, “what exists and has been carried out” (ICSS Statute, II.3.a.i) in the world of Salesian scholarship to the Congregation and beyond, to lend financial support to Salesian projects carried out by De Sales Oblates, and to initiate Salesian scholarly projects on behalf of and for the benefit of the Congregation and the wider world of Salesian scholarship to an even greater degree. Many religious orders and congregations have a formally sponsored body that leads its efforts to mine its spiritual patrimony by sponsoring and promoting scholarly research into its primary sources. The ICSS fulfills this function for our Congregation, as well as for much of the wider Salesian tradition.

In its work, the ICSS is guided by its Statute, as well as by the principles of the Salesian charism itself. For example, the primacy of human friendship and the relational in the Salesian spiritual vision suggests a fresh and more grounded way of understanding the dynamic and vital relationship that must necessarily exist among the three concentric circles of Salesian Studies. Salesian research in primary sources takes place within an international community of scholars that is composed of both Oblates and non-Oblates. Moreover, this is not research simply for the sake of research; rather, the new insights brought forth by Salesian scholars working in the primary sources nourish and help to keep vital the dissemination of the Salesian charism on the practical and pastoral
levels, which otherwise are in danger of becoming stale, even stagnant. Just as great care is taken to foster and support the popular and pastoral dissemination of the charism, there must be an equally firm commitment to promoting research into the primary sources of our Salesian heritage and patrimony.

Another hallmark of Salesian spirituality that guides the ICSS is careful attention to “our times,” to discerning the presence of the hand of Divine Providence in the ordinary events and circumstances of daily life. As we behold “our times,” we discover that, over the next sixteen years, no fewer than five major Salesian anniversaries will offer singular, “once-in-a-century,” opportunities to disseminate our Salesian charism: in 2008, the centenary of the death of Fr. Brisson; in 2009, the 4th centenary of the publication of the Introduction to the Devout Life; in 2010, the 4th centenary of the foundation of the Visitation Order; in 2016, the 4th centenary of the publication of the Treatise on the Love of God; and, in 2022, the 4th centenary of the death of St. Francis de Sales. Accordingly, it is more than appropriate that these historic anniversaries be the focal points of the initiatives undertaken by the ICSS over the coming years, as indicated in the Five-Year Strategic Plan (2006-2011) formulated and adopted by the ICSS at its meeting in Rome in April 2005.

The Statute of the ICSS, as well as its Five-Year Strategic Plan may be accessed on the ICSS website: www.franz-von-sales.de.

SALESIAN GENTLENESS AND HUMILITY IN ACTION:
ST. FRANCIS DE SALES’S MISSIONARY APOTOLATE IN THE CHABLAI

Missio ad gentes and the New Evangelization
In his masterful study The Splendor of Faith: The Theological Vision of Pope John Paul II, Avery Dulles, SJ, situates the pope’s great encyclical on missionary activity, Redemptoris missio (1990), in the context of the recent debate in the Church between two schools of thought in missiology. According to Cardinal Dulles, a more traditional school tends to restrict the term “missionary activity” to the evangelization of regions where the faith has not yet been planted, while a more innovative school argues that in the contemporary world missionary activity must be carried on everywhere, even in traditionally Christian parts of the world. In the latter’s judgment, the term “foreign missions” should be abandoned because it is reflective of the colonialist mentality that must be superseded. The former counters that to speak of the whole world as mission country diverts attention, funds, and personnel from the parts of the world where the Church still depends on support from countries where the Church is firmly established and flourishing.

Cardinal Dulles observes that, in Redemptoris missio, John Paul takes “a mediating position” between the traditional and innovative schools of missiology.

He uses the Latin term missio ad gentes as the equivalent of what used to be called “foreign missions,” thus satisfying a concern of the more traditional group. But he also says, with the innovative school, that many traditionally Christian parts of the world are no longer Christian except perhaps in name, and are in need of what he calls “re-evangelization.” In the end he makes a threefold distinction (RMts 33):

(a) Pastoral activity is needed in areas where the population is on the whole Christian and practicing.
(b) Re-evangelization or new evangelization is needed where the faith has been dominant but is no longer vital.
(c) Missio ad gentes, or missionary activity in the strict sense, is needed where the gospel has not yet been proclaimed or where the Church has not been planted. Its proximate aim is conversion and the implantation of the Church (ibid., 56).

This is not the first time in history that the Church has engaged in missionary activity on two fronts, so to speak. A comparable situation existed during the lifetime of St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622). Early modern Catholicism dedicated itself to vigorous missionary activity both in foreign lands and within Europe, where it sought to stem the tide of Protestantism in areas where the Reformation was a threat, and to promote the revival of Catholic piety and doctrine in areas not under such a threat. Francis’s ministry in the Chablais (1594-98), which sought to reconvert to Catholicism a region that had lapsed into Calvinism, is a sterling example of the Church’s missionary activity within Europe during the early modern period, which offers a precedent for the new evangelization at the dawn of the third Christian millennium.

Historically, however, religious communities in the Salesian tradition, such as the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales, have claimed Francis’s ministry in the Chablais as the model for their apostolate of the foreign missions, as attested by our congregation’s Constitutions (definitively approved by the Holy See on 29 June 1889). Constitution 199 avers: “The Oblate missionaries continue the work of St. Francis de Sales, who began his priestly life in this role.” This point is underscored in Constitution 202: “The Oblate who works in the missions will strive to acquire the virtues of the Apostle of the Chablais.” Moreover, the endowment established by the 17th General Chapter of the De Sales Oblates (2000) to ensure the long-term financial viability of our foreign missions is named the “Chablais Fund” (General Statute 42).

A challenge facing our congregation is to work out a “mediating position,” akin to John Paul’s in Redemptoris missio, between the traditional view that sees Francis’s Chablais ministry as the prototype for the De Sales Oblates’ missio ad gentes, and the more recent view, based on the recovery of the original historical context of the Chablais mission, that finds the contemporary counterpart of this key episode in Francis’s life and ministry to be the new evangelization. As the process of developing such a position unfolds, it is helpful to take a cue from Francis’s emphasis in his evangelization of the Chablais on a return to what is held in common. In this instance, we hold in common our congregational mission: “to achieve the imitation of Christ and to carry out the service of the Church in the modern world by living and spreading Salesian doctrine. Our intention is to imitate St. Francis de Sales as well as to teach and spread his doctrine in the world. [In the words of our founder, Fr. Brisson,] ‘We are not..."
only those who imitate St. Francis de Sales, but we are those who continue his work..." in our ministries, which “can assume all the forms our age requires” (Constitutions 11-12).

Viewed from this perspective, Francis’s Chablais ministry has a broader application and appeal than perhaps has been heretofore recognized. Presentations on the primary Salesian virtues of gentleness and humility usually offer an exposition based on Francis’s discussion of these virtues in his writings. However, in Francis’s Chablais ministry, Salesian gentleness and humility are seen in action: they are concretely exemplified and modeled by Francis for imitation by his sons and daughters in every age and in every circumstance and life activity, whether ministry, community life, or human relationships. The remainder of this reflection focuses on how Francis’s ministry in the Chablais proffers such a paradigm.

**The Challenges and Salesian Method of the Chablais Mission**

The Chablais mission is one of the most complex episodes of Francis’s life, due in no small part to the highly complicated political and religious situation of this region at the time. Even after Francis successfully completed his four-year mission there, the Chablais would continue to be an “administrative headache” (de la Bedoyere, 71) for him, particularly during his tenure as bishop. The particulars of the challenges Francis faced in his mission to reconvert the Chablais, from which the Catholic faith had been virtually eliminated for more than half a century, are detailed in the standard biographies of our saint: not only the religious situation, but also the deplorable physical and impoverished economic state of affairs as a result of years of warfare and conflict; the physical dangers and hardships, loneliness and depression, and frustration and disappointment at every turn; the hostility of the inhabitants of the Chablais, who were French by language and culture and in thrall to the Swiss, toward the Italian duke of Savoy and the militant Catholicism associated with Italy and Spain; the superstitiousness of the population, who believed in witches and werewolves and thought that papists were demonically possessed.

Francis’s effort to restore Catholicism to the Chablais, the outcome of which at many points was doubtful, was ultimately successful. Several factors contributed to this success, but perhaps none more importantly than Francis’s method and approach in accomplishing this mission and surmounting the challenges it posed. Francis’s personal model in his Chablais ministry is Jesus, specifically the Jesus of Matthew 11:29 (Francis’s favorite Scriptural verse), who reveals Himself as “gentle and humble of heart,” as He carries out His salvific mission traveling throughout Galilee and Judea (cf. Lajeunie, 1:194). The gentle and humble Jesus dictates the method and approach that Francis takes in the Chablais.

From his youth, Francis was drawn to contemplate, to rest in, and to be sustained by the heart of Jesus. In the Chablais, Francis’s appropriation of the gentle and humble heart of Jesus would attain an even greater profundity. This new depth was forged in the crucible of what must have seemed at times to be overwhelming adversity. At the same time, it was nurtured by long hours of prayer in the chapel of the fortress of Allinges (where Francis sought refuge each night) before the Romanesque mural of Christ that includes four figures, three of whom are identified as the (“little”) virtues of charity, humility, and patience (Figure 2). André Ravier, SJ, notes that during these years Francis moves away from the intransigence of a jurist with regard to Protestantism to a pastoral and apostolic approach that sought to restore unity through reconciliation (92-93). Put another way, “we must distinguish between [Francis’s] attitude to heresy as a political evil [cuius regio, eius religio] and his attitude towards the person of the heretic” (de la Bedoyere, 65). Francis’s priority was to provide his countrymen in the Chablais a glimpse of the face of the gentle and humble Jesus in his person and ministry to them. The contrast with the severity of Calvinism and its doctrine of predestination could not be more dramatic.

“[Whoever] wins a person’s heart has won the whole person”

It has been observed that even more significant than the successful outcome of the Chablais mission is that it “confirmed the young [Francis’s] intuition that persuasion—spoken from the heart in love—was preferable to battle, whether armed or in the form of invective intellectual debate” (Wright, 29). Francis’s method of gentle persuasion took various forms in his
missionary apostolate in the Chablais. Let us consider three salient examples.

First, the Calvinists had employed force and repression to extirpate Catholicism in the Chablais. Francis, on the contrary, would have nothing of force. When the Baron d'Hermance, the governor of the fortress of Allinges, proposed that an armed escort accompany Francis and his cousin Louis, Francis refused to carry out his mission “in the shadow of pikes and halberds” (Ravier, 76).

[Because] de Sales as a person of deep spiritual insight, understood very well the difference between the method of love and Christian charity and the method of force, whether political or military, he himself was only personally interested in conversions by purely spiritual means. “I assure you that I have never used invectives and reproaches without being sorry for it,” he confessed. “We must hold it an absolute fact that men do more through love and charity than through severity and harshness” (de la Bedoyere, 66).

Second, Francis’s apostolate was undertaken primarily by personal contact and availability to any person who wanted to speak to him: “I am ready with all my heart to listen to anyone in doubt [who] wants to speak with me about it. I will attend to him with all respect” (quoted by Koster, 64). Francis “treated with respect and charity those Protestants who kept away from him, who sometimes insulted him or assailed him, and above all he took them seriously…. By speech, undoubtedly, but especially by his entire life,… [he] had to reveal to his separated brothers the spirit and the [gentle and humble] heart of Jesus Christ” (Ravier, 76-77). James Cryan, OSFS, incisively comments on the centrality of dialogue in the Chablais ministry, providing not only a valuable insight into Francis’s person, but also its implications for his disciples in every age and place.

In his Chablais ministry Francis de Sales departed from the polemic style… and chose dialogue. Dialogue obligates one’s ego…. Dialogue is an ethical summons. It requires knowing the other. Francis de Sales wrote in “the homely language of the Savoyard” and used the rhetorical arrangement popular among Calvinists. “I want to discuss, not argue,” he told Beza. [Francis] knew that the moral summons of dialogue is jeopardized if one ignores the concrete historicality (particularity) of the other. Dialogue resists treating the other as an abstraction…. Dialogue seeks common ground, seeks to transcend difference. It is other-oriented, while need is self-oriented. In dialogue we do not promote our own agenda; we respond to another’s concerns; we care.… Such reversal of roles, a self-emptying that allows the substitution of the other for the self, pervades all Salesian thought….8

Third, another form that Francis’s method of gentle persuasion took was his preaching. The Reformation had won its success primarily through preaching. A major way that Francis sought to counteract Calvinism’s attraction was to reclaim the pulpit. Francis departed from polemics, turning to a constructive style of counteract Calvinism’s attraction was to reclaim the pulpit. The Reformation had won its success primarily through preaching. A major way that Francis sought to [Francis] preaching… focused on the beauty of the Catholic faith in all its rich symmetry, rather than upon negative characterizations or even disputed doctrinal questions. “Heart speaks to heart,” Francis taught, even at this early point in his career. The heart grounded in the Heart of God calls forth that love from other hearts.

But the arts of respectful conversation, constructive apologies, and persuasive preaching were for the young [Francis] not simply means to an end. His respectful methods were based on a real affirmation of the intrinsic dignity and worth of each particular person, who is to be revered as such, even when—perhaps most when—the ideas they hold or the affiliations that claim them make them an “enemy.”…Francis de Sales was a man of genuine reconciliation, a man for whom love and its realization was not simply the goal but the means.9

It would be a mistake to think that Francis’s method of winning hearts through gentle persuasion was universally acclaimed and accepted. It was a new method that stood apart from the aggressive and confrontational missionary strategies of the Jesuits, Capuchins, and even St. Charles Borromeo, whom Francis greatly admired and esteemed. The Salesian method was faulted (by Francis’s collaborator in the Chablais mission, the Capuchin friar Chérubin de Maurienne, and even by his dear friend, Antoine Favr) for being too gentle and peace-loving, not sufficiently zealous and rigorous, and too slow in yielding results. But Francis stayed the course, convinced that this was the Gospel way of proceeding. He was ever cautious about zealotry, which led to polarization and partisanship, thus precluding the Church serving as an instrument for peace and reconciliation. Francis’s goal was to convince and to win hearts, not to defeat, and, he had learned from Scupoli’s Spiritual Combat, this is more effectively achieved with a certain dispassionateness.10 More than a decade later, in his most well-known and best-selling book, Introduction to the Devout Life (1609), Francis would write: “whoever wins a person’s heart has won the whole person” (Pt. 3, ch. 23). This is the prize on which Francis’s eye was always fixed.

Salesian Humility in the Service of the Church and Collaborative Ministry

Jill Fehleison’s recent study of the Chablais mission (see note 4 below) has highlighted its collaborative nature, specifically in its second phase (1597-98). From 1594 to 1597, Francis worked alone and in tandem with his cousin Louis. In 1597, Francis and Louis received reinforcements, a small band that included two Capuchins (Chérubin de Maurienne and Esprit de Beaulne), a Jesuit (Jean Saunier), and the newly installed curé of Annemasse (Jean Maniglier). The group met in Annemasse to chart its strategy and course of action for the next phase of the Chablais mission. Chérubin de Maurienne in particular played a formative role in the new direction of the mission by introducing the idea of holding the Forty Hours Devotion in Annemasse. Père Chérubin was a gifted and learned, though fiery, orator. His zeal, emotional outbursts, and threats made him a controversial figure who eventually fell afoul of the duke of Savoy because of his inflammatory style. The contrast with Francis’s personality and the Salesian method could not be more marked.

This group worked together, however, to mount the very successful Forty Hours celebrations in Annemasse and Thonon, the capital of the Chablais. In this difficult collaborative process, it was Francis who was the mediator among the duke, bishop, papal nuncio, and missionaries. Although respected and admired, he was not always listened to or obeyed, and was sometimes challenged. Nonetheless, Francis succeeded, precisely because of his gentle manner and humility, and his complete lack of ego and desire to put himself forward.

(continued on page 12)
**Africa**

**Benin**

In the most recent issue of the *General's Newsletter* (Sept.-Oct. 2005), Fr. Fiorelli reports: “A very special moment of my visit to South Africa will be the ordination to the diaconate on September 10 of three Oblates from Bénin….The French community in Benin is beginning to blossom, much to the joy of the French Province and the fraternal encouragement of the entire Congregation.”

As noted in the most recent issue of the *La Lettre RES [= Recherches et Études Salésiennes],* no. 11, a Salesian conference with the theme “L’Esprit Saint et l’esprit salesien” was held in this former French colony in 1998 at the Centre Marial de Dassa-Zoumè. Approximately forty people participated. Among them were Salesians of Don Bosco, the Daughters and Sons of St. Francis de Sales, the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales, Priests of St. Francis de Sales (PSFS), the Salesian Missionary Sisters of Mary Immaculate (SMMI), novices, aspirants, seminarians, and lay people. The following talks from this conference appear in this issue: “L’Esprit Saint et son action dans l’Église et le monde d’aujourd’hui” (The Activity of the Holy Spirit in the Church and in Today’s World) by Sr. Martha Radoinamalala, SMMI; “L’Esprit, source de vie intérieure à la lumière de saint François de Sales” (The Spirit, Source of the Interior Life in the Light of St. Francis de Sales) by Fr. Jean-Luc Leroux, OSFS, “L’Esprit-Saint et les valeurs spirituelles salesiennes et africaines” (The Holy Spirit and Salesian and African Values) by Fr. Martin Adjou, PSFS; “L’Esprit-Saint dans la vie du jeune disciple africain de saint François de Sales” (The Holy Spirit in the Life of a Young African Disciple of St. Francis de Sales) by Adolphe Odjo and Benoît Ahouangonnou.

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**Asian Region**

**Philippines**

The sudden death of Fr. Anthony Ceresko, OSFS, of the Toledo-Detroit Province has left a deep void in the Congregation and in the plan to expand the Oblates into the Philippines. Fr. Ceresko was the avant-garde not only for the Indian missions, but also, more recently, for an Oblate foundation in the Philippines, where he taught Scripture in the Divine Word Seminary in Tagaytay City, Cavite. The previous issue of the *ICSS Newsletter* (July-August 2005) announced the publication of Fr. Ceresko’s new book, *St. Francis de Sales and the Bible* (Bangalore: SFS Publications/Asian Trading Corporation, 2005), a collection of nine of his previously published articles on the significance of Salesian spirituality and the Scriptures in dialogue with the modern world and, especially, with third world cultures. All Oblates and, particularly Oblate missionaries, will find in these writings a rich and abundant resource for living and preaching the Gospel in the spirit of St. Francis de Sales. Fr. Ceresko, by walking humbly and simply before God, has given us all an excellent example to follow.

Despite the great loss of Fr. Ceresko, Fr. Josef Költringer, OSFS, who was very instrumental in laying a strong foundation for the Indian Oblate missions, is moving forward with quiet determination to establish a more permanent Oblate presence in the Philippines. He has received a generous gift of about 2.3 acres of land from an elderly widow, along with the use for ten years of a house close to this property, located about 10 kilometers from Lipa. If one or two Oblates could join him in a couple of months or so, he could begin to accept candidates for the formation program. Any Oblate who might be interested can learn more
about the foundation by contacting him at jkoeltringer@gmx.at. The Philippines foundation is an outreach from India. The Oblate community in India is growing and maturing quickly. The plan is to have the Indian Oblates take full charge of this foundation by 2009. Fr. Költringer has been greatly aided by the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales and the Daughters of St. Francis de Sales who have preceded the Oblates. The Philippines, as he envisions it, will serve as an excellent springboard for evangelizing the vast populations of the nearby nations of East Asia, such as China, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Taiwan that long to hear the Good News of the Gospel.

**INDIA**

The growth of the Oblates in India has exceeded all expectations. There are currently seventy-four men that are part of the India project, thirty-seven of whom are professed and twelve ordained. It is comparable in size to the Toledo-Detroit Province. As noted in the last issue of this newsletter, a hostel for young boys was opened and is in full operation in the former novitiate on the Samapanaram property near Bangalore. Interestingly, several of the Oblate seminarians are doing their regency with the Salesians of Don Bosco in northeastern India (Assam and Meghalaya). Fr. Baiju Paul, OSFS, former Superior of the Salespuram Oblate Community in Kerala, is residing at Wills Hall Oblate Community and working on a Master's Degree in Education at De Sales University. He expects to return to India to establish an Oblate school there.

Not to be outdone by their Oblate confreres in Samapanaram, the younger Oblate aspirants in Salespuram began publishing their own newsletter, *Point Alpha*. Both OSAI, the newsletter of the Oblates of Samapanaram, and the newer publication exude a spirit of youthful optimism and joy, and a refreshing gratitude for their Oblate vocation, generally expressed in a rather imaginative fashion. They seem to be captivated and inspired by the Salesian-Oblate spirit and charism. This augurs well for the continued growth and expansion of the Oblates in that country.

**Central and South America Region**

**HAITI**

Fr. Tom Hagan, OSFS, writes from Haiti: “I am very much involved in this area. We have seven schools in this area with a total of 4,000 children. Our clinic is there as well, servicing 20,000 people. In one week alone, we feed over 500,000. The article [in the *New York Times*] does not mention us, but the only organization that can enter there is Hands Together. I try to keep a low profile, and I try to be apolitical. Actually the gang leader ‘Dred’ tried to contact me before he was killed on July 6th. All the gangs know us and respect us because we are helping their people. Yet, we still have suffered this year the loss of sixteen workers and several of the children. Last week four of my closest workers were kidnapped, but, fortunately, we were able to negotiate their release. Four of these schools in the slums are named after Salesian saints, the newest being St. Léonie Aviat. In mid-September, seven [Oblate] aspirants will leave for Brazil, and another six will remain here for this coming year.” So amid all the indescribable strife, corruption, and evil, we see that God’s work for good continues.

**BRAZIL**

Next year the Oblates will celebrate their 100th anniversary in the Southern State of Brazil, Rio Grande do Sul. To commemorate the occasion, the Oblates of the Brazil Region have published a calendar for 2006 with a picture of St. Francis de Sales and a map of South America, marking the many rays of spreading the Good News in the Salesian-Oblate spirit that emanate from this area and from Uruguay. In conjunction with this event, the Portuguese translation of Fr. Michel Tournade’s adaptation of the *Introduction to the Devout Life, Un monde à aimer*, has been translated by Fr. Laurentius van der Raadt, OSFS, with the title of *Un amigo a ser descoberto* and published by Cidade Nova.

**Europe**

**FRENCH PROVINCE**

News of the sudden death on 3 December 2005 of Sr. Marie-Patricia Burns, VHM, archivist of the Annecy Visitacion Monastery, was received with shock and deep sadness throughout the Salesian world. A memoir of this distinguished and beloved Salesian scholar will appear in the next issue of the ICSS Newsletter.

Fr. Henri L’Honoré characterized himself as a “...Normand par naissance, je suis devenu tout savoyard et tout salesien” (a Norman by birth, I have become a Savoyard and a Salesian through and through). This thought is brought out by Mme. Nicole Schneider, Secretary of the Académie Florimontaine in Annecy and author of the article “Le Père Henri L’Honoré, OSFS, 1917-2001,” *Revue Savoisienne* (2003). She stresses his passionate love for Francis de Sales and how tirelessly he worked to promote the saint’s spirit and teaching, especially through the “Journées salesiennes,” founded by the Austrian Oblate Fr. Franz Reisinger around 1950, who handed over the torch to Fr. L’Honoré in 1969. The article contains an interesting photo of Fr. L’Honoré seated between the Italian Oblate, Fr. Ruggero Balboni, and the then Cardinal Albino Luciano, the future Pope John Paul I. The picture was taken at a Salesian conference held in Venice, Italy, in 1976. They were listening to a talk on Pope Paul VI’s apostolic letter *Sabaudiae gemma* (The Gem of Savoy) given by Fr. Antonio Brunelli. Those interested in obtaining a copy of the article may do so by writing to: Académie Salésienne, 18, avenue de Trésun, 74000 Annecy, France.
Recognizing the stellar qualities of Fr. Michel Tournade, OSFS, Provincial of the French Province, the Bishop of Annecy has appointed him as diocesan Director of Youth Ministry. In his usual unobtrusive fashion, Fr. Tournade works to spread the Salesian-Oblate spirit and charism, especially by giving numerous conferences on St. Francis de Sales to lay people and organizing youth events. His colleague and former ICSS member, Fr. Jean Gayet, has just completed the digitization of volume 22 of the Annecy edition of the Oeuvres of St. Francis de Sales. We owe a profound debt of gratitude to Fr. Gayet for this labor of love.


AUSTRIA-SOUTH GERMAN PROVINCE

The Salesian magazine LICHT (Light) celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2006. Its first issue was published on 15 January 1906. Fr. Joseph Lebeau, OSFS, the first Provincial of the De Sales Oblates in Austria, was the initiator and founder of the magazine. In his preface to the first issue, he described its goals, which LICHT follows up to the present: disseminating information about the De Sales Oblates and the Salesian family from all over the world and about the life, teaching, work, and spirituality of St. Francis de Sales, as well as commenting on events in the Church and the world from the viewpoint of Salesian spirituality. In 2006 a series of articles will deal with the history of the magazine. Moreover, the Superior General of the De Sales Oblates, Fr. Lewis S. Fiorelli, OSFS, will contribute one in a series of articles about the essential aspects of Salesian spirituality. Fr. Fiorelli offered his congratulations on this anniversary with the following words:

The Austria-South German Province has made many significant contributions to the Church and to the Congregation during these past hundred years. I wish to express my personal gratitude to the Oblates of this Province, past and present, for all that they have done to foster the joyful optimism of St. Francis de Sales among the people whom they have served so generously throughout all these years. The LICHT has been a major vehicle for spreading the inviting spirit of the Gentleman Saint for the past hundred years. May it be so for another hundred years!

Fr. Herbert Winklehner, the present editor-in-chief of the magazine, has created a PowerPoint presentation about the last 100 years of LICHT, which chronicles how LICHT has always attempted to spread the Salesian charism and spirituality to the people of the German-speaking world in spite of so many challenges throughout the twentieth century, namely, the worldwide economic crisis in the 1920s, the Nazi dictatorship, and the Second World War.

On 21-22 October 2005 the Arbeitsgemeinschaft für salesianische Studien (Working Group for Salesian Studies) met at the Salesianum Rosental, Eichstätt, Bavaria. About twenty members of the working group from Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and the Netherlands attended this meeting. The principal topic of the meeting was the German edition of the letters of St. Jane Frances de Chantal, of which the complete edition (six volumes) is only available in French at present. Some members of the working group have been working on this translation for several years. A first rough translation of all the letters has been completed; however, it needs a thorough revision. For this purpose, an editorial team, under the leadership of Fr. Gottfried Prinz, OSFS, who already had responsibility for the work of the translation, has been established. No date has been set for the publication of the final translation because the amount of work required is very extensive.

Another topic of the meeting was the dissemination of Salesian spirituality by means of modern technology, such as computers and/or the worldwide web. For this purpose, Fr. Herbert Winklehner, a member of the ICSS, gave a detailed introduction to the different Salesian websites throughout the world, especially the website of the ICSS (www.franz-von-sales.de). He pointed out the wonderful possibilities the Internet offers to foster and disseminate St. Francis de Sales, his spirituality, and the different communities of the Salesian family.

Under the leadership of the scholastic Markus Kraxberger, OSFS, several students from the high school of the De Sales Oblates at Dachsberg, Upper Austria, have made a video that features three prominent De Sales Oblates of Austria and Germany: Fr. Richard Köckes from Ried im Innkreis (Upper Austria), Bro. Stanislaus Tempelmeier from Eichstätt (Bavaria), and Fr. Hans Wassling from Paderborn (Nordrhein-Westfalen). The title of the video is “Freaks.” It is available by contacting Markus at kraxberger@osfs.at.

Fr. Winklehner has created several PowerPoint presentations on Salesian topics: “The Life of St. Francis de Sales,” “Francis de Sales and Mysticism,” “Francis de Sales and the Virtues,” “Living
God in Everyday Life: Suggestions from Salesian Spirituality,” and “100 years of the Salesian Magazine LICHT (1906-2006).” Anyone interested in these presentations may contact Fr. Winklehner via e-mail: winklehner@osfs.at. To be able to use these presentations, one needs a computer with CD-ROM and the software Microsoft PowerPoint.

Fr. Winklehner also conducted a day of recollection for about 130 employees of the Diocese of Eichstätt, Bavaria. The topic was “Living God in Everyday Life: Suggestions from Salesian Spirituality.”

To celebrate the Solemnity of St. Francis de Sales, a talk was given by the Austrian writer Josef Dimbeck on 20 January 2006. His topic was: “A Sad Saint is a Sorry Saint.” On this occasion, Mr. Dimbeck presented his new book, Gott lacht: Ein fröhlicher Crashkurs des christlichen Glaubens (God Laughs: A Cheerful Crash Course on the Christian Faith). The feast itself was celebrated on Sunday, 29 January, with a Mass celebrated by the auxiliary bishop of Münster, Friedrich Ostermann. Since 2001, Bishop Ostermann has been the Chair of the Commission for Mass Media of the German Bishops Conference, and he is very knowledgeable about its patron, St. Francis de Sales.

**SWISS COMMUNITY**

Since August 2005, the Swiss Community of the De Sales Oblates has had its own website: www.osfs.ch. The well-organized and very attractive website contains detailed information about the spirituality of the De Sales Oblates, as well as their activities in Switzerland.

The Swiss Community has also published a little brochure with quotations of St. Francis de Sales and meditative pictures. The topic of the brochure is “Vertrautheit mit Gott” (Closeness to God) and was compiled by Alice and Ivo Baeriswyl. This brochure and other publications may be ordered via www.osfs.ch.

**DAUGHTERS AND SONS OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES**

In August 2005, thirty persons met in St. Maurice for the retreats of the Daughters and the Sons of St. Francis de Sales conducted by Monsignor Noyer of France. The theme was: “Becoming a Son and a Daughter of God.” During the retreat, Fr. Roduit from St. Maurice was warmly welcomed. He is responsible for the religious groups of the French-speaking region of Switzerland. These days of retreat provided an opportunity to foster communication among the different groups of the Daughters and Sons of St. Francis de Sales, and those who attended departed with a sense that they had been enriched by their participation.

The Daughters of St. Francis de Sales from the Austrian Region intend to make a pilgrimage to the Salesian sites of Annecy and its environs in 2006, as well as Lyon, where St. Francis de Sales died. In this way, the Daughters hope to deepen their Salesian spirituality.

**ITALY**

Fr. Joseph Boenzi, SDB, no stranger to these pages, is on sabbatical this year in Rome. He is collaborating with Fr. Morand Wirth, SDB, once the leader of a Salesian scholars group in Lyons and later Provincial of Southern France, on a course focusing on “contexts” for Salesian work. He will also teach Fr. Wirth’s course on St. Francis de Sales this semester while Fr. Wirth works on his research. Fr. Wirth has recently published a groundbreaking study entitled, *François de Sales et l’Éducation*, in the Collection Sciences de l’Éducation, edited by Guy Avanzini and published by Éditions Don Bosco in Paris. This work studies Francis de Sales from various perspectives that are rooted in his education and personal formation: (a) Francis’s humanist education, 1567-93; (b) Francis at the service of formation and education, 1593-1622; (c) holistic humanism: development of the whole person; (d) practical humanism: the person and society; (e) integrated humanism: openness to transcendence. Fr. Boenzi comments on this work as follows: “In many ways, says Wirth, Francis presents an anatomy of human nature as he explores the interior ‘movements’ of the personality and its external manifestations with the patience of a biologist, the precision of a watch-maker, and the attentiveness of a physician. Here Francis is presented as the great educator of the human heart.” An Italian translation is already in the works. The French version is available from Éditions Don Bosco at: www.editions-don-bosco.com.

**UNITED STATES**

**TOLEDO-DETROIT PROVINCE**

Among the new books found in the catalog of De Sales Resources & Ministries and not previously noted in this Newsletter are the following: *Belonging to God: A Personal Training Guide for a Deeper Catholic Spiritual Life*, a recasting of the Introduction to the Devout Life by Msgr. Charles M. Murphy; *Spiritual Combat Revisited*, a revised version of Scupoli’s Spiritual Combat by Jonathan Robinson; *Sermon in a Sentence: A Treasury of Quotations on the Spiritual Life from the Writings of St. Francis de Sales*, a collection of hundreds of quotes and short sayings of Francis de Sales arranged according to the major virtues of Christian life and other spiritual topics and edited by John P. McLernon; *Don Bosco* by Teresio Bosco, who attempts to situate the saint in his historical context using a popular narrative style. These books may be viewed and ordered online at: www.desalesresource.org/Cart/newreleases.asp.

With the theme “Live Jesus: Today’s Challenge,” the Joseph F. Power, OSFS, 23rd Annual Salesian Conference on the Spirituality of St. Francis de Sales and St. Jane de Chantal, sponsored by De Sales Resources & Ministries, was held in
Durham, North Carolina, 4-7 August 2005. Over 170 participants had the opportunity to be actively engaged in discussions after the main presentations and also in smaller workshops. The De Sales Oblates currently have fifteen parishes in North Carolina, making it more convenient for Oblates there and some of their parishioners to attend.

St. Mary Grace Flynn of the Wheeling Visitation reviewed the book, God Desires You: St. Francis de Sales on Living the Gospel, by Fr. Eunan McDonnell, SDB, in the Summer 2005 issue of Bondings. She enthusiastically recommends the book because: “His style is Salesian—gracious, encouraging, readable, and respectful toward the reader.”

WILMINGTON-PHILADELPHIA PROVINCE

Bro. Harry McGovern, OSFS, Province Archivist, has created a “Heritage Room” in the former refectory at Childs, Maryland. The room is very handsomely appointed with ample space and facilities to display the various holdings of the archives, as well as to accommodate those who wish to work in the archives. Brother Harry is to be thanked and congratulated for the great amount of creativity, time, and effort that he has put into this endeavor. For further information, he may be contacted by e-mail: harryatchilds@dol.net.

The De Sales Spirituality Center announces a new section on its website entitled, “Spirituality Bulletins,” which is based on its popular “Salesian Perspective” series. Each title (without the discussion questions or suggestions for further reading) has been reformatted (as a PDF file) to make it easier to include as an insert for a bulletin newsletter. Volumes 1-5 of the “Spirituality Bulletins” are now a free download. Another new section, now in preparation, will feature a more contemporary version of the ten meditations found in Part I of Francis de Sales’s Introduction to the Devout Life. These may be viewed and accessed at: http://oblates.org/spirituality/.

An article in the A.D. Times, the newspaper of the Diocese of Allentown, by Tami Quigley reflected on Fr. James Finnegan, OSFS, former faculty member and chair of the Philosophy/Theology Department at De Sales University, and his accomplishments in grief ministry. Fr. Finnegan began support groups at Assumption BVM parish, Colesville, that help those who have lost someone due to death, marriage, separation, or divorce. The program began as informal sessions in the parish rectory and have become successful throughout the diocese. To assist those in this ministry, Fr. Finnegan co-authored a series of brochures with Carol Barron that are used during grieving sessions. Fr. Finnegan, who died in June 2005, is responsible for starting these wonderful programs that give people in grieving a place to go and the help to get through this difficult time in their life. It is worth noting that Fr. Finnegan had a very strong background in Salesian spirituality; he did his doctoral thesis on “Christocentricism in Meditation and Contemplation According to St. Francis de Sales” at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland. His thesis is available in the Trexler Library of De Sales University.

In addition to being a Salesian scholar, Fr. Joseph Chorpenning, OSFS, chairman of the ICSS, is also a specialist in the theology and history of the cult of St. Joseph. Fr. Chorpenning is quoted extensively in the feature religion article on St. Joseph in the 19 December 2005 issue of Time magazine (pp. 67-74), for which he served as the principal consultant. Although Fr. Chorpenning asked that St. Francis de Sales be mentioned in the article, his request was unable to be accommodated. Nonetheless, the article’s title includes some distinctively Salesian vocabulary: “Father & Child: Scripture downplays even his Christmas role, but Joseph’s relationship with Jesus has inspired generations to explore his hidden virtues.” This article, by Time religion writer David Van Biema, is available at www.time.com, where it is complemented by a photo essay on St. Joseph in art. This article and the accompanying photo essay are the counterpart to a similar article and photo essay on the Virgin Mary by Time in December 2004.

Thomas Vresics, a longtime faculty member at the Salesianum High School in Wilmington, Delaware, is the Coordinator of De Sales Seeds of Service at the school. He is bringing to the Diocese of Allentown the very successful Salesianum Adult Christian Religious Education Day (SACRED), at the invitation of the Adult Faith Formation Office. The primary objective of SACRED is a greater understanding of the Catholic faith through the practical and optimistic lens of Salesian spirituality. To learn more about this program, visit Salesianum’s website: www.salesianum.org/sacred.

The Salesian Center for Faith and Culture (SCFC) has undertaken three new initiatives. By action of De Sales University’s Board of Trustees, the “Interfaith Coalition on Ethics in the Workplace” became a subsidiary corporation of the University on 1 January 2006, and under the administration of the SCFS. The mission of the Coalition is “to provide opportunities for people to come together for study, reflection, conversation, and action on ethical issues in the workplace.” In partnership with this organization, the Salesian Center will be able to expand its mission of social engagement into the corporate world and capitalize on the working relationships that this group has already established in the Lehigh Valley business community. Such a partnership would, no doubt, have delighted Fr. Brisson, who had such a profound understanding of the dignity of work.

The SCFC, in collaboration with a group of prominent judges and lawyers in the Lehigh Valley, established a St. Thomas More Society on 24 January 2006, the solemnity of St. Francis de Sales. Typically composed of Catholic lawyers, judges, elected
officals, and law students, a St. Thomas More Society provides opportunities for fellowship in faith, continuing professional development, and public awareness of ethical issues in the legal community. By its connection with this society, the SCFC expands its mission of bringing faith and culture together in the socially significant realms of law and politics, especially as these areas relate to the life and heritage of St. Francis de Sales.

Under the direction of the SCFC, De Sales University inaugurated a new “Heritage Week,” celebrating the life and legacy of St. Francis de Sales, 22-26 January 2006. Events included the Mass of St. Francis de Sales, with Msgr. Charles Murphy (author of Belonging to God: A Personal Training Guide for the Deeper Catholic Spiritual Life) as guest celebrant and homilist; a bioethics forum on “The Decisional Dilemma in Today’s Healthcare”; a television show with Fr. John Bartunek, LC (theological advisor to Mel Gibson for the filming of The Passion of the Christ); the annual R. Wayne Kraft memorial lecture, delivered by Msgr. Aloysius Callaghan (rector and vice president of the St. Paul Seminary School of Divinity and former secretary to Bishop Joseph McShea, one of the founders of De Sales University).

Additional New Publications

BOOKS

Fr. Hyacinthe Vulliez, Saint François de Sales: L’amour au coeur (Annecy: Éditions Le Vieil Annecy, 2002). This work draws on and illustrates some important and previously unpublished Salesian iconography.


ARTICLES

A painting of St. Francis de Sales is illustrated on the October 2005 cover of Liguorian magazine, together with the title of this issue’s feature article: “Saint Francis de Sales: Our Guide to a Devout Life” by the editor, Rev. Harry A. Grille, CSsR.


St. Francis de Sales’s Little Treatise on Holy Communion, composed for Anne Bourgeois, has been translated by Fr. Alexander Pocetto, OSFS, and is now available online at http://www4.desales.edu/SCFC/news.htm. It is interesting to read this treatise in the light of John Paul II’s encyclical Eucharistia de Ecclesia and to see how the saint understood Mary’s life in a “Eucharistic key,” especially in the prayer of the Magnificat.


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 Oblate Sisters 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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Chablais, continued from page 5

[He] remained humble, disinterested, always self-effacing and willing to put or leave anyone in his place. He faded into the background behind his collaborators. He knew that humility and gentleness are necessary prerequisites for unity. Others stepped into the limelight, but he stood aside; he preached very frequently, but in second place, according to needs and requests… and without any show… (Lajeunie, 1:340).

Another striking example of Francis's humility is his indifference toward rumors about his possible appointment as coadjutor bishop of Geneva. The Chablais mission that Francis carried out with such devotion and brilliance brought him fame. The duke of Savoy hailed him as “the apostle of the Chablais” and worked to advance him as Bishop de Granier's coadjutor and thus successor as prince-bishop of Geneva. Francis never allowed himself to become caught up in this whirlwind, remaining grounded and maintaining a self-detachment and reserve. Later, when this prospect became a reality, he acceded to it only with the greatest reluctance.

Conclusion

This reflection does not propose to be an exhaustive study of Francis's conduct of the Chablais mission. Rather, it has sought to demonstrate by select examples how his missionary apostolate to return the Chablais to the Catholic fold gives a human face to the practice of the primary Salesian virtues of gentleness and humility, which Francis so ardently and tirelessly advocates in his books, letters, spiritual direction, sermons, and conferences. These examples are a reminder that Francis's advocacy of these virtues was not simply on the level of theory, but was rooted in his own firsthand experience; he knew well what it costs to practice them. For those who profess to follow the Gentleman Saint, there is no other way of proceeding than to walk the path of Salesian gentleness and humility blazed by the Apostle of the Chablais.

In Redemptoris missio, Pope John Paul II speaks of the priority of proclamation accompanied by the witness of a Christian life in missionary activity (nn. 42-45). In his missionary apostolate in the Chablais, Francis enfleshes this integration of proclamation and witness by incarnating in his person the gentle and humble Jesus he proclaimed in his ministry. St. Jane Frances de Chantal testified that Francis’s “way of life was as effective a sermon as his doctrine.” What better model and patron could the Church of the third millennium have for its missio ad gentes and the new evangelization?

Joseph F. Chorpenning, OSFS

REFERENCES

3. See, e.g., A. Ravier, Francis de Sales: Sage & Saint, trans. J. Bowler (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 93, who notes Francis's conviction that a return to the common sources of Christian faith (the Bible, the Gospel, the Fathers) would bring together minds and hearts.
10. Lajeunie, 1:203, 269, 299, 302-303; MacCulloch, 404, 479. For a comparative study of the missionary strategies of the Jesuits, Redemptorists, and Vincentians, see D. Gentilcore, “‘Adapt Yourselves to the People's Capabilities': Missionary Strategies, Methods and Impact in the Kingdom of Naples, 1600-1800,” Journal of Ecclesiastical History 45 (1994): 269-96. The missionary method of St. Vincent de Paul was akin to Francis's, and for this reason he is considered to continue and carry on the Salesian method of winning hearts by gentle persuasion: see MacCulloch, 404, 463.