



ICSS NEWSLETTER

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WHAT IS THE “CHABLAIS SPIRIT”?

I. Introduction

In an essay entitled “Salesian Gentleness and Humility in Action: St. Francis de Sales’s Missionary Apostolate in the Chablais,” in the last issue of the *ICSS Newsletter* (No. 17 [January-February 2006], pp. 3-5, 12), we reflected on two key, but often overlooked, aspects of St. Francis de Sales’s Chablais mission (1594-98). First, we foregrounded the scholarly recovery of the Chablais mission’s original historical context as an example of the Church’s missionary activity within Europe that was part of the early modern Catholic reform and that is a precedent for the new evangelization at the dawn of the third Christian millennium. Second, we examined the distinctive Salesian spirit that animated the Chablais mission: Francis’s pastoral-relational-ecclesial approach, the “Salesian method” of winning hearts through gentle persuasion, other-oriented dialogue that seeks common ground and restores unity through reconciliation, and humility in the service of collaborative ministry with fellow missionaries with whom Francis was not always in agreement and vice versa.

In this issue, we will continue to reflect on Francis’s Chablais mission by considering the term, the “Chablais Spirit,” which has recently entered the Salesian lexicon. A survey of the various ways in which this term or its equivalent is used in various documents and publications suggests that there is not yet a consensus regarding its precise meaning and definition. This reflection, like the preceding one in the *ICSS Newsletter*, No. 17, is undertaken to assist the De Sales Oblates in their efforts to probe this early episode in Francis’s ministry so as to draw out its meaning for the Congregation’s missionary apostolate in the 21st century, as well as for the work of the Chablais Mission Fund, whose purpose is to ensure the financial viability of the missions. No less importantly, these two essays also seek to contribute to the continuing and vital conversation among Salesian scholars concerning Francis’s Chablais mission, to highlight the insights into this episode put forth by this appreciable body of scholarship, and to share with the wider Salesian family how one of its members has appropriated the narrative of Francis’s missionary apostolate in the Chablais.



Figure 1. *St. Francis de Sales Preaching in the Chablais*, engraving by Pitau after François Chauveau (France), from [Henry de Maupas du Tour] *La vie du vénérable serviteur de Dieu François de Sales ...* (Paris: Chez la Veuve de Nicolas Belley, 1707). Courtesy Salesian Library, Wilmington-Philadelphia Province of the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales.

Baron d’Hermance, governor of the fortress of Allinges, where Francis took refuge each night in the Chablais, advised the young priest not to start his mission with the celebration of Mass, a major point of controversy between Calvinists and Catholics, lest he antagonize the populace at the outset. Francis’s acceptance of this advice exemplifies his humility and discretion in the midst of a highly volatile environment. Instead, Francis gathered the people, giving them talks and homilies on the Catholic faith and sacraments, and responding to their doubts and questions. His preaching style sought to win the hearts of his audience and was “edifying,” in that it aimed to build up the Catholic faith within his listeners. As Francis would write a decade later about preaching, “Say what you will, lips speak but to ears, heart speaks to heart” (*Oeuvres*, 12:321).

II. Defining the Term

The term “Chablais Spirit” was coined to serve as a spiritual complement to the financial work of the Chablais Mission Fund.¹ This accords with Constitution 199 of the De Sales Oblates (“The Oblate missionaries continue the work of St. Francis de Sales, who began his priestly life in this role”), and Constitution 202 (“The Oblate who works in the missions will strive to acquire the virtues of the Apostle of the Chablais”). Referencing the former Constitution, it has been noted that the “Chablais Spirit ... characterizes an Oblate approach to the missionary efforts of the Church,” and, more broadly, it is “the Congregation’s missionary spirit.”² Further expanding the definition, it has been suggested that the “Chablais Spirit’ ... represents the ‘missionary’ dimension of our Oblate vocation as followers of St. Francis de Sales,”³ and that it should be a component of Oblate formation⁴ and an evaluative standard for all Oblate ministries, according to the following definition of the “Chablais Spirit”:

1. An Oblate community that possesses the Chablais Spirit is well rooted in the teaching of the Church and in the Salesian spirit.
2. Such an Oblate community is open to new needs in the Church, within its own Province or Region as well as worldwide.
3. It identifies those needs through a process of mutual discernment.
4. It is ready to move ahead into new situations and new places, and to enter into dialogue with other cultures and regions.
5. It is ever open and in search of new and more appropriate ways of disseminating our Salesian charism.⁵

Salesian scholars reflect on Francis’s Chablais mission with an eye less on a given project or apostolic activity and more on history.⁶ This focus on history has facilitated the identification of Francis’s particular contribution to the Chablais mission that is regarded as accounting for the success of this endeavor. The intention here is not to provide an exhaustive review of this body of scholarship, but to offer an overview of its main lines of thought and development.

Undoubtedly one of the most extensive and important treatments of the Chablais mission is found in the masterful intellectual biography of Francis by E.-J. Lajeunie, OP, *Saint François de Sales: L’homme, la*

pensée, l’action, 2 vols. (Paris: Éditions Guy Victor, 1966), with an English translation following twenty years later (Bangalore: S.F.S. Publications, 1986-87).⁷ For this great scholar, the very essence and core of Francis’s Chablais mission (what may be aptly called the “Chablais Spirit”) is what Lajeunie terms the “Salesian method.” In short, the “Salesian method” consisted in winning hearts through gentle persuasion so as to provide the inhabitants of the Chablais, who had been under Calvinist domination for nearly sixty years, a glimpse of the face of the gentle and humble Jesus of Matthew 11:29, whom Francis embraces as the “one unique model” for his priestly, and later episcopal, ministry.

According to Lajeunie, the “Salesian method” dramatically contrasts, on the one hand, with the force and violence employed by the Calvinists to coerce the Chablais into submission, and, on the other, with the aggressive and confrontational strategies of Francis’s fellow missionaries, especially the fiery Capuchin friar Chérubin de Maurienne, whose “zeal” and extremism eventually came to be deemed inappropriate by his foes and allies alike. Although Francis’s approach was criticized, even by his dear friend, Antoine Favre, for being too gentle and peace-loving, not sufficiently zealous and rigorous, and too slow in yielding results, he held to it because he was convinced that it was the Gospel way of proceeding. For his part, Francis was cautious about zealotry, which, he believed, leads to polarization and partisanship, which precludes the Church from serving as an instrument for peace and reconciliation. Years later, in his most well-known and best-selling book, *Introduction to the Devout Life* (1609), Francis gives this memorable formulation of the “Salesian method”: “whoever wins a person’s heart has won the whole person” (Pt. 3, chap. 23).⁸

Lajeunie’s interpretation of the Chablais mission was anticipated—to cite but two examples—by Pope Pius XI’s treatment of this episode in his 1923 encyclical on Francis, *Rerum omnium*, nn. 6-9, written to mark the third centenary of the saint’s death, as well as by Michael de la Bedoyere’s biography of Francis based on the saint’s letters.⁹ Moreover, it is supported by the preponderance of subsequent Salesian scholarship. For example, Elisabeth Stopp indicates that Francis’s *Meditations on the Church* (or *Controversies*, the title under which this work is usually known), an integral part of the Chablais mission, was unprecedented in two ways: “it is the first attempt [ever] at an informal work of theology written in the French language,”¹⁰ and it was “a genuine attempt at a dialogue, at a true conversation on points of difference”¹¹ with the

Calvinist elders of Thonon, who had sworn an oath never to go to listen to Francis and had forbidden their congregations to attend his sermons. Rather than a book, the *Meditations*' original form was as a series of eighty weekly news sheets (copied by hand, possibly even printed), explaining the true nature of the Church, that were hand delivered to the elders, many of whom were personally known to Francis, some from his childhood. The "Salesian method" is salient in this work: Francis "never talks down to [the elders], never attacks them personally, addressing them as 'separated brothers,' an unheard of courtesy in that age of fierce polemics. He turned to them as to friends and pleaded for a hearing."¹²

André Ravier, SJ, perceives Francis as undergoing change or development during the Chablais mission, as during these years he moved away from the intransigence of a jurist with regard to Protestantism to a pastoral and apostolic approach that sought to restore unity through reconciliation.¹³ Ravier observes that 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."¹⁴

Wendy M. Wright, in her comprehensive introduction to the Salesian spiritual tradition, offers this assessment of Francis's Chablais ministry:

There were prominent conversions, which were celebrated and later remembered, and Catholic ritual practice was reintroduced into the region. More significantly, the Chablais mission confirmed the young prelate's intuition that persuasion—spoken from the heart in love—was preferable to battle, whether armed or in the form of invective intellectual debate.¹⁵

Elsewhere Wright elucidates the theological and spiritual foundation of Francis's approach:

But the arts of respectful conversation, constructive apologetics, 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*.¹⁶

In a similar vein, James F. Cryan, OSFS, calls attention to the centrality of dialogue, as well as its broader implications, in the Chablais mission:

In his Chablais ministry, Francis de Sales departed from the polemic style ... and chose dialogue.... "I want to discuss, not argue," he told Beza....

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....

Such reversal of roles, a self-emptying that allows the substitution of the other for the self, pervades all Salesian thought....¹⁷

Lajeunie treats at length the collaborative nature of the second phase of the Chablais mission (1597-98), and the key role that Francis's humble, self-effacing, and gentle manner played in attaining success in what was sometimes a difficult and challenging collaborative process. More recently, Jill R. Fehleison studies this phase in even greater detail, chronicling the shift from the personal and individual approach of the first phase (1594-97), to the more dramatic and public appeal of the second phase, specifically the sumptuous, lavish, and visually stunning Forty Hours celebrations held in Annemasse (7-9 September 1597) and Thonon (20-22 September 1598, and 1-3 October 1598). She explains:

In the case of the Forty Hours, missionaries in the duchy of Chablais consciously used words, images, actions, and sounds in the form of rituals, processions, and theatrical performances to appeal to people's senses instead of their intellects. Convinced that the introspective nature of Calvinism lacked overt emotional appeal, the missionaries emphasized aspects of the Catholic faith that had an emotional appeal to the people. The missionaries hoped to navigate the existing emotional landscape of the Alpine region to bring about a dramatic change in its confessional makeup.¹⁸

This brief survey of the diversity of meanings attributed or attributable to the term, the "Chablais Spirit," suggests that to date the formulation of a single and universally accepted definition has proved elusive. Not surprisingly, some confess that they are perplexed about the meaning of this term, while others express concern that the definition proposed to describe an individual or group who possesses the "Chablais Spirit" seems generic and applicable to any number of religious congregations.¹⁹

Perhaps another way to approach this question is to return to the narrative that is the starting point for these various definitions. This attention to story is very Salesian, for Francis himself was a skilled storyteller, as evidenced, for example, by his *Treatise on the Love of God* (1616), in which his “parables of great beauty ... make plain and readily understandable what lies beyond the conscious realm.”²⁰

In the present instance, the story is an episode from Francis’s biography, and, as is often the case in biographical narratives, this story has two discernible, but inseparable and inter-related, dimensions: the outer story and the inner story. Focusing on the dynamic between the inner and the outer is also very Salesian. For example, in the *Introduction*, Part 3, chapter 23, Francis avers: “As for myself, Philothea, I could never approve the method of those who begin by the exterior ... in order to reform a person. On the contrary, it seems to me that we should begin by the interior.... As the heart is the source of actions, they are such as the heart is.” Likewise, throughout the *Spiritual Directory*, Francis constantly privileges interior disposition and prayer as the fount and source of every external action. The Chablais story must be “reassembled” in its integrity, if there is any hope of arriving at a definition of “Chablais Spirit” that faithfully and accurately reflects this archetypal narrative.

III. Reassembling the Narrative of Francis’s Chablais Mission

The outer story of the Chablais mission is perhaps that which is most well-known and popular. Its basic plot line is as follows: After the Treaty of Nyon (1589) restored the Chablais (a region in present-day France along the lake of Geneva, thirty miles long and fifteen miles wide) to the Duke of Savoy, the duke requested Bishop Claude de Granier of Annecy to send fifty priests to restore Catholicism to the region, which had been under Calvinist occupation for nearly sixty years. Within two years, Calvinists from Geneva attacked the Chablais, occupied Thonon (the Chablais’s principal town), banished the fifty priests, and laid waste to the churches. The uncertainty of the claim over the Chablais was finally resolved when King Henri VI

of France abjured Protestantism, and offered a truce on 31 July 1593. Again the duke asked Bishop de Granier to send priests to the Chablais.

At Bishop de Granier’s request, the newly ordained Francis undertakes the mission to re-Catholicize the Chablais against many odds: the vigorous opposition of his father, who feared for his son’s safety, as well as the



Figure 2. *St. Francis de Sales and His Cousin, Louis de Sales, Invoking the Protection of the Angel of the Chablais* (detail). On Wednesday, 14 September 1594, the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, St. Francis de Sales and his cousin, Louis de Sales, set out on foot from Francis’s family home at Sales for the Chablais. Carrying their light luggage on their shoulders because Monsieur de Boisy had forbidden anyone to accompany them, the two cousins proceeded northward along the same road they used to travel as children on their way to Brens, where their two families spent the holidays together. Entering the Chablais over the bridge at Boringe, Francis and Louis were greeted by the destruction left by the Calvinists in their wake—churches sacked and in shambles, crosses overturned, and the Château de Brens devastated. According to tradition, upon arrival in the Chablais, Francis and Louis knelt and prayed, invoking the protection of the Angel of the province for their mission. They then hastened toward the fortress of Allinges, where Baron d’Hermance, a good friend of Francis’s father, warmly welcomed the two missionaries.

dishonor that failure would bring upon the family name; limited personnel (in the mission's first phase [1594-97] only his cousin Louis, and in the second phase [1597-98] a small band of missionaries); limited financial resources and little, often reluctant, support from the Duke of Savoy. Trusting completely in God to bring success from a situation that, humanly speaking, had very little prospect of success, Francis was ultimately successful after enduring four years of arduous, often discouraging work, as well as personal hardship, danger, and trials. In the end, Francis's heroic efforts bore fruit, and the "rightness" of his "folly" was justified before all, as he was proclaimed the "Apostle of the Chablais" by the duke.

There is no doubt that the outer story of the Chablais mission is a riveting one that, when told with passion and verve, can capture the imagination and rally generosity and enthusiasm to undertake the most challenging and difficult project. At the same time, this is only half the story. The plot of the outer story resembles that of any number of stories of the heroic exploits of the saints, and even of heroes of non-fiction and imaginative literature, who overcame what, from a human perspective, seemed to be insurmountable obstacles and hardships to achieve their goal or destiny. Defining the "Chablais Spirit" solely on the basis of the outer story of the Chablais mission may also appear generic, unless the outer story's distinctively Salesian elements are teased out, and this definition is well illustrated by examples from Francis's own life and ministry, as well as complemented by the inner story. Another concern is that this version of the Chablais episode does not seem to do justice to the primary collaborative nature of the mission's second phase, which was precipitated by Francis's threat to resign if he did not receive support and reinforcements.²¹

The focus of the inner story of the Chablais mission is not so much on the "what," as it is in the outer story, as on the "how." Careful attention to the particular, whether of time, place, occasion, or person(s), is one of the hallmarks of Francis's ministry and Salesian spirituality.²² The inner story of the Chablais mission allows us to enter into the particularity of this episode in Francis's biography more easily, more richly, and perhaps to a greater degree than the outer story. It opens a window onto how Francis was changed by this mission, in which he further developed, tested, and refined his distinctive way of proceeding in ministry and human interaction. In fact, it is this inner story that was the subject of extensive reflection in the *ICSS Newsletter*, No. 17. Here it suffices to provide a synopsis of that discussion.

Several factors contributed to the success of the Chablais mission, but perhaps none more significantly than Francis's method and approach to accomplishing this mission and surmounting the challenges it posed. Francis's personal model in the Chablais ministry, as throughout his entire priesthood and episcopate, was the Jesus of Matthew 11:29 (Francis's favorite Scripture verse), who reveals Himself as "gentle and humble of heart." 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 ever-greater profundity that was forged in the crucible of this mission's sufferings and travails, and nurtured by long hours of prayer before the Romanesque fresco of *Christ in Glory* in the chapel of the fortress of Allinges. Francis's process of *imitatio Christi* found concrete and tangible expression in the "Salesian method" of winning hearts through gentle persuasion, other-oriented dialogue that seeks common ground and restores unity through reconciliation, and humility in the service of collaborative ministry that was often difficult and challenging.

"Reassembling" the Chablais narrative does not mean choosing the inner story over the outer story, or vice versa. Rather, it aims to embrace the seamless whole of the tapestry of the narrative of this defining moment in Francis's life and ministry, which continues for another quarter century and unfolds in ways and with a richness that is only glimpsed in his missionary apostolate in the Chablais. (It should be recalled that the Chablais continued to be an "administrative headache" for Francis, especially during his tenure as bishop.²³) An adequate, and accurate, definition of the "Chablais Spirit" will integrate both the distinctively Salesian elements of the outer story, which it must tease out, as well as the particularity of the inner story, whose narrative core is Francis's appropriation of the heart of the gentle and humble Jesus of Matthew 11:29, manifested by the Salesian method and its constitutive elements.

IV. The Chablais Charism of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales

For one member of the Salesian family, the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales (also known as the Fransalians), Francis's Chablais mission is the inspiration and paradigm for their particular charism and mission in the Church. The Fransalians, the Salesian missionary congregation *par excellence*, were founded in 1838 to re-Catholicize Annecy and its environs during the

period of recovery from the trauma of the French Revolution and its aftermath. Both the Fransalians' founder, Pierre-Marie Mermier (1790-1862), and the bishop of Annecy at the time, Pierre Joseph Rey (1770-1842), felt that the mantle of the Apostle of the Chablais had fallen upon them at that moment in Christian history. The Fransalians articulate their charism thusly:

The new text of our Constitutions, while emphasizing the fact that we are called to be missionaries following the way of St. Francis de Sales, qualifies and states that it is the "Apostle of the Chablais" that has to be the icon of our inspiration and imitation. This tiny phrase "Apostle of the Chablais" appearing first in the Prologue and then in Article 5 of the new Text speaks volumes of the specificity of the charism of being a Missionary in the spirit of St. Francis de Sales. The challenge for every MSFS is not only to imitate St. Francis de Sales but [to] imbibe and manifest the apostolic zeal as shown by him in his apostolate in [the] Chablais.... Therefore, a Fransalian, while fathoming the depths of Salesian spirituality is called to make the "Chablais experience" the spring and fountain of his missionary zeal.²⁴

So that the Fransalians would always be mindful that theirs was the missionary spirit of the Apostle of the Chablais, Bishop Rey entrusted to them care of the fortress of Allinges, where Francis took refuge each night during his Chablais mission; it has continued under their care to this very day. At first, the Fransalians ministered in the same exact part of the world where Francis ministered as a priest and bishop. However, so successful were their efforts there, that they were soon asked to extend their ministry to Africa and India, where they principally minister today.²⁵

The second of three working papers prepared for the Fransalians' 2007 General Chapter exemplifies how this congregation assimilates the narrative of Francis's Chablais mission as its charism (available on the Fransalians' website: www.fransalians.com). This paper's treatment of "St. Francis de Sales, A Missionary Leader" evinces how the Fransalians have integrated the outer and inner components of the Chablais narrative into the unified whole that is their charism. The following summary of this paper's principal themes serves to make this process of integration accessible to the wider Salesian family.

After an introductory section on the Fransalians' Chablais charism (quoted above), this paper orients the reader by giving basic information on the geographic location and history of the Chablais. As the paper

progresses into the narrative of the Chablais mission, its method is, first, to offer an exposition of particular elements of the story of Francis's Chablais missionary apostolate, and, then, to suggest its modern-day application to the Fransalian missionary vocation. For example, the difficulty of the Chablais mission, with the recent memory of the expulsion of fifty priests, and Francis's initial reluctance and then affirmative response to Bishop de Granier, finds its counterpart today:

We should not be surprised that there will be few volunteers for difficult missions like that of [the] Chablais. Constant appeal to the missionary dimension of our vocation, the pride in the work of our frontier missionaries, the encouragement to see beyond the apparent futility of efforts to hidden seeds waiting to sprout with new life, these [are the] attitudes that will create a missionary climate in the Congregation to evoke a missionary response from the members (1.5.3).

Next, Francis's thorough preparation for the Chablais mission is detailed. Primary, of course, was spiritual preparation for this mission: Francis not only asked all to pray for him, but also devoted himself to prayer, fasting, and penance, in order to dispose every fiber of his being to be filled with God's "spiritual unction." Other components of Francis's preparation included: knowledge of the situation of the mission; intellectual and reflective preparation to confront the mission's challenges; taking a companion with him to witness to living in communion (one of the Gospel's powerful core messages) and to prevent "oneself from being a victim of self-righteousness and arbitrariness" (1.6.3); and mental preparation for physical hardship and deprivation.

Francis's missionary approaches are then considered. The Salesian method of gentleness and approachability "is a simple approach but one which is valid for all times. Genuine, honest and respectful personal contacts pave the way to serious and frank dialogue even on issues on which we have disagreements, allowing truth to unfold itself" (1.7.1.2). Also highlighted are Francis's perseverance, creativity, and, especially, discretion in the midst of a highly volatile environment:

Francis listened to the advice of Baron d'Hermance not to start the mission with the celebration of the Mass which was one important point of difference between the Calvinists and the Catholics. Instead he gathered the people and gave talks and conferences on [the] faith [and] sacraments, and answered their doubts and questions....

Discretion is a very healthy strategy of respect and concern for the other who has difference of opinion and belief. While it shows respect for differences, it paves the way for mutual dialogue and openness leading to the discovery of truth. When we launch into a new mission area, it should always be a matter of discretion to observe and study the local situation before starting anything that will antagonize the people (1.7.2.1-2).

Other approaches that Francis employed in his ministry in the Chablais were: dialectical preaching aimed at winning over his listeners' hearts and building up the Catholic faith



Figure 3. Chapel of the Fortress of Allinges (France).

Each night Francis sought refuge in the fortress of Allinges, where he spent long hours of prayer in the chapel before the Romanesque fresco of *Christ in Glory* (10th-12th century). The foundation and charism of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales (also known as the Fransalians) was inspired by Francis as the Apostle of the Chablais. So that the Fransalians would always be mindful that their charism was the missionary spirit of the Apostle of the Chablais, the bishop of Annecy at the time of their foundation (1838) entrusted to their care the fortress of Allinges. It continues under the care of the Fransalians to this very day.

within them; personal asceticism of prayer, fasting, and penance so that he could better serve as a spiritual instrument in God's hands; and readiness for temporary setbacks, wounds, hurts, and exhaustion.

Finally, the collaborative nature of the Chablais mission's second phase, and its enduring relevance, is treated. Francis's role in this collaborative ministry is a model for ministers and missionaries in every place and age.

Francis insisted on working together as a team of pastors. He gathered them together periodically and invited them to share their pastoral problems and experiences. He threw light on these pastoral issues. He deepened their knowledge and acquainted them with pastoral skills. He helped them to see power in unity.

At times mission work does not progress satisfactorily because of lack of unity among the priests and religious. Unhealthy competitive mentality, negative criticism of one another blocks them from using the strength and power of team work.... Where there is lack of organization of people and programmes mission work lacks direction, and there is dissipation of energy, time and talents of all concerned. We have much to learn from Francis in the way he organized the Chablais Mission (1.7.6.2-3).

V. *Francis's Chablais Mission and the Salesian Charism*

The portion of the Fransalians' working paper on Francis as missionary leader proffers an engaging look at this Salesian missionary congregation's assimilation of the archetypal narrative of Francis's missionary apostolate in the Chablais as its singular charism in the Church. Other members of the Salesian family also exalt and accord great veneration to this episode, while integrating their reflection on it with their own particular charism. For example, the De Sales Oblates, founded in 1876, nearly four decades after the Fransalians, have their own distinct starting point. Like the Fransalians and many other members of the Salesian family, the De Sales Oblates are also part of the 19th-century "Salesian Pentecost."²⁶

Mother Mary de Sales Chappuis (1793-1875), the inspiration for the foundation of the De Sales Oblates, and Fr. Louis Brisson (1817-1908), their founder, regarded Francis de Sales's Christian humanism, with its generous vision of a world of divine and human hearts, as the remedy for the rigidity of Jansenism and the irreligious secularism of their day. Rather than singling out one episode in Francis's life (as did the Fransalians) or one theme in his writings, Mother Chappuis and Fr. Brisson embraced the rich whole of the spirit and doctrine of

Francis de Sales (distilled in the *Spiritual Directory*), which was always greater than the sum of its parts, or any one of its parts.

The researches of Fr. Alexander T. Pocetto, OSFS, have meticulously documented that not only was Mother Chappuis steeped in Francis de Sales's writings and had a profound grasp of his wisdom, but also that she saw herself, and was likewise perceived by her contemporaries, as an ardent and indefatigable "Apostle of the Salesian Spirit." Mother Chappuis had a very specific vision of what God was calling Fr. Brisson to do, namely, to establish the community of men that Francis had not lived long enough to found, and that this community's singular charism and mission would be to live and to disseminate through their various ministries ("the Christian education of youth ... the missions [and] in all the forms of ministry" [Constitution 13]) the spirit and doctrine of Francis de Sales. This vision was fulfilled with the foundation of the De Sales Oblates, which Mother Chappuis felt was the work that the Lord was calling her to from the time she entered the novitiate of the Fribourg Visitation and which was her very *raison d'être*. Fr. Brisson sets forth the foundational vision for the De Sales Oblates thusly:

Let's be fully aware that we are Oblates of St. Francis de Sales....

There are, needless to say, other communities established under the name of St. Francis de Sales, and which stem from his doctrine. *Others may have the doctrine of St. Francis de Sales—more or less; but it is certain that the Oblates are those who possess that doctrine in its integrity.* The Visitation inherited it.... It is the Good Mother [Mother Chappuis] who has transmitted to us the understanding of this doctrine and of this treasure confided to the Visitation.

St. de Chantal asked St. Francis de Sales to form an institute of priests: "Form priests who will be like you, who will preserve your spirit." And it is we who—three centuries later—have come to acquire this heritage....²⁷

Viewed from the perspective of the Salesian charism in its integrity (the spiritual patrimony of the De Sales Oblates), Francis's Chablais mission and "Chablais Spirit" take their place among a series of archetypal Salesian narratives, each of which captures the imagination and has compelling spiritual significance and power. Alongside the narrative of Francis the Apostle of the Chablais, there are the Salesian narratives of, among others, Francis the model post-Tridentine bishop, Francis the apostle of the spoken and printed word, Francis the spiritual director, Francis the

champion and teacher of the universal call to holiness and the devout life, Francis the founder of the Visitation Order, Francis the theologian, Francis the Gentleman saint, Francis the doctor of the Church, Francis the patron of writers and journalists, and Francis the precursor of the Second Vatican Council.

Many of the constitutive elements of the Chablais mission, which came at the outset of Francis's ministry, presaged what would later become the essential elements of Salesian doctrine and spirituality, whose full maturity and richness unfolded in the remaining nearly quarter century of Francis's ministry—in his letters of spiritual direction, sermons, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, *Treatise on the Love of God*, and foundation of the Visitation Order. And, as the late Sr. Marie-Patricia Burns, VHM, reminded us, on the occasion of the fourth centenary of the initial encounter of Francis and St. Jane Frances de Chantal in Dijon in 1604, without this encounter that flowered into their spiritual friendship and the foundation of the Visitation Order, there would not be the Salesian charism as we know it, Francis may not have been canonized a saint and declared a doctor of the Church, and congregations such as the Oblate Sisters and the De Sales Oblates would not have been founded (a point likewise underscored by the above cited quotation from Fr. Brisson).²⁸

VI. Concluding Thoughts

As this issue of the *ICSS Newsletter* goes to press, the Church and the Salesian family celebrate the solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. There is a symmetry here, as this feast brings us back to the gentle and humble heart of Jesus that nurtured, sustained, and shaped Francis's ministry in the Chablais mission and in the years thereafter. Francis himself was forever changed by the transcendent and transformative power of the gentle and humble heart of his beloved Jesus. Francis labored tirelessly to turn the world that he inhabited from the violence that was omnipresent, so as to bring the hearts of those to whom he ministered to beat in harmony with the Savior's gentle and humble heart. His "Salesian method," which was the distinctive form that his imitation of Christ took, stood apart from, on the one hand, the force and violence used by the Calvinists to coerce the Chablais into submission, and, on the other, the aggressive strategy and threats employed by his fellow missionaries. Francis's way of being in a violent world, his "Salesian method," is as timeless and powerful a message to our equally, if not more, violent world, as it was to his own time and place.

Joseph F. Chorpenning, O.S.F.S.

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2. *The General's News*, 19 (2002).
3. Committee on Oblate Missions in the 21st Century, "Developing a Comprehensive Plan for Missions" (October 2003).
4. *Book of Proposals*, General Chapter XVIII of the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales, Fockenfeld, Germany, 31 July – 11 August 2006, Proposal C1, p. 19.
5. *Ibid.*, Proposal A1, p. 6.
6. On the importance of history in studying Christian spirituality, see P. Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History: Questions of Interpretation and Method*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1995), and W. Principe, "Broadening the Focus: Context as a Corrective Lens in Reading Historical Works in Spirituality," in *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality*, eds. E. Dreyer and M. Burrows (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2005), pp. 42-48.
7. In the original French edition, 138 pages are dedicated to the subject of Francis's Chablais mission (1:223-361). Subsequent references are to the two-volume English translation of Lajeunie's work by Fr. Rory O'Sullivan, OSFS.
8. Lajeunie, 1:178-340, esp. 194, 203, 269, 299, 302-303.
9. *François de Sales* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), pp. 56-79. For example, Bedoyere comments: "[We] must distinguish between [Francis's] attitude to heresy as a political evil and his attitude towards the person of the heretic.... He could not ... conceive of a Catholic State giving equal rights to heretics and to Catholics. The Duc de Savoie would have been fully within his rights to use political and military force to drive heresy and obstinate heretics out of his country.... But 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.... It should also be remembered that the leaders of the Protestants who had used force to Protestantize the [Chablais] saw no more virtue in toleration than the most rabid of Catholics.... The unusual circumstances on both sides might have been designed to enable a saint to show the world how a true Christian apostolate should be carried out" (pp. 65-66). Cf. St. Jane Frances de Chantal's testimony for Francis's canonization process, which, while giving ample attention to the Chablais mission's perils and seemingly insurmountable difficulties and to Francis's extraordinary courage and trust in God, attributes the success of the mission to Francis's particular method whereby he prevailed, namely, his gentleness, which translated into "a special gift for conversion": "when [hardened opponents of the faith] turned to look at his friendly face it calmed down their fury. And indeed, this is just how it would affect people, for his face was all gentleness and peace when he looked at you" (*St. Francis de Sales: A Testimony by St. Chantal*, ed. and trans. with an introduction by E. Stopp [Hyattsville, Md.: Institute of Salesian Studies, 1967], pp. 52, 49 [hereafter *Testimony*]).
10. "The Art of the Writer," in her *A Man to Heal Differences: Essays and Talks on St. Francis de Sales* (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 1997), 75-84, at 80-81 (originally published in *The Month*, new series, vol. 3, no. 1 [January 1967]: 46-52).
11. "Meditations on the Church (1595-96)," in her *A Man to Heal Differences*, pp. 51-74, at 51 (originally published in *Salesian Studies*, vol. 4, no. 4 [Autumn 1967]: 53-69).
12. Stopp, "The Art of the Writer," p. 80.
13. A. Ravier, *Francis de Sales: Sage & Saint*, trans. J. Bowler (original French edition, 1986; San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), pp. 92-93.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77.
15. *Heart Speaks to Heart: The Salesian Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2004), p. 29.
16. *Seeking God's Will Together: Discernment in the Salesian World of Hearts* (Wilmington, De.: Oblates of St. Francis de Sales, 2003), p. 5.
17. "Alterity: At the Heart of the Salesian Matrix," in *Human Encounter in the Salesian Tradition*, forthcoming.
18. "Appealing to the Senses: The Forty Hours Celebrations in the Duchy of Chablais, 1597-98," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 36 (2005): 375-96, at 377. Also see Fehleison, "Visitor and Villager: Communal Dynamics and the Status of Local Religion in the Diocese of Geneva-Annecy during the Time of Catholic Reform, 1579-1640," Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 2001.
19. See, e.g., "Wilmington-Philadelphia Province Report on Regional Discussions in Preparation for the General Chapter of 2006" (31 May 2006), pp. 2-3, and "Answer from the Netherlands Province to the Paper of the Committee on Oblate Missions in the 21st Century."
20. E. Stopp, "François de Sales," in *The Study of Spirituality*, eds. C. Jones et al. (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986), pp. 379-385, at 384. Stopp returns to this facet of Francis's literary art in the final article she wrote before her death (1996): "François de Sales: The Writer and His Reader," in *The Art of Reading: Essays in Memory of Dorothy Gabe Coleman*, eds. P. Ford and G. Jondorf (Cambridge: Cambridge French Colloquia, 1998), pp. 75-83, esp. 78. Francis's liberal use of stories, images, and allegories was licensed by Jesus's own prodigal use of these in his preaching and ministry, and consequently highlighted Francis's imitation of Christ and the perception of his contemporaries that he "reflected the Son of God as a living image" ("Letter from Jane Frances de Chantal to Dom Jean de Saint-François [December 1623]," in *Testimony*, pp. 165-72, at 172).
21. See Fehleison, "Appealing to the Senses," p. 393.
22. On attention to the particular as a hallmark of Salesian spirituality, see *ICSS Newsletter*, No. 14 (July 2004), p. 3, and No. 15 (January-February 2005), p. 3.
23. de la Bedoyere, p. 71.
24. "St. Francis de Sales, A Missionary Leader, Fr. Mermier in His 'I Want Mission Experience,'" Working Paper 2, for General Chapter 2007, Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales (available at www.fransalians.com), 1.1.2. Subsequent references to this paper are to its numbered sections.
25. See *ibid.*, 1.2, and Wright, *Heart Speaks to Heart*, pp. 113-18.
26. On this "Salesian Pentecost," see Wright, *Heart Speaks to Heart*, pp. 110-72, which is also the basis of the account of the foundation of the De Sales Oblates that follows.
27. *The True Understanding of the Congregation According to Father Brisson*, Texts of Fr. Brisson chosen by Fr. Roger Balducelli, OSFS, for use by his confreres (Rome: Generalate, 1989), Text No. 9, pp. 30-32, at 30. Cf. Constitution 17.
28. See "The Flowering of a Friendship," in *Human Encounter in the Salesian Tradition*, forthcoming.



SALESIAN STUDIES WORLDWIDE

Africa

BENIN

Beginning in July, Fr. Jean-Luc Leroux, OSFS, one of the founders of the Benin missions, will return as Regional Superior. His principal objective will be to prepare the young Benin Oblates to gradually assume responsibility for the region. As noted in our previous *Newsletters*, he has been very active in RES (Recherches et Études Salésiennes) as its President and in promoting the Oblate-Salesian charism in several apostolates. The experience he has gained will be utilized for the annual Salesian Conferences held in Benin by the Salesian family, which includes not only Oblates, but also Priests of St. Francis de Sales, Salesians of Don Bosco, and Salesians of the Visitation. Fr. Leroux will be present for the priestly ordination of three Benin Oblates this July.

Asian Region

NEW WEBSITE

With a grant from the ICSS and the expertise of Fr. Herbert Winklehner, OSFS, a member of the ICSS and its webmaster, a new website, www.osfs-asia.net, for the Asia Mission was set up so that it could more effectively communicate its work, activities, plans, etc. Fr. Winklehner has placed maps of India and the Philippines, as well as a globe on which various Oblate foundations are located in these two countries and throughout the world. The site is well worth visiting.

INDIA

Under the leadership of Fr. Sebastian Leitner, OSFS, Regional Superior, all the professed members have the opportunity to

shape the future of the region. All the Oblates are required to attend an annual general meeting. At the October 2005 meeting, participants were asked to reflect on and share their thoughts on such topics as the positive and negative aspects of their ministry and how it could be improved, their vision as an Oblate priest, and what helped them grow as an Oblate. The members discussed the 2006 General Chapter proposals, the Philippine foundation, the financial situation of the region, the proposed school, and important aspects of the formation program.

The theologate will now be located in a rented house in Mangalore so that the seminarians can attend the diocesan seminary for their theological studies. This extends the Oblate-Indian foundation to another location in the state of Karnataka. Fr. Fred Smuda, OSFS, has been appointed as the superior of this new community.

In his capacity as Director of the Chablais Mission Fund, Fr. James O'Neil, OSFS, visited the region in order to become better acquainted with its needs and assets. He also used the occasion to give a number of talks on Salesian spirituality, emphasizing especially the Salesian virtues.

PHILIPPINES

The Indian Oblates decided that they would support a foundation in this country, but are not able to send any personnel immediately. In the meantime, Fr. Josef Koltringer, OSFS, has been laying the groundwork for this important foundation. He has had a formal ceremony to bless the house, generously loaned to the Oblates by a Philippine widow, and is now using it as his residence. The local bishop has already

promised to send Fr. Koltringer several hundred boys for him to screen as possible Oblate candidates, but he will not be able to begin a formation program until he has several other Oblates to assist him. As previously noted in these pages, Fr. Koltringer envisions the Philippine mission as a springboard for eventually sending missionaries into China. This is precisely the view of Pope Benedict XVI, who sees the Philippine Church as playing a key role in the evangelization of Asia and, in particular, of China.

Europe

AUSTRIAN-SOUTH GERMAN PROVINCE

On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Salesian magazine LICHT, Pope Benedict XVI conferred his apostolic blessing upon all authors, collaborators, and readers of the magazine. In his letter, the Pope wrote: "May the magazine LICHT be a suitable medium also in the future to show human beings the way to live their lives as Christians in the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales which is filled by the light of faith and by the love of God." The complete text of the letter, as well as further information about the Salesian magazine LICHT, may be found at: www.zeitschrift-licht.de.

To commemorate its 100th anniversary, the Province created a new website with the domain www.eslebejesus.de (Living Jesus). It contains information about the history of the Province, its present members and apostolic activities, as well as the different events during the jubilee year. The website also has historical documentation developed by Fr. Franz Wehr, OSFS. This documentation is also available in a brochure entitled, "Dokumentation der Oblaten des hl. Franz von Sales. Schwerpunkt: Österreichisch-Süddeutsche Provinz anlässlich ihres 100-jährigen Bestehens" (Documentation about the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales: The Austrian-South German Province on the Occasion of its 100th Anniversary).

In cooperation with Alfons Wittmann and Monika Rauh, two staff members at the library of The Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt (Germany), Fr. Herbert Winklehner, OSFS, a member of the ICSS, developed the first on-line encyclopedia about St. Francis de Sales and Salesian spirituality. This website can be found at: www.franzvosaleslexikon.de. All German-speaking Salesian scholars are invited to submit Salesian items for this encyclopedia.

DUTCH PROVINCE

Fr. Dirk Koster, a member of the ICSS, whose biography of St. Francis de Sales received very good reviews worldwide, has recently completed a biography of Fr. Louis Brisson, the founder of the Oblate Sisters and the Oblates of the St. Francis de Sales. The Dutch version of this biography is currently being translated into German and English. Fr. Winklehner has established a special website on Fr. Brisson at: www.louisbrisson.org.

On 25 March 2006, the Superior General, Fr. Lewis S. Fiorelli, OSFS, dedicated the new Provincial Residence located in the city of Schijndel. It contains a chapel, conference room, and library, and is large enough to accommodate groups of up to fifty persons for conferences. The residence is currently being utilized by the De Sales Oblates, as well as other Salesian groups.

From 26 May to 2 June 2006, there was a Salesian pilgrimage to Annecy with about forty persons participating. The Provincial, Fr. Kees Jongeneelen, and Fr. Koster accompanied the group as Salesian experts and spiritual directors.

In cooperation with the (Catholic) Radboud-University of Nijmegen, the Dutch Province is engaged in conversation with Fr. Rob Faesen, S.J., professor of Medieval Dutch Mystical Literature and Ignatiana and Jesuitica Chair in the Faculty of Theology at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (Belgium), to try to identify a scholar who would be interested in doing research on spiritual direction according to St. Francis de Sales from his letters and encounters (e.g., Louise de Charmois, Jacqueline Favre, Angélique Arnauld, Jean-Pierre Camus, and the diplomat Antoine de Hayes).

FRENCH PROVINCE

The annual Salesian Conference, *Échanges Salésiens*, under the sponsorship of RES (Recherches et Études Salésiennes), will be held this year (10-14 July) in Troyes, the city where both the Oblate Sisters and the De Sales Oblates were founded. The theme will be *Pèlerins d'amour: du quotidien à l'éternité*, "Pilgrims of Love: From the Day-to-Day to Eternity." This year something new has been added. There will be sessions for young people who desire to become familiar with Salesian spirituality. The contact person for this conference is Fr. Jean-Luc Leroux, OSFS, at: jlroux@chello.fr.

The contributions of Fr. Jean Gayet, OSFS, a former Provincial of the French Province and member of the ICSS, in promoting Salesian studies have been incalculable. In addition to the many retreats, conferences, talks, etc., that he has given over the sixty years of his Oblate priesthood, we have frequently mentioned his monumental work of scanning the Annecy edition of the *Oeuvres*. He has already scanned twenty-three of the twenty-seven volumes and placed them on CD-ROM. These have been of invaluable assistance to Salesian scholars in many parts of the world, not only in France, but also in the United States, Ireland, and Argentina, especially to those working on a doctoral thesis.

Of great interest to the Congregation is the progress achieved in the work being done to have the suspension lifted on the cause of beatification of Mother Chappuis. The suspension was enacted in 1921 by the Congregation of the Rites after the Holy

Office had established that “the writings of Mother Chappuis could not be tolerated” (*tolerari non posse*). Thanks to the kindness and understanding of the competent authorities, it has been possible for Fr. Roger Balducelli, OSFS, Congregational Archivist, to have access to the documentation relative to this suspension and to undertake a leisurely study of it. This study is still in progress. A parallel study is being conducted on the Good Mother’s letters to Fr. Regnouf (1000 computer-printed pages!). The cumulative results will be submitted to the Roman authorities, so that they can judge whether the circumstances that demanded or conditioned the suspension still deserve the same consideration as in the 1920s. Fr. Balducelli will continue his unsolicited but useful work as long as possible, but *le sable est bas dans le sablier*, as the French say (“the sand is low in the hourglass”). He will soon be eighty-seven years of age.

The Adult Faith Formation Service of the Diocese of Annecy, in collaboration with the Catholic radio station of Haute-Savoie (RCF Haute-Savoie), held two panel discussions, one for students and another for the general public, after two showings of the movie, “The Da Vinci Code” in one of the city’s movie theaters. The panel consisted of Fr. Michel Tournade, OSFS, French Provincial and a former member of the ICSS, and Jean-Yves Thomas, a lay theologian. Dan Brown’s book and film adaptation were evaluated as an example of very clever marketing by appealing to the public’s gullibility and its penchant for things esoteric and conspiratorial.

The original church of the Visitation (La Sainte Source) has been totally restored. The church has been the center for Italian Catholics living in Annecy since the 1920s, but in 2000 the Salesians were asked to take over this ministry. The Salesians were able to secure a grant from the Italian government for the restoration of the church under the Ministry of Culture. They argued that Francis de Sales and the Visitation originated in what was essentially an Italian state in 1610, and that the impact of the Salesian spirit and of the Visitation communities has been great throughout Italy through the 1600s and 1700s. In any case, the Italian Ministry of Culture gave a favorable reply. The restoration project was funded and completed. The interior of the church is wonderfully renewed. Visitors and tourists to Annecy now come more often to visit this important stop on the Salesian trail.

An exhibit entitled, “Regard sur la Visitation” (A Look at the Visitation), is permanently on display at the Musée Bourbonnais in Moulins, where the third Visitation monastery was founded and where St. Jane de Chantal died. The exhibit was made possible by the combined efforts of twenty-eight monasteries in France and Belgium, making available their patrimony of *objets d’art* spanning five centuries. It also contains personal items belonging to the founders and objects evoking the daily life of a Visitandine. To obtain a very handsome full color brochure of the

exhibit, write to the Musée Bourbonnais, 4, place de l’Ancien Palais, 03000 Moulins, France, or phone: 04 70 44 39 03.

ITALIAN PROVINCE

Fr. Emilio Testa, OSFS, who has had a long and fruitful experience dealing with the Vatican and its various dicasteries on behalf of the Oblates, is shepherding the introduction of the cause of beatification for Fr. Louis Brisson. He assisted Fr. Roger Balducelli, OSFS, in preparing the enormous amount of documentation submitted to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

The Visitation of Salò has graciously agreed to translate the *ICSS Newsletter* into Italian. The sisters did an excellent job in preparing an Italian version of the ICSS booklet *L’Autorità nella tradizione salesiana* (Leadership in the Salesian Tradition), which was distributed to the Visitation monasteries in Italy. The Italian version of the *Newsletter* will make it available in six languages on the ICSS website, and be particularly accessible to the Salesians of Don Bosco, many of whom know Italian.

The last issue of this *Newsletter* noted the recent publication of the groundbreaking book by Fr. Morand Wirth, SDB, *François de Sales et l’éducation* (Paris: Éditions Don Bosco, 2005). This work has been translated into Italian with the title *Francesco di Sales e l’educazione. Formazione umana e umanesimo integrale* and published by the Libreria Ateneo Salesiano. A short description in Italian of the contents of this work can be viewed on the website of the Università Pontificale Salesiana: <http://www.ups.urbe.it/index.php?method=news&action=zoom&id=78>. It can be ordered online at <http://las.ups.urbe.it/wwwroot/web/catalogo.html>.

MONACO

Those who read French will find an interesting history of how the Oblates were entrusted with responsibility for the parish of St. Charles in this principality and the important role that Fr. J. Francis Tucker, OSFS, its first Oblate Pastor and Chaplain to Prince Ranier, played in this apostolate at: <http://www.eglise-saint-charles.com/StFrancois1.htm#toppre>.

DAUGHTERS OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

On the website www.franz-von-sales.org of the Daughters of St. Francis de Sales, it is now possible to ask questions about St. Francis de Sales. Fr. Herbert Winklehner OSFS, a member of the ICSS, will answer these questions. Under the button “Angefragt” (inquired), these answers will be made available on this website.

The Swiss group of the Daughters is pleased to have obtained a new General Spiritual Director, Fr. Thomas Falak from Poland. He is a Priest of St. Francis de Sales and advises the two Polish groups of the Daughters in Warsaw and Lodz.

We extend our best wishes to him as he undertakes this additional responsibility.

The Austrian group of the Daughters celebrated the consecration of Rosemarie Hofmayer made on 24 June 2006 after a two-year formation program. The consecration took place within the celebration of the Eucharist at the Seckau Abbey in Styria, Austria. Rosemarie made her promises before the spiritual director of the group, Fr. Leo Liedermann, and with family guests and the West Austrian Group of the Daughters in attendance.

The common pilgrimage to Annecy will be the highlight of the year for the East and West Austrian Groups. It will take place 2-9 September 2006.

South American Region

The November 2005 issue of the Region's newsletter, *Encuentro dos Oblatos*, notes the meeting held in Rome of the major religious superiors on Consecrated Life. Several of the virtues they listed that are needed to develop new attitudes for new times are characteristics of Salesian spirituality, notably non-violence/gentleness and a spirit of freedom. This reaffirms the relevance of Salesian spirituality for our world.

The region formally opened its 100th anniversary celebration on 21 April 2006.

United States

TOLEDO-DETROIT PROVINCE

The Province has recently established the Brisson Regional Community consisting of six members who live in various geographical areas and are unattached to one of the Province's communities. The idea originated with Bro. Jim Petrait, OSFS, who has been appointed the regional coordinator for the group. Four meetings are held annually on-line. Bro. Jim assigns readings from the writings of St. Francis de Sales or articles on Salesian spirituality, with each member invited to give, via e-mail or phone, a personal reflection on the readings, along with the latest news about themselves. Thus far, there has been 100% participation. Fr. David Whalen, Provincial, notes: "This is a first for us and may well be a first among religious communities in the U.S. Obviously the way this Region will operate will be very different from the way other regional communities function, and it will take time and patience to figure out exactly how that will be. What is important is that it is now in operation."

"Dancing in the Darkness: A Spirituality of Hope in Any Age" will be the theme of The Joseph F. Power, OSFS, 24th Annual Conference on the Spirituality of Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal. It will be held 3-6 August at the Hilton Durham, in Durham, North Carolina. Some of the featured speakers and

their topics are as follows: Fr. James Yeakel, OSFS, "Dancing Through Life: Living Jesus in Challenging Times"; Sr. Mary Greenan, FMA, "Dancing with Aliens and Angels: The Young in the Church Today"; Sr. Jacqueline Burke, VHM, "Outliving St. Francis and St. Jane: The Gift of Salesian Wisdom"; Fr. Roland Calvert, OSFS, "Francis and Jane in the Political Arena." For more information and on-line registration, contact De Sales Ministries and Resources at: www.desalesresource.org.

At the Province's annual meeting on 21-24 June 2005, Fr. David Whalen, OSFS, introduced the topic for the week, "Understanding and Managing Anger, Ours and Other's," which was facilitated by Sr. Lynn Levo, SSJ. The Province's newsletter *Bondings*, summarized the topic in this fashion: "Learning to understand, feel, and manage anger is difficult, to say the least. Exploding, and damaging relationships, self or property is not the sane choice. Nor is stuffing it into grenade pouches, raising blood pressure, nor developing a depressive disposition, nor a porcupine personality. St. Francis de Sales, who himself admitted to the difficulty, expected that he would be free of all angry feelings fifteen minutes after his death, and in his *Introduction to the Devout Life* advised: 'It is better to try to find a way to live without anger than to pretend to make a moderate and discreet use of it.'"

The same issue of *Bondings* contains an obituary of Fr. Anthony Ceresko, OSFS, to whom we paid tribute in the last issue of this *Newsletter*. The article stresses his commitment to promote justice and notes: "All of his teaching and research, and indeed his call to respond in a most radical way, was grounded in his religious profession and in his love and dedication to the whole of Salesian spirituality. He was always looking for ways to take the traditional elements of our spirituality and show how they were compatible with solid biblical studies and genuine theology by whatever name that was currently in vogue." A number of his articles on Salesian thought are available in his book, *St. Francis de Sales and the Bible* (Bangalore: SFS Publications, 2005), which was published shortly before his death, as well as on-line on the website of the Salesian Center for Faith and Culture at: <http://www4.desales.edu/SCFC/SalStudies2.htm#Ceresko>.

Fr. Paul Henry, who heads the Office of Special Ministry of Spirituality of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, has a very favorable review of the book *Spiritual Direction: A Methodology* by Fr. Devasia Manalel, MSFS, in the Spring 2006 issue of *Bondings*. Fr. Henry characterizes the book as "a systematic work on the methodology of Salesian spiritual direction."

The Gesù parish in Toledo, Ohio, whose pastor is Fr. James Cryan, OSFS, presented a Lenten series of four sessions on Salesian virtues that were very well received.

WILMINGTON-PHILADELPHIA PROVINCE

The Spring 2006 issue of *Mosaic*, a publication of Holy Family

University, features Fr. Albert Smith, OSFS, on his retirement after eighteen years of dedicated service as the University's Chaplain/Campus Minister. His long and fruitful ministry not only to students, but also to staff and faculty, has been marked by Salesian optimism, accessibility, and affability. Fr. Smith imbued his life and work with the Salesian spirit and promoted it on every occasion. Congratulations and warmest wishes to Fr. Smith as he embarks on a new phase of his priestly Oblate life!

Kudos to Fr. Michael Murray, OSFS, and to the De Sales Spirituality Center (DSC) for completing Phase I of an ongoing process to translate its Salesian resources into Spanish. The following Spanish resources have been posted on the DSC's website: (1) *Sundays Salesian*, one-page reflections on the Sunday/Solemnity/Feast Days Lectionary through the end of the 2005/2006 Liturgical Year; (2) seventeen installments of *Prayers of the Heart*; (3) six volumes of *Salesian Perspectives*; (4) two versions of the *Spiritual Directory*; (5) the ten Meditations from the *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Part One; (6) *Every Day with St. Francis de Sales*, offering a thought from Francis de Sales for every day of the year, presented in a monthly format. There are now in excess of 200 distinct Salesian resources in Spanish available on the DSC's new Spanish language main web page: <http://www.oblates.org/spirituality/es/>.

The DSC is delighted to offer Salesian Discipleship Seminars for parish faith communities. The purpose of these one-day seminars is to help establish a core group of people who will work with parish leadership and staff to help others learn, live, and share Salesian spirituality's practical, down-to-earth approach to embracing the Gospel, to "Living Jesus." For more information, please contact the executive director at mmurray@osfs.org.

Dave Herrington, regional director for the Florida Region of the De Sales Spirituality Center, gave a presentation, at the invitation of the Venice Diocese, to its teachers and catechists during a summer institute in early June. His topic was "A Salesian Bouquet: Doing the Ordinary in an Extraordinary Way." Dave, a retired military officer, is one of the most enthusiastic and committed lay collaborators of the Oblates.

Fr. Joseph Chorpenning, OSFS, chairman and a member of the ICSS, curated the exhibition, "*Emblemata Sacra: Emblem Books from the Maurits Sabbe Library, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven*," on view during spring 2006 at the Francis A. Drexel Library at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia. He also edited and contributed an essay to the catalogue that accompanied the exhibition. The exhibit opened a window on the world of symbols and images in which St. Francis de Sales lived and ministered.

Fourteen students and four Oblates from De Sales University completed their yearlong program in the Salesian Leadership Institute (SLI), under the aegis of the Salesian Center for Faith

and Culture (SCFC) and with generous funding from Frank Ryan and the Ryan Foundation. A team of Oblates (Fr. Douglas Burns, Fr. Peter Leonard, Fr. Mark Plaushin, and Fr. Christopher Hudgin), under the leadership of Fr. Thomas Dailey, OSFS, SCFC Director, worked in collaboration with the staff of the Catholic Leadership Institute to integrate Salesian spirituality with its program. The program has two major components: L.E.A.P (Leaders Experiential Adventure Program), which focuses on the discovery of one's personal profile and the development of one's personal mission, and B.E.I.T (Being Energized and Inspired Together), which emphasizes personal reflection and group discussion with facilitators trained in Salesian leadership. Fourteen new students will participate in the program next academic year. More information on the SLI is available on the SCFS website: <http://www4.desales.edu/SCFC/Leadership/SLI-front.htm>.

Partially assisted by an ICSS grant, Fr. Alexander Pocetto, OSFS, former chair and member of the ICSS and presently News Editor of the *ICSS Newsletter*, has successfully digitized two books in the Salesian Collection of Trexler Library at De Sales University. Ruth Kleinman's *A Revolution in Charity* was digitized, saved as a pdf file, and placed on the Web as an experiment; it is now available at: <http://nt1.desales.edu/courses/Charity.pdf>. It was used as a resource in a new on-line course developed and taught in March-April 2006 by Fr. Pocetto, "A Salesian Civilization of Love." The first English translation of the *Treatise on the Love of God* (1630) has also been successfully digitized and will soon be placed on the World Wide Web, so that it is available to Salesian scholars worldwide. This translation by Miles Carr into Elizabethan English can be studied from many perspectives, not least of which is the impact of Salesian spirituality on English Catholicism during a period of intense persecution.

Two new on-line courses were offered by the SCFC. They were "Salesian Scriptures," which examines the manner by which St. Francis de Sales appropriated the teachings of Sacred Scripture and incorporated them in his own preaching and writing, with examples from his sermons and his *Mystical Exposition on the Canticle of Canticles*, facilitated by Fr. Dailey; and "A Salesian Civilization of Love," facilitated by Fr. Pocetto (see above).

Nativity Preparatory School, which opened in 2003, graduated its first class of seven students in June. All of these students have been accepted into private high schools in the Wilmington, Delaware, area. Brother Edward Ogden, OSFS, principal of Nativity Prep, is confident that all of them will be able to meet the challenges of their high school program. Nativity Prep, in three short years, is well on its way of preparing future leaders from disadvantaged circumstances with its rigorous and demanding programs imbued with the Salesian charism and spirit.

In May, the United Nations Association of the United States, in cooperation with the United Nations, hosted the seventh annual

global classrooms model UN conference at the UN headquarters building in New York City. More than 2,300 students from all over the USA and seventeen other nations participated in this convention. Frs. John Hurley, OSFS, and John Spellman, OSFS, led a joint delegation of fifty-one students from Father Judge, Salesianum, and Northeast Catholic high schools to win the world championship at this most prestigious academic debate on a global level. The “Salesian Team” was awarded the Secretary-General’s plaque as the best team in the world. Our sincere congratulations to the “Salesian Team” and to their Oblate mentors. There’s no doubt that the UN itself could profit from an infusion of Salesian spirituality.

Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales (Fransalians)

Preparations are underway for the Fransalians’ 2007 General Chapter. For this purpose, a multitude of resources are posted on their website (www.fransalians.com), including a summary outline, preparatory booklet and prayers, timetable, and set of three working papers. The latter are of particular interest, as they offer thoughtful reflections on three timely themes: (1) Jesus the Missionary, Jesus the Leader; (2) St. Francis de Sales, a Missionary Leader, and Fr. Mermier in His “I want mission experience”; and (3) Challenges of Being a Missionary Leader Today. The Fransalians were founded in 1838 by Pierre Mermier, under the patronage of St. Francis de Sales as the Apostle of the Chablais, who is “the icon of [their] inspiration and imitation.” Accordingly, theirs is the Chablais missionary charism.

New Publications

BOOKS

Elisabeth Stopp, *Adrien Gambart’s Emblem Book: The Life of St. Francis de Sales in Symbols* (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph’s University Press, 2005). This volume includes the late Elisabeth Stopp’s previously unpublished study of *La vie symbolique du bienheureux François de Sales* (1664), an introductory essay by Agnès Guiderdoni-Bruslé that updates and supplements Stopp’s work, and a facsimile of Gambart’s emblem book.

Jose Kumbloickal, MSFS, *La unión con Dios en San Juan de la Cruz y San Francisco de Sales: Estudio comparativo de su propuesta doctrinal* (Union with God in St. John of the Cross and St. Francis de Sales: A Comparative Study of their Spiritual Doctrine) (Burgos, Spain: Editorial Monte Carmelo, 2002). A detailed table of contents in English can be viewed at: <http://www.fransalians.com/sfs-views/kumbloickal-j.htm>. It is available for purchase on <http://www.montecarmelo.com>

Benni Grigoriöse Koottanal, MSFS, *Eucharist Is Love: A Dogmatic and Hermeneutic Understanding of Salesian Eucharistic*

Theology in the Calvinistic Era (Bangalore: SFS Publications, 2005). A very detailed outline of each chapter is available at: <http://www.fransalians.com/sfs-views/kootanal-b.htm>.

Han Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988), *Love Alone Is Credible*, trans. D. C. Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004). The book jacket states that in this new translation, von Balthasar “delves deeper into his exploration of what love means, what makes the divine love of God, and how we must become lovers of God in the footsteps of saints like Francis de Sales, John of the Cross and Thérèse of Lisieux.”

Philippe Legros, *François de Sales, un maître en pédagogie* (Paris, Éditions Don Bosco, 2005).

Stefan Hauptmann, a parish priest of Markt Indersdorf near Munich and an admirer of St. Francis de Sales, has published a *Sales-Novena*, which was used for the first time in his parish to prepare for Pentecost 2006. As the title indicates, it consists of nine days of spiritual preparation for the solemnity of Pentecost in the spirit of St. Francis de Sales. Anyone interested in learning more about this novena can contact Fr. Hauptmann via e-mail: hauptmannst@web.de.

Anne Hoffmann, *Mit der Kraft des Lächelns. Von der Lust, neue Wege zu beschreiten – Aus dem Leben des heiligen Franz von Sales* (With the Power of a Smile. From the Pleasure of Using a New Approach: The Life of St. Francis de Sales) (Munich: Don Bosco Verlag, 2006). This small brochure contains a refreshing short biography of St. Francis de Sales from the series “Lebensgeschichten aus der Don Bosco Familie” (Stories from the Don Bosco Family).

Antony Kolencherry, MSFS, *Von Herz zu Herz. Mystische Dialoge* (From Heart to Heart. Mystic Dialogues) (Eichstätt: Franz Sales Verlag, 2006). This work consists of a series of previously published articles, which place, in typically Salesian manner, the heart and mysticism of heart at the center of the spiritual life. It is well written and presents the teaching of St. Francis de Sales in an accessible fashion.

André Compte-Sponville, *A Small Treatise on the Great Virtues: The Uses of Philosophy in Everyday Life* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001). Among the virtues treated are gentleness and love. The essay on love includes a good commentary on the *Treatise on the Love of God*. Fr. James Cryan, OSFS, writes that he uses it as a *vademecum*.

Not previously mentioned in these pages, but of possible interest to some of our readers, are the following: Mino Bergamo, *L’Anatomie de l’âme: De François de Sales à Fénelon* (Paris: Jérôme Millon, 1994); Tullio Poli, *Punta Suprema Dell’Anima: virtù teologali, preghiera semplice e adesione alla volontà divina secondo S. Francesco di Sales* (Roma: Università Gregoriana Editrice, 1982). Unfortunately, both books are now out of print.

Articles

Binu Edathumpambal, "Incarnational Love: A Salesian Response to Deviations and Disintegration in Society Today," *Indian Journal of Spirituality* 18 (July-September 2005): 326-32.

David Frank Allen, "St. Francis de Sales and the Hospitaller Knights of St. John of Jerusalem," *Downside Review* 123 (July 2005): 170-79.

Patricia Siegel, "The Unsung Hero of the Reformation: Saint Francis de Sales," in *War and Its Uses: Conflict and Creativity*, eds. J. Kleist and B. Butterfield (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 47-59.

Glen C. Scorgie, "Yearning for God: The Potential and Poverty of the Catholic Spirituality of Francis de Sales," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* (Sept. 1998). This article provides very interesting insights on how Evangelicals view or should view Salesian spirituality, and is available online at: http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3817/is_199809/ai_n8813437.

The Fransalian website has a "Thematic Easy Reference to Salesian Perspectives on Various Topics. A List of About 70 Topics from 'Abandonment' to 'Will of God'" at: <http://www.fransalians.com/sfs-views/salesian-views.htm>.

John McCaslin, author of the "Inside the Beltway" column for *The Washington Times* and a contributing columnist on Townhall.com, wrote a brief piece in his column of 24 January 2006 on Francis de Sales as patron saint of journalists.

In *The General's News* XXVI (April-May 2006), pp. 4-6, Fr. Lewis Fiorelli, OSFS, points out some of the parallels

between the ideas on love of Francis de Sales and of Pope Benedict XVI in Part I of the encyclical, *Deus caritas est*.

John Sankarathil, OSFS, "Pope John Paul II and St. Francis de Sales," *Indian Journal of Spirituality* 18 (April-June 2005), studies the themes of the homilies delivered by Pope John Paul II during his visit to France in October 4-7, 1986, as well as of the Pope's letter issued on 23 November 2002 to mark the fourth centenary of St. Francis de Sales's episcopal ordination.

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