During this first quarter of the 21st century, we have the privilege of celebrating the 400th anniversary of a number of key events in the life of St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622). 2002 was the fourth centenary of his episcopal ordination (as well as the 125th anniversary of his declaration as a Doctor of the Universal Church); 2004, of Francis’s initial encounter with St. Jane Frances de Chantal (1572-1641); and 2006, of the establishment of the Académie Florimontane. Next year, 2010, is the 400th anniversary of the foundation of the Visitation Order, the fruit of that first meeting of Francis and Jane; 2016, of the publication of Francis’s masterwork, Treatise on the Love of God; and 2022, of our saint’s passing into eternal life. Last but by no means least, this year, 2009, is the 400th anniversary of the publication of Francis’s most popular and best-selling book, Introduction to the Devout Life (Figure 1).

Some elements of the story of how the Introduction came to be are well known. 1 The young Louise de Châtel, Madame de Charmoisy (1587-1645), was married to Francis’s cousin Claude de Charmoisy, and, as would happen with Jane a little over a year later, Francis first encountered Louise as she sat among the congregation in front of him while he was preaching in January 1603. Although Louise strongly felt that Francis’s sermon was specially meant for her, it was not until four years later, in April 1607, that she formally put herself under his direction, asking the bishop for guidance in her effort to live a Christian life amidst the luxury and moral decadence of the court.

While Louise was preparing to be away from Annecy for six months to attend to a case she had before the senate in Chambéry, Francis gave her some brief treatises or memos (Mémoires) he had written on various spiritual subjects—e.g., how to order the day to accommodate a life of devotion, Christian virtues, the meaning of the life of “perfection” (at the time, a term synonymous with vowed religious life), etc.—and exercises—e.g., prayer and meditation, etc.—to take with her. The bishop had composed these over the course of several years, having them at hand to share, as needed, with his various directees. During her stay in Chambéry, Francis advised Louise to place herself under the direction of the Jesuit Jean Fourier, rector of the college of the Society of Jesus there. 2 Louise showed Francis’s memos to Fourier, who also happened to be Francis’s spiritual director, and, in a letter of 25 March 1608, he urged our saint to publish this material in book form.

The Introduction was first published in 1609, and quickly sold out (Figure 2). Francis immediately set to work on a second edition, which was published in or just before September 1609.
Francis added new material to this edition. For example, in February 1609, he wrote Madame de Chantal to ask her to return to him “all the letters and memoirs I have ever sent you, if you still have them,” using this material to enlarge his text, which he also changed and reorganized, and from which he also deleted material. Three chapters were inadvertently omitted from the second edition, so Francis prepared a third edition (1610), but it also contained mistakes, as did the 1616 edition. The definitive edition, so Francis prepared a third edition (1610), but it also contained mistakes, as did the 1616 edition. The definitive edition of the Introduction was published in 1619; this is the version familiar to readers today. Since the first edition, Francis had made more than 1,000 purely stylistic emendations to his text.

So great and immediate was the Introduction’s success that even during Francis’s lifetime it was translated into the major European languages, and since then it has appeared in many other languages, including Basque, Chinese, modern Greek, and Armenian. There were also counterfeit editions. What was the secret of the Introduction’s success?

At the time of its first printing, the Introduction . . . filled a very real need in Catholic culture. Interest in the spiritual life was high among persons in all walks of life. Many of the classic works on prayer and spiritual practices were newly available in vernacular translations and people were hungry to read them. People were also seeking out guides to the spiritual life, and men like Francis, who had much to say on the topic, were in great demand. Yet because so many of the classic treatments on prayer were written for and by individuals in the monastic vocation and thus reflected a spirituality appropriate to a life of withdrawal, and because spiritual directors were not easy to come by, there was a crying need for a book that could distill some of the collective wisdom of centuries of Christian experience and make it accessible to persons in various walks of life. . . . [Francis] had something to share that [people from all walks of life] were hungry to hear. . . .

Since the Introduction’s first edition, it has never gone out of print, and it continues to offer practical, commonsense spiritual advice to countless laypeople, religious, and clergy.

There is also a “back-story” to the Introduction—the story behind the story—whose elements may be less familiar. This back-story has two principal elements: first, Francis’s student days in Paris and Padua; and, second, his 1602 visit to Paris. Most accounts of Francis’s composition of the Introduction’s first edition explain that he pulled it together rather quickly, in the midst of a busy schedule, by reworking a series of memos he had sent to Madame de Charmoisy and others like her into chapter form, addressing them to an imaginary “Philothea,” a feminine name that simply means “lover of God.” While this explanation is accurate, the Introduction’s back-story invites us to consider this Salesian classic from the broader, often overlooked, perspective that it is the fruit of a prolonged period of personal spiritual development and gestation on the part of Francis. This is the approach taken in this essay.

I. Portrait of the Saint as a Young Man

Francis at the Jesuit Collège de Clermont in Paris

The story of the Introduction actually begins with Francis’s own efforts as a layperson to live the devout life during his student days in Paris and Padua. As a spiritual teacher and director, Francis imparted to others lessons he first thoroughly learned himself. For Francis, this learning process commenced decades before he engaged in the ministry of spiritual direction that led to the Introduction’s composition and publication.

From 1578 to 1588, Francis studied humanities, philosophy, and liberal arts at the Jesuit Collège de Clermont in Paris, which was the premier educational institution of the Society of Jesus in France. These years were pivotal not only for Francis’s intellectual formation, but also his spiritual development. According to Francis’s own testimony, given many years later, he first struggled with the question of what constituted true devotion—a topic he takes up at the outset of the Introduction— as a young student in Paris.

It is necessary to avoid feigned behavior since all that is affected must be abhored. . . . I mean playing devout persons and saints in our external appearance as I once
did. . . . When I was a young student in this city, I suddenly had a great fervor and desire to be holy and perfect. I began to imagine that to be a saint I had to lean my head on my shoulder while saying my Book of Hours, because another student, who really was a saint, did it. I carefully did likewise for some time, but without becoming more saintly.7

In all likelihood, it was at Clermont where Francis was first exposed to St. Ignatius of Loyola's Spiritual Exercises, which had a formative and lasting influence on him. One of the enduring lessons that Francis learned from the Exercises and the Jesuits at Clermont—a lesson that would be reinforced in Padua by Lorenzo Scupoli's Spiritual Combat (1589)—is that cultivation of the spiritual life in the midst of the world required strategy. The key was to order each day: daily attendance at Mass, meditative prayer, frequent reception of Holy Communion, weekly Confession, devotion to the Virgin Mary and the saints, and, of course, the practice of the virtues, specifically obedience, humility, piety, fidelity to the duties of one's state of life, civility, and chastity. These would later become the central elements of the Introduction's second and third parts.8

While at Clermont, Francis was admitted to its elite Marian sodality, and in due course he was elected its secretary and later, its president. This sodality was part of a European-wide network of such groups promoted and maintained by the Jesuits, many in the schools of the Society, with a view to fostering the spiritual development of their students and ultimately to revitalizing and transforming the wider Catholic society.9 Francis's experience of the Marian sodality at Clermont may have influenced the importance that he later ascribed to community and spiritual friendships for the devout life:

[T]he delightful balm of devotion is distilled from one heart into another. . . . For those who live in the midst of the worldly-minded and who embrace true virtue, it is necessary to join with other like-minded persons by holy and sacred friendship; for, by this means they encourage, assist, and lead one another to goodness (Introduction, Part 3, chapter 19).

No consideration of Francis's student days in Paris is complete without reference to his six-week anguished temptation to despair of his salvation—the primary defining experience of his life and the theological foundation of Salesian spirituality (Figure 3). The fruit of this experience is Francis's subsequent unshakable faith in the scriptural truth of God's will to save all (1 Timothy 2:4), which is the theological foundation for the universal call to holiness. From these dark days, Francis confided to his friend, Jean-Pierre Camus (1584-1652), bishop of Belley, that he also learned a lesson that he would never forget and that would shape the rest of his life and his future ministry: "to have compassion for the weakness of others."10

Compassion was the lens through which Francis read the universal salvific will of God, which reveals the divine compassion and gentleness, which is enflashed in the self-emptying (kenosis) of the crucified Jesus. This is the archetype that Francis's own compassion for others sought to mirror, and that Salesian gentleness and humility personalize and seek to make present in human relationships.11 As Francis insists, in the Introduction, Part 3, chapter 8, humility and gentleness bring us closest to the perfect imitation of Christ, who, in Matthew 11:29, invites all to learn these virtues from Him.

**Francis's Rule of Life at Padua**

After receiving his licentiate and master of arts degrees in Paris and a brief visit home with his family, Francis enrolled for higher studies, on 26 December 1588, at the University of Padua. He is inscribed in the university's register as Nob. D. Franciscus Salesius, Sabaudus Gallus, that is, "Noble lord, Francis de Sales, French-speaking Savoyard." At Padua, Francis studied law to please his father, and theology to please himself, since he had already discerned a vocation to the priesthood. These studies culminated, three years later, with Francis taking a double doctorate in *utroque jure*, i.e., in canon and civil law.

**Figure 3. Statue of Notre Dame de Bonne Délivrance of the Dominican church of Saint-Etienne-des-Grès, presently in the convent of the Sisters of St. Thomas of Villanova, Neuilly-sur-Seine. A deep devotion to the Virgin Mary was part of St. Francis de Sales's spiritual life from his youth.** Not long after matriculating at the Jesuit Collège de Clermont in Paris, he was admitted to its Marian sodality, and in due course he was elected its secretary, and later, its president. At the height of his anguished six-week temptation to despair of his salvation, Francis was delivered from this trial after praying the *Memorare* before this statue of Our Lady. These dark days left an indelible mark on Francis's life and subsequent ministry, teaching him to have compassion on the weakness and struggles of others. Compassion was the lens through which he read the Biblical truth of the universal salvific will of God (1 Timothy 2:4), enflashed in the crucified Jesus—the archetype his own compassion for others sought to mirror.
During his years in Padua, Francis continued to deepen his spiritual life. To assist him in building on the firm foundation made in Paris, Francis placed himself under the direction of the Italian Jesuit Antonio Possevino (1534-1611), a renowned theologian, humanist, and papal diplomat, who would serve as Francis's spiritual and intellectual mentor (Figure 4). The two maintained a lifelong friendship. Possevino's solid understanding of the problems facing the Church in the Geneva area gave him a special interest in the gifted Savoyard student, whose priestly vocation he helped to clarify and affirm. With his firsthand knowledge of the worlds of both politics and religion, Possevino instilled in Francis the universal, cosmopolitan, and catholic outlook that would become our saint's hallmark. Under Possevino's direction, Francis composed a set of "spiritual exercises" to help him to deepen his spiritual life while in the midst of the dissipated world of student life. Francis would later include several of these exercises in a revised form in the Introduction to the Devout Life.

Impressed by the practicality, wisdom, and excellence of these exercises, some of Francis's fellow students obtained his permission to make copies of them for their own use and benefit. In this way, "they became on a small scale what the Introduction was afterwards to be in a much larger sphere." Likewise, it is of no little interest that these exercises enjoyed a privileged place in the ministry to youth of St. John Bosco (1815-88) and the first Salesians.

II. A Turning Point

Francis's 1602 Visit to Paris

Another key episode of the Introduction's back-story is Francis's diplomatic trip on ecclesiastical and state business to Paris in 1602. Francis was welcomed as the acclaimed "Apostle of the Chablais," and the 35-year-old bishop-designate's preaching at court and in the city's churches made him the toast of Paris. While in the French capital, he was also a frequent visitor to the home of Pierre and Barbe Acarie (Barbe Avrillot; in religion, Marie of the Incarnation, 1566-1618), a gathering spot for a group of devout lay people and clerics, whose "names . . . read like a Who's Who of Counter-Reformation Paris" (Figure 5). The members of the Acarie circle "sought to nurture their own internalized and often mystical piety and at the same time to spark a broader renewal of Catholic institutions and faith" (ibid., 78), in the aftermath of the devastation of the bloody civil Wars of Religion between Calvinists and Catholics (1562-98).

Francis was introduced to the elite Acarie spiritual salon by Pierre de Bérulle (1575-1629), a cousin of Madame Acarie, the founder of the French Oratory, and future cardinal (1627). During his sojourn in Paris, Francis served as Madame Acarie's confessor. He also actively participated in one of this circle's major projects—the introduction to France of the reformed Discalced Carmelite nuns of St. Teresa of Ávila (1515-82): he was delegated by the group to seek permission for the new foundation from Pope Clement VIII. After her husband's death in 1613, Madame Acarie herself entered Carmel, taking the name "Marie of the Incarnation," by which she is best known in the annals of sanctity, being beatified in 1791.

While frequenting the Acarie circle and collaborating on its projects, Francis was also aware that the spiritual vision that predominated in the salon Acarie, and which would take the shape of the French School of Spirituality, was different from his own. This difference becomes clear when, for example, the theological anthropology, approach to the imitation of Christ, and pastoral orientation of Francis and Bérulle, who is regarded as the founder of the French School of Spirituality, are compared.

Both Francis and Bérulle were products of Jesuit education—both alumni of the College de Clermont—and "had Ignatius of Loyola's Spiritual Exercises imprinted on their hearts." However, whereas Salesian spirituality is deeply embedded in the thought world of Christian humanism, in which Francis and Bérulle would have been immersed at Clermont, Bérulle had little attraction to it. Francis's view of human nature is profoundly optimistic, affirming
that the capacities with which persons are gifted are God-given and are, in fact, the medium through which response to God occurs. Thus, all human works are designed to be utilized, not bypassed, in the Christian life. . . . Salesian thought imbibes the humanist spirit by affirming the essential goodness and Godward capacity of humanity. Moreover, it is a very “human devotion” in the sense that it is practical, balanced, down to earth, and accessible (ibid., 158-59).

By contrast, Bérulle’s view of human nature parts company with Christian humanism. The keynote of Bérulle’s spirituality is abnegation and annihilation (anéantissement) of the self, which leads one to have a very low estimate of all created things and especially of oneself, and a very high idea of God. . . . Abnegation involves a detachment from all that hinders one from adhering to Jesus. . . . It is only through a radical abnegation of one’s very self that a person can adhere fully to Jesus who is our life and our all. The object of abnegation or annihilation is to live entirely for God in Christ Jesus.22

For Bérulle, abnegation and annihilation of the self is the conditio sine qua non for the imitation of Christ, which consists in seeking “consciously to conform one’s whole life to the interior life of Jesus, to what Bérulle calls the ‘states’ of the Incarnate Word,” most especially “the self-humiliation of the Word Incarnate, particularly in Christ’s state of infancy. . . . [which] was basically . . . a state of servitude . . . “ (ibid., 289-90). From his understanding of the imitation of Christ, Bérulle develops the practice of making a devotional vow of servitude to Jesus and Mary. His insistence that the Carmelite nuns adopt this vow ignited a firestorm of controversy.23 Bérulle’s and Francis’s approaches to the imitation of Christ, each rooted in a distinctive theological perspective, could not be more different.

At the head of each letter that Francis wrote and throughout his writings are found the words, “Live Jesus!” Rather than a cheer of affirmation or a rallying cry, “Live Jesus!” is an emphatic statement about how Francis saw himself and what he was about in the world.24 As Francis tells Philothea,

I have wished, above all else, to engrave and inscribe on your heart this holy and sacred maxim, “Live Jesus!” After that, I am certain that your life, which comes from your heart . . . will produce all its actions, which are its fruits, inscribed and engraved with the same word of salvation. Just as this gentle Jesus will live in your heart, so too He will live in all your conduct. . . . And you will be able to say reverently in imitation of St. Paul, “It is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me” [Galatians 2:20] (Introduction, Part 3, chapter 23).

In Salesian spirituality, the imitation of Christ takes the form of “living Jesus” in one’s state of life by the practice of the little virtues, whose conquest Our Lord has set forth for our study and labor. Such are patience, gentleness, self-mortification, humility, obedience, poverty, chastity, tenderness toward our neighbors, bearing with their imperfections, diligence, and holy fervor (Introduction, Part 3, chapter 2).

Francis urges Philothea to apply herself to learning from Christ Himself, who teaches us, by word and example in the Gospels, how to practice the little virtues in order to live Jesus, to be refashioned into another Christ.

I]ust as little children learn to speak by listening to their mothers and lisping words with them, so also by keeping close to our Savior by meditation and by observing His words, actions, and affections, we learn, by His grace, to speak, act, and will like Him (Introduction, Part 2, chapter 1).

As they were for Jesus Himself, the little virtues “are fundamental to our relational lives with God and others and . . . we have ample opportunity to practice them, in one form or another, many times every day.”25 Francis further puts a human face on the practice of the little virtues by calling attention to the example of the Virgin Mary and the saints, who likewise serve as models in this regard.26

Francis’s instructions to Philothea on the little virtues, which can be practiced in any state of life, and which bring us closest to the imitation of Christ since in the Gospels He teaches them to us by word and deed, has a very different feel from Bérulle’s formal, intellectual, and systematic discourses on the “states” that must be entered through prayer to attain incorporation into Christ.27 The bishop of Geneva’s emphasis on the primacy of “the solid evangelical virtues” is regarded as being of a piece with the realism of Teresian mysticism.28 There is no better testimony to the effectiveness of the practice of the little virtues for interior and exterior conformation to Christ than the
lived witness of Francis himself. In her deposition at the first canonical process for Francis's beatification (1627), Mother de Chantal averes: "Several great servants of God said they knew no one who more vividly showed them what Our Lord must have been like in His dealings with men, and that the Blessed seemed to them a true image of the Son of God."  

The pastoral orientations of Francis and Bérulle were also distinctive. Responding to one of the greatest needs of the Church of his day, Bérulle discerned that he had a special vocation to work for the education and sanctification of the diocesan clergy. For this purpose, he founded in 1611 the French Oratory at Paris, a congregation modeled on the Oratory of St. Philip Neri (1515-95) in Rome. The Oratory's mission was to restore the dignity and grandeur of the Catholic priesthood, "the Order of Jesus Christ," so as to remedy the widespread clerical corruption and immorality at the time.  

For his part, Francis was himself a model bishop of the early modern Catholic reform, lent his enthusiastic support and encouragement to Bérulle in founding the Oratory, and worked tirelessly in his own diocese to improve and renew the clergy. At the same time, he believed that the Holy Spirit was leavening the loaf of a renewed Christendom by raising up "devout persons" not only in the episcopate and presbyterate, but in all walks of life, including married people, widows, professionals, workers in the service industry, etc. 

Bérulle also had a great regard for the laity, believing that all were called to perfection, each through his/her own unique manner of participating in the various states of Christ. In comparison, Salesian spirituality seems less formal, abstract, and intellectual and more "practical, . . . down to earth, and accessible." Francis reworks the Ignatian principle of "finding God in all things" into the Salesian principle of "finding God wherever you are." Francis meets people where they are, namely, in their state of life, and there he assists them in living Jesus, living the devout life, in the quotidian vocational and relational context in which they find themselves. Salesian spirituality is intrinsically flexible and adaptable, not being linked to one lifestyle, especially not a monastic or religiously professional life, although it may be practiced in those settings. Rather, it emphasizes finding God, practicing the devout life, in the busyness of one's ordinary duties. There, in the midst, the worker, householder, courtier or greengrocer makes Jesus live (ibid., 159).

Of course, the manifesto of this hallmark of Salesian spirituality is the Introduction, and, as already noted, the key to its popularity and success as a best-seller in Francis's day was that he had something to share that people from all walks of life were hungry to hear. In the four hundred years since the Introduction was first published, it has never gone out of print and continues to provide practical spiritual guidance to countless readers.

Students of Francis's life and spirituality often observe that his 1602 visit to Paris marks a turning point in his life and ministry in that his encounter with the Acarie circle made him fully conscious of the singularity of his own approach and spiritual vision. As Père Lajeunie puts it, "He had been revealed to himself by Paris. . . . He was then aware of his capacities and his vocation. . . . "  

On his return to Annecy, Francis wasted no time in giving voice to his own intuitions and ideas in his first letters of spiritual direction, which, together with the rule of Padua, may justifiably be considered the "first draft" of the Introduction.

One final observation on Francis and the Acarie spiritual salon: Although members of the Acarie circle, such as Bérulle, and Francis held very different, even opposing, theological views and understandings of the spiritual life, Francis, nonetheless, maintained respectful and profoundly gracious friendships with these individuals, and together they supported one another's efforts in the renewal of the Church. For example, Francis's relationship with Bérulle did not end when the bishop returned to Annecy, but continued through a correspondence that linked these two men from 1605 until just a few months before Francis's death in 1622. Francis's letters to Bérulle make known his admiration for the latter's work of reform, especially the foundation of the Oratory, as well as his deep respect for Bérulle's person and writings. This is a striking example of how, in Francis's life, genuine friendships did not originate simply in shared interests or complementary views, but in God and God's love, whereby all who are engaged in works of love on behalf of God's kingdom are part of the circle of friends in Christ.

Francis's Idea of Devotion

One of the most important and influential ideas that Francis put forth, subsequent to his 1602 visit to Paris, was his notion of true devotion. As already noted, as early as his student days in Padua, Francis carried a copy of the first edition of this work on his person throughout his life and read and reread it. One of his favorite books, it made a deep impression upon him. Here Francis read Scupoli's warning about

[P]eople . . . [who] imagine that they have already reached the state of the angels and feel that God Himself is present in them. . . . however, anyone can see clearly . . . how far they are from true perfection, if he looks at their life and character. As a rule, they always wish to be preferred to others; they love to live according to their own will and are always stubborn in their decisions; they are blind in everything relating to themselves, but are very clear-sighted and officious in examining the words and actions of others. . . . if anyone interferes with them in their pious occupations and works of asceticism, especially in the presence of others—God forbid!—they immediately become
indignant, boil over with wrath and become quite unlike themselves.38

In the Introduction, Francis takes his own approach in defining devotion. Devotion does not mean devotions, but “simply true love of God,” which is expressed by the careful, frequent, and prompt fulfillment of His will that more often than not takes the form of practicing the little virtues amidst the duties of our state of life (Part 1, chapter 1; Part 3, chapters 1-2). In the letters of spiritual direction on which the Introduction is based, Francis insists on these very same points. One of his most poignant descriptions of devotion is found in a letter of 3 May 1604 to Madame Brûlart (+1622), the wife of the President of the Burgundian Parliament in Dijon.

You must not only be devout and love devotion, but you must render it lovable to everyone. Now you will make it lovable if you render it useful and pleasing. The sick will love your devotion if they receive care and comfort from it; your family will love it if they see you more attentive to their well-being, more gentle in handling your affairs, more kind in correcting and so on; your husband will love it if he sees that as your devotion increases, you become more warm and affectionate toward him; your relatives and friends will love it if they see you more free, supportive of others, and yielding to them in matters that are not contrary to God’s will.39

Salesian devotion “perfects . . . adorns and beautifies” (Introduction, Part 1, chapter 3), rather than stunts or harms, one’s life and human development, relationships, and vocation. It is—in Mother de Chaugy’s memorable phrase—a “well-mannered devotion,”40 which is delightfully illustrated by an episode from the life of Francis’s most eminent directee, Madame de Chantal. As her servants testified: “Madame’s first (spiritual) guide made her pray only three times a day, and we were all annoyed by it, but the bishop of Geneva makes her pray at all hours of the day, and this disturbs no one” (ibid.).

Concluding Thoughts

In his biography of our saint, Francis de Sales: Sage & Saint, André Ravier, SJ, observes: “Devotion—such as Francis de Sales intended it—was born of his personal experience and of the confidences of his Philotheas” (178). The preceding pages have tried to indicate how the Introduction was born of Francis’s own experience, first, as a student at Paris and Padua, and, then, as a participant in the Acarie circle during his 1602 visit to Paris. The latter was indeed a turning point, as it confirmed the singularity of Francis’s approach and spiritual vision that would quickly be revealed in his letters of spiritual direction, which, together with the Spiritual Exercises of Padua, may be aptly regarded as the first draft of the Introduction.

It is hoped that this exploration of the back-story of the Introduction may contribute in some way to a better appreciation and understanding of the nearly three-decade developmental process that yielded this spiritual classic, as we mark the 400th anniversary of its publication. At the same time, the Introduction’s back-story is also a vivid reminder that spiritual growth and development tends to be a slow, gradual process, even for a saint, and that more often than not it requires diligence, patience, perseverance, and humility—little virtues that Francis models in an exemplary fashion.

Joseph F. Chorpenning, OSFS

NOTES


4. Wright, 33-34.


7. Spiritual Conference on Modesty (Saint François de Sales, Oeuvres, eds. A. Ravier and R. Devos, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade [Paris: Gallimard, 1969], 1050-51). Quotations from the Introduction are also from this edition, and are simply referenced parenthetically in the text by part and chapter. Unless otherwise noted, English translations of citations are my own.

8. Bremond, 1: 144; La Bedoyere, 35-36; Wirth, 64-65.


10. On the friendship between Francis and Possevino, see E. Stopp, “St. Francis de Sales: Attitudes to Friendship,” in her A Man to Heal Differences, 119-37, esp. 126-27. On Francis’s student days at Padua, see Ravier, Sage & Saint, 35-45, and

(continued on page 16)
**Annecy Symposium on the “Introduction to the Devout Life at 400 Years” (27-28 July 2009)**

Several news items in the pages that follow report on programs commemorating the fourth centenary of the publication of the *Introduction to the Devout Life* (1609-2009) that have already taken place, e.g., the conference sponsored by the Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Salesianische Studien (Working Group for Salesian Studies), at Salesianum Rosental, Eichstätt, Bavaria, 17-18 September 2008, and the Literature Roundtable on the *Introduction to the Devout Life*, at De Sales University, Center Valley, Pa., on 20 January 2009, as part of its 4th Annual Heritage Week. Forthcoming events are also announced, e.g., the 2009 Journées Salésiennes, in Troyes, 21-25 August 2009, and the 27th Annual Joseph F. Power, OSFS, National Salesian Conference, 8 August 2009, via live teleconferencing to five sites: Wilmington, De., Washington, D.C., Mendota Heights, Mn., St. Louis, Mo., and Toledo, Ohio.

On the congregational level, the De Sales Oblates will officially celebrate this anniversary with a symposium in Annecy, France, 27-28 July 2009. The symposium’s theme is “Encountering Anew the Familiar: The Introduction to the Devout Life at 400 Years.” This program is part of the annual meeting of the Major Superiors of the De Sales Oblates.

The symposium’s concept is as follows: Sometimes the *Introduction*’s contents seem so familiar, that it is perceived that there is nothing more or new to be discovered or known about this spiritual classic. Yet by its very nature, a spiritual classic is inexhaustible. The symposium, “Encountering Anew the Familiar: The Introduction to the Devout Life at 400 Years,” will revisit several of the *Introduction*’s most familiar elements and themes so as to uncover an overlooked or neglected aspect, and perhaps even to yield some fresh insights. This program will include several components: formal presentations by specialists in Salesian studies, together with discussion groups and a roundtable with the presenters.

Presentation topics and presenters are:

**Spiritual Classic.** What does it mean to say that the *Introduction* is a spiritual classic? The renowned Salesian scholar, Dr. Wendy M. Wright (Professor of Theology and Kenefick Chair in the Humanities, Creighton University) will reflect on this question, which has been the subject of her recent research and several publications.

**Spiritual Direction.** The *Introduction* developed out of Francis’s spiritual direction not only of Madame de Charmoisy, but also other Philotheas. Fr. Lewis S. Fiorelli, OSFS (former Superior General and currently General Formation Coordinator), will reflect on Francis’s ministry of spiritual direction as the context for the *Introduction*, as well as our saint’s insights into this topic in this work. Moreover, from the perspective of this seminal work, he will particularly emphasize the importance of spiritual direction in Oblate formation.

**Imagery and Spiritual Formation.** Imagery is ubiquitous in the *Introduction*, which is essentially a book of spiritual formation. Fr. Joseph F. Chorpenning, OSFS (Chairman, International Commission for Salesian Studies [ICSS], and Editorial Director, Saint Joseph’s University Press, Philadelphia), will consider the interrelationship between these two facets, i.e., spiritual formation as a process of image-making.

**Spiritual Friendship.** An element of Francis’s teaching on spiritual friendship in the *Introduction* that has not received the attention it merits is that friendships rooted in God are
eternal and continue in the next life. Bro. Daniel P. Wisniewski, OSFS (Ph.D. Candidate, Bryn Mawr College, and Instructor, De Sales University), will explore this theme, which he has been researching for several years.

**Modern Adaptations of the Introduction.** A consistent element of the publication history of the *Introduction* is the various “adaptations” of this work that have appeared, beginning in the 17th century. Fr. Michel Tournade, OSFS (Provincial of the French Province), will speak about his critically acclaimed adaptation of the *Introduction* for young people, *Une monde à aimer* (1998), with particular attention to what led him to undertake this work, its purpose, methodology, etc.

The schedule for the Annecy symposium will be similar to that of the “Workshop on Fr. Brisson’s Ministry and Spirituality,” which took place in Troyes in February 2008, i.e., symposium sessions will be combined with visits to Salesian sites, Mass at these sites, etc.

All Oblate confreres and others are welcome to attend the symposium and any meals, but need to make their own arrangements for lodging accommodations, as well as to inform the meeting’s organizers of their attendance in advance. If you plan to attend the symposium, please contact in advance Fr. Michel Tournade, OSFS (mitournade@yahoo.fr), or Fr. Sebastian Leitner, OSFS (bigdog@gmx.at).

**Death of Fr. Jean Gayet, OSFS**

The De Sales Oblates and the ICSS were saddened to learn of the passing, after a lengthy illness, on 5 September 2008, of Fr. Jean Gayet, OSFS, former Provincial of the French Province and a longtime member of the ICSS. A memoir will appear in a future issue of the ICSS Newsletter.

**2008-2009 ICSS Grants**

Acting on the recommendation of the ICSS, the General Council and Major Superiors of the De Sales Oblates approved 2008-2009 ICSS grants for the following projects: Bro. Hans Leidenmühler, OSFS, for a press kit for the centenary of the death of Fr. Louis Brisson; and Fr. Sebastian Leitner, OSFS, to assist the publication of Josef Dirmbeck’s book on the *Introduction to the Devout Life* (see below under Europe: Austrian-South German Province). The ICSS extends appreciation and congratulations to these confreres for their ministry of disseminating the Salesian charism in the German-speaking world.

**New Websites**

**INTRODUCTION TO THE DEVOUT LIFE**

To commemorate the 400th anniversary of the publication of the *Introduction to the Devout Life*, often referred to as Philothea in the German-speaking world, Fr. Herbert Winklehner, OSFS, ICSS webmaster and member, has created a special website: www.philothea.de. This site contains the complete text of this great spiritual classic in French, as well as information (in German) about the history, content, and purpose of this perennial bestseller, and its author, St. Francis de Sales.

**Oblate Formation**

This site is intended to support the various formation ministries of the De Sales Oblates. Initially, it was the idea of Fr. Lewis S. Fiorelli, OSFS, former Superior General and now General Formation Coordinator. The design was made possible with the assistance of Fr. Ken McKenna, OSFS, Novice Master of the Toledo-Detroit Province. Formation personnel from the congregation’s provinces and regions are encouraged to submit information about their formation programs and to utilize this site as a forum on formation. The site is accessible at: www.formation.salesoblates.org.

**Merging Processes Within the De Sales Oblates**

**Swiss Community and Austrian-South German Province**

The official ceremony of welcoming the Oblates of the Swiss Community as members of the Austrian-South German Province took place at Fockenfeld, Bavaria, on 22 August 2008. After sixty-two years, the Swiss Community returned to its “mother province.” The De Sales Oblates of Switzerland were an independent province from 1946 to 1999. Because of lack of vocations, the Swiss Community has been under the Generalate in Rome since 1999. The conditions for this official reception were specified in a document drawn up by the Provincial Council of the Austrian-South German Province and approved by the General Council. Fr. Konrad Eßer, OSFS, served as liaison between the Swiss Community and the General Council, and ultimately coordinated its integration into the Austrian-South German Province. The welcome ceremony was attended by Fr. Aldino Kiesel, Superior General, and approximately sixty De Sales Oblates from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. As Fr. Kiesel noted in *Father General’s Letter, VI* (December 2008), “One of the notable qualities of the Swiss confreres was their generosity in contributing to Oblate formation in different parts of the world. Therefore, it has been agreed that part of the economic resources of Switzerland will be designated for the Chablais Fund in the future.” Pictures of the welcome ceremony and the assembly of the members of the German and Austrian-South German Provinces (see below) may be viewed at: www.franz-salesverlag.de/salesianum/images/provinzversammlung08/.

**German Province and Austrian-South German Province**

The merging of the German Province with the Austrian-South German Province will occur on 1 July 2009. The consolidation process between the two German-speaking provinces is progressing well. In August 2008, an assembly of members from the two provinces took place in Fockenfeld. Presently, the entire membership is actively involved in discussion of areas of common interest impacted by consolidation: formation, missionary spirit, our Oblate mission today, ecology, financial
concerns, the contributions of the province to the Congregation, etc. In February-April 2009, Fr. General is making a canonical visit to both provinces.

**South Africa/Namibia**

After a long and challenging process, the Regions of Keetmanshoop and Keimoes became a single region: the South African Region. The unification occurred officially on 16 December 2008, at a solemn celebration in Majieskloof. Fr. Konrad Eßer, OSFS, Assistant Superior General of the De Sales Oblates, represented the Superior General at this historic event. An extraordinary chapter, with membership from both outgoing regions, preceded the official unification. Besides deciding to include for the next four years six members on the Regional Council, the chapter decided that the new administration’s primary focus should be community life and reconciliation. The chapter set forth as the new region’s goal the reinforcement of fraternal bonding among all the confreres and the involvement of the entire regional community in the process of continuing formation.

**Africa**

**Benin**

**Correction:** ICSS Newsletter, No. 22 (August 2008): 9, incorrectly reported that Fr. Anatole Mongadjì, OSFS, was serving as parochial vicar at St. Charles parish in Monaco. Fr. Anatole was merely visiting Monaco and actually serves as parochial vicar at St. Charles de Sales parish in Parakou. We apologize for any misunderstanding this error may have caused.

A report by Ferdinand Sokenou, OSFS, on the 2007 Benin Salesian Conference appears in La Lettre de RES [= Recherches et Études Salésiennes], No. 14 (August 2008). This issue also contains Fr. Jean-Luc Leroux’s paper, “Mission de saint François de Sales au Chablais et évangelisation” (St. Francis de Sales's Mission in the Chablais and Evangelization). For more information on this publication, see below, under Europe: France.

**Asia**

**India**

The India Mission is embarking on its first apostolic endeavor. With the approval of the General Council and the Bishop of Vijayawada in the neighboring state of Andhra Pradesh, Fr. Xavier Manchu, OSFS, has been assigned as pastor of the Oblates’ new parish in Vangutur. This is the Mission’s first attempt to spread the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales and our founders in a parish setting. This also provides a welcome opportunity to assist in the faith formation of the laity and to contribute to the social transformation of the people and society by ministering to the poor and through social development programs.

At the invitation of the U.S. Ambassador to Switzerland, Fr. John Sankarathil, OSFS, as the honored guest, addressed a group of some twenty ambassadors at a prayer breakfast in Bern. In his remarks, Fr. Sankarathil noted the contribution that St. Francis de Sales’s teaching on gentleness can make for bringing peace to the lives of individuals and to our world. A number of ambassadors showed great interest in St. Francis de Sales, indicating that they intended to purchase and read the *Introduction to the Devout Life*. For his part, the U.S. Ambassador to Switzerland is keenly interested in St. Francis de Sales and has read the *Introduction*. Many attendees also expressed the desire to read Fr. Sankarathil’s forthcoming book, a popularization of his doctoral thesis, “Humility and Gentleness: Theological Investigations in the Writings of St. Francis de Sales,” presented at the University of Fribourg in 2008.

**Europe**

**Accent on Youth**

As reported in ICSS Newsletter, No. 22 (August 2008): 9-10, the Salesian Pilgrimage for Youth, which included more than forty pilgrims (Oblates and students from Oblate high schools in the United States, France, and Uruguay), took place in June 2008 in Annecy.

In July 2008, thirteen young European Oblates met in and around Annecy and spent time at the Alpine vacation house in La Frasse, near Annecy. It was the first event of its kind. The group engaged in in-depth discussion of topics such as the life and ministry of Fr. Brisson and St. Francis de Sales’s understanding of the Eucharist. Despite the disparity of languages, a fraternal Salesian spirit overcame cultural barriers. Frs. Michel Tournaire, OSFS, and Sebastian Leitner, OSFS, plan to hold another meeting of this kind in 2010.

**Austrian-South German Province**

A celebration to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the death of Fr. Louis Brisson, took place in Switzerland on 13 September 2008. Oblate Sisters from Bern, Soyhières, and Châtel Saint-Denis, together with De Sales Oblates from Switzerland, Austria, and Germany, participated in this celebration in Düdingen near Fribourg. Fr. Josef Huber, OSFS, was the main celebrant of the Eucharist, and the homilist was Fr. Konrad Eßer, OSFS, Assistant Superior General of the De Sales Oblates. He pointed out four essential elements that Fr. Brisson gave to the Oblate Sisters and De Sales Oblates in order to live and disseminate the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales: (1) the Spiritual Directory as an aid to live in God’s presence in everyday life; (2) the Eucharist as a source of strength; (3) the love of God; and (4) the love of the Blessed Mother, to whom Fr. Brisson was greatly devoted under the title, “Our Lady of Light,” because she brought us the “Light of the World” by the birth of her Son, Jesus Christ.

A conference sponsored by the Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Salesianische Studien (Working Group for Salesian Studies) took place at Salesianum Rosental, Eichstätt, Bavaria, 17-18 September 2008. The conference’s topic was “The 400th
Anniversary of the *Introduction to the Devout Life* (Philothea) by St. Francis de Sales (1608-2008): Aiming at a Devout Life—Today's Search Movements in Church and Society.” Prof. Dr. Ludwig Mödl (University of Munich) delivered a talk on “Searching for Spirituality from the Present Perspective of a Pastoral Theologian.” Prof. Dr. Margit Eckholt (The Catholic University of the Salesians of Don Bosco at Benediktbeuern, Bavaria) spoke on “Friendship and Community: A Dogmatic-Theological Reading of the Philothea of St. Francis de Sales.” In addition, there was a presentation of a new Salesian book published by Franz Sales Verlag, Eichstätt: *Fromm und trotzdem normal. Die Franz von Sales Methode* (Devout and Yet Sane: The Method of St. Francis de Sales), by the Austrian author, Josef Dirnbeck. (Publication of this book was assisted by an ICSS grant.) The author himself attended and read from his new book. He selected twenty-eight essential elements from the *Introduction to the Devout Life* and described them for modern readers. In this way, this book provides a good overview of St. Francis de Sales’s method of teaching Christians how to live devotion in ordinary life.

Fr. Herbert Winklehner, OSFS, gave several talks on Salesian topics on Radio Horeb, a Catholic radio station in Germany. In the one-hour series “Spirituality,” he spoke on “St. Jane de Chantal: We always have to trust in God” on her feast day (12 August 2008), on “Louis Brisson and the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales” on 8 October 2008, and on “St. Francis de Sales, the Author of a Bestseller: His *Introduction to the Devout Life* Celebrates Its 400th Birthday” on the saint’s solemnity (24 January 2009). The talks are broadcast live, and listeners have the opportunity to call in to ask questions. These radio programs are available on the Internet at: www.radio-horeb.de.

The Salesian Online Advent Calendar 2008 (www.salesadvent.de) was dedicated to the 400th anniversary of the *Introduction to the Devout Life* by St. Francis de Sales. With twenty-four essential quotes from the *Introduction*, the readers were prepared step by step for Christmas.

As a spiritual companion on the way to the merging of the German and the Austrian-South German Provinces of the De Sales Oblates, a special website has been created so that the confreres cannot only learn more about the other province, but also find a monthly novena and a special prayer for this merger: www.franz-sales-verlag.de/provinzen.

The De Sales Oblate Community at Salesianum Rosental, Eichstätt, Bavaria, is marking the fourth centenary of the publication of the *Introduction of the Devout Life* in several ways. For example, there were special “Philothea Sermons” for the Sundays of Advent. Fr. Johannes Haas, OSFS, preached on “Everything starts with longing’ (Nelly Sachs). Longing for God (*Introduction*, Part 1, chapter 1): Aiming at a Devout Life.” Fr. Winklehner’s theme was “Sugar plums and cordials. Eternal blessedness to those who seek God (*Introduction*, Part 4, chapter 13)” Fr. Sebastian Leitner, OSFS, preached on “Inherited Love of God: Curse or gift? God began to love you, as He began to be God (*Introduction*, Part 5, chapter 14)."

There are two new German songs about St. Jane Frances de Chantal and St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. These are available at: www.franzvonsaleslexikon.de, under “Liturgie” (Liturgy).

**France**

Anticipating the Synod on the Word of God, the Journées Salésiennes, held in Troyes 24-29 August 2008, had as its theme “Avec François de Sales, vivre la Parole de Dieu aujourd’hui” (Living the Word of God Today with Francis de Sales). Among the presenters and their topics were the following: Fr. Jean-Luc Leroux, OSFS, “La Bible et saint François de Sales” (The Bible and St. Francis de Sales); Fr. Michel Tournade, OSFS, “A Partir de la Parole de Dieu, les relations humaines dans les traditions salésienne et brissonienne” (Starting with the Word of God, Human Relations in the Salesian and Brissonian Traditions) and “La Parole de Dieu, source de similitudes chez François de Sales” (The Word of God, Source of Similitudes chez François de Sales’s Imagery); Philippe Legros, “Les saints ou l’Évangile chanté: saint Louis” (Saints or the Gospel Sung: St. Louis); Sr. Geneviève-Agnès, OSFS, “Rachi, la Bible hébraïque et François de Sales” (Rachi, the Hebrew Bible and Francis de Sales); Mother Françoise-Bernadette Beuzelin, OSFS, “Évocation du Père Brisson” (Reminiscences of Fr. Brisson); and Blandine Delayhe, “Le Message de la Fête de la Toussaint dans les sermons de François de Sales et dans l’École Française de spiritualité” (The Message of the Feast of All Saints in the Sermons of Francis de Sales and in the French School of Spirituality).

The theme for the 2009 Journées Salésiennes will be “Avec François de Sales, vivre l’Esprit aujourd’hui” (Living in the Spirit Today with Francis de Sales). It will be held in Troyes, 21-25 August 2009. One day will be dedicated to the 400th anniversary of the publication of the *Introduction to the Devout Life*.

*La Lettre de RES* publishes most of the conferences and papers presented at the Journées. *La Lettre de RES*, No. 14 (August 2008), which includes materials from the 2007 Échanges salésiens, 2007 Entretiens salésiens du Bénin, and 2008 Journées Salésiennes, is now available. This issue also contains a review of the ICSS volume, *Human Encounter in the Salesian Tradition* (2007), as well as an editorial by Dr. Philippe Legros that emphasizes the primacy and indispensability of scholarly research into the primary sources of the Salesian tradition. Those who pay the annual membership fee for the Association RES also receive a copy of *La Lettre de RES*. For further information, please contact Fr. Jean-Luc Leroux, OSFS, President of the Association RES, at: association69@yahoo.fr.

**Italy**

On 8 November 2008, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints recognized the heroic virtue of Sr. Maria Troncatti, a Salesian who
served the indigenous peoples of Ecuador. Archbishop Angelo Amato, prefect of that dicastery, presented the decree in the presence of the newly elected Superior General of St. Troncatti’s congregation, the Salesian Sisters of Don Bosco, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Sr. Troncatti is the ninth member of this religious family to be declared venerable, including Margarita Occhiena, the mother of St. John Bosco. The Salesian news agency (Zenit News) explained that Sr. Troncatti (1883-1969) lived with the Shuar population of southeast Ecuador for more than forty years, carrying out “an enormous work of evangelization in the midst of various kinds of danger.”

Netherlands
Dr. Judith de Raat, a lay theologian, has completed a book that includes forty letters of St. Francis de Sales and six of his friends in Dutch translation. The formal presentation of the book took place on 25 January 2009, at the Salesianum in Schijndel, as part of the celebration of the solemnity of St. Francis de Sales by both the De Sales Oblates and the members of the Salesian circles. Each letter is preceded by an introduction. Moreover, the book also has a general introduction and a concluding essay. This positive and fruitful collaboration between Dr. de Raat and the De Sales Oblates will hopefully result in further publications.

The principal thematic focus of the four 2009 issues of the Salesian magazine, OESalesians Contact will be the 400th anniversary of the publication of the Introduction to the Devout Life, with special attention to Madame de Charmoisy, also known as Philothea.

SISTERS OF THE VISITATION
A preparatory meeting for the 400th anniversary of the foundation of the Visitation Order (1610-2010) took place in the Visitation Monastery of Zangberg, near Munich, Bavaria, in early October 2008. One of the many ideas that came out of this meeting has already been realized: a jubilee prayer, which will be given to all sisters of the German Federation of the Visitation, printed on an attractive card with the portraits of St. Jane Frances de Chantal and St. Francis de Sales.

SECULAR INSTITUTE OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES
After two years of formation, Monika Rauh became a new member of the Bavarian region of the Secular Institute of St. Francis de Sales by professing the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. On this occasion, a festive Eucharist was celebrated, in the Bavarian village of Steinerskirchen, by Fr. Franz Wehrl, OSFS, assistant director of the Institute (Bavarian region). The homilist was Fr. Herbert Winkelhner, OSFS, who described three essential elements of the Salesian life: (1) living in the presence of the loving God; (2) living cordially (from heart to heart); and (3) making a new beginning every day. Angela Haucke, the General Director of the Institute, was also present.

SOCIETY OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES
Members of the German, Austrian, and Swiss group of the Society of St. Francis de Sales gathered for days of further formation in Rastatt, Baden-Württemberg, 12-14 September 2008. The meeting’s topic was “Being Religious Without God—The Challenges of the New Atheism for Christians.” The presenter was Werner Hobsch, director of the Institute for Interreligious Dialogue of the Archdiocese of Cologne, Germany. His topic was “St. Francis de Sales and Madeleine Delbrel: Their Witnesses of Faith as Answers to the New Atheism.”

South American Province
Shortly after the South American Region became a province, it undertook responsibility for Haiti as one of its missions, in addition to Ecuador, Bolivia, and La Bahia (Brazil). In a recent visit to Haiti, Fr. Aldino Kiesel, OSFS, Superior General of the De Sales Oblates, was impressed with the number and quality of the Haitian men who are presently in the formation program. These include five scholastics, three novices, seven postulants, eight associates, and nine aspirants. Fr. Thomas Moore, OSFS, on loan to the South American Province from the Toledo-Detroit Province and a member of the formation team, reports that the associates and the aspirants live with Fr. Tom Hagan, OSFS, at the Hands Together House, which is about fifteen minutes away from the Formation House. All of them teach at the Hands Together School of St. Francis de Sales in Cité Soleil. The others live at Kay Fomasyon St. François de Sales, 1 Rue Famosa/Delmas 33, Port-au-Prince.

As Fr. Moore recounts, this blessing of burgeoning vocations is not without its challenges, including housing, financial resources, religious life in the Haitian culture, etc., which Fr. Moore, and the two Brazilian Oblates Frs. Carlos Martins de Borba, OSFS, Director of Formation, and Wilfrido Mosquera, OSFS, along with the able assistance of the very experienced Fr. Hagan, are carefully trying to work through. Hands Together has made quite a substantial contribution in underwriting the Oblate foundation, as Fr. Moore gratefully notes, but the Oblates now have to assume the lion’s share of the finances. A recent substantial grant from the Chablis Fund is an indication of the Oblate commitment to this worthy apostolate.

In discussions with Fr. Kiesel, Fr. Hagan noted that in addition to poverty as an economic question “there is also a poverty that seems to be part of the Haitian culture which is much deeper than economic poverty. He senses that the Haitian people experience a poverty of self-confidence and/or self-esteem. They seem to lack a sense of their own value as human beings and as children of God. He spoke of [a] liturgy he celebrated in which he baptized over sixty children. He said to the assembly that these young baptized had great value—value as persons in themselves and value in the eyes of God. Having said this, the assembly began to applaud. This surprised [Fr. Hagan], and he wondered if he had used the wrong word in Creole, but was reassured by someone near him that no, the people applauded because they had never heard anyone say that they were of value. These people need to know that they are valued, that God loves them and that they have value because of who they are and not so much because of what they have” (as reported by Fr. Moore).
During a New York Times video broadcast, Fr. Hagan reported his firsthand experience of a Gospel perspective on the present food crisis in Haiti.

**United States**

**TOLEDO-DETROIT PROVINCE**

On 23-25 October 2008, the biennial Salesian Scholars Seminar was held at De Sales Resources and Ministries (DR&M), Stella Niagara, N.Y. The Seminar's theme was “Propagating the Salesian Spirit.” Following customary procedure, papers are prepared and circulated in advance of the Seminar, where working sessions are devoted to the discussion of these papers. Each paper is briefly introduced by a seminar participant other than the author, and it is then discussed in detail by the group. The following papers were presented and discussed: Joseph F. Chorpenning, OSFS, “Francis de Sales’s Emblematic Interpretation of the Death of St. Joseph (Treatise on the Love of God, Book 7, chapter 13)”; Paula McCarthy, VHM, “The Shroud of Turin and St. Francis de Sales”; Alexander T. Pocetto, OSFS, “The Sternness of the Gentle Francis de Sales (1567-1622)”; Daniel P. Wisniewski, OSFS, “Chains of Love: The Eternity of Friendship in Salesian Spirituality”; Christian Krokus, “Spiritual Friendship in the Salesian Tradition Read in Light of Lonergan’s Understanding of Vertical Finality”; Wendy M. Wright, “The Transmission of the ‘Salesian Spirit’ in the 19th-Century Année sainte”; Patricia Siegel, “Caroline Carré and the Founding of the Daughters of St. Francis de Sales”; Thomas Dailey, OSFS, “Jewel of Perfection: The Spiritual Directory as a Privileged Means of Propagating the Salesian Spirit”; Joseph Boenzi, SDB, “Salesian Spirit, Lay Movements, and Consecrated Life in the Church” and Kathleen Brown, “St. Francis de Sales and a Theology of Vocation.” Other participants were Fr. John Graden, OSFS, Joanne Kinney, and Mary Grace McCormack, VHM.

Dr. Wright and Fr. Chorpenning graciously agreed to continue as co-chairs for the next Salesian Scholars Seminar, which is scheduled for 20-24 October 2010, at DR&M. As 2010 is the 400th anniversary of the foundation of the Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary, the Seminar’s theme is “The Visitation Order: Its History and Spiritual Patrimony.” The 2010 Seminar will also include a mini-seminar by Dr. Jill Fehleison on her research on the episcopates of Claude Granier, St. Francis de Sales, and Jean-François de Sales, as well as confessional pamphlets produced between 1589 and 1665 by Catholics and Protestants living in Geneva and Savoy.

The Toledo-Detroit Province’s newsletter, Bondings, 21/3 (Autumn 2008), contains an article by Ceil Sharp on the 26th Annual Joseph F. Power, OSFS, National Salesian Conference on the Spirituality of St. Francis de Sales and St. Jane de Chantal, held at the Mendota Heights Visitation Monastery, St. Paul, Mn., 31 July-3 August 2008. The 2008 Conference’s theme was “Fostering Salesian Leadership,” and for this occasion DR&M reprinted an updated edition of Leadership in the Salesian Tradition, originally published by the ICSS in 2002 to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the episcopal consecration of St. Francis de Sales. Copies of this publication may be purchased from DR&M at: www.desalesresource.org.

The 27th Annual Joseph F. Power, OSFS, National Salesian Conference (2009) will commemorate the 400th anniversary of the publication of the Introduction to the Devout Life by focusing on this book, its content and spirituality, and a way of connecting these to the present moment. Just as this classic work will take on new life, so too will this Conference, which is scheduled for 8 August 2009, via live teleconferencing to five sites: Wilmington, De., Washington, D.C., Mendota Heights, Mn., St. Louis, Mo., and Toledo, Ohio. This exciting new format, adopted in view of the current economic crisis, offers participants a one-day program “right in their own backyard,” which includes the Conference’s usual components (prayer, three keynote speakers, facilitated discussion, a Salesian Marketplace at each venue, and lunch), while not having to bear the expense of travel and lodging. For further information, go to: www.desalesresource.org.

In an article “Envisioning a Salesian Culture” (Bondings, 21/2 [Summer 2008]), Fr. John Graden, OSFS, Director of DR&M, notes the many Salesian programs, projects, and services that DR&M sponsors. A major part of DR&M’s ministry is Salesian evangelization, and in this regard, it is collaborating with St. Anthony Messenger Press to develop tools to revitalize American parishes. Dr. Graden envisions for the future a ministry that he describes as “Salesian Central,” which will hopefully involve Oblates, Visitandines, Salesians of Don Bosco, and the Daughters and Sons of St. Francis de Sales. “Its goal,” he says, “is to use every technique imaginable from printed materials to mp3 files and podcasts to impact this culture with the radical vision” given us by Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal of our basic “goodness and attraction to that goodness to the Ultimate Goodness that is God.”

**WILMINGTON-PHILADELPHIA PROVINCE**

Seven novices with their Novice Master, Fr. Ken McKenna, OSFS, spent a ten-day study visit at De Sales University as guests of the Wills Hall Oblate Community. Frs. Thomas Dailey, OSFS, and Alexander Pocetto, OSFS, each gave mini-courses on Salesian spirituality. A number of other Oblates from De Sales University—including Frs. John Hanley, OSFS, Marc Gherardi, OSFS, Daniel Gambet, OSFS, Christopher Hudgin, OSFS, and Peter Leonard, OSFS—also spoke to the novices about various aspects of Oblate and university life.

The most recent addition to the website of the De Sales Spirituality Center of the Wilmington-Philadelphia Province is entitled “Images in the Salesian Tradition”: www.oblates.org/spirituality/salesian_images. This new section, prepared and compiled by Fr. Michael Donovan, OSFS, offers the opportunity to explore (from “A” to “Z”) much of Francis de Sales’s writings.
by way of the images he employed to capture the imagination of the people of his day and that continue to capture our imaginations today, to enlighten the mind, to enflame the heart, and to move the will to “Live + Jesus!” The present compilation includes images from the *Introduction to the Devout Life* (John K. Ryan translation) and the *Spiritual Conferences* (William Ruhl, OSFS, translation). Work is underway to add to this compilation the *Treatise on the Love of God* and Elisabeth Stopp’s edition and translation of the Selected Letters.

Another addition to the De Sales Spirituality Center’s website is entitled, “Year of St. Paul”: www.oblates.org/spirituality/yearstpaul. This resource provides a select compilation of the many ways in which Francis de Sales uses examples from the life and ministry of St. Paul to inform, instruct, and inspire his readers.

The Province’s website has been redesigned and updated by its webmaster, Fr. Kevin Nadolski, OSFS. Among the new items that it includes are archived editions in pdf of the Province’s newsletter, *De Sales World*. The current issue of the *De Sales World* (21/3 [2008]) focuses on a number of Oblates who have received public recognition for their outstanding achievements. Fr. John Hurley, OSFS, for the second consecutive victory, coached a combined Salesian team from three DeSales Oblate high schools in a Model U.N. competition among students from thirty nations. The Sister Thea Bowman Educational Foundation Legacy Award was given to Bro. Michael O’Neill McGrath, OSFS. Fr. Joseph Campellone, OSFS, President of Fr. Judge High School, Philadelphia, Pa., was honored by Philadelphia mayor, the Hon. Michael Nutter, with the Cambridge Who’s Who Award Among Top Executives and Professionals in America. The Monsignor John Myers Award for a lifetime of service to Catholic education was presented to Fr. William F. Davis, OSFS, at the annual convention of the National Catholic Education Association. Fr. John Crossin, OSFS, was elected president of the North American Academy of Ecumenists.

A special insert to the Allentown, Pa., daily newspaper, *The Morning Call*, focused on the celebration of National Philanthropy Day 2008. The Eastern Pennsylvania Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) announced eight winners of the 2008 AFP philanthropic awards. Among these was Fr. Daniel G. Gambet, OSFS, President Emeritus of De Sales University, who received the Lifetime Achievement Award, the AFP’s highest level of distinction, in recognition of an individual’s high ethical standards, and commitment and dedication to helping society.

The annual Anthony J. Ruggiero Lecture in Catholic Education, under the auspices of the Salesian Center for Faith and Culture (SCFC), De Sales University, was delivered on 8 September 2008, by Mother Françoise-Bernadette Beuzelin, OSFS, Superior General of the Oblate Sisters of St. Francis de Sales. Her talk, “St. Léonie Frances de Sales Aviat: The Straight Path to Jesus,” was given in French, accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation, with the English translation delivered by another Oblate sister. The English version of her lecture, together with a photo gallery of the event, is available at: www4.desales.edu/SCFC/RuggieroLecture.htm.

At a special Eucharistic liturgy in the chapel of the Wills Hall Oblate Community, in September 2008, nineteen students (fourteen women and five men) were formally inducted into the Center for Discernment at De Sales University by Fr. Christopher Hudgin, OSFS, Center Director. The Center will assist “those students who believe that they may be called to religious life, priesthood, or lay ecclesial ministry to learn more about these vocations as they pursue their undergraduate degree,” said Fr. Hudgin. “The students in the program will pray and reflect on their Catholic faith and how they might best serve God in the Church of the twenty-first century.”

In connection with the solemnity of St. Francis de Sales, De Sales University observed its 4th Annual Heritage Week, 18-22 January 2009. The week commenced with the celebration of the Mass of St. Francis de Sales, on Sunday evening, 18 January, by Rev. Msgr. Stuart Swetland, Director of Homiletics and Pre-Theology and Presidential Special Counsel for Catholic Identity and Mission, Mount St. Mary’s University, Emmitsburg, Md. Other programs during the week included a Bioethics Forum with Dr. Peter Augustine Lawler, a member of the President’s Council on Bioethics; a Literature Roundtable on the *Introduction to the Devout Life*, comprised of Dr. Joanne McKeown (Professor of French Language and Literature, Moravian College, Bethlehem, Pa.), Fr. Donald Heet, OSFS (Director of Pastoral Studies, The Catholic University of America), and Rev. Bernard Bangley (pastor emeritus, Quaker Memorial Presbyterian Church, Lynchburg, Va.), and author of *Authentic Devotion: A Modern Interpretation of the Introduction to the Devout Life* (2002); a “Town Hall” on Social Communications with Raymond Arroyo, creator/host of “The World Over” and news director of the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN); and the R. Wayne Kraft Memorial Lecture by Michael Novak, a former U.S. ambassador, who holds the George Frederick Jewett Chair in Religion and Public Policy at the American Enterprise Institute, Washington, D.C.

### Publications

#### BOOKS


ARTICLES

XVIIe Siècle, a scholarly journal published by Presses Universitaires de France and dedicated to the literary history of 17th-century France, recently devoted part of issue no. 235 (2007/2), to a gathering of articles on St. Francis de Sales. The section is introduced by Emmanuel Bury, “Relire saint François de Sales” (Re-reading St. Francis de Sales, 337-39), and includes the following studies: Hélène Michon, “François de Sales: de l’anthropologie à la mystique” (Francis de Sales: From Anthropology to Mysticism, 341-57); Laurence Devillairs, “La supposition impossible: De François de Sales à Descartes” (The Impossible Assumption: From Francis de Sales to Descartes, 359-71); Benedetta Papasogli, “L’abeille et la colombe: la méditation chez François de Sales” (The Bee and the Dove: Meditation in Francis de Sales, 373-91); and Christian Belin, “La naïveté amoureuse dans le Traité de l’Amour de Dieu,” (The Naïveté of Love in the Treatise on the Love of God, 393-412). For further information and/or to order a download of individual articles, go to: www.cairn.info/revue-dix-septième-siècle-2007-2.


Herbert Winklehner, OSFS, “Gott segnet die liebenden Herzen. Leben und Werk des vor 100 Jahren verstorbenen Louis Brisson (Stella Niagara, N.Y.: De Sales University, 2008). The author intends this booklet to be a kind of vade mecum that will help to deepen and enrich appreciation for the practice of the Direction of Resources and Ministries, 2008).


Agnès Walch, La spiritualité conjugale dans le catholicisme français, XVIe-XXe siècles (Conjugal Spirituality in French Catholicism, 16th to the 20th Century) (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2002). The author points out how the Introduction to the Devout Life was a fundamental source for developing a spirituality of marriage in French Catholicism. For an abstract of this work, visit: www.cairn.info/revue-annales-de-demographie-historique-2003-1.
The Story Behind the Story of the Introduction to the Devout Life

(continued from page 7)

“François de Sales à l’école des jésuites,” 409-11; Lajeunie, 1: 75-119; and Wirth, 71-84.


17. H. Burton, The Life of St. Francis de Sales, adapted from Abbé Hamon’s Vie de S. François de Sales [1854-55], 2 vols. (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1925), 1: 50. It might also be noted that on the front and end pages of his copy of the Spiritual Combat, Francis copied an abridged version of the spiritual exercises he had worked out under Possevino: see Ravier, Sage & Saint, 40.

18. Wirth, 81, note 32.


26. See, e.g., the fragment of a letter (c. 1605-8) to Madame de Chantal, in which Francis enumerates how Mary practiced the little virtues throughout the course of her life, from the Annunciation to the foot of the cross at Calvary (OEA, 14: 109-10); and Fiorelli, 20-21.


30. Thompson, 11-13; Healey, 288-89.


32. Wright, “The Salesian and Bérullian Spiritual Traditions,” 158.

33. Thompson, 38.


35. Lajeunie, 2: 242. Also see Bremond, 1: 133-34; Ravier, Sage & Saint, 112; and M. Müller, St. Francis de Sales (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1937), 14-15.


38. Quoted in La Bedoyere, 35-36.


Salesian Studies Worldwide

(continued from page 15)

(1817-1908), des Gründers der Oblatinnen und Oblaten des hl. Franz von Sales” (God Blesses the Loving Hearts. Life and Work of Louis Brisson [1817-1908], the Founder of the Oblate Sisters and the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales, Who Died 100 Years Ago), Ordensnachrichten, (47. Jahrgang 2008/Heft 3): 77-80.

Book Reviews


