On the morning of Trinity Sunday, 6 June 1610, Mme. de Chantal, Jacqueline Favre, and Jeanne-Charlotte de Bréchard heard Mass in the chapel of the bishop’s residence, and they received Holy Communion from his hand. They spend the day visiting churches and the poor. In the evening they returned to the bishop’s dwelling, because he had invited them to have supper with his brothers. The meal ended, Francis handed Jane a booklet of “pious little Constitutions” that he had drawn up [Figure 1.1], and he told her: “Follow this road, my daughter, and make all those follow it whom heaven has destined to follow in your footsteps.” Then he blessed them. . . . They then set out from the bishop’s house for the little Gallery House. . . . The cortège had great difficulty covering the short distance that separated the two lodgings, so dense was the crowd. A woman was waiting at the door of the Gallery: it was Anne-Jacqueline Coste, . . . whom Francis had providentially encountered in Geneva at the time when she was the servant of the Calvinist innkeepers. Her courageous activity, her rustic faith, her charity would gladden and enliven those first days of the Visitation. . . .

When everyone had withdrawn, the two young girls [Jacqueline Favre, and Jeanne-Charlotte de Bréchard] and the servant [Anne-Jacqueline Coste] promised Jane de Chantal perfect obedience, and—after saying their prayers in common—they went off to bed. 1

Thus was the day of the foundation of what would become the Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary.

At the moment of its foundation, however, the new congregation did not yet have a name. The first name Francis had in mind was Filles de Sainte-Marthe (Daughters of St. Martha), but it did not seem to fit and Mother de Chantal was not keen on it, though she kept this to herself. Then Francis suggested “Oblates of the Holy Virgin,” but since the word “oblate” was not known or understood in France, it was dropped. Finally, the right name was discovered after the foundation, perhaps prompted by the actual feast of the Visitation of Our Lady (celebrated at the time on 2 July), though Francis seems to have been meditatively ruminating on this mystery for some time. Mother de Chantal was immediately receptive: Visitation Sainte-Marie (Visitation of Holy Mary) sounded right.2
Francis selected “Visitation of Holy Mary” as the Order’s name “not solely to refer to the sisters’ visits and charitable service to the sick poor, but because he found in this mystery a thousand spiritual insights which shed special light on the spirit he wanted to establish in his institute.”

According to the doctor of divine love, the Virgin “had conceived Him who, being all love, had transformed her into love itself.” Mary thus “made continual acts of love, not only to God, with whom she was united by the most perfect pure and tender love possible, but she also possessed love of neighbor in a most perfect degree, which made her ardently desire the salvation of the whole world and the sanctification of souls; and, knowing that she could cooperate with that of St. John, still in the womb of St. Elizabeth, she went there in all haste.”

The spirit of the Visitation mystery, and hence of the Order bearing its name, is attentiveness and receptivity to the mystery of divine love, spontaneity and promptness in practical charity, transformation and sanctification, worship and adoration.

Four hundred years to the day of the Visitation’s foundation, 6 June 2010, this landmark anniversary was celebrated at the basilica of the Annecy Visitation, the sainte-source of the Order, as well as at Visitation monasteries throughout the world. In Annecy, the televised Solemn Mass celebrated at the basilica by the Most Rev. Ives Boivineau, bishop of Annecy, was the climax of a weeklong celebration. This “festival week” was inaugurated by a Solemn Mass, celebrated on 31 May 2010, the solemnity of the Visitation of Our Lady, in the basilica by Cardinal André Vingt-Trois, archbishop of Paris. It also included a scholarly colloquium, lectures, prayer vigil, and performance of theatrical works focused on the Visitation—one by Fr. Thierry Mollard, OSFS, and the group Théotime, and another by Fr. Michel Tournade, OSFS, French Provincial of the De Sales Oblates, and students from the Lycée Saint-Michel in Annecy.

The basilica was filled to capacity for the 400th anniversary Mass on 6 June (Figures 1.2, 1.3). Among the altar concelebrants for this Mass were Fr. Aldino Kiesel, OSFS, Superior General of the De Sales Oblates, and Fr. Jean-Paul Fournier, MSFS, Provincial of the Franco-Swiss Province of the Fransalians. The altar was adorned with an exquisite late 17th-century antependium (Figure 1.4), with the scene of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary and Elizabeth in the center, flanked by St. Francis de Sales (right) and St. Augustine (left). The pairing of these two saints is ubiquitous in Visitandine iconography, as Francis adopted the Rule of St. Augustine for the Visitation Order.

The celebration of the Visitation’s 400th anniversary was not limited to a day, or even a week, but was a yearlong event, which commenced with the solemnity of St. Francis de Sales (24 January) and concludes on the anniversary of the death of St. Jane de Chantal (13 December). A complete list of the various liturgical celebrations, exhibitions, lectures, theatrical and musical performances, etc., held in the diocese of Annecy during this Jubilee Year may be found at: http://www.diocese-annecy.fr/rubriques/haut/diocese/4eme-centenaire-de-la-visitation.

Moulins has a privileged place in the history of the Visitation Order. As the Most Rev. Pascal Roland, bishop of Moulins, recently explained in published remarks, Moulins was the third monastery of the Visitation Order to be founded (by Jeanne-Charlotte de Bréchard in 1616; the first was, of course, Annecy in 1610, and the second, Lyon in 1615); St. Francis de Sales preached in Moulins in 1619; Mother de Chantal died in Moulins in 1641; and if Annecy is the sainte-source, Moulins has become, with the Musée de la Visitation that has on deposit more than 8,000 objects from 150 Visitation monasteries, “the international capital of the Visitation.”

To commemorate the 400th anniversary of the Visitation’s foundation, the Musée de la Visitation has mounted another magnificent special exhibition, “Au cœur de la Visitation: Trésors de la vie monastique en Europe” (At the Heart of the Visitation: Treasures of Monastic Life in Europe) (Figure 1.5). The exhibit opened on 7 May 2010, in the presence of a number of civic and ecclesiastical dignitaries, including Bishop Roland, and Msgr. José Manuel del Río Carrasco, Undersecretary of the Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church, who represented Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, President of the Pontifical Council for Culture at the Vatican. Like previous special exhibitions at the Musée de la Visitation, this exhibit, which runs through 24 December 2010, is accompanied by an inch-thick, profusely illustrated catalogue (288 pp.), produced by Somogy éditions d’art in Paris.

On 22-24 October 2010, the museum also hosted an international colloquium in conjunction with this exhibit: “Art et l’histoire chez les visitandines: Quatre siècles de rayonnement, 1610-2010” (Visitandine Art and History: Four Centuries of Influence, 1610-2010). The colloquium was divided into four thematic sections: “Histoires multiples” (Multiple Histories); “Rayonnement de la Visitation” (The Visitation’s Influence); “Permanence de l’art” (Art’s Permanence); and “Représentations salésiennes” (Salesian Representations). More than two dozen scholars presented papers, and there were more than 300 attendees from France, Switzerland, Belgium, Austria, Italy, England, and Poland. The program also included Solemn Mass celebrated by Bishop Roland in the cathedral of Moulins and a choral concert of Renaissance and Baroque music. The colloquium’s proceedings will be published by Somogy éditions d’art in 2011.

The ICSS joins the Salesian family in extending warmest congratulations to the Sisters of the Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary throughout the world on their 400th anniversary. We thank Almighty God for the singular and life-giving gift that the Visitation Order has been and continues to be to the Church and the world. We pray that the celebration of this Jubilee Year may yield an increase in Visitandine vocations. Ad multos annos!

NOTES

5. Ibid., 159.

For Figures 1.2-1.5, see pp. 10-11.
Remaining Close to the Manger during the Christmas Octave:
St. Francis de Sales's Spirituality of the Crèche

Consider, I beg you, this little newborn Infant in the manger at Bethlehem, listen to what He says to you, look at the example He gives you... Oh God!, whoever remains close to this manger throughout this octave [of Christmas] will melt with love... 1

This passage is from a sermon of Christmas Eve 1620 by St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622), the early 17th-century French-speaking Savoyard bishop of Geneva resident in exile in Annecy, to the sisters of the Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary, which he and St. Jane Frances de Chantal (1572-1641) co-founded in 1610. The venue was the church of St. Joseph (now the church of St. Francis de Sales), which was attached to the first Visitation monastery in Annecy.2 Francis had blessed the church’s cornerstone in 1614, and four years later solemnly consecrated the church, placing it under the titular patronage of St. Joseph (Figure 2.1).

The Three-Dimensional Crèche

By this time, it was not uncommon for the three-dimensional crèche to be displayed in churches and chapels. St. Francis of Assisi (c. 1181-1226) is often credited with being the “inventor” of the crèche. But Francis of Assisi’s assembling a living Nativity in a humble outdoor setting near Greccio in 1223 has more in common with the liturgical drama than with subsequent stationary manger scenes.

St. Francis wanted to invest the Christmas Mass with a specific character reminiscent of the cave of Bethlehem. Thus he transferred the Mass into an environment similar to that of the Nativity cavern. He introduced an ox and ass, and placed the portable altar upon a manger filled with hay. The physical conditions were recreated as closely as possible, but the actual events of the Nativity were commemorated by the transubstantiation and by the sermon of St. Francis. None of the holy personages were represented.3

Nonetheless, the saint of Assisi had touched upon a key point:

the need to visualize in a tangible manner the events surrounding Christ’s birth. He knew the need people have to see, and not just to hear about, the sacred events of their salvation. What Francis definitely did do was to spark renewed devotion to the Nativity and special devotion to the Infant Jesus.4

The first Christmas crèche to be erected in a church was not in a Franciscan church, but in the Jesuit church in Prague in 1562. It was a realistic three-dimensional representation of the Nativity and was constructed especially and exclusively for the Christmas season—two distinctive characteristics of the modern crèche.5 Moreover, the first definition of the crèche is found in a book published in 1619 by the Jesuit Philippe de Berlaymont:

It is common knowledge that the Jesuits are observing the pious custom of their predecessors in the Order, by arranging Christmas crèches to represent the stable in Bethlehem. The manger with the Infant is standing between the Virgin and Joseph in a structure with a roof of straw to which a star is affixed. Shepherds and angels are in attendance, the whole being so cleverly arranged that the devotion of the beholders is vigorously stimulated. They feel themselves to be participating in this so miraculous event, hearing with their own ears the crying of the Child and the heavenly music, touching with their own hands the swaddling clothes, and experiencing a pious awe.6

But is the three-dimensional crèche what Francis de Sales has in mind in his sermon when he states, “whoever remains close to this manger throughout this octave [of Christmas] will melt with love...”? Perhaps he was thinking of something else—the practice of making a spiritual pilgrimage to the crèche, which derives from the patristic, monastic, and mendicant tradition.

A Spiritual Pilgrimage to the Manger

Although the custom of building and displaying the crèche did not exist in Christian antiquity, the Church Fathers’ interpretation of the angel’s words to the shepherds, “Go unto
Bethlehem” (Luke 2:12), and the shepherds’ words, “Let us go unto Bethlehem” (Luke 2:15), gave rise to an important spiritual exercise. These words were understood as a “summons to all believers,” so that “when the faithful attended Christmas Mass, they were to feel that they were making a spiritual pilgrimage with those very shepherds unto Bethlehem.”

In the Middle Ages, this spiritual exercise was expanded beyond Christmas Mass. The Benedictine monk and archbishop, St. Anselm of Canterbury (c. 1033-1109), advised reflecting upon the mystery of Christmas “by calling to the mind’s eye the happenings in the cave of the Nativity.” In the next century, the Cistercian abbot, Bl. Guerric of Igny (c. 1070/80-d. 1157), linked contemplation of the Divine Infant in the crib, as well as on the altar in the Eucharist, with imitation of the virtue of humility, which was particular to the Incarnation:

> let us again and again make our way to Bethlehem and gaze upon this Word made Flesh by Almighty God who has become a little One. In this visible Word . . . we may learn the wisdom of God which has become humility. It embraces every virtue.\(^9\)

The most-well-known exhortation to making a spiritual pilgrimage to the crèche in the late medieval period is found in the 14th-century *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, which Francis would have known as the work of St. Bonaventure (1221-74), although it is now regarded to have been authored by the friar John of Caulibus. Here is what Francis would have read in the Meditations, which had a far-reaching influence on spirituality, religious drama, and sacred art:

> You too stay with our Lady as she watches by the crib, and take your delight often with the boy Jesus, for grace goes out from Him (Luke 6:19). Any faithful soul, and especially a religious person, from the day of our Lord’s birth all the way up to the Purification, ought at least once a day visit our Lady at the aforementioned crib to adore the boy Jesus; and to meditate affectionately on the poverty, humility, and kindness of His mother and her child.\(^10\)

**Imaginative Visual, Participatory Meditation**

This brief passage opens a window on the Franciscan meditative method that is operative throughout the *Meditations*: visual meditation on scenes from the Gospels that the reader/meditator imaginatively reconstructs and participates in like an actor assuming a role in a drama. The goal of this process is to align one’s life with the exemplary life of Christ. This approach is grounded in the medieval understanding of the human brain as possessing three internal powers: imagination, intellect, and memory. The imagination forms necessary mental images for thought, and these images, in turn, are impressed upon the memory, the storehouse of ideas. Meditation is a process of making and visual recollection, as the mind’s eye or imagination recollects images imprinted upon the memory to meditate upon the life of Christ and to participate in the events of His life.\(^11\)

In the early modern era, this approach to meditative prayer reaches its apex in the *Spiritual Exercises*, of St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), which built on a well-established medieval tradition of imaginative visual prayer that seems to have been transmitted from the Cistercians to the Franciscans and Carthusians.\(^12\) In Ignatian meditation, “the movement of the imagination is intellectually guided towards a sympathetic identification with the major scenes of the Bible, leading to a reshaping of the individual soul.”\(^13\) As a student at the Jesuit Collège de Clermont in Paris (1578-88), Francis was schooled in the imaginative world of the Exercises, which had a lifelong influence upon him. In the *Introduction to the Devout Life* (1609), Francis offers his own distillation of the tradition of imaginative visual, participatory meditation, which was ubiquitous in his day in books on prayer, as well as in sermons and the visual arts.

> “the composition of place” . . . This is nothing else but to represent to your imagination the whole of the mystery on which you wish to meditate as if it really and actually occurred in your presence. For example, if you want to meditate on Our Lord on the cross, imagine that you are on Mount Calvary, and that you see all that was done and hear all that was said on the day of the Passion. Or, if you prefer, it is all the same, imagine that in the very place where you are they are crucifying Our Lord in the manner described by the evangelists.\(^14\)

Among the authors that Francis recommends to Philothea to help her meditate on Jesus’s life, Passion, and death is Bonaventure, which undoubtedly refers to the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, bringing us full circle.

**St. Francis de Sales at the Manger**

In light of the tradition of making a spiritual pilgrimage to the crèche, which was bolstered by the practice of imaginative visual, participatory meditation, it seems likely that when Francis speaks of remaining close to the manger throughout the Christmas octave, he intends a mental visit. This means summoning in the mind’s eye a mental image of the scene of the Nativity through the imagination for the purpose of participatory meditative prayer (Figure 2.2). At the same time, this approach does not necessarily exclude a visit to the three-dimensional crèche, which could serve as a valuable aid in meditating on the Nativity, for images seen by corporeal eyes aid the imagination in forming images seen in the mind’s eye.\(^15\)

In the tradition of sacred art, there is a genre of images depicting saints adoring the Infant Jesus in the manger. This subject approximates the notion of a spiritual or mental journey to the crèche by portraying medieval and early modern saints present in the stable on the first Christmas. There are, for example, the *Adoration of the Shepherds with Sts. Francis of Assisi and Charles Borromeo*, c. 1628-30, by the Italian artist Tanzi da Varallo (Lombardy, c. 1575/80-1635) (Los Angeles County Museum of Art),\(^16\) and *St. Teresa of Ávila and St. Catherine of Siena Adoring the Infant Jesus in the Manger in the Presence of Mary and Joseph*, 17th century, French School (Paris, Collection carmélitane).\(^17\)

There is also an example of this subject in Salesian iconography: *St. Francis de Sales Adoring the Infant Jesus in the*
In the early modern period, imaginative visual, participatory meditation was often supported and facilitated by visual aids such as this engraving, which appears in two books by the Spanish Jesuit Jeromé Nadal (1507-80): *Images of Gospel History* (1593) and *Annotations and Meditations on the Gospels* (1595). The idea for these books originated with St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) himself, who suggested to Nadal that he compose an illustrated book to help Jesuit seminarians meditate on the Gospels. The *Annotations* foreword instructs the reader/viewer to “dwell for a day or more upon each [engraving].” This is the second of two engravings illustrating the Gospels of Christmas—the first being the Gospel for Midnight Mass (Luke 2:1-14), and the second, the Gospel for Mass at Dawn (Luke 2:15-20). A letter is assigned to constitutive components of the scene that is keyed to captions identifying the places, characters, and actions depicted. They are as follows: (A) The Heder Tower, where shepherds held converse; (B) They find JESUS lying in a manger; (C) They understand what had been told them about the Child; and (D) They return to their flocks, and tell all what they have seen and heard.

Manger, 19th century, altarpiece (chapelle des Combres, Valmeiner, Savoy) (Figure 2.3). The painting is comprised of three constitutive scenes. The first of these—illustrating Luke 2:8-17—is further subdivided into a sequence of three scenes: the angels’ announcement of the Savior’s birth to the shepherds, who then go with haste to Bethlehem; the shepherds entering the manger; and the adoration of “the babe lying in a manger” (Luke 2:16). At the center of the composition, the Virgin and St. Joseph present the Infant Jesus lying in the manger, who is the Savior born for all people (cf. Luke 2:10-11). Joseph and the Infant look directly at viewers—a technique intended to make viewers feel they are part of what they see in order to draw them into the mystery that takes place before them. Finally, to the left of this central scene, stands the full-length figure of Francis. Vested in a white cope with gold orphrey, Francis holds his crosier in his left arm, while placing his left hand over his heart as—his eyes lowered—he contemplates “that divine Child who is the Savior of those who love and the love of those saved.” Francis extends his right arm in a protective gesture enveloping the shepherd who kneels in front of him. 19

Love as the Key to the Crèche’s Meaning

What Francis regards to be of greatest importance in remaining close to the Infant Jesus in the manger is its purpose: meditative prayer must ultimately lead to closer imitation of Christ (imitatio Christi). In his Christmas Eve sermon of 1620, Francis also makes clear what he considers to be the lesson of the crèche.

[T]he Son . . . became incarnate to teach us spiritual sobriety, which consisted in detachment from and voluntary privation of all the delightful and agreeable things He could have had and received in this life . . . .

He willed to suffer a thousand pains and labors, paying in full rigor of justice for our faults and iniquities, teaching us by His example spiritual sobriety, detachment from all consolations, in order to live according to reason and not according to our appetites and affections . . . .

Consider, I beg you, this little newborn Infant in the manger at Bethlehem, listen to what He says to you, look at the example He gives you. He has chosen the most bitter and poorest things imaginable for His birth. Oh God, whoever remains close to this manger throughout this octave [of Christmas] will melt with love. Oh, with what reverence the glorious Virgin your Mother kept looking at His Heart that she saw pulsing with love in His sacred breast, as she wiped away the sweet tears that flowed so softly from the eyes of this blessed Babe. 20

Emphasis on the self-emptying, poverty, and humility of the Christ Child in the manger is commonplace in the spirituality of the 17th-century French-speaking world. There is nothing sentimental or tender about this image of the Infant Jesus. For example, Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle (1575-1629), a major and influential spiritual figure in early modern French Catholicism, held that Jesus’s humiliation in becoming an infant surpasses that of His taking on human nature because infancy epitomizes human weakness and helplessness. This point is underscored by the vocabulary that Bérulle consistently employs to speak of Jesus’s infancy: indigence (indigence), powerlessness (impuissance), destitution (dénouement), servility (bassesse), incapacity (incapacité), subjection (sujétion), privation (privation), weakness (infirmité), etc. According to Bérulle, the self-humiliation of the Word Incarnate, particularly His state of infancy, was to be imitated by radical self-abnegation and annihilation, which make it possible to live entirely for God in Christ Jesus. 21

Unlike Bérulle, Mother de Chantal did not develop a full-blown theology of the Incarnation and Infancy. Rather, she seeks to draw out the practical implications of the Incarnate Word’s anéantissemient (self-emptying) for her Visitandine sisters.

O my Sisters, I would greatly desire that we imprint on our hearts this love of humbling ourselves unto nothing in all things in which Our Lord humbled Himself. I say imprint in our hearts, because a thing printed never gets erased. We must then print and engrave in our hearts this desire to humble ourselves in all things, but principally in honor, in esteem, and in the desire of being thought virtuous, being loved, preferred, being regarded as capable of something. We must destroy all these things in us in imitation of the Son of God because you see how He abased Himself. 22

Within the broader context of Visitandine spirituality, Mother de Chantal here echoes one of this tradition’s distinctive themes, the martyrdom of self-love—an “uncompromising sense of a life lived heart to heart with the crucified God of love.” 23

On the one hand, reflection on the meaning of the Incarnation and divine Infancy by Bérulle, Mother de Chantal, and Francis dwells on Jesus’s kenosis (self-emptying), given classic expression in Philippians 2:5-7: “Christ Jesus . . . though He was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.” On the other hand, Francis, the doctor of divine love, couples Jesus’s kenosis with love, thus according with John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (cf. 1 John 4:9-10). For Francis, love is the key that unlocks the deepest meaning of Jesus’s kenosis in that it is the latter’s motive and message. This approach is clearly informed by Francis’s bracing vision of salvation history: God, who “is God of the human heart,” 24 “desperately . . . longs for us to love Him.” 25

Not satisfied with declaring His love, “this divine Lover . . . stands . . . knocking” 26 at the door of the human heart in order to allure and draw us to Him.

In the passage from Francis’s Christmas Eve sermon of 1620 quoted above, the themes of Jesus’s self-humiliation and His immense love for humanity are held in balance. In a letter of the
Visual images depicting medieval and early modern saints adoring the Infant Jesus in the manger approximate the notion of a spiritual or mental journey to the crèche. St. Francis de Sales Adoring the Infant Jesus in the Manger is composed of three constitutive scenes. The first—illustrating Luke 2:8-17—is further subdivided into a sequence of three scenes: the angels’ announcement of the Savior’s birth to the shepherds, who then go with haste to Bethlehem; the shepherds entering the stable; and the adoration of “the babe lying in a manger” (Luke 2:16). Then, at the center of the composition, the Virgin and St. Joseph present the Infant Jesus lying in the manger, who is the Savior born for all people (cf. Luke 2:10-11). Joseph and the Infant look directly at viewers—a technique intended to make viewers feel that they are part of what they see so as to draw them into the mystery unfolding before them. Finally, to the left of this central scene, stands the full-length figure of Francis. Vested in a white cope with gold orphrey, Francis holds his crozier in his left arm, while placing his left hand over his heart as—his eyes lowered—he contemplates “that divine Child who is the Savior of those who love and the love of those saved” (Preface, Treatise on the Love of God). Francis extends his right arm in a protective gesture enveloping the shepherd who kneels in front of him.
previous year to a nun, Francis further unpacks the latter theme. For our purposes, this text also brings together several themes already touched upon—being close by the manger to learn from the Infant Jesus, who loves humanity with abandon and suffers for that love, who wants nothing more than to draw our hearts to His own, and who ardently desires our progress in virtue.

It is good for you to be close to this sacred manger, where the Savior of our soul teaches us so many virtues by His silence. How much He tells us by saying nothing! Our own heart should be kindled by His little heart panting with love for us. See how lovingly He has written your name in the depths of His divine heart as He lies on the straw for your sake, longing lovingly for your progress. . . . A magnet attracts iron, amber attracts straw and hay: now whether we are hard in heart as iron or feeble and helpless as straw we should follow the attraction of this sovereign little Infant, the real magnet of hearts.27

Concluding Thoughts

The Vincentian priest, Adrien Gambart (1600-68), served as confessor to the Visitation monastery in the faubourg Saint-Jacques in Paris for over three decades. In preparation for Francis’s canonization (1665), Gambart published in 1664 his emblem book, La vie symbolique du bienheureux François de Sales (The Life of St. Francis de Sales in Symbols). This book reveals Gambart to be a perceptive commentator on, and creative interpreter of, Salesian spirituality. Gambart’s method of presenting Francis’s biography and virtues through the medium of images and symbols is very much in keeping with the saint’s symbolic thinking and metaphorical expression—a point underscored by the use of Francis’s own images for many of the book’s emblems. As Gambart points out in the book’s dedicatory letter to the Visitandines of the faubourg Saint-Jacques monastery, this method also highlights the correspondence between Francis’s profuse use of similitudes and Christ’s method of teaching by images and parables.28

In Gambart’s book, we find a graphic image that is the visual counterpart of Francis’s verbal image of the Infant Jesus in the manger as the magnet of hearts. Emblem XXXII pictures a large heart-shaped magnet, held by a hand in the clouds, that draws up a chain of smaller hearts (Figure 2.4). The motto reads: Magnes amoris amor, “The magnet of love is love”; and the verse, L’amour sert luy-mesme d’Aymant, /Pour tirer le cœur de l’Amant, “Love itself serves as a magnet/To draw the lover’s heart,” playing on the French word for magnet, aymant, something that loves. Gambart’s method of presenting Francis’s life and virtues through the medium of images and symbols is very much in keeping with the saint’s symbolic thinking and metaphorical expression—a point underscored by the use of Francis’s own images for many of the book’s emblems. In the accompanying prose text, Gambart acknowledges the original source of this image in Francis, while at the same time redirecting it to the saint himself, as the emblem’s title makes clear: Son amour cordial et plein d’attraits, “His heartfelt and most attractive love.”

This heart-shaped magnet, which attracts and draws up after itself all others, is the symbol of the heartfelt love of our saint, who was in his lifetime and still is a true magnet, as he himself says of our Savior in His Nativity.29

Figure 2.4. Albert Flamen, Emblem XXXII, in Adrien Gambart, La vie symbolique du bienheureux François de Sales, evesque et prince de Genève comprise sous le voile de 52 emblèmes . . . (Paris, 1664). Photo: Saint Joseph’s University Press.
Francis’s contemporaries emphasized the importance of learning the lessons of the crèche. But few, if any, equaled Francis in this regard, as he embodied and became a living image of the divine love for each and every person that is revealed and made visible by the Infant Jesus in the manger. By allowing this Jesus to live in him, Francis became a magnet who drew and continues to draw hearts to God through the attractiveness of his heartfelt love that is palpable in his spiritual legacy: his writings, and the Visitation Order, together with the religious congregations and institutes dedicated to the service of the Church in the modern world by living and spreading Salesian spirituality.

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

NOTES

2. On the various Visitation monasteries in Annecy (the “Galerie” [1610-12], the first monastery [1612-1793], the second monastery [1634-1793, presently the motherhouse of the Sisters of St. Joseph], and the current monastery), see La Visitation d’Annecy et l’Ordre de la Visitation Sainte-Marie: 400 ans de vie et d’histoire (Annecy: Monastère de la Visitation, 2010).
5. Berliner, 251.
6. Ibid., 250.
7. Ibid., 251-52.
8. Ibid., 252.
15. Powell, 95.
19. I am deeply grateful to Dr. Josette Malbert-Curtil for bringing this painting to my attention, as well as for sharing her insightful commentary on it that formed part of her recent doctoral thesis, Mémoire et patrimoine: Les représentations de saint François de Sales dans les églises et chapelles des Pays de Savoie (1594-1965), Université Pierre Mendès, Grenoble, 2010.
29. Ibid., 112-13; facsimile, 124.
30. Ibid., facsimile, 125.
Foundation of the Visitation Order

Figure 1.2. Solemn Mass in the basilica of the Annecy Visitation, 6 June 2010, celebrating the 400th anniversary of the foundation of the Visitation Order. Photo: Herbert Winklenher, OSFS.

From the right are Fr. Jean-Paul Fournier, MSFS, Provincial of the Franco-Swiss Province of the Fransalians; Fr. Aldino Kiesel, OSFS, Superior General of the De Sales Oblates; Most Rev. Yves Boivineau, bishop of Annecy; a deacon from the diocese of Annecy; Most Rev. Jean-Christophe Lagleize, bishop of Valence; and an unidentified priest.

Figure 1.4. Embroidered antependium, with the Visitation of the Virgin Mary and St. Elizabeth (center) and St. Francis de Sales (right) and St. Augustine (left), late 17th century. Photo: Herbert Winklenher, OSFS.

This antependium adorned the altar for the Solemn Mass in the basilica of the Annecy Visitation, 6 June 2010, marking the 400th anniversary of the foundation of the Visitation Order.
Figure 1.5. Guillaume Ernest Grève (d. 1639; known as Guilherme), *The Visitation with Saints*, oil on canvas, commissioned in 1626 and completed in 1631 for the high altar of the chapel of Visitation monastery, Valence (France). Musée de la Visitation, Moulins (France). Photo: courtesy of the museum.

The signature image of the Musée de la Visitation’s 2010 special exhibition, “Au cœur de la Visitation: Trésors de la vie monastique en Europe” (At the Heart of the Visitation: Treasures of Monastic Life in Europe). *The Visitation with Saints* illustrates the primacy of the Visitation mystery in Salesian spirituality. Under the Holy Spirit’s inspiration, the Visitation takes place—here portrayed as a “double visitation”: Mary and Elizabeth in the center, and to the left, Joseph and Zechariah. On the right, Francis and St. Augustine (354–430), whose rule Francis adopted for the Visitation Order, contemplate this mystery. The boy with the ladle beside Augustine alludes to the saint’s vision of a child trying to spoon the sea into a hole in the sand, which the boy claimed was no more impossible than Augustine’s effort to explain the mystery of the Trinity. In the foreground, kneel SS. Peter (left) and Paul (right). Peter gestures to the scene of the Visitation, while looking directly at viewers in order to make they feel that they are not just looking at a painting but are part of what they see.
2010-11 ICSS Grants Awarded
At their annual meeting in Fockenfeld (Germany) in late July 2010, the Major Superiors of the De Sales Oblates approved three grants, unanimously recommended for funding by the ICSS. Two grants were awarded to Fr. John Graden, OSFS (De Sales Resource Center, Stella Niagara, NY, to assist two publishing projects—the re-publication of Elisabeth Stopp's translation of St. Francis de Sales, Selected Letters (1960), which remains in constant demand; and publication of the book, St. Francis de Sales: Life and Spirit, by Fr. Joseph Boenzi, SDB. A grant was awarded to Fr. Sebastian Leitner, OSFS, to assist with the production of the musical “The Baroness” about the life of St. Jane Frances de Chantal, composed by Andreas Kehr, a music teacher at The Catholic University of Eichstätt, Bavaria, with lyrics by Fr. Herbert Winklehner OSFS, which is scheduled to premiere on 7 May 2011 at The Catholic University of Eichstätt. While the two books pertain to the innermost core or center of Salesian studies—basic research, they will be useful not only to Salesian scholars, but also to those disseminating the results of basic research at the pastoral and popular levels (ICSS Statute, I). Likewise, the musical, “The Baroness,” disseminates Salesian spirituality at the pastoral and popular levels.

Expanded Salesian Picture Gallery on ICSS Website
Fr. Herbert Winkleher, OSFS, ICSS member and webmaster, has updated and greatly expanded the Salesian picture gallery on the ICSS website at: www.franz-von-sales.de, then click on “Pictures.” For St. Francis de Sales alone, there are more than 1500 different pictures. There are also pictures of St. Jane Frances de Chantal, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, St. Léonie Aviat, Fr. Louis Brisson, and Mother Mary de Sales Chappuis. A feast for the eyes, it’s well worth a visit!

Beatification of Blessed Cardinal Newman and St. Francis de Sales
There are several interesting connections between St. Francis de Sales and John Henry Cardinal Newman (1801-90), whom Pope Benedict XVI beatified on the final day of his recent state visit to the United Kingdom (16-19 September 2010). The Pope took as the theme of this visit “Heart to Heart,” inspired by the motto on Cardinal Newman's coat of arms, “Cor ad cor loquitor” (Heart speaks to heart). As is well known, Newman took this motto from Francis’s letter on preaching to Archbishop André Frémyot (1573-1641), St. Jane de Chantal’s brother. During his lifetime, Newman was renowned as an eloquent preacher because his sermons deeply touched the hearts of his listeners.

Another connection to the Salesian tradition is Newman’s letters to a dying Visitandine nun, Sr. Dominica Bowden, who was the daughter of his closest friend when he was at Oxford. As an Anglican priest, Newman baptized her as a baby. She became a Catholic two years after Newman did and entered the Visititation monastery at Westbury, when she was twenty-one years of age. Newman preached at her profession of final vows and was distraught when he later learned that she was dying from tuberculosis. The letters indicate how dear his friends were to him and how close he was to this Visitandine.


Committee for the Salesian Education of Youth
Under the auspices of the Committee for the Salesian Education for Youth, a meeting of administrators of schools conducted by the
De Sales Oblates was held in Annecy in May 2010. Two persons from the administration of each school were invited to attend, as well as one Oblate and one layperson. The meeting discussed ways to better incorporate principles of Salesian education in our schools, and also to develop a training program for Salesian lay teachers. Other topics discussed were ways to organize future exchange programs among our schools involving both teachers and students, as well as how to promote communication among participants via the Internet.

**Africa**

**BÉNIN**

“You have to take care of your body so that the soul can find pleasure dwelling in it” (St. Francis de Sales). For the third consecutive year, on 13 February 2010, a marathon was organized by the De Sales Oblates of Bénin. The marathon’s purpose is twofold: to encourage reflection on the importance of the body in maintaining the equilibrium of the human being; and in a country with many different religions, to promote encounter among people of different faiths and social conditions. A marathon is here regarded as much more than a simple matter of running; it is an attitude toward life, a school for listening, together with ecumenical and interreligious dialogue; it is a discipline that affects all aspects of the human body that permits a person to find in him/herself the resources of endurance, perseverance, determination, humility, faith, and confidence in oneself and in others. Opened by Bénin’s Minister of Youth and Sports, the marathon brought together 935 runners, and had a Salesian motto: “The human being, a fragile reed, but a reed of gold.” For more information, access the site at: http://www.apatam.net/Association_nkua/nkua_gen.htm.

From 30 August to 3 September, some thirty members of the Salesian family of Bénin met in Dassa (in central Bénin) to consider the theme, “Salesian Optimism.” The theme was discussed from three perspectives: *Les fondements de l'optimisme salesien* (The Foundations of Salesian Optimism) by Fr. Charles Whannou, PSFS; *L'optimisme dans la pédagogie salésienne* (Optimism in Salesian Pedagogy) by Fr. Benard Baussand, OSFS; and *L'optimisme au quotidien* (Daily Optimism) by Sr. Wivine Kipangu, SDV (Salesian of the Visitation). The closing Mass was celebrated at the foot of the statue of Our Lady of Arigbo, on the site of the national pilgrimage of Bénin. During the Mass, two lay women made their act of consecration to the Association of the Daughters of St. Francis de Sales. The talks will be published in the *Annales salésiennes* in 2011.

**Asia**

**INDIA MISSION**

To celebrate the eightieth birthday of Fr. Antony Mookenthottam, MSFS, the Fransalians have invited a number of Salesian scholars and writers to submit articles for a Festschrift in his honor. Fr. Mookenthottam has devoted many years to promoting Salesian spirituality in India and has been one of the prime movers in establishing the S.FS Publishing house and the *Journal of Indian Spirituality*, which have been rich resources for disseminating Salesian spirituality throughout India and elsewhere. We eagerly look forward to the publication of Fr. Mookenthottam’s Festschrift.

After having reviewed and discussed the present formation program, the India Mission of the De Sales Oblates, with the approval of the General Council, has decided to change the formation program. As a result, candidates who have finished their pre-university studies will be admitted into the Novitiate, and then they will proceed with philosophy studies. On 31 May, 2010, a group of eight candidates were admitted to the Novitiate, with Fr. Alfred Smuda, OSFS, serving as their novice master.

The first apostolate for the De Sales Oblates of the India Mission was to take over a parish in the diocese of Gunter, Andhra Pradesh. It soon became evident that to adequately serve the parish’s spiritual needs, a nearby residence for the priests was sorely needed. Thus, on 26 September 2010, in the presence of neighboring parish priests and local leaders, Fr. Baiju Puthusherry, OSFS, Delegate Superior of the India Mission, laid the foundation stone for the construction of a new rectory.

On the vocation front, there are eighteen new candidates, attracted by the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales, who aspire to become priests. They were accepted into the minor seminary, Salespuram.

**Europe**

**FRENCH PROVINCE**

Fr. Jean-Luc Leroux, OSFS, is President of the Association RES (Recherches et d’Études Salésiennes), editor of the *Annales salésiennes*, and served as the coordinator of the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the foundation of the Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary for the diocese of Annecy. A three-page interview with Fr. Leroux appears in the winter 2009 issue of the *Cahier de Saint François*. In the interview, he responds to questions such as to what attracted him to Salesian spirituality and what he hopes to achieve by the planned activities and various celebrations of this anniversary.

Fr. Leroux was also instrumental in the preparation of the exhibition for the 400th anniversary of the Visitation Order mounted in the crypt of the Annecy Visitation. In addition, he worked with others to create a very attractive and informative website celebrating various aspects of this landmark celebration. This site is accessible at: http://www.diocese-annecy.fr/rubriques/haut/diocese/4eme-centenaire-de-la-visitation.

Dr. Hélène Bordes has been recognized for her outstanding work over the years as President of the Association RES by being named as permanent honorary president. The ICSS extends its warmest congratulations to Dr. Bordes for this well-deserved honor.

The *Annales salésiennes*, new series no. 1 (2010), which now includes *La Lettre de RES*, features the presentations made at the
2009 Journées Salésiennes, whose theme was the Holy Spirit in the writings of St. Francis de Sales: Sr. Geneviève Agnes Poinsof, OSFS, “L'Esprit Saint dans la bible” (The Holy Spirit in the Bible); Fr. Alain Viret, PSFS, “Paix et joie dans l’Esprit Saint” (Peace and Joy in the Holy Spirit); Fr. Edgard Vigan, “Témoignage la spiritualité salésienne: Dieu est Dieu du cœur humain” (Witness the Holy Spirit: “God is God of the Human Heart”); Fr. Benoît Goubau, PSFS, “L’Esprit dans les lettres de saint François de Sales” (The Spirit in the Letters of St. Francis de Sales); and Marc Stenger (bishop of Troyes), “Vivre de l’Esprit Saint” (To Live in the Holy Spirit). This issue also reports on the Solemn Mass and festivities in Annecy on 24 January 2010, the solemnity of St. Francis de Sales, which inaugurated the Jubilee Year of the 400th anniversary of the foundation of the Order of the Visitations of Holy Mary, as well as provides a calendar of the liturgical celebrations, exhibitions, lectures, cultural events, etc., in the diocese of Annecy that were part of this yearlong observance. For further information about the Association RES and subscriptions to the Annales salésiennes, please contact Fr. Leroux, via e-mail, at: association69@yahoo.fr.

The 2010 Journées Salésiennes took place 16-20 August 2010 in Annecy, with a format that alternated between visits to various Salesian sites and conferences. This year’s theme was “La Visitation aujourd'hui” (The Visitation Today). The presenters and their topics were as follows: Fr. Michel Tournade, OSFS, “Français de Sales, Annecy et la fondation de la Visitation” (Francis de Sales, Annecy, and the Founding of the Visitation); Dr. Josette Curtit, “L’iconographie de saint François de Sales à travers les églises de Savoie” (The Iconography of St. Francis de Sales in the Churches of Savoy); Dr. Hélène Bordes, “Visite et Visitation” (Visiting and Visitation); and Dr. Blandine Delahaye, “La charité apostolique de saint François de Sales lors de sa mission en Chablais” (St. Francis de Sales’s Apostolic Charity during the Chablais Mission).

Teaming up with the De Sales Oblates of Brazil and Bénin, several groups of young people traveled to those countries this summer. Some students from Lycée Saint-Michel, with Frs. Bruno Lecoin, OSFS, and Thierry Marcoz, OSFS, went to Porto Alegre in Brazil. A group of young people from the campus ministry centers of the public schools of Savoy, accompanied by Fr. Thierry Mollard, OSFS, lived at Camp Hors Frontières with the De Sales Oblates of Parakou. A small group of students from the youth ministry office of the archdiocese of Lyon, joined with Frs. Antoine Moismont, OSFS, and Jean-Luc Leroux, OSFS, to participate in a humanitarian project in Parakou, Bénin.

NETHERLANDS PROVINCE
To make plans for the future of the house in Schijndel, Salesianum, a workshop was held on 15 February 2010. Some twenty participants—all of whom are involved in the Salesian study group, committee, or administration—attended this workshop.

In May 2010, a new publication was presented in Salesianum by the work’s editor, Dr. Judith de Raat. It contains three essays on different facets of Salesian spirituality by various authors, together with a selection from the Spiritual Directory of the De Sales Oblates. This work is intended to serve as an introduction for members of the Salesian circles and others interested in Salesian spirituality.

On their way home from the Meeting of Major Superiors in Fockenfeld, Fr. Kees Jongeneelen, OSFS, Provincial of the Netherlands Province, and Dr. de Raat, the Province’s Salesian Coordinator, visited the Sisters of the Visitation in Zangberg. They were warmly received in this beautiful convent, where they discussed with the Sisters the original intention of St. Francis of Sales and St. Jane Frances de Chantal for the Visitation Order, the best way to invite and welcome guests and laypeople, and the courses and activities that could be organized for them.

Dr. de Raat’s article, first published in the quarterly magazine Salesians Contact, on a portrait of St. Francis of Sales by the famous Dutch painter Marc Mulders, was later republished by several other magazines. Subsequently, she has been invited to present a lecture on the subject.

To commemorate the 400th anniversary of the foundation of the Order of the Visitations of Holy Mary, the Netherlands Province website (www.oblaten.osfs.nl) added two new pages. One is dedicated to the history of the Visitations Order’s 100 years in Holland, and the second page focuses on the Visitation worldwide.

In September 2010, a group of thirty pilgrims from the Netherlands visited all the well-known Salesian sites in Annecy and its environs, with Fr. Dirk Koster, OSFS, a member of the ICSS, and Dr. de Raat serving as guides. A commemorative travel book, film, and reunion is planned. The pilgrims were delighted with the exhibits mounted in the basilica crypt in Annecy and in the Chateau de Saels in Thorens in connection with the observance of the 400th anniversary of the foundation of the Visitations Order.

Preparations for a new Dutch translation of the Introduction to the Devout Life are progressing slowly but surely.

GERMAN-SPEAKING PROVINCE (GERMANY-AUSTRIA-SWITZERLAND)
In the new cafeteria of the De Sales Oblate School at Haus Overbach, Nordrhein-Westfalen, there is a mural painting, by alumnus Robin Coenen (class of 2008), illustrating St. Francis de Sales’s saying: “Bloom where you are planted.” A photo may be seen at http://www.osfs.eu/aktuell/graffiti_overbach.html.

Christian Deppisch from Neumarkt/Oberpfalz., Bayern, has now digitized the German translation of all the retreat talks by Fr. Louis Brisson, OSFS, founder of the Oblate Sisters of St. Francis de Sales and the De Sales Oblates. They are accessible on the website: www.louisbrisson.org. Currently, Mr. Deppisch is working on Fr. Brisson’s instructions to both congregations. Those from 1877 to 1890 are already available on the aforementioned website.

Fr. Herbert Winklehner, OSFS, ICSS member and webmaster, gave retreats and days of recollection in 2010 to the Salesians of
Don Bosco in Germany, the Association of St. Francis de Sales and the Secular Institute of St. Francis de Sales. The topics were “So That the Soul Can Keep Correct Time Again,” and “To Tune the Strings of the Soul in a New Harmony,” which were based on the Introduction to the Devout Life.

The Assembly of the De Sales Oblates’s German-Speaking Province, which took place 19-21 August 2010 in Fockenfeld, Bavaria, focused on the theme, “The Vow of Poverty and Our Lifestyle.” About fifty De Sales Oblates from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland took part at this biennial program, which was prepared by the Provincial Conference.

Scholastic Dominik Hien Nguyen, OSFS, Fr. Hubert Czinczoll, OSFS, and Florian Mayrhofer accompanied the annual pilgrimage, “In the Footsteps of St. Francis de Sales,” from Thonon to Annecy in August 2010. This year there were also two Oblate sisters among the participants.

In October 2010, the De Sales Oblates conducted two pilgrimages for vocations in Bavaria and Austria. To mark the 400th anniversary of the founding of the Visitation Order, the Austrian pilgrimage was to Gleink near Steyr in Upper Austria, a former convent of the Visitation.

The next annual meeting of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Salesianische Studien (Working Group for Salesian Studies) is scheduled for 14-15 January 2011, in Salesianum Rosental in Eichstätt, Bavaria. The meeting will focus on St. Jane Frances de Chantal.

On 18-20 February 2011, young men are invited to the Salesianum Haus Overbach, Nordrhein-Westfalen, to learn about consecrated life and the De Sales Oblates. For more information, contact: Tobias Menke, OSFS, via e-mail, at: menke@osfs.eu.

The world premiere of the musical “The Baroness” about the life of St. Jane Frances de Chantal, composed by Andreas Kehr, a music teacher at The Catholic University of Eichstätt, Bavaria, with lyrics by Fr. Herbert Winklehner OSFS, is scheduled for 7 May 2011. Additional performances will be held on 13-15 May 2011. All performances will take place at The Catholic University of Eichstätt. This musical project, in which about fifty musicians, actors, technicians, etc., are participating, is assisted by a grant from the ICSS. Additional information is available at: www.musical-diebaronin.de.

On 10-17 July 2011, Salesian Accompanied Retreats will take place at the Zangberg Visitation. A team of lay people, religious, and priests from the Salesian family will be the spiritual guides. For further information, please contact Fr. Konrad Esser OSFS, at Haus Overbach, D-52428 Jülich, or, via e-mail, at: P.Konrad.Esser@osfs.de.

The Austrian supermarket chain “Spar” (save) has been selling an Austrian red wine labeled “Herrzüpferl” (small drops for the heart) since summer 2010. The label also includes a saying of St. Francis de Sales: “Among the virtues charity is like the sun among the stars; to all of them it distributes their brightness and beauty “ (Treatise on the Love of God, Book 11, chapter 9).

The German radio station “Bayern 2” (Bavaria 2) broadcast a thirty-minute program, with excerpts from the Introduction to the Devout Life, on the topic “About Talking Unkindly: Views of St. Francis of Sales,” on 1 November 2010.

SISTERS OF THE VISITATION

For the Visitation Order’s 400th anniversary, the German Federation of the Sisters of the Visitation created the website www.heimsuchungsschwester.de, and also published a press kit, including a CD. These were invaluable resources for journalists, who drew on this material extensively for detailed articles about the Visitation Order that were published in church and secular newspapers and magazines in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.

A special highlight of this anniversary year was the pilgrimage to Annecy, on 17-22 June 2010, of twenty-nine Visitandines from Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, and Croatia. Accompanied by Frs. Konrad Esser, OSFS, and Fr. Winklehner, the pilgrims visited all the major Salesian sites in Savoy. Undoubtedly, one of the pilgrimage’s most poignant moments was the visit to the Annecy Visitation and the German Federation Visitandines signing their names in the 400-year-old book of the professed sisters, in which on the first pages St. Francis de Sales wrote his dedication, and St. Jane Frances de Chantal and the first Visitandines wrote their vows. Photos of this pilgrimage may be viewed on the website: www.heimsuchungsschwester.de.

The year 2010 was a source of great joy, celebration, and gratitude for the monastery of the Visitation in Vienna, Austria. On 6 June 2010, the 400th anniversary was celebrated together with the archbishop of Vienna, Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, O.P. On 14 August 2010, Sr. Maria Magdalena Meinhart, VHM, made her final vows. Fr. Francis de Sales Göckele of the “Community of the Beatitudes” was the celebrant and preacher.

The Visitandines of Oberroning, Bavaria celebrated the 400th anniversary with a very special event. In early May 2010, the students from their school inflated 400 red balloons. On each balloon, there was a postcard on which the anniversary was described and that could be returned by the finders to the monastery. To date, the most postcards to come back to the monastery are from Poland.

On the feast day of St. Jane Frances de Chantal, 12 August 2010, the auxiliary bishop of Salzburg, Austria, Bishop Andreas Laun,
OSFS, celebrated the 400th anniversary with the community of the Visitation of Budakeszi, near Budapest, Hungary. He was accompanied by De Sales Oblate, Fr. Eugen Szabo, OSFS, a native of Hungary.

The Visitation sisters of Solothurn, Switzerland, celebrated the anniversary by creating their own website, which provides information about their monastery: www.klostervisitation.ch.

In August 2010, the Pielenhofen Visitation monastery, located in Regensburg, closed. The remaining five sisters of this monastery joined that of Zangberg, east of Munich. This brought to a close a long and fruitful history extending back to 1838.

Under the topic “Getting Together for (Spiritual) Conversation,” the “younger” sisters of the Visitation from monasteries of the German Federation came together in the monastery of Zangberg, Bavaria, on 24-26 September 2010. Among other things, they considered the Spiritual Conferences of St. Francis de Sales.

**ASSOCIATION OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES**

Both the Swiss and German group of the Association of St. Francis de Sales were visited by their new General Spiritual Director, the Belgian priest, Fr. Benoît Goubou, in 2010. He was introduced at the annual retreat of the Association, and then presented a talk on the essential ideas of the *Introduction to the Devout Life*.

In September 2010, ten members of the German group of the Association of St. Francis de Sales made a pilgrimage to the Salesian sites in Paris where St. Francis de Sales studied, and later stayed and preached during his two diplomatic trips. They also visited the Visitation Monastery on the rue de Vaugirard. At the Centre Salesien on the rue Léon Frot, the house and the center of the Association of St. Francis de Sales, they met with their Superior General Annie Trabichet.

**SECULAR INSTITUTE OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES**

On 26-30 July 2010, the annual Community Week of the Secular Institute of St. Francis de Sales took place in Augsburg, Bavaria. Fr. Konrad Esser, OSFS, from Haus Overbach, Nordrhein-Westfalen, was the spiritual director. Among other things, he delivered a lecture on “Ecumenism: What Separates Us, What Unites Us,” about the Second Vatican Council document *Unitatis Redintegratio*. To commemorate the 400th anniversary of the Visitation Order, Fr. Herbert Winklehner, OSFS, gave a presentation on the Visitation’s origin, history, and spirituality.

**OBLATE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES**

Since mid-2010, the Oblate Sisters of St. Francis de Sales have a new official website in French: http://www.sosfs.com/.

In late August, a monument in honor of St. Léonie Aviat, the Good Mother Mary de Sales Chappuis, and Père Blanchard, a former pastor of Soisyères, was dedicated in Soisyères, Switzerland, the birthplace of Mother Chappuis. The event was initiated, organized, and designed by the *Association des Amis du Père Blanchard et de la Mère Chappuis* (Association of Friends of Fr. Blanchard and Mother Chappuis). The monument in front of the parish church of Soisyères consists of a 2.5 meter-high triangular column. On each side, one of the honorees is represented by a portrait, biography, and motto. After Mass and the blessing of the memorial, there was a reception in the garden of the Oblate Sisters of St. Francis de Sales. In the afternoon, the children of the village participated in games to learn more about Soisyères, Léonie Aviat, Marie de Sales Chappuis, and Père Blanchard.

**ITALY**

Fr. Aldino Kiesel, OSFS, Superior General of the De Sales Oblates, has announced that Cardinal Angelo Amato, SDB, Prefect of the Congregation of the Causes of Saints, has approved Sr. Madeleine-Thérèse Dechambre, OSFS, as Postulator of the Cause of the Beatification of Mother Mary de Sales Chappuis. Fr. Kiesel, with the approval of Mother Françoise-Bernadette Beuzzelin, Superior General of the Oblate Sisters, presented her name to the Congregation of the Causes of Saints because of her dedication and the outstanding work that she did as Postulator of the Cause of the Venerable Fr. Louis Brisson. The ICSS congratulates Sr. Dechambière on her appointment and offers its prayerful support in having the Good Mother’s cause move forward.

Fr. Morand Wirth, SDB, and Fr. Manlio Sodi, SDB, have published a facsimile edition, preceded by an introduction, of the *Rituale sacramentorum Francisci de Sales Episcopi Gebemensis Issui Editum Anno 1612* (Ritual for the Sacraments of Francis de Sales Bishop of Geneva in Use in 1612) (Vatican City State: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2010). They presented this publication to the bishop and priests of the diocese of Annecy in April 2010. The formal launch of this work took place in October 2010.

**South American Province**

**Haiti**

In a brief article entitled “Finding God and Hope in Haiti,” in the Spring 2010 issue of *Bondings* (vol. 23, issue 2), Fr. Thomas Moore, OSFS, stated several reasons that give him hope despite all the horror and devastation he personally witnessed: “I saw young men, our Associates, risking their lives during and after the quake to free others from the wreckage of their building. And I saw three of them a few days later risking their lives to find the dead bodies of two confères buried in the rubble. When I said to them that’s very dangerous and even life-threatening, they answered: ‘But they are our brothers’—well, that is the reason to hope! When I looked at my confère, Fr. Tom Hagan, OSFS, who in a flash saw the work of close to twenty-years of his Hands Together projects in ruins, he immediately returned to see how he could get food to the poorest of the poor in the huge slum of Cité Soleil. When I saw our local pastor, a Montfort Father, gather his people for Mass and the sacraments, for Stations of the Cross and the rosary, amid the rubble of his beautiful but totally destroyed 125-year-old church—well, if they can do that and thousands of others like them pick up and start over, then there is every reason to hope, hope that Haiti will survive and that God will never leave us.”
The Joseph F. Power, OSFS, 28th National Salesian Conference, conducted under the auspices of De Sales Resources and Ministries, Inc., was another great success. The conference's theme was "The Visit: Salesian Icon for Today," to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the founding of the Visititation Order. The three presenters and their topics were as follows: Fr. Joseph Chorpenning, OSFS (ICSS member and chairman), "The Visitation as Biblical Mystery"; Dr. Wendy Wright, "The Visitation as Community"; Fr. Joseph Boenzi, SDB, "The Visitation as Commitment." The talks, originating at Salesianum School in Wilmington, DE, were simulcast live to six other sites in five states (Ohio, North Carolina, New York, Minnesota, and Missouri) and the District of Columbia.

The biennial Salesian Scholars Seminar was held at the De Sales Resource Center, Stella Niagara, NY, 21-24 October 2010. This year's theme was "The Visitation Order: Its History and Spiritual Patrimony." The first day was devoted to a "mini-seminar" conducted by Dr. Jill Feleisen (associate professor of history at Quinnipiac University), on the findings of her new book, Boundaries of Faith: Catholics and Protestants in the Diocese of Geneva (Kirkville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2010), as well as on her current research on confessional pamphlets produced between 1589 and 1665 by Catholics and Protestants in Geneva and Savoy. The remaining two days focused on the discussion of eight research papers prepared by seminar members and circulated in advance: Fr. Joseph Boenzi, SDB, "Visitation: Mystery of Presence, Community of Women for Women"; Fr. Joseph F. Chorpenning, OSFS, "Francis de Sales's Word-Paintings of the Biblical Mystery of the Visititation"; Mr. Thomas Donlan (Ph.D. Cand., University of Arizona), "The Many Meanings of Doucer in Francis de Sales's Spiritual Conferences"; Dr. Patricia Finley, "The Phoenix of the Woods: The Visitation Monastery of Scy-Chazelles"; Dr. Christian Kroks, "Francis de Sales and Louis Massignon on the Visitation Mystery: A Comparison"; Fr. Eunan McDonnell, SDB, "Holy Indifference: Freeing the Heart for Pure Love"; Fr. Alexander T. Pocetto, OSFS, "Living the Mystery of the Visitation: The Early Visitandines as Educators"; and Dr. Wendy M. Wright, "Preliminary Thoughts on the Mystery of the Visitation and the Early Visitation Order." Other Seminar members who participated were Dr. Roberta Brown and Bro. Daniel P. Wisniewski, OSFS, Sr. Mary Grace McCormick, VHSM, and Fr. Michael Murray, OSFS, attended as auditors.

The Seminar also included the customary business meeting, at which Seminar members reported on their current research projects; a proposal for a volume on "The 19th-Century Salesian Pentecost" in Paulist Press's "Classics of Western Spirituality" series, was reviewed and endorsed; and the dates and theme of the next meeting of the Seminar were selected. The 2012 Salesian Scholars Seminar is scheduled for 26-30 September 2012, at De Sales Resource Center, Stella Niagara, NY, with the theme, "The Holy Spirit in the Salesian Tradition."

In July 2010, Camp De Sales hosted fifteen eighth graders from Nativity Preparatory School in Wilmington, DE. These inner-city students from low-income families got a taste of outdoor life that they had never before experienced. They received training in outdoor survival and sensory perception as well as the study of birds of prey, reptiles, and amphibians. Of course, the outdoors provided special opportunities for lessons in faith and the love of God from a Salesian perspective.

WILMINGTON-PHILADELPHIA PROVINCE

Beginning its seventeenth year as a ministry of the Wilmington-Philadelphia Province, the De Sales Spirituality Center has begun self-assessment to ascertain how it assists Oblates in their ministry to disseminate Salesian spirituality and to explore how it might be of greater assistance and support. With the assistance of Michael Castrilli, OSFS, an online survey form was developed to measure the effectiveness of the De Sales Spirituality Center through feedback from Oblates working and living in a variety of ministries. Approximately eight-five members of the province participated in the first phase of the evaluation process. The findings of the survey were the subject of thorough review and discussion during the DSC's Advisory Board meeting with Fr. Michael S. Murray, OSFS, Director, on 25 September 2010.

The data provide some very specific, concrete affirmations of what De Sales Spirituality Center does well; the data also offer some clear suggestions for how the De Sales Spirituality Center can better meet the needs of the province regarding the dissemination of Salesian spirituality. Regarding the latter, some of the more frequently cited include: substantial changes/enhancements to how the website material is organized and presented; producing/providing easy-to-use digital media (e.g., PowerPoints, videos) on Salesian spirituality (lives of Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal, introduction to Salesian writings); establishing a speakers/presenters bureau/team; developing resources for specific target audiences (e.g., adults, adolescents, grade-school children) to be used at schools, parishes, and other ministries; orientation programs for new staff, teachers, etc.; providing more models/modules for retreats, in-service, missions and other programs; greater collaboration between De Sales Spirituality Center, De Sales Resources and Ministries, Inc. (Toledo-Detroit Province); and the Salesian Center for Faith & Culture at De Sales University.

One of the suggestions raised at the DSC's Advisory Board meeting was to determine if other Oblate provinces around the world have developed any ready-made audio/visual resources for promoting Salesian spirituality that could be translated into other languages. If you have suggestions in this regard, please contact Fr. Murray at mmurray@osfs.org.

Fr. William Walsh, OSFS, pastor of Holy Redeemer Church in Kitty Hawk, N.C., ably assisted by Fr. Edward Fitzpatrick, OSFS, do a host of things to promote the Salesian-Oblate charism. Some of the more notable activities/programs are Advent and Lenten missions presented by Oblates stressing Salesian spirituality; parish talks and seminars on Salesian themes; and raising approximately US$70,000 to assist dissemination of the Salesian charism.
The Province is taking a leading role in the feasibility study exploring the possibility of establishing a Cristo Rey high school in Philadelphia. The Cristo Rey schools have many of the same objectives and strategies on the secondary level that the Nativity schools have on the elementary level for educating students from low-income families.

A new online course, “Salesian Priesthood: A Special Edition to Conclude the Year for Priests,” was taught by Fr. Thomas Dailey, OSFS, Director of the Salesian Center for Faith & Culture, at De Sales University. This course offered a glimpse into the rich spirituality for priests elaborated by St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622), bishop and doctor of the Church. Situating his vocation in its historical context, participants explored Francis’s profound appreciation of the priesthood, as well as his practical advice and priestly ministry in terms of preaching and administering the sacraments, all in the hope of providing a way to continue the blessings of the Church’s celebration of the Year for Priests.

Fr. Alexander Pocetto, OSFS, preached a retreat to eighteen members of the Province on the theme, “Creating a Salesian Civilization of Love and Catholic Social Teaching.” The various conferences dwelt on how Salesian spirituality can create the proper disposition for appropriating and teaching the Church’s social doctrine.

Several priests of the Province have been singled out for their work. Fr. Thomas Hagan, OSFS, former Catholic Chaplain at Lafayette College, Easton, PA, and founder of the humanitarian organization Hands Together received an honorary doctorate in public service from the College at its 175th commencement exercises. Governor Jack Markell declared “Fr. Richard R. DeLillo, OSFS, Day” on Tuesday, 18 May in the State of Delaware. The Governor made a surprise visit to the Board meeting of the Nativity Preparatory School, and presented Fr. DeLillo with this honor in recognition of his six years of service as Nativity’s Executive Director and President. Fr. John Harvey, OSFS, was presented the Founder’s Award in recognition of his outstanding work as the founder of Courage at the annual meeting of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars held in Baltimore in September 2010. The ICSS congratulates these De Sales Oblates for imbuing their work with the Salesian-Oblate charism.

Publications

Books

English


French

*L’Âme de Saint François de Sales révélée par Sainte Jeanne-Françoise de Chantal dans une de ses lettres et dans sa déposition au procès de beatification du serviteur de Dieu* (The Soul of St. Francis de Sales Revealed by St. Jane Frances de Chantal in One of Her Letters and in Her Deposition at the Process of Beatification of the Servant of God) (Annecy: Monastère de la Visitation, 2010).

*François de Sales & Jeanne de Chantal: L’Ordre de la Visitation fête ses 400 ans* (Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal: The Visitation Order Celebrates 400 Years), preface by Mgr. Yves Boivineau, bishop of Annecy (Paris: Cerf, 2010).

*Saint François de Sales et Sainte Jeanne de Chantal. Une extraordinaire amitié. Correspondance* (St. Francis de Sales and St. Jane de Chantal. An Extraordinary Friendship. Correspondence), collected and adapted to modern orthography by the Sisters of the Visitatin of Annecy (Annecy: Monastère de la Visitation, 2010).

*St. François de Sales: Portraits Croisés. Conférences de Thorens pour le 4e centenaire de l’ordination de saint François de Sales* (St. Francis de Sales: Intersecting Portraits. Lectures Presented at Thorens for the 4th Centenary of the Episcopal Ordination of St. Francis de Sales), Mémoires et documents publiés par l’Académie salésienne (Annecy: Académie salésienne, 2010). This long-awaited publication collects twelve papers on a wide range of topics, including Francis’s spirituality of love; Salesian anthropology; Francis’s final sermon at Christmas Midnight Mass of 1622; Francis and the Eucharist; Francis and the Virgin Mary; Francis’s first biographers; and the Visitatin Order, Francis, and devotion to St. Joseph. It also includes a letter and a homily by Pope John Paul II.


Gérard Picaud and Jean Foisel, *Au cœur de la Visitation: Trésors de la vie monastique en Europe, 400e anniversaire de l’ordre* (At the Heart of the Visitatin: Treasures of Monastic Life in Europe, 400th Anniversary of the Order), exhibition catalogue (Paris: Somogy éditions d’art/Moulin: Musée de la Visitatin, 2010). Like its three predecessors, this is another exquisite, profusely illustrated exhibition catalogue, which in this case offers a permanent public record of the exhibition mounted at the Musée de la Visitatin to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the foundation of the Visitatin Order.

Marie-Claire Busat-Enevoldsen, *Le voile et la plume. Jeanne de Chantal et François de Sales, l’étonnant récit de leur rencontre* (The Veil and the Quill: Jane de Chantal and Francis de Sales, A Striking Account of Their First Encounter), Collection Culture et religion (Montrouge [Hauts-de-Seine]: Éditions Bayard, 2010).

Daniel Moulinet, Au cœur du monde: Henri Chaumont—un prêtre dans l’Esprit de Jésus (In the Midst of the World: Henri Chaumont—a Priest in the Spirit of Jesus) (Mayenne: Éditions Beaurépaire, 2010). This is a biography of the founder of the Association of St. Francis de Sales by a priest of the diocese of Moulin and professor of church history at the Theological Faculty of The Catholic University of Lyon. In the light of Salesian spirituality, Chaumont helped the faithful to overcome the supposed contradiction between a life in the midst of the world and a life of faith.

**German**

Franz von Sales, Auf heiligen Bergen: Worte der Seelenführung aus den geistlichen Briefen (On Sacred Mountains: Words of Spiritual Direction from the Spiritual Letters) (Eichstätt: Franz Sales Verlag, 2010). This is a new edition of a classic collection of advice gleaned from the letters of St. Francis de Sales on how to be a Christian in the world.

Christoph Benke, Gott ist nicht kleinlich: Über das christliche Maß (God Is Not Petty: Concerning Christian Temperance) (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 2010). The book focuses on the virtue of temperance and also includes observations of St. Francis de Sales, who is described as a “master of supernatural balance” and moderation.

Odilo Lechner and Michael Langer, Mystik für Christen: Ein Jahreslesebuch (Mysticism for Christians: A One-Year Textbook) (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2010). This book provides for each day of the year texts from the Bible, as well as from major theologians and mystics, including five texts from the writings of St. Francis de Sales.

Lehrer des Glaubens? Luther einmal anders (Teacher of the Faith? Luther with a Difference), ed. Reinhard Dörner, 3rd revised and enlarged edition (Stadtlohn: Verlag des Kardinal-von-Galen-Kreis e.V., 2010). This volume includes the entire text of the Codex Fabriianus of St. Francis de Sales.

Michael Plattig, Kanon der spirituellen Bücher (Canon of Spiritual Books) (Münsterschwarzach: Vier Türme Verlag, 2010). This book presents fifty “spiritual classics” of Christian literature, including St. Francis de Sales’ Introduction to the Devout Life (202-08).

Franz Wehrl, OSFS, Allen Alles: Die Leidenschaft des Reformbischofs Franz von Sales für den anderen (For Everyone Everything: The Passion of the Reform Bishop Francis of Sales for the Other) (Eichstätt: Salesianisches Institut, 2010). This book focuses on Francis de Sales and his work as a reform bishop. The author also sheds light on the relationship between Francis of Sales and St. Charles Borromeo, who was in many respects a model for the saintly bishop of Geneva, although Francis, unlike Borromeo, emphasizes gentleness rather than severity.

**Italian**


**ARTICLES**


Robert Greving, “It’s a Wonderful Life: How the Philosophy of St. Francis de Sales Can Give You a Wonderful Life,” Envoy, 9/2. The article is a reflection on Frank Capra’s movie “It’s a Wonderful Life” and Salesian spirituality.


———, “Heimsuchung heißt Begegnung. Vor vierhundert Jahren wurde die Ordensgemeinschaft der Heimsuchung Mariens gegründet” (Visitation Means Encounter: 400 Years Ago the Order of the Visitation of Mary Was Founded) in Magnificat. Das Stundenbuch (Magnificat: The Hours) (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, August 2010): 363-67

**Online**

Roger J. Landry, “Preventing Spiritual Suicide,” at http://www.catholicpreaching.com/index.php?content=articles&articles=20100806duc. In this sermon, Landry refers to the recent scandals in the Catholic Church and thereby makes interesting and relevant comparisons to Francis de Sales and the scandals with which he contended.

**CD-ROM**


**DVDs**


Dans les pas de François de Sales à travers le lieux salésiens de Haute-Savoie (In the Footsteps of St. Francis de Sales across the Salesian sites of Haute-Savoie).

**VARIA**

Licht und Leben. Franz von Sales und Johanna Franziska von Chantal. Illumination ihres Lebens in der Glasmalerei der Basilika der Heimsuchung/Annecy (Light and Life. Francis de Sales and Jane Frances de Chantal: Illumination of Their Lives by the Stained Glass Windows in the Basilica of the Annecy Visitation, ed. Visitation of Annecy, 2010, Text: Stefan Hauptmann. The cost of this folder is 5 Euros, plus shipping, and it may be ordered directly from Stefan Hauptmann at: hauptmannst@web.de.

Dossier de 30 Fiches, thématiques salésiennes rédigé sous la direction du Père Jean-Luc Leroux, OFS, édité par le diocèse d’Annecy, novembre 2009. A File of Thirty Cards on Salesian Themes, written under the direction of Fr. Leroux and published by the diocese of Annecy.

**CORRECTION**

In ICSS Newsletter, no. 25 (April 2010): 5, the description of the Visitandine profession cross should be amended as follows: The letters M and A signify not Maria, but Mons Amoris, the mount of love, which is Calvary. On this Mons Amoris, Jesus’s Heart was opened by the lance and His love was poured out upon the world, thus the Heart is flanked by the letters M and A. (See St. Francis de Sales, Treatise on the Love of God, Book 12, chapter 13). The Editor thanks Fr. Herbert Winklehner, OFS, for this information.

### 2011 Salesian Calendar for the De Sales Oblates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday, Jan. 10</td>
<td>Feast of St. Léonie Frances de Sales Aviat, co-founder of the Oblate Sisters of St. Francis de Sales</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, Jan. 24</td>
<td>Solemnity of St. Francis de Sales, Principal Patron of the Congregation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, Feb. 2</td>
<td>Anniversary of the Death of Fr. Brisson (1908)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, May 31</td>
<td>Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, July 1</td>
<td>Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, Aug. 12</td>
<td>Feast of St. Jane Frances de Chantal, Secondary Patron of the Congregation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, Oct. 12</td>
<td>De Sales Oblates Founders’ Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, Nov. 21</td>
<td>Memorial of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary</td>
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N. B. As Oct.16 falls on a Sunday, the De Sales Oblate Ordo indicates that the feast of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque is “not observed this year.”

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