

Holy Mother?

St. Jane and Her Teenager

by Wendy M. Wright



St. Jane de Chantal (far left) is introduced to St. Vincent de Paul (right) by St. Francis de Sales (center)

She is too often remembered as the woman who stepped over her son in order to “leave the world.” I suspect if she could weigh in, Jane de Chantal would cringe at that characterization of her long ago action and Celse Benigne, her son, would not want his mother to be remembered that way. The truth was that he was a hotheaded 15 year old. Jane, widowed for considerable time, had given careful consideration for her children as she discerned that she, with Francis de Sales, would establish the innovative religious community of the Visitation. Her younger daughter would go with her mother to live in the new community. Her eldest daughter, soon to be married, would be settling nearby, precisely so her mother could help her in her new role in life. Celse Benigne was to go live with his uncle André and attend school. This was a typical arrangement for well-born sons. Francis de Sales himself, accompanied by a tutor and his cousins, had left home at the age of 11 to attend the Jesuit school in Paris, a long way from his natal Savoy.

On the day of her leave taking from her home town of Dijon, a very formal and public event as she was a woman of stature, Jane had no idea that Celse Benigne was unhappy with the upcoming arrangements. Indeed, the new community she was to lead was unusual in that it allowed her to continue to attend to family concerns. She would visit her son. She would see to his well being. But Celse Benigne, full of adolescent angst, had in secret written out a dramatic script that he planned to deliver. As she and her entourage said their final goodbyes to the assembled townsfolk, dignitaries, family and friends, the boy stepped forward and

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De Sales says...
"Friendships
begun in this world
will be taken up
again,
never to be
broken off."

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Keeping us in touch since 1987.

Bondings is published regularly for the members and friends of the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales, Toledo-Detroit Province. Its purpose is to enhance and develop the bond we have through our common faith and spirituality.

"We have no bond
but the bond of love."
-St. Francis de Sales

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V+J

V+J - the French initials for Vive Jésus, Live Jesus: The prayer of St. Francis de Sales and the motto of all whose hearts are bound together by the spiritual tradition of Francis de Sales and Jane Frances de Chantal.

An Operatic Personality: Fr. Bill Fisher, OSFS

by Fr. Bob Mossett, OSFS

Monroe, Michigan Pastor Celebrates 50 Years of Oblate Priesthood



Fr. William Fisher, OSFS

Thirty years ago when Bill became a pastor in the Archdiocese of Detroit, the parish had no cook. So he bought a copy of *The Joy of Cooking*. Ever since he has found joy in cooking and his confreres, friends, parishioners and staff have benefitted greatly from the meals he prepares. That's Bill Fisher, a man who enjoys discovering new things and places and sharing his talents with others. From his first days at the Oblate Novitiate in Childs, Maryland, he has enjoyed listening to music and singing. When he taught at St. Francis de Sales High School in Toledo, not only did he share his knowledge of opera with his students. He also encouraged them to join him as members of the casts of the Toledo Opera Company. As familiar as he is with opera, a peek into his record collection reveals also his love of jazz---not only will you find Puccini but also Brubeck, Coltrane, and Fathead Newman. For many years at Mass on Christmas and every funeral, he has provided the Communion meditation singing Schubert's Ave Maria.

Bill is a great travel companion. He studies the history of the place you are visiting and guides the tour. Once while he and a confrere were on a tour visiting the Cathedral in Cartagena, Colombia, he discovered the bones of St. Peter Claver under the high altar and a vacation became a pilgrimage. It was the foundation of the Peter Claver Prayer Group.

Although he has not lived in Philadelphia for nearly fifty years, he is still a diehard Philadelphia Republican almost as conservative as some Fox News commentators. Yet he has encouraged many a former student and a few parishioners to pursue their political careers regardless of their political leanings.

Bill's love of English literature has given him a facility to spin a delightful yarn. He has been known to introduce himself to an unsuspecting taxi driver as a Detroit Toyota salesman or a grieving widower.

In recent years, Bill has had to deal with many health problems and serious surgeries. He is a cancer survivor. In

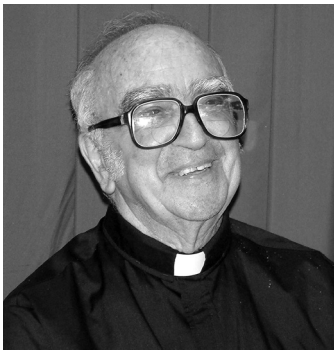
Save the Date: Annual Salesian Conference August 6, 2011

“God Desires YOU,” will be the theme for the upcoming Joseph F. Power, OSFS National Salesian Conference, telecast on Saturday, August 6.

The live simulcast will include presentations, shared prayer and discussion, liturgy, a Salesian Marketplace as well as a continental breakfast and lunch. A free will offering is requested.

Conference sites currently include: Salesianum School in Wilmington, DE, Georgetown Visitation in Washington, D.C., Lourdes College in Sylvania, OH, Immaculate Conception Church in Wilmington, NC, Stella Niagara in Lewiston, NY, Convent of the Visitation School in Mendota Heights, MN, and Visitation Academy in St. Louis, MO.

Information and pre-registration: www.desalesresource.org or call De Sales Resources and Ministries at 1-800-782-2270.



Bro. Jim Rago, OSFS

Rest In Peace, Brother Rago

Brother Jim Rago, OSFS, entered eternal life on January 28, 2011 at the age of 85. Bro. Jim's life and ministry as an Oblate touched many lives. His last ministry was living and working at St. Francis de Sales High School, Toledo, OH. Students from SFS provided Bondings with memories of Bro. Jim.

“I remember when Bro. Jim came and talked to my American history class. He was hilarious. He talked about being in the Navy during WWII. He also worked in the library and I saw him all the time. I can't picture him mad. He was always happy and smiling.”

“Brother Jim was a cheerful spirit and someone who could make your experience better just by being there. I remember in the summer while I was doing work study that every morning I had to clean the Oblate kitchen. I hated waking up in the summer to go to work but every morning Bro. Jim would be in the kitchen and he would always make my mornings better just by getting to talk to him and seeing how happy he was all the time.”

V+J



Jim Rago, OSFS, covered in silly string at a St. Francis High School Pep Rally.

“I never saw him without a giant smile on his face and positive words always coming from him. It seemed like he made everyone have a better day just from being around him.”

Favorite Salesian Sayings



St. Jane de Chantal

From Tom Helfrich, OSFS

The wisdom of Jane de Chantal is easily overshadowed by the sufferings of her early life and the fact that Francis de Sales gets so much attention. She comes to life in a little book of excerpts from her letters and conferences called *St. Chantal on Prayer*. A number of times she gives voice to a wise and healing message, a virtual quote of Hebrews 12:2: "Keep your eyes fixed on God." From anxieties about the duties and pressures of each day to discouragement about our failures, she returns repeatedly to the gift of strength that comes from directing our attention to God, powerful beyond our imagining and literally with us always. Jane makes clear the deep truth that the focus of our attention can determine the state of our emotions. Hmm, what are you looking at?
St. Chantal on Prayer, Rev. A Durand, Ph.D., Daughters of St. Paul, 1968



Louis Brisson, OSFS

From Shaun Lowery, OSFS

"Lord may my heart never bend except under your love. May its weakness ever praise you so that at every moment my heart continues to say: You are my God and my all. Amen." At the age of 32 I resonate with this jotting in Fr. Brisson's journal. I'm now 32 years old and a priest engaged in a wonderful parish and living in an Oblate community. But even with all the day-to-day goodness that surrounds me there is so much uncertainty in the Church, in the world, and in me at times. It can be overwhelming. Fr. Brisson's quote is real. He is tired. He is overwhelmed. But he is hopeful. Like I so often do, Fr. Brisson was getting ahead of grace; ahead of the present moment where we all find the Lord.



From Roland Calvert, OSFS

"M'oublier entièrement" = To forget myself completely. This is the resolution Mother Francis de Sales Aviat (Leonie Aviat) made at the time of her profession. She is the co-founder (with Fr. Louis Brisson) of the Oblate Sisters of St. Francis de Sales. Her resolution recalls Jesus' words about losing our lives and then finding them. If we are full of ourselves, even God cannot find a space there. Mother Aviat did wonders in the ministry of education and establishing the Oblate Sisters through the Divine Presence working so powerfully in her. May we too forget ourselves completely and work for God.



St. Francis de Sales Aviat, OSFS

From the Editorial Staff...

Easter Blessings to all our readers as we find ourselves in the midst of the fifty day celebration of Jesus' triumph over death. Special wishes to our readers who are mothers and mother-figures for a blessed Mother's Day. We hope you found Wendy Wright's article meaningful and that it brings St. Jane - wife, mother, religious co-foundress - into a new perspective for all people.

We hope you enjoy the new "Favorite Salesian Sayings," addition to Bondings. We hope to hear from you our readers and to use this column as a way of encouraging sharing and further Salesian understanding.

Many congratulations and blessings to Fr. Bill Fisher and all Oblates observing special anniversaries of profession and ordination this year. You are each powerful witnesses of fidelity in a world so caught up in uncertainty.

May God be blessed!

-Bondings Editorial Staff





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Live + Jesus

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delivered his theatrical address ending with, “If I cannot hold you back at least let it be said that you trampled your own child underfoot.” Then he threw himself across the doorstep. Jane, choking back tears, had no choice but to step over him. In fact, a couple of clerics observing the scene were critical of her weeping, feeling that it lacked the detachment necessary for one embarking on a religious life. Her response was, simply, “I am, after all, a mother.” Years later, that same son wrote a grateful letter to his mother thanking her for the wonderful care she had always given him. I’m not sure any mother, least of all Jane, would wish to be remembered in perpetuity for a single painful incident involving one of her teenaged children.

Dr. Wendy M. Wright is Professor of Theology at Creighton University and holds the John C. Kenefick Chair in the Humanities. Dr. Wright also is a wife and mother and we at Bondings want to wish her and all our readers who are mothers and mother figures a happy Mother’s Day in May.

Former Oblate Reunion Plans Finalized to be held Sept. 8-9, 2011 at Camp DeSales. Check website at

www.xoblates.com ,

or contact Bill Mittendorf at mittlaw@live.com