

BONDINGS

THE QUARTERLY OBLATE NEWSLETTER

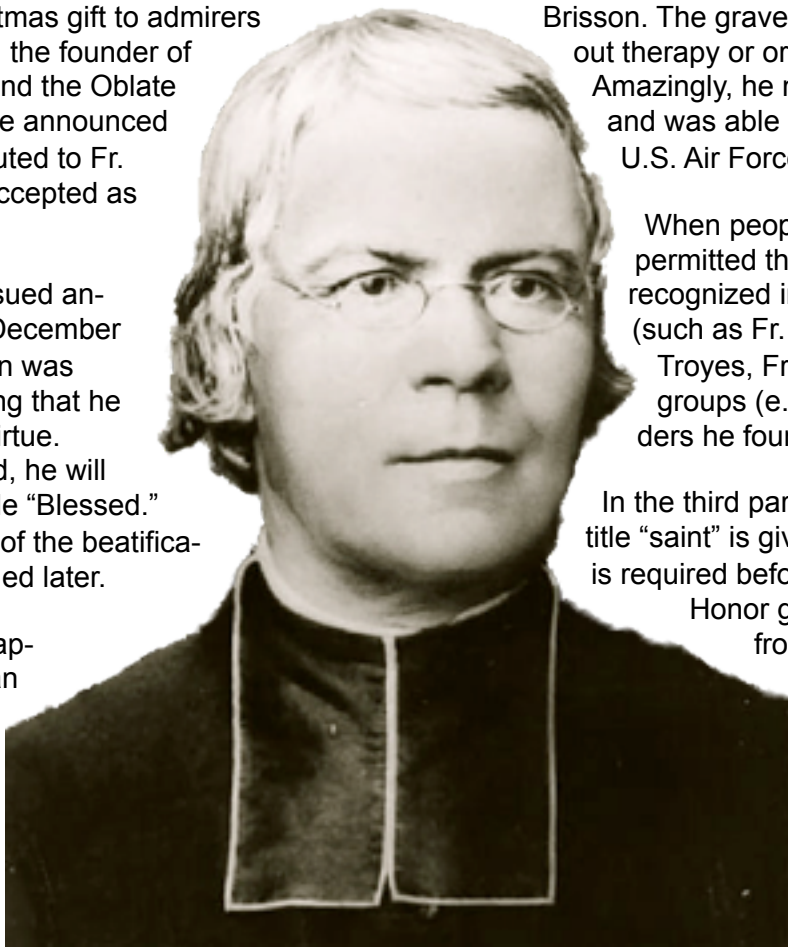
Fr. Brisson Moves Towards Beatification

FOUNDER OF THE OBLATES OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

In December 2011, Pope Benedict XVI gave an early Christmas gift to admirers of Fr. Louis Brisson, the founder of the Oblate Sisters and the Oblate Fathers/Brothers. He announced that a miracle attributed to Fr. Brisson had been accepted as valid.

The Pope had issued another statement in December 2009 that Fr. Brisson was “Venerable,” meaning that he led a life of heroic virtue. When he is beatified, he will also be given the title “Blessed.” The time and place of the beatification will be determined later.

The miracle just approved concerned an eight-year old boy in Ecuador whose foot was crushed by a tractor. Doctors believed he would never walk again. But the lo-



cal Oblate Sisters arranged for a novena to Fr. Brisson. The grave wound healed without therapy or orthopedic devices. Amazingly, he moved to this country and was able later to enlist in the U.S. Air Force.

When people are beatified, it is permitted that their sanctity be recognized in specific places (such as Fr. Brisson's Diocese of Troyes, France) and by specific groups (e.g., the religious orders he founded).

In the third part of the process, the title “saint” is given. Another miracle is required before this happens.

Honor given the saint is then from the universal Church and moves beyond a specific place or group. Please pray that God who began this good work will bring it to its completion.

“Just like St. Francis de Sales, Fr. Brisson was a kindly, gentle man, a man who gave such good example. With a delightful smile and in an engaging way, he steadfastly went about his work, not in a noisy way but acting effectively. If after pondering for some time he made a decision, he was like granite. I believe that Fr. Brisson, despite all the bitterness and trials, completed something miraculous in his own undaunted way. I know that I shall always remain deeply marked by the projects of this man of such patient energy.”

Words spoken by Henri Patenotre, a former student of Fr. Brisson at the grave during Fr. Brisson's funeral on February 6, 1902. From *Louis Brisson* by Fr. Dirk Koster, OSFS.

DSR&M Announces Leadership Initiative & Salesian Convention

DeSales Resources and Ministries (T-D Province) and DeSales Spirituality Services (W-P Province) have joined together with the Provincials of both Oblate Provinces to call together a gathering of the **leadership of all the Salesian organizations in the USA**. The purpose of this meeting will be to consider how those of us rooted in Francis de Sales might collaborate in presenting our Salesian charism to a world searching for a viable spirituality.



Invitations have been sent to leaders of the Visitation Sisters of Holy Mary, Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales, Salesians of Don Bosco, Salesian Sisters of Mary Help of Christians, Oblates of St. Francis de Sales, Oblate Sisters of St. Francis de Sales, Salesian Cooperators, and the Association (Daughters and Sons) of St. Francis de Sales.

The meeting will take place in early April, 2012 in Detroit. One hoped-for outcome of this meeting will be an effort by all of the Salesian organizations to gather their people at the first ever SALESIAN CONVENTION to be held in St. Louis on November 2-4, 2012 (you can put this date on your calendar). This CONVENTION, an expansion of the 29 previous Salesian Conferences, will hopefully draw both new and old followers of Salesian Spirituality. Please pray for our success at the leadership meeting, and consider the possibility of coming to the CONVENTION.

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Mission Statement

The mission of the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales of the Toledo-Detroit Province is to "Live Jesus" according to Salesian spirituality in our personal and communal lives and to share this spirituality with the People of God.

Bondings

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 in Jesus Christ and Salesian spirituality.

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FR. LOUIS BRISSON AND SALESIAN EDUCATION

Adapted from an article by Fr. William A. Guerin, OSFS

Throughout his chapters and retreats, Father Brisson continually repeats that “the Oblate (Salesian) method of education is exactly the same as that of Our Lord.” It is not the authoritative method whereby teachers command and at once make themselves heard and obeyed. On the contrary, Jesus whose method Father Brisson followed, never posed as that type of Master, whether he was dealing with his apostles or with the great crowds that followed him. Jesus used the method of persuasion, taking people where they were and for what they were worth. Christ, our model, having in himself the fullness of the Godhead, lowered himself to the level of his listeners, but he did not become so familiar as to lose their respect.

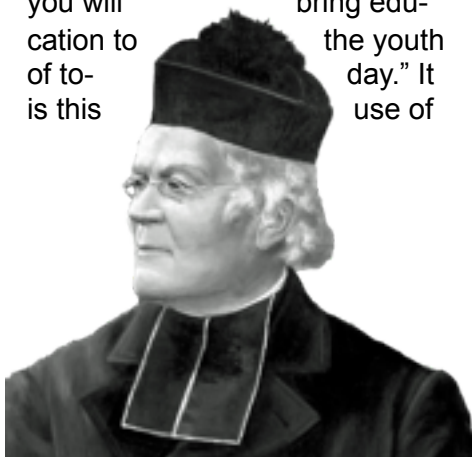
In putting this method into practice Father Brisson employed what he called “*helps*.” He considered these three to be the most important: *respect for the child, good example, and prayer for one’s students.*

According to Father Brisson, if a Salesian educator wishes to succeed, he must permeate himself with the spirit of Saint Francis de Sales on the subject of youth. “The capital point of this doctrine,” says Father Brisson “is respect for the child.” *What makes a man is the interior, and consequently it is the*

interior that the educator must reach. Respect for the soul of the child rules out exacting obedience by force, since such obedience is purely exterior. This principle of respect for the child demands that because the student has a soul which is dear to Our Lord and for which the teacher is in some way responsible, the Salesian teacher must treat him with the greatest delicacy, never making fun or ridiculing him “for it is not the will of your Father in heaven that a single one of these little ones should perish.”

“Words are only words.” The phrase keeps appearing in Fr. Brisson’s writings. He felt that what makes a lasting impression on the students is not so much what the teacher tells them in the classroom as his devotion, his kindness, his spirit of piety. It is this good example which constitutes the lasting education of youth. This is the second help emphasized by Father Brisson.

In stressing the importance of prayer for one’s students, Father Brisson quotes the words of Pius IX who said: “You must live by prayer; this is the way in which you will bring education to the youth of today.” It is the use of



prayer for the student which gives the distinctive quality to our founder’s method of education. To understand how important prayer is for the student, Father Brisson would have the teacher recall the incident in the Gospel of the boy possessed by the devil that the apostles could not cure. When they asked Our Lord the reason for their failure, He said, “This kind can be cured only by prayer and fasting.”

At Faneuil Hall in Boston in 1852, Daniel Webster had this to say:

“If we work upon marble, it will perish. If we work upon brass, time will efface it. If we rear temples, they will crumble to dust. But if we work upon men’s immortal minds, if we imbue them with high principles, with the just fear of God and love of their fellow men, we engrave on those tablets something which no time can efface, and which will brighten and brighten to all eternity.”

Herein lies the greatness of Father Brisson in his work with youth: his realization of the privilege of being God’s instrument in bringing truth even to the least of humankind. And this made of Fr. Brisson a sculptor of a special type. The material upon which he worked was the immortal human soul and by means of his educational method or “*helps*” he imbued them with the high principles of love of God and neighbor, so that he engraved on these tablets something which no time can efface and which to his glory will brighten and brighten to all eternity.



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Favorite Salesian Sayings

“Every morning, before doing anything else, you must beg God to give you gentleness of spirit, so necessary for souls pledged to his service, and resolve for your part to exercise it particularly toward those persons to whom you owe the most. If you do this, you will be very happy because God will live in the center of your heart which will remain totally at peace. If, however, it happens that you fail in this matter, do not lose heart but immediately step back into line, just as if you had never fallen.” – St. Francis

What attracted me so much to Salesian spirituality is gentleness. From hearing that famous motto set to music, “You are strong when you’re gentle and gentle when you’re strong,” sung by Fr. Tom Helfrich at Camp De Sales back in 1994, I have desired to somehow attain that virtue. I now make this request as part of my morning prayer – and St. Francis is right: peace follows.

– Karen Stein, Daughter of St. Francis de Sales, Ann Arbor, MI

“May my love unceasingly offer something to my divine Jesus.” – St. Léonie Aviat

Mother Frances de Sales Aviat, foundress of the Oblate Sisters of St. Francis de Sales, repeatedly offered this prayer. Her life of union with God inspires us to continuously offer our day, our prayers, our work and suffering to our divine Jesus. Thus our life will be one of constant union and praise.

– Sr. Mary Bertha, OSFS, Childs, MD

Please send us one or more Salesian Sayings and tell us what inspires you about them: bondings@oblates.us

Fr. Geoff Rose, OSFS & the Lingap Center

I have been working with the Lingap Center, an orphanage in the Philippines. A Jackson man named John Drake left his dream job at a major energy company to build it and essentially run it from the other side of the world. (The story of how this transpired is an amazing example of discovering God in life's events—very Salesian!) John and I often speak of the reality that there are “no coincidences.” How we met, and the ways in which I have been blessed to help these children, is certainly no coincidence. While foreign mission work has always been close to my heart, my experiences with the Lingap Center have been more than I can put into words. I guess that is how it goes with powerful experiences of God; words are insufficient. I was fundraising for the Lingap Center for a couple of years before I made my first visit. Having led a number of short-term mission experiences in Jamaica, I thought I fully understood what I was about to experience. However, I was not leading this experience. I was able to just be present to the children, the staff, and the people of the community. Even though language was a bit of a barrier, we shared many laughs, songs, and our faith. They reminded me that I am perfectly loved by God as they showed their love for me. And their witness to simplicity in life really challenges me, as someone who has vowed poverty.

I have returned three times to the Lingap Center since that first visit. I have given a few retreats to the Lingap staff, with a healthy dose of Salesian spirituality, of course. I have also come to know a few government officials as well. (No surprise for a “recovering politician!”) But it is the children themselves that compel me to continue to support this ministry.

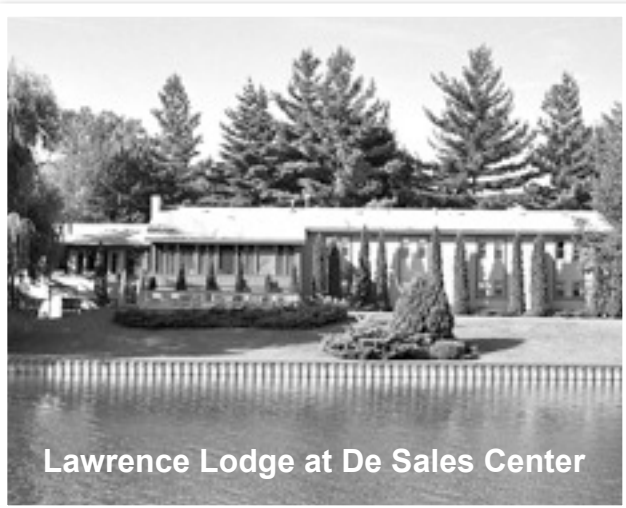
When I was preparing for ordination, I picked a verse of Scripture to serve as a theme. I spent a lot of time praying about it, and one verse really jumped out to me. “I shall be a father unto him, and he shall be a son unto me.” (2 Samuel 7:14) As someone who lost his father when I was young, I saw it as recognition that I am never an orphan. In the last several years, I have come to see that the verse isn't just about me being the son, but also that I am called to be a father too. I have been blessed with so many opportunities to do that in ministry, and in a very special way with the children of the Lingap Center.

For more information about the Center, go to: www.lingapcenter.org.

Below: Fr. Geoff receives complimentary haircut from the orphanage barbers.



What happened to... Fr. Jim McHugh, OSFS



Lawrence Lodge at De Sales Center

I have been in Jackson, MI since April 1, 2011 (an auspicious date to arrive!) and moved into our community here. We are five in the house these days---Fr. Richard McLernan who taught with me in Salt Lake City, Bro. John Bailey who cooked in the kitchen at Judge Memorial in the 1970s, Fr. John Lindsay who is helping me in the kitchen here in the community these days, and Fr. Geoff Rose who is the Campus Minister at Lumen Christi in Jackson.

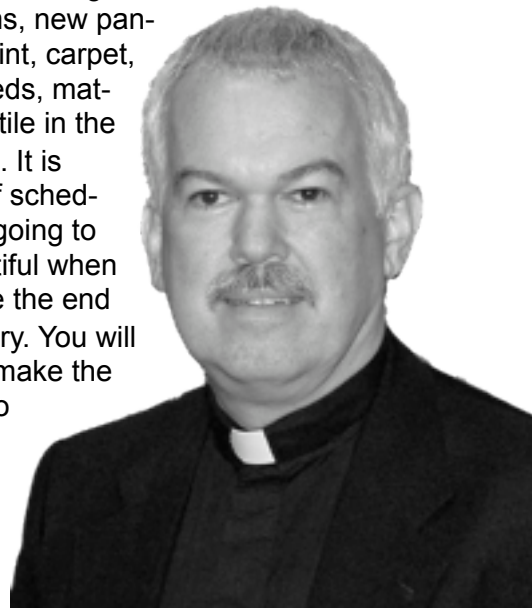
We had our Assembly the last week of June in Detroit and elected Fr. Ken McKenna our new Provincial. He had been the Novice Master for the last twenty years and was also the Director of Camp De Sales. Guess who got to take over for him!

I am settling into my new job as Director of Camp De Sales and De Sales Center in Brooklyn, MI. (Sorry, it is not New York! For you NASCAR fans we are very, very close to the Michi-

gan International Speedway. When they are racing, you can hear the engines roar let me tell you!!) It really is a beautiful place and I'm happy so many different groups are using it. We have all sorts of retreats, reunions, workshops, etc. and then we have summer programs with the Holley Institute that involves deaf children and their families. We even have branched out a bit and are doing a few things for blind children and their families in the summer also.

If you want to see a bit of what I am responsible for, go to our web page www.desales.org and you can see what a beautiful place it is. It's a lot of work dealing with all the groups who come every week. I had no idea what I was getting into, but Fr. Ken has been so kind teaching me as we go along.

Right now we are remodeling Lawrence Lodge---redoing all the bedrooms, new paneling, paint, carpet, lights, beds, mattresses, tile in the hallways. It is ahead of schedule and going to be beautiful when it is done the end of January. You will have to make the trip out to see all the new improvements.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY

On behalf of the Toledo-Detroit Province, thank you for your generous response to our annual appeal. If anyone lost the letter but would still like to contribute, please send a check to the return address on the back, or donate online at www.oblates.us.

God bless you, and again, thank you. – Fr. Ken McKenna, OSFS, Provincial