



BONDINGS

THE QUARTERLY OBLATE MAGAZINE

[V+] | OBLATES OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES | TOLEDO-DETROIT PROVINCE

Spring 2013

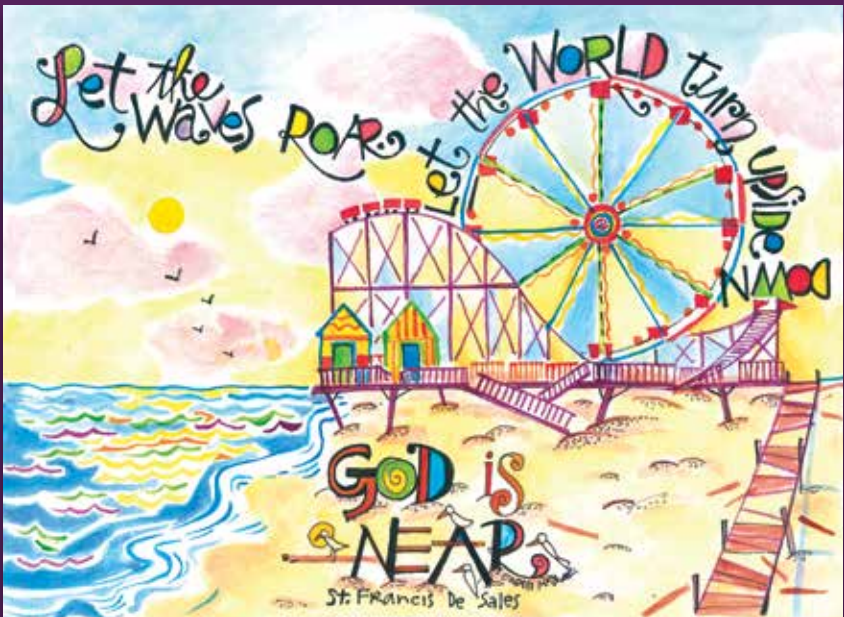


Illustration by Brother Mickey McGrath, OSFS

CELEBRATING THE EASTER SEASON



HAPPY EASTER!

Easter is the very center of our faith. We wish you the rich blessings of this holy season in abundance.

The Church begins a new phase of its life as Pope Francis was chosen to be its leader. We pray for blessings on him and the gifts of wisdom and courage from the Holy Spirit.



Our cover is an illustration from Oblate Brother Mickey McGrath which he did after Superstorm Sandy hit the East Coast, including Mickey's home state of N.J., last year.

The optimism of the quote from Francis expresses the message of Easter as well: Even in the worst calamity, God's love continues to surround us. Good Friday leads ineluctably to Easter Sunday.

Brother Mickey came to Deerfield, Mich. in January and addressed the assembled Oblates as we celebrated Francis de Sales' feast day. He spoke of the great social activist Dorothy Day and her connections to De Sales. The article on pages 4-5 gives some of the ideas he presented.

We wish rich blessings on you and your family as nature brings life and color back to the earth and the Risen One grants new life to each of us spiritually.

EASTER BLESSINGS TO ALL!

- Editorial Staff

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. *Bondings* is free of charge to anyone on request. Send your name and address (or that of a friend) to the Provincial Office or call 419.724.9851.

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THE OBLATE SEAL

On the cover of each *Bondings* and throughout each issue, we feature the image of the Oblate Seal (which can be called a shield, a crest and other names). The elements are not self-explanatory, so we include this short article of explanation.

At the top of the image is the rising sun, an ancient symbol of resurrection. The sun each day is the source of light and life, as Jesus is for us. Francis suggests in his spiritual rule, the Directory, that an appropriate thought each morning is: "Sleep is the image of death and awakening that of the resurrection."

The letters "V+J" are an abbreviation for "Vive Jésus!" which is the motto Francis wrote at the top of letters and other writings. It translates as "Live Jesus!" It capsulizes Francis' advice to live like Jesus, to live for him, to live with him at our side as Companion on the Journey.

On the left side of the shield is a branch from an orange tree. In 1882, Father John Simon (later Bishop Simon) and two other Oblates went to the Orange River area of South Africa to become missionaries. Pope Leo XIII asked

Father Brisson to have the Oblates take on mission work.

On the right side is an olive branch symbolizing the peace that the Risen Savior brings. "Peace be with you" was his first greeting to the disciples (Jn. 20:19) after the crucifixion.

Finally, the motto *Tenui nec dimittam* translates, "I have held (him) and I will not let go." It comes from the Song of Songs (3:4), Francis' favorite book in the Hebrew scriptures. He chose this as his episcopal motto in 1602 when he became bishop of Geneva. It refers to Jesus, the Divine Lover.

The striking image of the seal dates back at least to the 1888 *Annales Salésiennes*. The name of the designer has been lost, but the powerful image remains. It sums up Salesian spirituality and reminds us of the great message of Easter: Hold on to the Risen Savior. Never let go and all will be well.



AN INTERVIEW WITH BROTHER MICKEY McGRATH, OSFS

Would you describe your ministry in Camden, N.J.?

This is my home base. It's where my studio is located and where I do the artwork. I'm on the road a great deal of the time, however, giving retreats and talks where I use my art as the basis of the presentations.

When did your love affair with Dorothy Day begin?

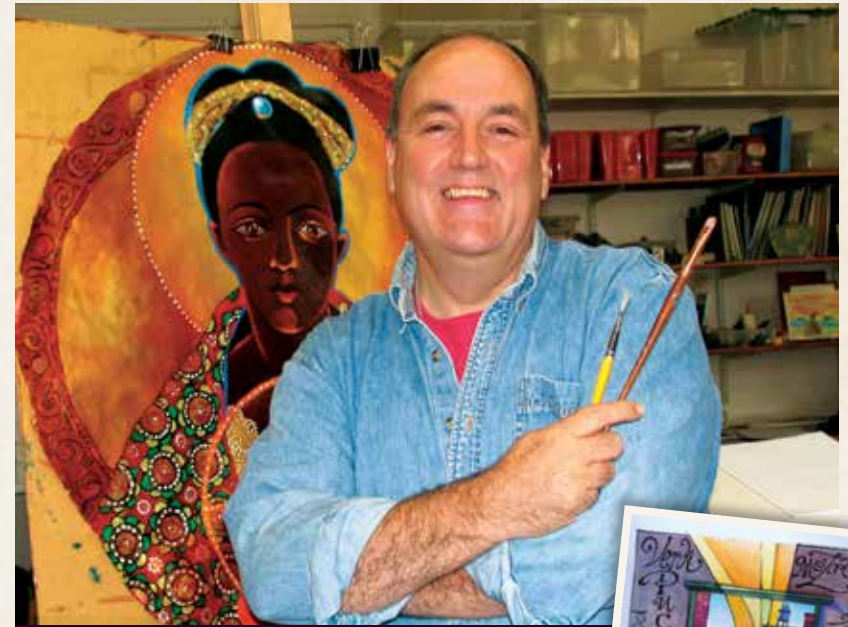
I've known about Dorothy Day from my earliest years. But it was a wonderful book, *The Life You Save May Be Your Own*, that enkindled my deep love for her. I admire her prophetic social work with the Catholic Worker and her dedication to social justice. But I also deeply admire her love of beauty. She was an avid reader, the great Russian writers being her favorites. She never missed the Metropolitan Opera broadcasts on Saturday afternoons and even said that if she came back again, she'd like to be one of the great Wagnerian heroines like Brunnhilde! One of her favorite quotes was from Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*: "Beauty will save the world."

What are Dorothy Day's connections to St. Francis de Sales?

She found Francis' advice about joining a life of contemplation with the active life exactly what she needed in her very active struggle for social justice. She needed help in remaining connected to God and Francis provided this. She found Francis' example of being the first religious pamphleteer helpful. In the Chablais in the 1590s, when he couldn't speak with the Calvinists, he left pamphlets around with theological questions answered. Dorothy found this a useful model when she founded the Catholic Worker newspaper. She even used him in practical situations, remarking about the visits of a very trying friend: "I always have to re-read Francis' chapters on gentleness and patience after these visits!"

You put a great deal of emphasis on beauty in your ministry. Your new book is called *Saved By Beauty*. What is the importance of beauty to the spiritual life?

God is the author of all beauty. Living in God's presence means placing ourselves in an environment of beauty. Francis de Sales once said, "We pray best before beauty." Francis began his great *Treatise on the Love of God* with an entire chapter on beauty. Even the reality of



Brother Mickey McGrath, OSFS

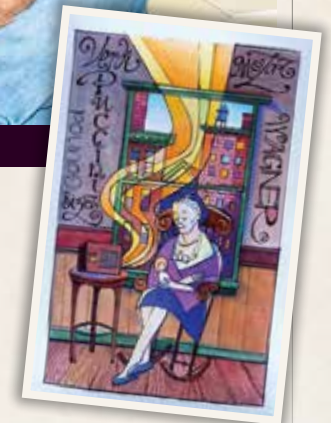
violence and ugliness can be transformed into beauty. Consider the wonderful images of the cross through the centuries.

Any additional comments?

Following up on the comments on beauty, I find living in Camden has expanded my ideas about beauty. There is so much poverty and crime here, but there also is extraordinary beauty. Beauty is important because it gives us hope and allows us to go on living even in difficult circumstances. I love the quote in Romans about creation groaning and the Holy Spirit helping us to pray. Art and beauty are the ways the Spirit helps me to pray and grow.

Brother Michael O'Neill McGrath, OSFS (better known as Brother Mickey) presents a visual journey with Dorothy Day in his new book, *Saved by Beauty*, published by World Library Publications (2012). It is available from: Bee Still Studios, P.O. Box 10, Childs, MD 21916-0010. Phone: 410.398.3057.

*Image of Dorothy Day above immersed in music is from *Saved By Beauty*, used with permission, World Library Publications.





ST. FRANCIS DE SALES CHOSE ME!

by Terri Mudd

I didn't choose St. Francis, he chose me! The thought suddenly dawned on me as we were discussing how we came under the influence of the gentle saint from Annecy.

This gentle guidance began when I first met my Aunt Francis – that is not a spelling error. Aunt Francis always spelled her name with an “I.” I asked her why she didn't use the feminine version. She shared the story of St. Francis de Sales. Aunt Francis died about the time I graduated from high school. I used my uncle's gift to purchase a copy of *Introduction to a Devout Life*.

I attended Immaculate Heart College in Los Angeles. During that time, I was in an environment that gave me opportunity to consider vocation, to choose carefully and prayerfully. I graduated, moved to another state, married and had children – but always maintained an image of my vocation, not only to my home and family, but also my community and to those around me.

My marriage is critical to the point that St. Francis was waiting to catch me in the web of Divine Love. Jim, the man of my dreams and of my life, graduated from Northeast Catholic, an Oblate school in Philadelphia. He was sustained by Oblates through his formative years.

We moved to a community

just outside Niagara Falls, N.Y., called Lewiston. It took only hours for us to learn that the Oblates, the same group that taught Jim, had a Scholasticate nearby. We quickly made friends with everyone at De Chantal Hall, the students attending Niagara University and their leaders. Priests from the local Oblate high school often said Mass at our parish. Since our home was just across the street from the church, we often found ourselves entertaining a visiting Oblate between the 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. Masses.

The most memorable moment for me was our first visit to De Chantal Hall. We walked into the chapel and attended the service. When we came out, Jim was visibly moved. He said, “Terri, did you see the inscription on the overhang at the altar?” Of course I had. No surprise, it said: “Vive Jésus.” Jim told me he'd grown up with that phrase all around him and never realized the meaning until that night, years after he and I had been moved and influenced by Young Christian Students and the Christian Family movement.

It took the combination of his Salesian background and my Catholic Action background to realize how that phrase vitalized our lives.

Because of that wonderful wedding of gifts, we were able to make a family life of the gifts of the Spirit, growing in many ways of grace. That growth was aided by Father Joe Power, who returned to Lewiston, his hometown, after studies in France and Switzerland. Joe was no stranger to my Catholic Action approach to life and prayer. But he added the gentleness and grace, the result of Salesian training. Together with our family, Joe addressed the farm worker movement through the Migrant Ministry, and the environment when Love Canal became a known menace to our neighbors. Joe was with us when we added the spiritual sensitivity of Jean Vanier and the



Terri Mudd and her husband, Jim.

L'Arche movement that reaches out to the population least able to stand alone.

Salesian study, reading and association have supported us in each step of our development. When Jim died, we had Oblates near us to extend the love and support needed. And today, as I face the problems of growing older, I rely even more on words from St. Francis: “Be who you are and be that well.”

DEACON ORDINATION



January 2013: Newly ordained Oblate Deacons Joe Newman (left), Ed Ogdon (middle) and Brian Zumrum (right) at St. John Neumann Church, Reston, Va.



December 2012: Oblate Deacon Rudi Schwarzkopf was ordained at St. Pius X Church in Toledo, OH.



FRANCIS MEETS FRANCIS IN SYLVANIA, OHIO

TWO MEN NAMED FRANCIS, SEPARATED BY FOUR CENTURIES, SEE THEIR FOLLOWERS CONNECTED TODAY AT A NURSING HOME.

The Sisters of St. Francis of Sylvania, Ohio, are a group of 170 vowed religious women founded in Toledo in 1916. They originally built Rosary Care Center (RCC), a nursing home to take care of their own aging members. When the opportunity came, they licensed the facility to provide services to any vowed religious eligible for Medicare and Medicaid.

Three Oblates now reside in RCC. Father Tom O'Neill can often be seen sitting on the swing outside the entrance to the building, regardless of the weather. He is pleasant to all who stop to talk to him and takes part in many of the activities that are offered. Father Ed Canavan is known for his love of reading, meeting the librarian from the bookmobile that comes weekly from the public library. Brother John Bailey is the most recent Oblate to call RCC home. He is always thankful for the help he receives.

The Sisters are pleased to be able to offer the services of their nursing home to the Oblates. In return, the Oblates have assisted

in various ways. Their gentlemanly ways and deep spirituality provide inspiration to all who meet them. When Father Jim Bradley was alive and resided there, he regularly presided at Mass and administered the Sacrament of the Sick to residents who requested it. After his death, the Oblates have supplied presiders at the daily RCC chapel Mass. The various Oblates are known for homilies that are inspirational, to the point, and focused on the situation of the aging residents.

Six times a year, these Oblates come to administer the sacraments of the sick and of reconciliation. The residents of RCC are looking forward to a four-day



Sister Nancy Surma OSF with Oblate Brother John Bailey (center) and Oblate Fathers Ed Canavan (left) and Tom O'Neill (right).

retreat that Father Thomas Landgraff will present in June. Father David Whalen serves on the RCC Board of Trustees, helping provide direction and expertise to the executive director and her staff. In addition, for several years Father Marty Lukas has been a part of the campus ministry team at Lourdes University, a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of St. Francis. He has provided a supportive presence at many university activities.

Francis of Assisi and Francis de Sales would be pleased to see such mutual support and cooperation. Both saints had an overwhelming sense of God's goodness and love. That com-

“FRANCIS OF ASSISI AND FRANCIS DE SALES WOULD BE PLEASED TO SEE SUCH MUTUAL SUPPORT AND CO-OPERATION. BOTH SAINTS HAD AN OVERWHELMING SENSE OF GOD'S GOODNESS AND LOVE. THAT COMMON REALIZATION IS MADE CONCRETE TODAY IN A NURSING HOME IN SYLVANIA, OHIO.”

mon realization is made concrete today in a nursing home in Sylvania, Ohio.

Sister Nancy Surma, OSF,
Senior Vice President, Mission Integration
Sylvania Franciscan Health



FRANCIS DE SALES: LIFE AND SPIRIT

BY FATHER JOSEPH BOENZI, SDB

Book Review by Father Roland Calvert, OSFS

This is a remarkable compendium of Salesian material, the result of Father Boenzi's extensive scholarship on Francis. He has given innumerable retreats, talks and classes on Francis and his spirituality; this book is a valuable summation of his studies.



Father Boenzi begins with a review of Francis' life. He has many original comments and insights. One of the salient early points is that Francis was a Savoyard and not a Frenchman. Francis wrote in the French language, but the Duchy of Savoy was quite separate from France and often in conflict with it.

The capital of Savoy was Turin, which eventually became part of Italy. Francis spoke Italian fluently and studied at the University of Padua, as well as Paris. So he is a Savoyard and a reflection of the complex culture that was found in that duchy.

A particularly valuable section of the book is a description of all the major publications of Francis and some of his lesser known works. One learns much about Francis in his attitude toward these

publications. In 1600, for example, he published *The Defense of the Holy Cross of Our Savior Jesus Christ*. In 1613, a pirated edition with inflated language and a new title (*Pantology*) appeared. Francis protested: "Such boastful title pages horrify me." He cared very much about how his works were presented to the public. It is fitting that he's the patron of writers.

Father Boenzi has additional sections on St. Jane de Chantal and her writings. He also examines the historical sources of Francis' spirituality and reflects on Francis as a theologian.

Francis de Sales: Life and Spirit is a rich treasury of Salesian material that will benefit those advanced in their knowledge as well as neophytes. We are indebted to the author for this beautiful distillation of his extensive studies.

SALESIAN RELICS BLESSED AT ST. MARY'S CHURCH

Bishop Earl Boyea, the bishop of Lansing, Mich., presided at a Mass in honor of St. Francis de Sales in late January at St. Mary's Church in Adrian, Mich. During the Mass he blessed four relics that will be placed in the altar of the church.

Oblate Father Shaun Lowery, parochial administrator at St. Mary's, said that the event was part of the Year of Faith celebration and also was meant to honor the 35th anniversary this year of Oblates pastoring St. Mary's Church.

Four relics were included. Two of them (St. Jane and St. Margaret Mary) were donated by Father Mike Newman, OSFS. They had been given to him by a friend. Father Lowery contacted the Ob-

late Sisters in Troyes, France, asking for a relic of newly beatified Father Louis Brisson, the founder of the Oblates. They sent some of his hair. He also contacted the Visitation Sisters in Tyringham, England, and they sent a relic of St. Francis de Sales.

Relics are a way of honoring the memory of holy men and women. The honor accorded them is a prayer to God that we might have some of their goodness and virtue.



SALESIAN SAYING

"I tell you again on the part of God that you are too introspective. Do not put yourself in any more pain regarding your pain. Speak of it neither to God nor within yourself. Never reflect on it or think how to express yourself about it to anyone whatsoever, and make no examination on it. Hide your pain from yourself and look to God as if you did not feel it. If you speak to God, let it be of God and not of your trouble."

- St. Jane de Chantal (from *A Simple Life: Wisdom from Jane Frances de Chantal*, Kathryn Hermes, FSP, ed., Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2011.)

St. Jane was both challenged and fascinated by the clear directive in the Letter to the Hebrews, "Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus." Her words to one of the first Mothers of the Visitation offer some wise, practical advice for getting away from self-preoccupation. This builds on a quote from Francis de Sales: "Go to God without reflecting on your trouble." - Father Tom Helfrich, OSFS, Adrian, Mich.



BOOK AVAILABLE FROM: DE SALES RESOURCES & MINISTRIES, INC.,
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