



BONDINGS

THE QUARTERLY OBLATE MAGAZINE

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

Winter 2014



St. Léonie Aviat, OSFS: Feast day January 10



JANUARY FEASTS

Jan. 10 is the feast day of St. Léonie Aviat, OSFS (known in religious life as Sister Frances de Sales Aviat). This Jan. 10 also is the 100th anniversary of St. Léonie's death in Perugia, Italy. She had been forced to flee there after the anti-clerical persecution in France. Our lead article honors this anniversary and also the Oblate Sisters of St. Francis de Sales, the congregation Mother Aviat co-founded.

We feature as well an article on the Daughters of St. Francis de Sales, a group of lay women who do important work in living and spreading the spirituality of the bishop of Geneva.

Jan. 24 is the feast day of Francis de Sales. We invite you to read some of Francis' extensive writings. His best known book is the *Introduction to the Devout Life*, now more than 400 years old and still one of the most popular spiritual guides.

Francis wrote: "Always keep by your side some good book of devotion ... read a little every day as though it were a letter from the saints in heaven to guide and encourage you on your way there."

In the *Introduction*, Francis develops at length his central theme: *Live Jesus! Live like Jesus, for Jesus and with Jesus at your side.* St. Léonie Aviat and St. Francis de Sales, pray for us.

— Editorial Staff



Cover Image: St. Léonie Aviat, OSFS, Centenary of Death. Used with permission from the Stan Family.

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.

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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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Oldest member of the T-D Oblates:
Brother Fred Chiappone, OSFS, age 94.



Youngest member of the T-D Oblates:
Postulant Jordan Gorzalski, age 22.

MESSAGE FROM FATHER KEN MCKENNA, OSFS PROVINCIAL OF THE TOLEDO-DETROIT PROVINCE

*It shall come to pass ... your old men will dream dreams,
your young men will see visions." (Joel 3:1; Acts 2:17)*

I am not sure our youngest members see visions, but they certainly have a vision for the Oblates, the Church and their ministry in the world today. I do know that our old men dream dreams – whether awake or asleep – dreams for a better future and a kinder world.

Thank you for supporting the Oblate mission through your prayers, friendship and gifts. A special thank you to all who donated or will donate to our annual appeal. Your generosity has a direct impact on both our younger men in college and our older men in assisted living.

When I entered the Oblates, the favorite Salesian quote was: "Be patient with everyone, but above all with yourself; I mean, don't be disturbed about your imperfections, and always have the courage

to pick yourself up after a fall."

The quote I most often hear now is: "Let us be who we are and be that well in order to bring honor to the Great Artist whose handiwork we are."

I love both quotes. Great wisdom for young and old alike. Aging gives us time to become our best selves. The quotes are two sides of the same coin. Becoming fully alive and free takes time. We make mistakes. We need an abundance of patience and perseverance. St. Francis encourages us to never lose the vision, never abandon the dream. We are made by Greatness for greatness, by Love for love. God raises up the lowly and calls us to himself. If we but let him, he will bring the good work begun in us to completion in Jesus Christ our Lord!

To donate to the Oblates, please go to www.oblates.us and click "T-D Annual Appeal"



ST. LÉONIE AVIAT, OSFS AT 100 YEARS

by Sister Susan Louise Eder, OSFS

September 16, 1844 seemed like any other day, but it was destined to be known as the birth date of a saint! For, on that day, Léonie Aviat was born in Sezanne, in the region of Champagne, France. She attended the Visitation School in Troyes, where Mother Marie de Sales Chappuis and Father Louis Brisson exerted a profound influence on her. It was there that she was being formed for her life's mission: the foundation of a congregation committed to Salesian spirituality and to the evangelization of young women.

In 1866 large industrial concerns were attracting an underpaid labor force to cities like Troyes, where fabric mills drew young girls from the countryside. In 1858, Father Louis Brisson opened residential and recreational centers for these young ladies. To insure their stability, he established the Oblate Sisters of St. Francis de Sales to direct this important work. He found in Léonie Aviat an incomparable co-worker and an ardent apostle like himself. He entrusted both this work and the new community to her care and direction.

Léonie was affected by the plight of young factory workers and felt called to minister to them. The congregation was strongly influenced by the Visitation Sisters and placed itself under the patronage of St. Francis de Sales, identifying completely with the

spirituality and the educational principles of the holy bishop of Geneva. Under Léonie's guidance, the community grew in numbers, the social apostolate flourished and girls' schools were opened. In Paris, the first residence for young ladies was started, an establishment Mother Aviat directed for eight years. Thus, the apostolate of the Oblate Sisters extended to the different classes of society and to diverse forms of education.

After a period of difficulty through which so many foundresses must live, St. Léonie Aviat guided her sisters through the religious persecution in her native France and developed the works of the congregation in Europe, South America and Africa. When the anti-clerical French government dissolved the congregation, Mother Aviat and the sisters worked to maintain the establish-



Some of St. Léonie Aviat's North American daughters.

ments that could be continued in France, while transferring the Motherhouse to Perugia, Italy, guaranteeing its future.

On January 10, 1914 she died in Perugia, after entrusting herself totally to God. To her last breath, she remained faithful to the resolution she had taken at the time of her profession: "To forget myself entirely." To her daughters and all those who would come to know of her, she left for all time this very Salesian precept: "Let us work for the happiness of others." She was beatified in 1992 and canonized on November 25, 2001.

After her death, the congregation opened a foundation in the United States where the miracle needed for her canonization took place. The sisters staff two schools



Sr. Frances Carol, OSFS leads her class in the Rosary.

in America: Mount Aviat Academy in Childs, Md., and Holy Cross Academy in Fredericksburg, Va. One of the sisters serves on the faculty of DeSales University.

After 100 years, this example of selfless love endures. May we, like St. Léonie, see the needs around us and reach out so that we may "work for the happiness of others."



Daughters of St. Francis de Sales 2013 Retreat – Camp de Sales, Brooklyn Mich.

THE DAUGHTERS OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

By Wendy Kennedy

As a busy mother of seven, I always have struggled with finding a way to find support for my faith within my often chaotic life. I have tried many things: charismatic prayer groups, Bible studies, parish ministries, devotions, even a Third Order. Nothing “fit.” I felt the discouragement of always falling short of an ideal that seemed impossible for me. Then a dear friend introduced me to the very practical spirituality of De Sales and eventually to the Daughters of St. Francis de Sales. ... and my spiritual life has not been the same! What I thought was “just another study group” was an actual community – a spiritual family. From St. Francis de Sales, I learned practical tools for living a truly Christian life in my messy world. I still miss meetings when I’m needed at home, skip formal prayer when a kid misses the bus or can’t come to my study group when I’m called in to work. But rather than seeing it as failure, the daughters continually remind me that “State of Life comes first.” My daily life is my prayer, my life of holiness. I am called to be who I am, to live Jesus right where I am.

How can I sum up the Daughters of St. Francis de Sales? We are an international association of the

faithful, living a common spirituality and purpose – a life of love. The daughters are unique in that

we started as a lay organization, which later led to the formation of a religious order of missionaries. The daughters are a spiritual family (composed of both lay and religious branches) created in order to help women pursue holiness within their own environment and “state of life,” according to the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales. The daughters have a special emphasis on the bond of love, devotion to the Holy Spirit and the Blessed Mother.

Becoming a daughter is an amazing journey! Each daughter is assigned a companion, a life-long spiritual friend and mentor in the association, who supports her as she prays and studies. All the daughters follow a common formation program made up of a three-month aspirancy of prayerful discernment, then two years of studies of probations (topical studies based on the love of God, Christian virtues and Salesian spirituality). After initial formation, the daughter makes a formal act of consecration. Not a vow, consecration



Father Ken McKenna, OSFS celebrates the consecration of four daughters, 2013.

is a public promise to God to strive for holiness as it is found in the Gospels, in the spirit of St. Francis de Sales, and within our state of life and vocation. Our local group just celebrated four consecrations! For those who desire to go deeper after consecration, there is continuing formation and companion training available through online programs.

Our local group was brought to Monroe, Mich. in 2001 by Catherine Durkin-Horan. It has grown to 31 members, bringing together women from Monroe, Dexter, Highland, Ann Arbor, Temperance, (all in Michigan) and northern Ohio. We meet once a month, with an annual weekend retreat and annual day of reflection together. A unique distinction of our local group is our Salesian teams – subgroups that work together on common work and outreach: charity sewing, communications, homebound visits, hospitality, music, missions, newsletter and website. This year, we are providing supplies for a local food bank. Daughters from our group also run Salesian Perspectives groups in order to introduce others to Salesian spirituality. We stay connected to our wider community through the regional directress of our geographic zone, plus *The Salesian Bond*, a bi-monthly journal of the association. And, of course, we benefit from the wisdom and spiritual friendship we have with the Oblate priests who guide us!



Colonel Dave Kenehan, OSFS

COLONEL DAVID KENEHAN, OBLATE PRIEST AND CHAPLAIN

by Father Tom Helfrich, OSFS

Ever the adventurer, Dave Kenehan organized a two-car, one-trailer caravan from Jackson, Mich. to Salt Lake City, Utah soon after his ordination in 1974, a creative way to get to his new ministry. I can still see him standing on the shoulder of the highway getting ready to hitchhike north, back to SLC after our swing through southern Utah and Las Vegas, as the remaining five of us turned east and headed for home. Dave eventually became the last Oblate principal of Judge Memorial, the high school in Salt Lake City that the Oblates staffed for many years. And no one loved the mountains or the great students he worked with more than he.

A few years later, that spirit of adventure led him to surprise many of us as he followed in his own father's and brother's footsteps to be commissioned in the Army. He faced the bitter reality of combat in Kuwait, bringing the solace of

the sacraments and the healing message of the Gospel to the men and women who fought for life and encountered death close at hand. From Texas to Alaska, from Korea through Europe to Washington, D.C., Dave has brought the gift of

the Gospel to military personnel, never far from his Oblate brothers.

I'm only one of a number of Oblates who have been blessed by his invitations to join him in his ministry, and, God knows, we're all the better for it. I think I was the third in a string of Oblates to join Dave in Seoul, South Korea to lead a program for Catholic military chaplains in the Pacific theater in 1998. Dave was a long, long way from home, but ever eager to bring other Oblates his way to share in his work with military personnel. They were just as far from home, often with few connections to loved ones. It was sobering to travel north one day to the intensely fortified border with North Korea, where bunkers and fortifications stand ever ready for an attack.

What an experience it was in 2004 to join him at Carlisle Barracks in Pennsylvania, the oldest Army post in the country, to conduct a Salesian parish retreat there. This is the same Carlisle made famous by Jim Thorpe, the standout athlete from the Indian school on the base. It was heartbreaking to walk through the school cemetery and pray at the graves of dozens of young Indians who very likely died of loneliness so far from the land and families they loved.

Dave faced his mandatory retirement date in 2007 while serving as the command chaplain in Belgium at SHAPE/NATO, but was imme-



Father Dave with some of the Oblates who have assisted him in his ministry at Fort Myer.

diately recalled with no break in service because of the shortage of priests. He returned to the States and, in 2008, I spent time with him at Fort Myer in Arlington, Va., once again bringing the Salesian message to his military parish through a Lenten program with Joanne Kinney from De Sales Ministries and Resources. Once again a cemetery, the vast military cemetery at Arlington, was a significant part of the landscape. But where the dead are remembered, Dave continues to call us all to life. One of his parishioners is the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

And in nearby Washington, our Oblate seminarians study theology preparing for their own adventures in proclaiming the Gospel. Leave it to Dave to bring them as teachers of the faith to his current parish. Dave will finally take off his military uniform sometime in 2014, but he has made clear that he always will serve as an Oblate.



HEART TO HEART: A CARDINAL NEWMAN PRAYER BOOK

Book Review by Father Roland Calvert, OSFS

Cardinal Newman, one of the towering Catholic figures of the 19th century, is now properly called Blessed John Henry Newman, since he was beatified in 2010. It is safe to assume that he will become St. John Henry Newman in the near future.

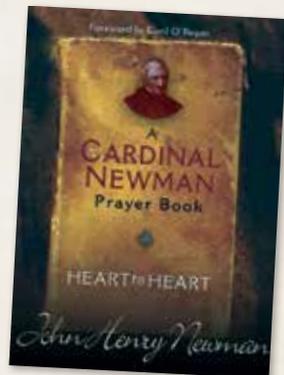
I had the opportunity of being in Birmingham, England about ten years ago and visited the Oratory where Cardinal Newman spent the final years of his life. When one enters his private quarters (carefully and authentically preserved), one sees his small chapel. Above the altar is a portrait of St. Francis de Sales. Newman looked at this portrait each day as he said Mass. He was profoundly influenced by the bishop of Geneva.

Cardinal Newman chose “Heart to Heart” as his episcopal motto. He took it from a letter of Francis. The phrase occurs also in a treatise on preaching and in Book VI of Francis' masterpiece, the *Treatise on the Love of God*.

There is a Salesian spirit that permeates Newman's prayers contained in *Heart to Heart*. In the first section on the Holy Trinity, we read: “Go back a few years, and I simply did not exist ... But Thou art from eternity.” This section reads almost as a paraphrase of the meditation on creation in Part I, Chapter 9 of the *Introduction to the Devout Life*. Other prayers indicate that Newman carefully and frequently read De Sales' writings.

Like the spirituality of Francis, Newman's is profoundly Christo-centric. The cardinal's prayers on the Dying and Rising of Jesus and the Sacred Heart are moving. Newman's approach is incarnational, as was that of De Sales: We look to the human model Jesus gave so we can be true to what is best in our humanity. Newman spells out at length the implications of the Salesian motto, *Live Jesus!*

This is not a book to read cover to cover but to return to daily for spiritual food. It's almost as if one were reading Francis de Sales seen through the prism of another cleric 250 years later who was, like Francis, a man of genius and of deep, loving spirituality.



BOOK AVAILABLE FROM: DE SALES RESOURCES & MINISTRIES, INC.,
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SALESIAN REFLECTION: HOW DO I DISCOVER THE WILL OF GOD?

by Father Tom Landgraff, OSFS

Discernment is a \$50 word that simply means an attempt to discover what God's will is. Francis de Sales tells us that we experience God's will in two different ways.

The first is what he calls the *signified or expressed will of God*. We come to know this in the reading of Scripture and listening to the teaching of the Church.

Second, he speaks of God's *permissive will*. We look for it in the various events of life. In these events, God is communicating with us. The trick is to find out what God is saying.

Let me offer an example from my own life. In 1997 I was assigned to be a part-time associate pastor at St. Pius X Parish in Toledo, Ohio. Later, the pastor resigned. I was asked to fill in as temporary pastor until the province could find a replacement. In the months that followed, I began to notice I really enjoyed this ministry. It began to dawn on me that God might be calling me to become the full-time pastor. It was helpful when two members of the parish independently asked me to apply to do this. With this encouragement, I threw

my hat in the ring and was later named pastor.

Some principles can be drawn from this experience. The first is to pay attention to your emotions. What brings you real joy and fulfillment? The second is to bring the situation to God in prayer: “God, what do you want?” The third is to look for some outside source that could affirm the direction where you think you're being led.

It is fairly easy to discover the expressed will of God. It may be challenging to carry it out or to understand it, but to know the commandments and the Church's teaching is not hard. Knowing God's will in the events of our lives is harder. It requires prayer, listening and, then, more prayer. Hard though it may be, it is worth the effort.

We want to know God's will and to do it because we want to imitate Jesus, our Savior, who came to do not his own will, but the will of his Father. God be praised!





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