



Dear Parishioners,

Praised be Jesus Christ! Each year, I'm amazed at the proximity of both Martin Luther King Jr Day and the Anniversary of Roe-vs-Wade. Both dates though separated by time, point to the timeless Truth, that Life Matters. In fact, it matters a lot. While the blood of MLK Jr in the Lorraine Hotel in Memphis and that of 65+ Million babies legally killed in the USA since 1973 – may suggest something different, the Truth remains: Life matters no matter what. Which raises a question: How do we as Christians communicate that Truth to such a hostile world? May I suggest another date this week which can be a great help to us in doing this. Namely, Friday, January 24th: The Feast of St. Francis DeSales. Here's a thoughtful reflection on him by Matthew Brunson and how Francis shared the Truth in a very hostile world.

Peace, Fr. Rogers

Francis DeSales had a vision for apologetics that was likewise far ahead of his time. As a bishop, despite his aristocratic origins in the nobility of Savoy, he dressed very humbly, very simply. He also took as his own two important mottoes. The first was, **"He who preaches with love, preaches effectively,"** which cuts to the very heart of how he approached his listeners and those he was trying to evangelize. He also had as his episcopal motto in Latin, *Non Excidet*, meaning **"he shall not fail."** The motto was not about himself. It pointed to God; if we trust in God who is love, He will not fail us. And that became one of the great burning mottos for the era. He had already shown it at work in his first years after ordination to the priesthood in 1593 when he had been sent to Chablais to preach among the Calvinists. His mission and sermons lasted for four years and, in the face of great physical danger, hostility, doors slammed in his face and insults hurled at him from every direction, he was largely successful in converting most of the inhabitants.

Francis' method of evangelization was clever, but it was also incredibly genuine. He recognized that the style of the times was to wage a war of rhetoric, a form of apologetics in which you tried to win arguments with those who held a different position from you. It could be effective, but it also posed challenges at times in attracting the uneducated. Francis instead adopted a very different model. It is said that he began simply to preach one on one with the inhabitants of Chablais. What that meant too was that he had to reach out to them, to their hearts.

One of the things that characterized his preaching was that Francis could speak to anyone. He could be understood very clearly by kings and emperors, but also by humble washer women and by farmers. His preaching was clear, profound and utterly riveting. He was reasonable, unafraid to point out error, sin and heresy, but always touching the heart and the mind. He wove Scripture, doctrine, an understanding of the human person and imagery from everyday life into a style of preaching that proved irresistible to those who took the time to listen. And his stealth communications, calm and humble manner, and clever way of appealing to the heart brought many stubborn Calvinists to his preaching and then inevitably to the sacraments and to the Church.

After four years in the Chablais region, he could report without boasting of more than 70,000 conversions. It was said that the Reformers in Geneva raged in frustration when word reached them that there were almost no Protestants to be found in Chablais and that Francis had been responsible for all of it. He proved to the Calvinists his maxim, "Nothing is so strong as gentleness; nothing is so gentle as real strength."

We are in an era in which culture is adamantly opposed to so much of everything that Francis believed, everything that we, as Christians believe. Yet 400 years removed from his death, his method tells us how to reach those who might have never encountered Christ or who might also be in their own minds, thinking themselves to be enemies of Christianity, enemies of the Church. Heart speaks to heart, Francis tells us. May our gentleness be our strength as we too try to speak to the hearts of today and to remind the world of one absolute truth: God is love. St. Francis de Sales, bishop and Doctor of the Church, pray for us.



Winter Bible Study Now Forming

Lectio: Eucharist: Discovering the Mass in the Bible

Dates: February 4 – April 15, 2025 (10 weeks)

Tuesday Evening, 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM

Where: St. Joseph Room

Acclaimed author and teacher Dr. Brant Pitre digs down to the biblical roots of the Eucharist, through its foreshadowing in the miraculous events of the Old Testament, the Gospels, and Apostolic teaching.

"The Lamb of God," "The Bread of Life," "The Body and the Blood of Christ"... these are phrases we know from the Mass. But do we understand what they mean in the greater and deeper context of Scripture and Church teaching? We'll discover firsthand how Christ's Body and Blood are an integral and wondrous part of God's plan for our salvation.

This study from Ascension Press will be held for 10 weeks and will include a combination of video segments, group discussion, and prayer. It will begin on Tuesday, February 4 in the St. Joseph Room or on Zoom. **You have the option to purchase the Individual Participant Workbook via Amazon for \$24.95 at <https://qrco.de/bfgN4B>.**

To register for this study or if you have further questions, please contact Ann Marie Gillinger at amgmag03@gmail.com. You may also register online through the Parish Website or Parish Flocknote.