



My Dear Parishioners,

As we enter the last full week of January 2024, we enter a week loaded with various Saint Days, including that of St. Francis DeSales. I want to point him out not only because of his connection with our parish (i.e. Oblate of St. Francis DeSales) but also because his connection with our times.

We continue to live in troubled times. The discord and division within the Church and the world; the violence and war within neighborhoods and nations, are all painfully real. And Francis DeSales lived in similar times! I share this article with you in the hope that you take hope, ask his intercession, read his writings and follow his example! We live in a time RIFE for Saints. And he can help us in that noble goal.

Peace,

Fr. Rogers

What's to learn from St. Francis DeSales? (2020 article by Elena Attfield)

A time of apostasy, dejection, quarrelling and dwindling religious vocations. There is plenty that we, in 2020, have in common with the 16th-century Church as it responded to the Protestant Reformation. Yet one particular Counter-Reformation saint shows us the fruits of another, quite different response.

Born into a noble family four years after the Council of Trent, St Francis de Sales could look forward to a life of comfort. But while he was still an adolescent, he realised that many around him were suffering the greatest poverty – and one he could not ignore: separation from God. To remedy this, St Francis exchanged comfort for works of mercy. From spiritual counsel to feeding the hungry and, most famously, combating Calvinism, his efforts were arduous. During four years of mission in Chablais, prior to becoming Bishop of Geneva, he is said to have converted 70,000 Calvinists to the Catholic Church (some 50 a day). How, besides grace, was this possible?

While the Counter-Reformation was bearing little fruit and churches were pillaged in anger, St Francis decided that the key to releasing souls from error, thereby binding them back to God, was charity. His response to Calvinist gloom and Catholic despondency wasn't vain arguments or gloomy warnings. Instead, he appealed to his flock with truth, love and the notion that a holy life was a sweet and cheerful one. In St Francis's words, "A spoonful of honey attracts more flies than a barrelful of vinegar."

His Introduction to the Devout Life is one of Christianity's most influential books of spiritual direction. Even the founder of the Methodists, John Wesley, is said to have carried a copy. CS Lewis referred to the "dewy freshness" permeating it. Addressed in poetic and witty language to a fictional character, Philothea ("Lover of God"), it calls us to true devotion, through which the fragrant perfection of charity is attained. As honey sweetens all it touches without damaging its source, he writes, so does devotion beautify everything we do without damaging our state of life.

Through this approach, Francis earned the reputation of a "gentleman saint". A friend once commented: "If you want someone to argue with heretics, send them to me; if you want to convert them ... send them to the Bishop of Geneva." If every soul matters, including our own, in a world impoverished of God we cannot afford mediocre devotion or to prefer winning arguments to winning souls.

St. Francis's audacity in conversion, which even saw him develop a sign language to bring a deaf man to God, shocked many of his contemporaries. Piety is today similarly shocking. Yet how might the world look if we all had the audacity to pursue a devout life?



St. Patrick Parish
Rosary
Sunday Evenings
7:00 PM
via Zoom

To join us online visit www.zoom.us. Select Join and enter
 Webinar ID: 859 4073 5946
 Passcode: stpatsksq

Additional login details and to submit your prayer requests
 can be found on the parish website.

St. Charles Borromeo Seminary School of Theological Studies Catechetical Institute-The Catechetical Institute (CI) offers affordable online non-credit courses for Catholic adults 18 years+ with a high school diploma or equivalent. The courses are for teachers in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia elementary schools who are required to obtain catechetical certification. These courses are also suitable for parish catechists for those Catholic adults seeking to deepen their knowledge of the Catholic faith. The following courses are being offered in February 2024:

Person of Jesus & New Testament. Online registration is now open on our webpage: <https://www.scs.edu/school-of-theological-studies/catechetical-institute>. Cost per course is \$60.00. 236