

## **A Spiritual Life for All with Saint Francis de Sales**

**Sister Bénédicte de Vaublanc, Congrégation of Chambéry**

At the time of Saint Francis de Sales, it was thought that a life of intimacy with the Lord was reserved for those who lived behind the gates of cloisters. Many lay people, desiring a life of union with God, then called "devotion," sought support and a rule of life from the saint.

Louise de Charmoisy, a cousin by marriage of Francis de Sales, was languishing in Annecy. Francis de Sales became her confidant, but she moved to Chambéry. To continue to guide and support her, the Saint wrote a short advice booklet as he had done for others.

In Chambéry, Louise de Charmoisy showed the booklet to a Jesuit. Full of admiration for the depth and simplicity of this modest treatise, Father Fourier insisted that the bishop of Annecy, his friend, publish it.

Francis de Sales agreed to modify it so that people could also find themselves in it and he had the work printed, which he entitled: "The Introduction to the Devout Life." The expression has become outdated and means: an initiation to a life of intimacy with the Lord. The book is addressed to a certain Philothea, a name invented from the Greek words: friend and God, which means any Christian soul loved by God and desiring to love him. This easy-to-read book of piety offers advice for lay people, men and women living in the midst of the world. "We are all called to be aware that God is a loving Father who reaches out to us in the everyday of our lives."

The success of the book is dazzling, even Protestants are snatching it up; it is translated into all the languages of Europe. In a cordial tone, the author encourages the reader to set out on a journey towards a life totally given to the Lord and to others.

If Philothea remains in union with the Lord, she will be able to live in the heart of the world with confidence and freedom. She will feel carried and supported like the little child who does not let go of the hand of his father or mother. The saint multiplies the images of spiritual childhood, later popularized by Theresa of Lisieux. "Do as little children do, who with one hand hold on to their father, and with the other pick strawberries or blackberries along the hedges. Gathering and handling the goods of this world with the one hand, always holding the hand of the Heavenly Father with the other, turning to him from time to time to see if he has enjoyed your occupations. Beware in all things of leaving his hand, thinking of gathering or collecting more, for if he forsakes you, you will not take a step without giving your nose to the ground."

Whether "we dance, play or court" whatever the situation, only the love we have in our hearts counts. This is in line with Saint Augustine: "Love and do what you want."

This love must be concretized in all relationships, whether in the family or in the neighborhood. We must learn to see the face of the Lord in each person, especially in the poor. "Love the poor, Philothea, be the servant of the poor, serve them in their beds when they are sick, be their cook, be their linen maid and their laundress. "This is what the Baroness de Chantal did before founding the Visitation with Francis de Sales.



As a fine connoisseur of human nature, Francis de Sales knew its generosity and its frailties. Following in the footsteps of Christ, his master, he looks at the world with a benevolent and loving eye. He invites each one to accept peacefully his/her own limits and those of others, to walk humbly at his/her pace, to "hurry up nicely." That is to say, to take oneself with gentleness and patience. "Everything through love, nothing by force."

Times and places have changed. The content of the message is the same. It is the Gospel: "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.» It was strongly emphasized by the Second Vatican Council. Every baptized person is called to live in the intimacy of the Lord and to take responsibilities in the Church and in the world in order to be a witness to the tenderness of our Father.

Every year the Parish of Saint François de Sales des Hauts de Chambéry (Chambéry le Haut) celebrates a Mass in a small oratory built about fifty years ago. This place attests to the passage of Francis de Sales, who fell three times from his horse and found God's call to the priestly vocation. "We must take up the cross," St. Francis de Sales writes, "for God calls us to it." In 2013, Sr. Bénédicte gave a conference addressed to all the parishioners on this influential saint.



**Sister Bénédicte de Vaublanc,  
died on June 14, 2021 in  
Chambéry, France**

## Life is bursting out all over the Centre



Flowers are popping out all over and the garden is growing: tomatoes, pumpkins, and cabbage.



**Check out our new website: <https://www.centreinternationalssj.org/>**

## Visitors at the Centre!!!



For over the 12 months, Novitiate Community of the Institute of the Sisters of St. Joseph had tried numerous times to visit the Centre. Their plans, however, were dashed by coronavirus restrictions and lock-downs. In May, they were finally able to travel from Lyon to Le Puy—and they even brought a picnic lunch of sandwiches, salad, cheese, dessert, and Muscat wine.

## Global prayer calendar for July - August

The Global Joseph Family includes 11,000 sisters, 5,666 associates, 34 agrégées, and 26 charisma passers in 52 countries. Each week of each month, a different country is featured so that we may be united in prayer to listen to the heart of the world and pray for the ministers and their ministries in a given country. Many thanks to the [Federation of Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada](#) for the calendar.

### July

#### **Sisters of St. Joseph – Ivory Coast**

Sisters: 23

Associates: 12

Languages: French

Congregations: Aosta, Lyon,

Institut des Sœurs de Saint Joseph,



### Week 1

#### **Sisters of St. Joseph – Japan**

Sisters: 31

Associates: 0

Languages: Japanese

Congregations: Carondelet, Congregation of St. Joseph



### Week 2

#### **Sisters of St. Joseph – Kenya**

Sisters: 4

Associates: 4

Languages: English

Congregations: Annecy



### Week 3

#### **Sisters of St. Joseph – Lebanon**

Sisters: 7

Associates: 2

Languages: Arabic, French

Congregations: Lyon



### Week 4

### August

#### **Sisters of St. Joseph - Madagascar**

Sisters: 143

Associates: 400

Languages: French, Malagasy

Congregations: Aosta



#### **Sisters of St. Joseph - Mexico**

Sisters: 44

Associates: 25

Languages: Spanish, French

Congregations: Lyon



#### **Sisters of St. Joseph - Norway**

Sisters: 22

Associates: 25

Languages: Norwegian

Congregations: Chambéry



#### **Sisters of St. Joseph - Pakistan**

Sisters: 13

Associates: 30

Languages: English, Urdu

Congregations: Chambéry



## Vaccinations help to re-open France after pandemic lock-downs



Last spring, France began vaccinating millions of people to protect them from the coronavirus. Eluiza and Olga received their shots in May and June. (Olga was quick to tell the doctor that the Pfizer vaccines came from her hometown of Kalamazoo, Michigan USA.) France re-opened the country after its third lock-down in May with a four-stage process based on numbers of cases. In June, many travel restrictions to and from other countries had been lifted. Life is gradually getting back to normal—and people seem to be appreciating it.