Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology

Institute of Salesian Studies - Spring 2015

SP-4571 - Francis de Sales: Sources and Spirit

3.0 units (5 ECTS) - Tuesday/Friday: 9.40-11.00, DSPT 2

Instructor: Joseph Boenzi, SDB
2301 Vine Street, #203 Phone 510-883-2070
Berkeley, CA 94708-1816 E-mail: jobonz@gmail.com

Course Description

Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva from 1602 to 1622, is known as a French-speaking spiritual author and director, but few understand his roots in the Italian Renaissance and how his training in secular environments prepared him to for his life mission as one of the foremost Catholic Reformers in the aftermath of the Council of Trent. This course provides the opportunity to examine his principal works as well as lesser-known personal writings in an attempt to understand the basis for Salesian spirituality that he (perhaps unknowingly) originated – a lay spirituality in the Catholic tradition that paved the way for Vatican II. Primary sources studied and discussed; final grade based on research paper and class presentation.


Course Outline

Introduction to the Life and Works of St Francis de Sales
1. Overview of content and thrust of the course
2. Historical, political and religious context

His life in broad strokes
1. Family life, Education and Vocation
2. Missionary: evangelization and reconciliation
3. Lenten preacher and director of souls

Introducing St Jane de Chantal
1. Life and Vocation
2. Searching to understand God’s will in one’s life…
3. Personalities of Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal

Reading Francis de Sales in context
1. Shepherd, Reformer, Teacher
2. The written works of Saint Francis de Sales
3. Correspondence
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Hearing Francis de Sales
1. Oral culture
2. Sermons (On Preacher and Preaching)
3. Exhortations

Salesian Spiritual Direction
1. Direction as spiritual accompaniment
2. Baroness de Chantal: a new challenge for spiritual direction
3. Theme of “spiritual friendship” in Francis de Sales thought and praxis

Salesian Direction and Friendship
1. The Letters of Spiritual Direction
2. Salesian spiritual direction and accompaniment.
3. Francis de Sales prayer style and its accessibility in reference to his times

Learning and Living God’s Will
1. Opening the heart in responsiveness to God
2. The expressed will of God
3. God’s will “of good pleasure”
4. Living between the two wills of God

Salesian Keywords
1. La vie dévote
2. La douceur
3. La vie quotidienne

Salesian Key Practices
1. Friendship
2. The pastoral zeal (DA MIHI ANIMAS)
3. Trust in a Provident God
4. The Will of God, sought and embraced
5. Sacraments / Confession and Communion
6. Salesian gentleness
7. The presence of Mary

Required reading:


Instructor’s supplemental notes: ©Salesian Society, Berkeley: 2015 [estimated cost: $25.00].

Primary sources (in translation):


**Tools for assessment**

In addition to attending lectures and actively participating in class discussions, your progress in this course will be assessed on the basis of four (4) short research papers. The reflection papers grow out of the reading of primary sources and small-group discussions; due dates are distributed throughout the semester.

**Scheduling**

SP4295 is slated to meet on Tuesdays and Fridays during First Period (8:10-9:30). During the first class meeting, we will firm up the instruction calendar and due dates for assignments; lecture schedules and reading deadlines will be finalized during the second week of class.

Joseph Boenzi SDB