The Salesian Center for Faith and Culture is celebrating 10 years of service to DeSales University and the Lehigh Valley. When Fr. Daniel Gambet, OSFS, the second president of DeSales University, announced his retirement, the Board of Trustees sought a way to demonstrate their deep appreciation for his excellent leadership of more than 21 years. After much discussion, they created an endowment of $300,000 to begin the Salesian Center for Faith and Culture.

Both Fr. Gambet and the members of the Board realized that the real distinctiveness of the University was the rich legacy of Salesian spirituality that animated the Oblates and the campus community. It was their desire to make this rich spirituality of St. Francis de Sales and St. Jane de Chantal, called Christian humanism, more visible, more prominent, and more influential in the lives of graduates and in the fabric of the larger Lehigh Valley community.

One of my first tasks in realizing this dream was to find superb leadership for the Salesian Center. After consultation with the Board, the Oblate Province, and the academic administration, I chose Fr. Thomas Dailey, OSFS ’81. His enthusiastic acceptance of this challenge was a great blessing. We carved out of his full-time faculty responsibilities time for him to assume the task of creating of the Salesian Center for Faith and Culture. With characteristic energy, he has never stopped.

Since the Center’s inception, we have grown the endowment funds that make the Center possible to more than $3 million. This provides approximately $150,000 in resources for operations and salaries each year. The programming has become exceptional, as is evidenced by the week-long activities we had for this year’s Heritage Week celebrations. Our first Salesian pilgrimage was a spiritual blessing for all the participants who journeyed in the footsteps of the great saint. The Center also hosted a summer gathering of Oblate leadership from around the world. (To see all that the Center does, visit their newly updated web site at www.desales.edu/salesian)

Fr. Dailey is ably assisted by Fr. Alexander Pocetto, OSFS, retired senior vice president, and Lore McFadden-Westwood, administrative secretary and coordinator of events. Lina Barbieri ’94 is invaluable as a consultant on public relations and communications. They have created a locus of activity in their little house.

As you may know, the current capital campaign seeks to raise $30 million. These funds will be used to create three important structures for the campus: The Gambet Center for Business and Healthcare, the Salesian Center for Faith and Culture, and a baseball stadium. Imagine an architectural gem with its arms opened wide in welcome situated at the intersection of Preston Lane and Landis Mill Road. What an introduction to Salesian spirituality. Please offer a grateful prayer of praise to the Lord for the many blessings of our Salesian Center for Faith and Culture on this 10th anniversary.

Bernard F. O’Connor
President