Heritage Week Honors Patron Saint

By Mary Bielski

From Sunday, Jan. 24 through Thursday, Jan. 28 DeSales University celebrated the fifth annual Heritage Week.

“Heritage Week celebrates the legacy of St. Francis de Sales as it relates to higher education,” said Rev. Thomas Dailey, O.S.F.S., director of the Salesian Center for Faith & Culture. Preparations began in August and were organized by Dailey.

Each day’s event was given a theme, celebrating St. Francis de Sales as a bishop, a humanist, a lawyer, as Patron Saint of Journalists and Writers, and as a Doctor of the Church.

This year’s guests and speakers included Rev. John O. Barres, Bishop of Allentown, Dr. Marie Hilliard, director for the National Catholics Bioethics Center, The Honorable Joan Orie Melvin, justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, Tim Kennedy, president and CEO of the Morning Call, Martin Till, president and publisher of the Express Times, and Monsignor Paul Tighe, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications.

“There are great opportunities for students to learn what they wouldn’t in class, meet people in their fields of study, and to make contacts for the future,” says Dailey.

Heritage week is designed to as Dailey says “make a bigger deal out of St. Francis de Sales.” Campus recognition of the university’s patron saint was originally only on the saint’s feast day, January 24.

According to Dailey, St. Francis de Sales is a particularly beneficial role model for students.

“He taught precisely the idea that happiness and holiness go together in every possible realm of life. He could relate to everyone,” said Dailey.
St. Francis de Sales is also widely recognized for his love of learning.

“Knowledge and education were so important to him,” said Dailey.

In his lifetime, St. Francis wrote more than 20,000 letters, converted thousands to Catholicism by distributing pamphlets of his sermons, and wrote a book, The Devout Life, which still continues to be a best-seller.

Heritage Week strives to share these qualities and achievements with the entire student body, regardless of each student’s personal faith.

“The best connection anyone can make with St. Francis, whether they are Catholic or not, is his virtue. Humility and gentleness appeal to everyone,” Dailey remarked.

Heritage Week provides an ideal time to follow in his footsteps and learn not only more about him, but also how faith still has a place in the changing world.