Salesian Pedagogy

- Christian Humanism in Education
  - early developments
  - modern revisions
  - contemporary challenges
  - Salesian

- Salesian Spirituality
  - biographical information
  - educational events
  - spiritual themes
  - leadership methodology

- Friendship & the Educational Community
  - historical context
  - the Florimontane Academy
  - the Salesianum high school
Christian Humanism - OVERVIEW

- **Early Developments**
  - Greek philosophy
  - Old Testament theology

- **Modern revisions**
  - the Renaissance
  - the Reformation
  - the Enlightenment
    - cosmology
    - philosophy
    - psychology

- **Contemporary**
  - “Christian” humanism
  - 21st century humanisms
  - a “crisis” in humanism
  - experience of grace
  - culture of freedom

- **Salesian**
  - synthesis (SFDS)
  - education (DSU)
In the early age of Greek philosophy, where the universe is considered to be an ordered reality (Aristotle), humans are thought to enjoy a pre-eminent status. In this world, the pursuit of happiness is impaired not by death but by ignorance. Thus, it is the task of the great philosophers, like Socrates and Plato, to provide educational dialogues by which men and women could grapple with the larger questions about the meaning of life, and thereby better themselves.
In a Christian humanism, the order of the universe is seen as a result of the providential hand of God at work in creation and, subsequently, in the redemption of the world. Human beings in this world do, indeed, enjoy a pre-eminent status, owing to their having been created "in the image and likeness of God" (Gen 1:26); as such, their worth and dignity remain dependent on God rather than on their own ingenuity. In this relational context, the real limitation to human happiness is not ignorance, but sin.
In the age of the Renaissance, humanism in its classical form takes shape. Extolling the virtues of human freedom and championing the potential of human action, the Renaissance thinkers bring about a cultural revolution. Attention is drawn to the arts, as the expression of human creativity, and thought returns to the antiquities (Erasmus), as the cultivation of human knowing.
The classical humanism of the Renaissance, with its focus on human freedom and potential, encounters a biblical humanism that highlights our dependence on God and the need for divine grace in order to realize our potential. We are reminded that, prior to human creativity, faith is the first and foremost need for the good life (Luther). In addition, human greatness is found not in the revitalization of ancient knowledge but in the present works of a truly good life (Council of Trent).
the Enlightenment

- Scientific theories situate human existence in a new *world-view*:
  - earth is put in its proper cosmic place (Copernicus), and
  - human beings are considered to have evolved over time (Darwin).
Rationalistic philosophies relegate self-knowledge to a more confined context, where

- doubt begins the reflective process (Descartes) and
- brute experience underscores social interaction (Hobbes & Locke).
The nature of human life comes to be explained in behavioral terms, where the human species operates according to fundamental, instinctual drives:

- for power (Nietsche) or
- for sex (Freud) or
- for economic well-being (Marx).
“Christian” Humanism

- a vision of the universe as ordered by divine providence and oriented toward salvation

- an understanding of human nature as dependent on one’s relation to God

- an emphasis on human responsibility over and against forms of determinism

- an emphasis on human freedom as ordered to ultimate beauty, truth, and goodness

- an acknowledgment of human sinfulness and faith in the power of forgiveness

- a vision of the individual as rooted in communion with God and others through the Church

- a conviction that human history as a purpose for which Jesus Christ is the key
**21st Century “humanisms”**

- **scientific** -- proclaims itself capable of explaining the human mind, human qualities, and religious faith entirely by means of physical laws

- **technological** -- locates meaningfulness in human capabilities alone, and fulfillment in material objects of human production

- **secular** -- seeks the full meaning of human existence within the boundaries of this age and this world itself

- **ethical** -- values responding to human need but rejects religion as failing to foster independence and courage
“The evil of our times consists in the first place in a kind of degradation, indeed in a pulverization, of the fundamental uniqueness of each human person. This evil is even more of the metaphysical order than of the moral order. To this disintegration, planned at times by atheistic ideologies, we must oppose, rather than sterile polemics, a kind of “recapitulation” of the inviolable mystery of the person.”
experience of grace

- silence
- forgiveness
- sacrifice
- kindness

If we can find such experiences in our life, then we have had that very experience of the Spirit which we are after here — the experience of the Eternal, the experience that the Spirit is something more than and different from a part of this world, the experience that happiness in this world is not the whole point of existence, the experience of trust as we sink into darkness, the experience of a faith for which this world provides no reason.
Freedom untethered from truth is freedom’s worst enemy. For if there is only your truth and my truth, and neither one of us recognizes a transcendent moral standard (call it “the truth”) by which to adjudicate our differences, then the only way to settle the argument is for you to impose your power on me, or for me to impose my power on you. Freedom untethered from truth leads to chaos; chaos leads to anarchy; and since human beings cannot tolerate anarchy, tyranny as the answer to the human imperative of order is just around the corner. The false humanism of the freedom of indifference leads first to freedom’s decay, and then to freedom’s demise.
In the view of St. Francis de Sales, human beings are a microcosm of the universe, and the history of the world is the story of its gradual perfection in love. Thus, the investigation of what it means to be human naturally leads to a consideration of God, for

- **Man** is the measure of the universe;
- the **mind** (is) the measure of man;
- **love** (is) the measure of the mind;
- and **God** (is) the measure of love.
Salesian Spirituality

- biography of Francis de Sales
  - master of sacred eloquence
  - visionary founder
  - doctor of the Church
  - educational endeavors
- educational events
  - Paris ... a reason to hope (formative "crisis")
  - Padua ... a way to relate (spiritual exercises)
- spiritual themes
- leadership methodology
Master of Sacred Eloquence

- renowned preacher
- lots of letters
- inspired common sense
Visionary Founder
the Visitation of Holy Mary

- apostolic beginnings
- martyrdom of love
Doctor of the Church

- The Catholic Controversy *(meditations on the church)*
- Introduction to the Devout Life
- Treatise on the Love of God
Educational Endeavors

- patron of Journalists
- patron of the Deaf
- Florimontane Academy
PARIS ... a reason to hope!

- the personal crisis
  - physical fatigue
  - intellectual consternation
  - psychological delicateness

- Our Lady of Deliverance
PADUA ... a way to relate

- the “spiritual exercises”
- cultured conversation
- simplicity rules!
PADUA ... the “spiritual exercises”

- Preparation of the Day
- Spending the Day Well
- Spiritual Sleep or Repose
- Conversation and Social Gatherings
PADUA ... the “spiritual exercises”

- meeting people socially vs. associating with friends

- “professional” conversation
  - non-avoidance
  - non-familiarity
  - non-critical

- *I will speak little, but well* ...
PADUA ... the “spiritual exercises”

His whole manner and his way of speaking had great dignity and discretion but was at the same time humble, quiet and candid; ... he was all for straightforwardness and simplicity.

- friendly vs. familiar
- nothing against God
- desire for sincerity

(St. Jane de Chantal)
Salesian Themes

- optimism
- divine will
- the heart
- holy indifference
- in the world
- little virtues
I am as human as anyone could possibly be.
(Francis de Sales in a letter to Jane de Chantal, *Oeuvres* XIII, 330)

**OPTIMISM**

Implied in this optimistic view of human capacity is an appreciation for the created world and for the human arts. ... Salesian spirituality is marked in its celebration of whatever in the created order participates in the beauty evocative of God.
So let us live courageously between the one will of God and the other.

(Francis de Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God*, book 9)

**DIVINE WILL**

The first of these [“God’s signified will”] is God’s will *to be done*. It is known to persons through what God says, directs, and inspires.

The “will of God’s good pleasure” - God’s *will done* – happens independently of human consent. Where one finds oneself, one’s particular situation, is also revelatory of the divine will and must be taken into account and lived with creativity if one is to be truly responsive to the unique will of God.
Since the heart is the source of all our actions, as the heart is, so are they.

(Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, III, 23)

... at the deepest point of wisdom of Salesian spirituality, is the assumption ... that the spiritual life is not primarily about understanding, nor solely a matter of enthusiasm. It is a dynamic, integrative process that is brought about through the engagement of the whole person. The heart in Salesian thought is the seat both of intellect and of will. There the affective as well as cognitive capacities of the person are seen to dwell. All Salesian praxis then proceeds from this conceptual point of departure.
Walk in the presence of God in holy and absolute liberty of spirit.

(Jane de Chantal, *Letter to a Superior*)

HOLY INDIFFERENCE

... at its best indifference is the ability to love creatures deeply without attaching oneself to them unduly. It is about seeing God in all things, about attending to what is of God in all things. It is about perceiving each person solely in the hope of the wholeness to which they are created.
Let us belong to God ... in the midst of so much busyness.

(Francis de Sales, letter to Mme. de Cornillon)

IN THE WORLD

(The Salesian worldview) recognizes that the true Christian life could be realized anywhere. ... No facet of life is thus alien or indifferent: all of the ordinary things and actions have value in themselves and can express love of God and neighbor, notably by the compassion and competence that are brought to them.
We cannot always offer God great things, but at each instant we can offer him little things with great love.

(Jane de Chantal)

**The LITTLE VIRTUES**

**Humility** -- a recognition of the truth of who we are along with the truth of God’s love for us that rids us of self-destructive pride and fills us with joy in the knowledge of being loved.

**Gentleness** -- a sense of being gracious that extends from external demeanor (polite manners and convivial disposition) to the very quality of a person’s heart, the way in which a person is interiorly ordered and disposed.

**Simplicity** -- a singularity of focus which banishes solicitous cares and anxious concerns, and instead sees in ordinary events and circumstances an opportunity for loving God and others.
Salesian Speak!

- devotion
- *Live + Jesus*
- all by love, nothing by force
- *suaviter et fortiter*
- ask for nothing, refuse nothing
- *tenui nec dimittam*
St. Francis de Sales authored a classic work entitled an *Introduction to the Devout Life*.

In it he teaches that devotion is a “spiritual agility and vivacity, by means of which charity works in us with love and readiness, leading us to obey and fulfill all God’s commandments with promptitude and diligence.”

This is the vocation of all persons and can be realized in any and every state of life.
Live + Jesus

... in our lives and actions, Jesus is to be seen walking once again upon the earth ... 

Christian leadership is one of service, not of lordship (for domination or for profit) and never of power.
All by love ...

*Do all through love, nothing through force.*

A leader is to have a genuine esteem for all people in their particularity and uniqueness.

Leadership of this kind affirms that each person is made to God’s image and is thus endowed with a dignity and freedom which can never be compelled.
suaviter et fortiter

There is nothing so strong as gentleness, nothing so gentle as real strength.

Decisiveness requires that we make decisions, defend their reasonableness, and see that they are implemented.

Decisiveness must be balanced by an awareness of the fact that even good decisions are not always appreciated and that each person reaches the point of acquiescence at their own pace.
nothing ... but peace!

*Ask for nothing, desire nothing, refuse nothing.*

The Salesian leader should be at peace, content to surrender what happens into God’s providential care, neither asking for nor desiring a particular result, nor refusing to accept, even to embrace, whatever God permits to be the outcome.
Effective leadership is nourished in the familiarity of prayerful union with God. It is nourished there, where the heart learns directly from God how much He loves each of us, and where we hear His word to us and heed His will for us, not out of fear or force, but simply because it is our Beloved who asks it of us.

"I have laid hold of you and I will never let you go!" (Song of Songs 3:4)
Vision of Grandeur

No task is too humble nor any event too insignificant to be “filled with the grandeur of God.”

A leader in the Salesian tradition is tireless in reminding others of the magic of each moment, of the divine possibility in every circumstance, and of divinity itself in each person.
Persons in Relation

"one heart, one soul" – the friendship of St. Francis de Sales & St. Jane de Chantal

Theirs were collaborative efforts between people who cared for each other, who shared a common goal, who worked cooperatively with each other, and who labored so that each of them would be the best that they could be and become the saint which God desired them to be.
Power of Persuasion

“We cannot approve the method of those who try to reform someone by beginning with outward things. ... Since the heart is the source of our actions, as the heart is so are they.”

Humility teaches us how we are to relate to God.

Gentleness teaches us the manner in which we are to interact with others.
Friendship and the Educational Community

- historical context
- the Florimontane academy
  - genesis
  - distinction
  - organization
  - program
- the Salesianum school
- DeSales University
Historical Context -- the Church

- one century after the Reformation
  - controversy focused on beliefs (knowledge of)
  - SFDS: conflict due to ignorance
- half-century after the Council of Trent
  - the bishop as chief agent of Counter-reform
  - SFDS: education as the “eighth sacrament” for priests
Historical Context -- the 17th Century Academies in France

- the Pleiade
- palace academy of David de Flurance Rivault
  - “honor” of nobility founded on “virtue” > “class”
  - “discourses of reason open the mind to the consideration of everything that goes on”
- [the Florimontane Academy, 1607-1610]
- the French Academy (1635 to the present)
  - public vs. court institution
Genesis of the Florimontane

- **cultural need for education**
  - ignorance of letters ... from which proceeds the corruption of good mores [Comte]

- **the zeal and ardor of Francis de Sales**
  - “in order to undertake, there is no need of hope; nor [is there need] to succeed in order to persevere”

- **graphic identity**
  - orange tree: fruits & flowers
  - *all things will come to the one who does his best*
Distinction of the Florimontane

- to combat heresy > military utility
  - vs. Geneva
  - via “spiritual arms”

- “devout humanism” > court civility
  - mystical (lived) > rational (dogmatic)
  - sermons > debates
  - atmosphere (*utile-doux*) > religious policy

- biographical background
  - Padua (medicine)
  - Baranzano (science)
Organization of the Florimontane

- officers
- scholars
- audience
Scholars of the Florimontane

- Honore D’Urfe - poet
- Alphonse Delbene - abbot & senator
- Pierre Fenouillet - preacher to Henri IV
- Redente Baranzano - scientist
- Rene Favre - jurist
- Claude Favre de Faugelas - linguist
Audience at the Florimontane

- All the gallant masters of the honorable arts will be admitted to the general assemblies, including painters, sculptors, carpenters, architects, and the like.

- No heretic, schismatic, infidel, apostate, enemy of the country or of their most serene Princes will be admitted, nor will anyone who disturbs the peace or who is known for some public infamy.
Program of the Florimontane

(what)

- **Lessons** will be given in theology or politics or philosophy or rhetoric or cosmography or geometry or arithmetic. The aesthetic of languages, especially French, will also be dealt with there.

- All the members of the Academy will maintain a **mutual and fraternal love**. One will try to set aside from the Academy all that could in any way nourish discord.

- The **aim** of the Academy will be the exercise of all the virtues, the sovereign glory of God, the service of the most serene Princes, and public usefulness.
Program of the Florimontane

- The **conferences** of those who will have to speak publicly will be done with a serious and exact judgment.
- The **style** of speaking or of reading will be grave, exquisite, and plain, and will not resort at all to the fashion of pedantry.
- The **lecturers** will do all that is in their power to teach well, much, and in little time.
- The **auditors** will pay attention, focusing their thoughts and their concerns on what will be taught; and if there is something that they do not understand, they will ask questions after the lesson.
- The **discourses and orations** will be made with more eloquence than the lessons; in this case the oratory art will be made use of.
- None of the members of the Academy will make any sign of **legerity of spirit**, however small it may be; otherwise, he will be corrected by the Examiners.
Foundation of the Florimontane

- St. Francis de Sales (bishop of Geneva)
- Antoine Favre (president of Geneva)
Francis de Sales -- Humanist

- linguistic style (letters)
- “doctor of adaptation” (preaching)
- inculturation (writing)
- synthesis: realism & optimism
Antoine Favre - a Spiritual Friend

- paternal patronage
- shared interests
  - sense of duty
  - studies (language and law)
  - diplomatic missions (Geneva, Rome, Paris)
- the “sweet & gentle struggle” of friendship
  - noblesse oblige
  - rule of communication
  - SFDS loved and honored Favre “like his eyes”
The Salesianum Today

- the historical context
- the academy
- spiritual friendship
Historical Context

- The Florimontane
- post-Reformation
- post-Council of Trent
- the academy

- The Salesianum
- “post-modernism”
- post Vatican II
- Catholic schools
The Academy

- The Florimontane
  - “zeal” of founders
  - purpose of institution
    - to combat heresy
    - devout humanism

- The Salesianum
  - zeal of the OSFS
  - mission
    - moral principles/values
    - “a different kind of school”
The Academy

- **The Florimontane**
  - graphic identity (orange tree)
  - members (scholars)
  - audience (artisans)
  - program
    - cultural instruction
    - virtuous aim

- **The Salesianum**
  - faculty
  - students
  - program
    - curriculum
    - formation
Basis in Friendship

- **The Florimontane**
  - SFDS - Humanist
    - relates with secular
    - sense of optimism
  - Favre
    - family mediation
    - noblesse oblige
    - rule of communication

- **The Salesianum**
  - Teachers
    - related to youth
    - sense of optimism
  - Friends
    - family mediation
    - professional relation
    - lasting connection
In a word, our Blessed Father has been, in every sense of the term, one of the more illustrious representatives of that humanism which ... is characterized by the dominant wish, with respect to the acting of man and in man of that which makes him truly human -- not only living in service of a species, nor working in service of an enterprise, nor even citizen in service of the city, but intelligent and free creature, called to a spiritual destiny, to a life of society, not only with those similar to himself, but, for the Christian, with God himself.
In this way, the educational experience that unites faith & reason at DeSales University seeks to prepare students not only for careers but for life.

- **In the Natural Sciences** they learn not only the biological and chemical make-up of organisms, but also the respect for that created dignity which makes life human.

- **In Nursing & Health** they learn not only how to diagnose and treat disease, but also how to develop those spiritual goods without which human wellness is incomplete.

- **In the Social Sciences** they learn not only the principles of interaction and organization, but also the virtue of charity that enlivens truly human relationships.

- **In Business** they learn not only the principles of a market economy, but also the fundamentals of ethical behavior by which to live a worthy life.

- **In Math & Computer Science** they learn not only calculations and computations, but also that formula of faith which provides personal order to life.

- **In the Humanities** they learn not only to interpret language and literature, but also to see that Truth which gives fullness of meaning to all human communication.

- **In the Performing & Fine Arts** they learn not only acting and directing, but also appreciating the divine Beauty inherent in human life and the world that is its stage.

- **In Philosophy & Theology** they learn not only the laws of logic and the truths of revelation, but also the One who unites the many and brings salvation to all.
Student Life at DSU ...

- grow in Faith
- live in Hope
- “be nice!” (Love)