ABSTRACT: The spirit of St Francis de Sales, at the core of Don Bosco’s educational system, is captured by the Salesian aphorism: ‘be who you are, but be perfectly well who you are.’ A Salesian approach to expressive education seeks to engage with, and promote, this core goodness which lies at the heart of each young person. This requires the educator to be vigilant in monitoring the inspirations of the young person’s heart. Through these inspirations, God acts in an absolutely original and authentic manner within their freedom enabling them to choose what is truly good, and therefore, grow in love and holiness.

A recurrent motif in the writings of St Francis de Sales is that we give glory to God by becoming the person whom God has created us to be. He writes, ‘let us be what we are and be that well, in order to bring honour to the Master Craftsman whose handiwork we are.’ To another correspondent he writes even more tellingly: ‘Don’t sow your desires in someone else’s garden; just cultivate your own as best as you can; don’t long to be other than what you are, but desire to be thoroughly what you are... Believe me, this is the most important and least understood point in the spiritual life.’ Such advice is particularly relevant for young people in the throes of human and spiritual development. If disconnected from their heart, or deepest centre, the young person is quite likely to look for an external source or be tempted to imitate others. ‘Be who you are’ contains a call to become the person God has created you to be with the accompanying admonition ‘don’t long to be other that what you are’. The role of the

educator is to draw out this potential within the young person through ‘expressive education’ and to ‘prevent’ anything that might be harmful to their development. Whilst it is true to say with St Francis de Sales that each young person is God’s masterpiece, the apex of creation and ‘a work of art’, it is equally true to say that each young person is ‘an unfinished work of art’. In journeying with young people, so as to enable them to make choices that are reflective of their inner goodness, the educator is actively engaged with the young person in God’s work of creation. God creates at each moment, God is creating now.

Who am I?

‘Be who you are’ therefore, provokes the question: Who am I? From a Salesian perspective this question can only be answered by an appeal to our human experience of receiving and giving love. This should not surprise us as St Francis defines the person in terms of ‘heart’ which underscores our relational nature. The desires of the human heart revolve around love and even the experience of dissatisfaction reveals the infinite desires of the human heart for love. We are created with a capacity to love the infinite and, consequently, nothing else will satisfy the deepest hungers of the human heart. The heart is at rest when it rejoices in the good, but is restless when the good is absent because it desires the good. If we had all that was good for us, we would be without desire and without movement, but not being in possession of all our good, we search for it: “Our heart is anxious”; Francis de Sales starts from this anxiety. In short, ‘God having created the human person in his image desires that like in Him everything

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3 Expressive education in the Salesian way has been defined as ‘a commitment to draw out the potential latent in the educated so as to orientate him or her towards an all-round maturity.’ This is traced back to the Salesian aphorism cited above ‘to be fully who one is personally called to be and to strive to be that perfectly.’ See Peter Gosalves. ‘Don Bosco’s ‘Expressive System’: An alternative perspective for a communication age’. Salesianum, 71 (2009), 651-694, at 664.

4 OEA V:165.

5 OEA IX:343.

6 Ephesians 2:10.

7 See OEA IV:90-91. The original French text captures much more clearly this sense of creation as being a present, continuous action of God: ‘Cette perfection est un seul acte ... lequel n’estant autrue chose que la propre essence divine.’ Note the use of estant to express God’s nature as being Act. This use of the present continuous is reminiscent of the Hebraic notion of Being (eyeh) which more than indicating a state of being, indicates an activity, being present with.

8 It is not easy to define ‘heart’ in Salesian spirituality because St Francis ‘does not always use the term to signify systematically the same reality.’ R. Mercier, ‘Spiritual Direction: Prophetic Insight and Pastoral Guidance Methods of Prayer according to St Francis de Sales’. Indian Journal of Spirituality, 18 (2005), 350. And yet, by not defining ‘heart it remains an an image of multivalent richness, [which] conveys a sense of the central and ultimate dynamic of both the human person and of God.’ Wendy M. Wright, “That is What it is Made for”: The Image of the Heart in the Spirituality of Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal’, in Spiritualities of the Heart, ed. A. Callahan (New York & Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1990), 143-144.

9 OEA IV:44.

in us be ordained by love and for love.’

This Salesian *archaeological* and *teleological* understanding of the human person, as originating from and destined towards love, has strong affinities with the spirituality of St Catherine of Genoa. For her, ‘the goal of the spiritual journey is defined by its beginning. We have been formed by love, in love and for love. The truest “port” of the human heart is the Pure Love in which it was first created.’

God who made our ‘heart even before it was made in the world seeing it only in his divine plan’ that it ‘would be forever united to His, for whom it was created.’

God who is good creates us good. The human heart is good because it is created by God who is good. This explains the Salesian insistence that at the core, or heart, of every young person is goodness. Expressive education seeks to tap into and express this through love, because God’s love is breathed into us at creation. In his earliest book, *Meditations on the Church*, St Francis writes that Adam only becomes human whenever God *inspires him* (that is, breathes his life into him). This ‘mass of earth’ becomes human only after receiving the breath of love. As Pocetto reminds us, ‘thus love enters into the very make-up of the human person, into the innermost structure of our being [...] For this reason, human life is to be considered essentially as a life of freedom in love.’

In us all things must be set in order by love and for love: ‘Just as weight gives movement to the moveable parts of a clock, so love gives to the soul whatever movement it has.’ This, then, is our universal calling to holiness, everyone is called to love. It is in and through our love of God and neighbour that we give glory to the God who is creating us now.

**What is love?**

We are now in a position to respond to the question ‘Who am I?’ by concluding that we are created from love and created for love. This naturally raises the question: What is love? St Francis de Sales defines love succinctly as ‘the heart’s movement towards the good.’

Commenting on this Louis Lavelle writes: ‘But what do we mean by love? It is our very being, inasmuch as our being resides in an interior movement inclining it towards the Good, a good which we make our own good.’

More recently Pope Benedict XVI has endorsed such teaching declaring that ‘concern for others entails desiring what is good for them from every point of view: physical, moral and spiritual... The good is whatever gives, protects and

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11 *OEA IV*:40.


13 *OEA XVI*:300.

14 *OEA XV*:91.


16 *OEA V*:309.

17 *OEA IV*: 43.

promotes life, brotherhood and communion.’

The task of the educator is, accordingly, to help young people grow in love through choices that promote their good. This is reflective of who they are at their deepest core and enables them to become who they are called by grace to be. At a very natural level, or at the level of nature, we have been created in such a way so as to be able to receive God’s communication because the human heart is not only “oriented to the good,” but “created to love the infinite good.” St Francis remarks that ‘God has planted in the human heart not only a special, natural inclination to love the good in general, but to love in particular and above all things his divine goodness.’ As André Ravier points out, ‘the heart of God has made the human heart.’

So, we can say with the psalmist, ‘He made us, we belong to Him’ (Ps.100). If we were to attempt to translate what St Francis is saying into more contemporary language we could say that we are ‘hard-wired’ for God. Our ‘natural inclination’ to God means that we have a God-ward orientation or an orientation to God. We have a fundamental basic attraction for God. Our attraction towards other human beings rests on this principle that we are drawn towards what we perceive to be good, beautiful and true. People are signposts on the journey for their beauty, truth and goodness points us to the supreme Beauty, Truth and Goodness that is God.

To become more loving through choosing what is truly good brings us inexorably into the mystery of human freedom. Pochat writes that ‘it is quite possible to reflect on freedom, without speaking about love, but love cannot exist without freedom.’ Whilst agreeing with the sentiments expressed in the latter half of this statement, we would take issue with the first part. Within a Salesian understanding of freedom it is equally impossible to speak of freedom without love or love without freedom. It is precisely this aspect of freedom’s necessary relationship to love that undergirds the originality of a Salesian understanding of freedom. Once freedom is no longer at the service of love, set adrift from this mooring, it quickly degenerates into license, a counterfeit of freedom. Since true freedom is determined by the good, then, the surrender involved in being drawn towards the good results in a paradox: we surrender false freedom in order to enjoy true freedom which only the good can bring. It is

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20 OEA IV:77. See also, OEA IV:78; 79; 84; 137.

21 André Ravier, *Ce Que Croyait François de Sales* (Paris: Ateliers Henri Labat,1976), 7
23 OEA XIII:104.

24 ‘Plato holds that freedom requires self-discipline, not a discipline imposed on and so external to the self, but self-discipline. Without such discipline the self is fragmented, and a fragmented self has no abiding will, the person does not know what s/he wants, or if s/he does her/his will is subject to what obstructs or deflects it from the direction it faces. He further holds that the discipline in question belongs to the love of the good. The person who loves goodness is one committed to the values of a morality of love. This means that these values are not open to choice for us. But this is not a restriction or limitation of our freedom of choice, it is a precondition of it.’ Ilham Dilman, *Free Will: An Historical and Philosophical Introduction* (London & New York: Routledge, 1999), 42.
this intermediation between freedom and the good which refuses to reduce the dynamics of this relationship to the language of self-interest or self-determination.

**Love precedes Freedom**

In our normal contemporary understanding of love and freedom we believe that we are free and, therefore, can choose to love. If we reduce freedom to the power to choose, is it not more likely to result in a series of options where none of them are any more compelling than any other? In a Levinasian manner of thinking that prioritizes ethical responsibility towards, for, and in front of the other, before the exercise of one’s own individual freedom, St Francis inverts our contemporary understanding of love and freedom to proclaim that love precedes freedom. Such an understanding proposes a positive account of freedom which does not seek to protect all choices equally, but only those choices motivated by love, understood as the heart’s movement towards the good, as that which constitutes and generates authentic freedom. Consequently, the Salesian perspective which seeks to cultivate freedom for love, through educating young people in love, is consonant with the classical tradition of virtue ethics which is currently enjoying a rediscovery. Can we not surmise that there is a synchrony between Salesian virtue education and the new emphasis of positive psychology which aims at the development of character through virtue?

In the original Greek understanding of the term, virtue describes a given quality of a truly good person. Plato, thus, assigns the virtues according to the human psychological functions of the intellect, passions, and will: to reason he ascribed the virtue of wisdom; to affectivity courage; and to moral decision-making self-control. When wisdom guides self-control with courageous strength and ordered determination, a person arrives at justice, that is, the appropriate ordering of all one's functions. As St. Francis de Sales writes: ‘such are the qualities by which our spirit is rendered gentle, obedient, and amenable to the laws of natural reason which is in us.’ It follows that as young people grow in virtue, freedom grows in them which ‘must be developed through education, which among many other things involves the experience of emulating others who live wisely and well.’ It is also incumbent on the educator to help young people discover the beauty of virtue, helping them to discover the

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27 Eunan McDonnell, *The Concept of Freedom in the Writings of St Francis de Sales* (Berne: Peter Lang, 2009), 162-165.

good since it is necessary to “instruct the heart,”\textsuperscript{29} since “the heart is fed by what gives it delight,”\textsuperscript{30} is “restless”\textsuperscript{31} and “desires the good.”\textsuperscript{32}

\textit{The Asceticism of Love}

We acquire character by directing our freedom and loyalty to values outside ourselves. In a very real sense, we become what we love. The habitual doing of that value, then, becomes a virtue in us. Virtues build character. As young people grow in character they are enabled to make choices consistently that are allied to the good and, therefore, at the service of love. As Spitzer observes: ‘If I am cognizant of the fact that I must choose between the intense/tangible and the pervasive/enduring in order to determine what I really want, then I am likely to use this power of choice in a way that does not always correspond to the strongest stimulus (the most intense feeling). Rather, I may choose an objective that has virtually no intensity of feeling but seems noble and good in itself. After choosing it, I could feel ennobled by the choice.’\textsuperscript{33} In a similar fashion, citing St Gregory, St Francis reminds us that ‘bodily pleasures arouse desire before we get them but disgust once we have obtained them. On the other hand, spiritual pleasures arouse disgust before we obtain them and pleasure once we have obtained them.’\textsuperscript{34} This doctrine, at first sight, appears to restrict our freedom and deny the senses. The aim, however, is true human freedom, the freedom to love; not only to love God but also to love and enjoy the world that he made, in the way it should be loved and enjoyed.\textsuperscript{35} Although reason should be in control, we frequently find that appetite has its own way. In our fallen state, nature does not provide a remedy. A greater and better love, a stronger and more powerful desire, is needed and St Francis finds this in the love of God. ‘If God is our heart’s desire, then the heart knows its own path.’\textsuperscript{36} Love of God, therefore, is the ordering principle that orients our desires towards the true good and, therefore, freedom. He writes, ‘God’s love supplants and brings into subjection the affections and passions by turning them away from the end to which self-love would direct them and turning them to its own spiritual intention.’\textsuperscript{37} It follows that there is a struggle within the individual between self-love and the love of God.

\textsuperscript{29} OEA III:217.
\textsuperscript{30} OEA IV:259.
\textsuperscript{31} OEA XI: 19.
\textsuperscript{32} OEA IV:30.
\textsuperscript{34} OEA IV:61.
\textsuperscript{35} Failure to go along with what God wants from us is the result of some disorder in our appetites. It is this disorder that St Francis wishes to correct when he speaks of mortification of the appetites. The appetites themselves are good, and our use of them brings us to God, provided we are free at heart. Detachment means freedom to move towards God without hindrance.
\textsuperscript{36} Mary Margaret Funk, \textit{Thoughts Matter: The Practice of the Spiritual Life} (New York: Continuum, 2005), 13.
\textsuperscript{37} OEA V:312; T2:256.
which St Francis describes as a veritable ‘martyrdom of the will.’\textsuperscript{38} The reality of sin, self-love, disordered desires in our lives admits of unfreedom and implies the notion of a struggle or effort to achieve freedom.\textsuperscript{39} St Francis writes, ‘the work of purging the soul neither can nor should end except with life itself.’\textsuperscript{40} In the classical language of spirituality such an acknowledgment necessitates the need for \textit{ascesis}.\textsuperscript{41} Asceticism is the struggle to overcome the deep divisions within our nature, the reordering of our desires, so that our lives can be brought into harmony with the demands of our Christian faith. ‘In its most general sense, asceticism can be said to represent all those elements of the spiritual life that involve an organized campaign against the sinful aspects of self, and against exterior temptation, as well as positive efforts directed toward the perfection of our own spiritual activities.’\textsuperscript{42} The spiritual outlook of St Francis de Sales is situated within such an ascetical tradition that emphasizes the need of human effort in achieving freedom, so as to create an openness and receptivity to God’s grace.

\textit{Virtuous Love}

It is clear that Salesian education stands within this tradition of building character through virtuous choices that seek to promote the good. At the heart of the Salesian understanding of \textit{devotion} is precisely this aim to lead the young person to a full and fervent interior life through a life of true devotion which is the true love of God that has reached such a degree of perfection that ‘it not only makes us do good, but, also to do this carefully, frequently, and promptly.’\textsuperscript{43} Nevertheless, this is not a journey made in isolation from others. Ever conscious of the fragility of human nature, St Francis insists on creating a supportive environment among the young because ‘to embrace true virtue it is necessary to unite together in holy, sacred friendship. By this means they encourage, assist and lead one another to perform good deeds.’\textsuperscript{44} This relational nature is reflective of the life of God who is a community of persons. When we love we mirror God, in whose image we are made, as a community of love. ‘God, as

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{OEA} IX:79
\textsuperscript{39} For a detailed examination of how sin, self-love and disordered desires draw love away from its goal of self-transcendence producing an \textit{amor recurvus} which substitutes true love with self-gratification, see Mc Donnell, \textit{The Concept of Freedom}, 181-211.
\textsuperscript{40} \textit{OEA} III: 27; \textit{ID}: 48.
\textsuperscript{41} Asceticism as a discipline is not exclusive to Christianity. The Stoics, the Epicureans, and Socrates taught sophisticated and coherent methods in what Epictetus called “the art of living”. All these methods involved self-denial and the re-ordering of our value systems in order to achieve inner peace, a serene acceptance of what could not be changed. P. Hadot, \textit{Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault}, ed. A. Davidson and trans. Michael Chase (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 68.
\textsuperscript{43} \textit{OEA} III:15.
\textsuperscript{44} \textit{OEA} III:203-204.
Trinity, therefore, defines us.’ The movement of love is ecstatic, a movement outwards, beyond ourselves. This movement which ushers us onto the path of self-transcendence increases our freedom and capacity to love whilst paradoxically, allowing us to come more into possession of our true selves. Here we have the kernel of expressive education which is ‘a commitment to draw out the potential latent in the educand so as to orientate him or her towards an all-round maturity.’ However, this journey outwards towards love can be short-circuited through sin, self-love, and disordered desires. Although St Francis de Sales highlights the dignity of the human person created in the image and likeness of God, at the same time, he does acknowledge the potentiality for sin, a failure to love God and others. He preaches, ‘since we are created in the image of God we receive all that is good from him; but since we are created from nothing, there always remains some imperfection in us.’ St Francis concludes that we have a twofold tendency to go out of ourselves: either a sensual ecstasy that brings us down towards the beast or a transcendent ecstasy that enables us to respond to the good for the sake of the other. In brief, we are drawn out of ourselves toward charity or egoism. This struggle within the human person cannot be reduced to a simple dualistic interpretation of a struggle between the spirit and the flesh. Rather it is to be understood, in the Pauline sense, as a conflict of two loves, sacred love and self-love.

The struggle between sacred love and self-love continues through our whole life for it is only ‘in heaven, that we shall indeed have a heart entirely free from passion, a soul entirely cleansed from distraction, a spirit liberated from contradictions, and powers exempt from conflict.’ However, in this life, the question remains, “What method should we follow to bring our affections and passions into the service of divine love?” To which St Francis de Sales answers, ‘we fight against the passions either by opposing contrary passions to them or by setting up stronger affections.’ Thus, with St Francis, in harmony with St Thomas Aquinas, ‘we naturally pass from the emotions to the virtues, which moderate and direct them.’ It is through the cultivation of the virtues, which seek to order our affective life through the use of reason, that we gain an inner equilibrium. As indicated earlier, the aim of Salesian asceticism is not to eliminate our passions, but seeks to integrate the sensitive and intellectual sides of human nature so as to achieve a balanced life. The virtues have a predominant role in

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46 Gonsalves, Don Bosco’s ‘Expressive’ System, 664.
47 Sermon for Palm Sunday 20th March 1622, OEA X:345.
48 See Lajeunie, Saint Francis de Sales, 2:365.
49 Sensual in this context must not be understood as a negation of the erotic, for it does not include, for example, physical expressions of love proper to marriage. It is to be understood more in terms of lust where we use the other for self-gratification rather than offering oneself as a gift. See Pope Benedict XIV’s Encyclical: Deus Caritas Est, n.9-11.
51 OEA V:311-312; T2:255.
52 Francis Selman, Aspects of Aquinas, (Dublin: Veritas, 2005), 133.
bringing this about because they do not deprive us of our emotions, but on the contrary, help us to overcome disordered emotions. In line with the thinking of St Thomas, St Francis also holds that ‘the virtues develop our natural inclinations and brings them to perfection; they become like a second nature.’\(^\text{53}\) However, St Francis makes a further distinction between inclination (unconscious) and virtue (conscious) demonstrating how the movement from inclination to virtue requires both the intellect and will through deliberation and choice.\(^\text{54}\)

**Self-love as Amor Recurvus**

The role of the Salesian educator is to accompany young people in helping them to discern and choose what is truly good as opposed to a good that is self-referential and mixed with self-interest.\(^\text{55}\) This is difficult in a world which thrives on stimulating the senses and advocates immediate self-gratification. It is a small step to become absorbed with the things God has created rather than recognizing them as gifts from God. In fact, the whole world of advertisement is based on this very principle appealing to the desires of the heart, promising us that if we only possess this or that we will be happy. However, as St Francis teaches, we become homeless, no longer living from our heart when something other than God possesses our heart. We are ripe for addiction. Such addiction reveals to us that our restless heart longs for the infinite God, but we get seduced by a ‘downward transcendence’ when we substitute the living God for some thing or some one. Such ‘desiring love, settling on an object extrinsic to the self, makes, admittedly, a movement outwards and indeed reaches its object, but this rootedness in the self draws it ineluctably back, to complete a circle (as amor recurvus) and finish where it began.’\(^\text{56}\) Accordingly, ‘the proper work of the will is in the ordering of our love; for the will dictates the consent or the refusal we give to love’, Lavelle continues, ‘the will regulates the course of love and must be vigilant to keep its flame alive and prevent it from being diverted to objects which may allure but can never satisfy it. Such objects are worthy of being loved only in the light of the Infinite Love which sustains the will itself and in which, once found, it reaches fulfilment.’\(^\text{57}\)

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\(^{55}\) There is a universalizing aspect to true goodness because it cannot be confined to what is good for me, but also must include what is good for the other. It is this respect that we understand the importance of the ‘common good’ which emphasizes how goodness transcends, but includes, the individual. However, what is the common good? Connell argues that “therein lies the danger because people tend to assume that the common good is just the collection of individual goods.” For further reflections on the common good, see R. J. Connell, ‘Freedom, Self-Interest, and the Common Good’. *The New Scholasticism*, 61 (1987):125-145.


\(^{57}\) Lavelle, *Quatre Saints*, 195-196.
threshold of the mystical life because it presupposes God’s prevenient grace already at work within us. In Salesian terminology this is the role of inspirations.\textsuperscript{58}

**The role of inspirations in Expressive Education**

In tandem with preventing the young person from making choices that lead him away from his deepest self and the path of love, Salesian expressive education also requires the educator to be vigilant in monitoring the good desires of the young person’s heart, foster these desires and help to bring them to fruition. In a letter to Jane de Chantal, St Francis de Sales writes: ‘I shall never stop praying God to perfect His work in you, that is, to further your excellent desire and plan to attain the fullness of Christian life, a desire which you should cherish and nurture tenderly in your heart. Consider this to be a work of the Holy Spirit and a spark of His divine flame.’\textsuperscript{59} What is at play here is the ability to recognize God’s Spirit at work in the good desires of the young person which in Salesian spirituality is simply called, ‘inspirations’.\textsuperscript{60}

Often we are more familiar with the role of temptations than its counterpart, inspirations.\textsuperscript{61} God, as our supreme good, is able to draw us to himself through the attraction of his inspirations. This is the particular mission of the Holy Spirit who pours into our hearts the first rays and perceptions of his light and vital heat.\textsuperscript{62} Inspiration, then, is to the human person what the light and warmth of the Sun is to the earth. In this instance the inspirations, through which God reveals his will, are presented through the metaphor of light and heat. They are described ‘psychologically’ in the manner in which they affect our conscience. It is consequent on our free will whether we choose to resist or respond to this divine awakening. However, it must be noted that we do not awaken ourselves, it is the prerogative of these inspirations to bring about our awakening. As St Francis notes: ‘I cannot awaken, nor can I move myself unless you move me. But when you have moved, then, O beloved spouse of my soul, “we run,” we two. You run before me, ever drawing me forward, and for my part I will follow in your path by consenting to your call.’\textsuperscript{63} One of the main tasks of expressive education is to discern these interior movements of God’s inspirations in the young person’s heart. This, in turn, is allowing ourselves to be led by the Holy Spirit because inspirations are always God’s initiative. Of course, although the divine goodness draws and attracts us, we are left free to


\textsuperscript{59} *Letter to Jane Frances de Chantal*, 3\textsuperscript{rd} May 1604, *OEA* XII: 263-264.

\textsuperscript{60} See McDonnell, *The Concept of Freedom*, 280-301.

\textsuperscript{61} ‘Inspirations are … all those interior attractions, motions, acts of self-reproach and remorse, lights and conceptions that God works in us and predisposes our hearts by his blessings, fatherly care, and love in order to awaken, stimulate, urge, and attract us to holy virtues, heavenly love, and good resolutions, in short, to everything that sends us on our way to our everlasting welfare.’ *OEA* III:108.

\textsuperscript{62} *OEA* IV:130.

\textsuperscript{63} *OEA* IV:132.
respond: ‘In spite of the all-powerful strength of God’s merciful hand, which touches, enfolds and bends the soul with so many inspirations [...] grace has the power not to overpower, but to entice our heart.’

The essence of inspiration is the way in which God addresses us intimately and reveals his will to us personally. As St Francis expresses it, ‘His vital breath is called inspiration because by it supreme goodness breathes upon us and inspires in us the desires and intentions of his heart.’

Inspiration allows for mutual friendship between God and us because Jesus reveals the ‘intentions of his heart’ and speaks to our hearts. As André Brix comments: ‘The Salesian method is situated at the level of freedom and personal inspiration. Inspiration reveals that God would like to act in an absolutely original and authentic manner in each freedom, so as to change the world and create it. It is not a question of forming a regiment of obedient robots. Inspiration is to do with my acting in a concrete situation where no-one else can take my place. We must let the exterior be born from the interior.’

Whilst inspirations remain always the initiative of God’s grace, nevertheless, we can foster an interior disposition that makes us vigilant and ready to respond as the occasion arises. The cultivation of such an interior disposition allows the young person to respond to these inspirations “carefully, frequently, and promptly” while ‘leading an ordinary life to all outward appearances.’ This inculcates ‘the virtue of devotion’ which ‘is nothing other than a general inclination readiness of the soul to do what it knows to be agreeable to God. It is that enlargement of heart of which David said “I have run the way of your Commandments, when You did enlarge my heart.’ St Francis ‘invites us “to do everything by love” because he knows that love broadens the heart while at the same time keeping it simple and master of itself.’ Indeed, St Francis argues that if we only ‘accepted his inspirations to the full extent of their power in how short a time would we make great progress in holiness.’ Expressive education, understood from this perspective, leads the young person on the path to holiness.

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64 OEA IV:126-127.
65 OEA V:90.
67 OEA III:15.
68 OEA III:6.
70 OEA IV:121.
Conclusion

St Francis de Sales writes that ‘freedom is the life of our heart [and] the greatest gift we can give to God (and others).’\textsuperscript{71} Expressive education from a Salesian perspective is consequently a journey to the heart, a \textit{reditus ad cor}. The young person is encouraged and guided to make choices and decisions from this deepest heart centre which leads to a growth in freedom and love. This is evident in paying attention, particularly, to the inspirations which lie in the deepest recesses of the young person’s heart. Fidelity to such inspirations set us on the path of love, understood as the heart’s movement towards the good. Expressing love, in this manner, is to choose what is truly good over and above what appears to be good. It follows that an important aspect of Salesian education is to ‘prevent’ the young person from short-circuiting the choice for love by choosing what appears to be good. The choice of the true good in place of what appears to be good allows the young person to grow in virtue, develop character, so that choosing the good becomes more habitual. Along with this personal choice for the good, Salesian expressive education creates an educational environment of acceptance that allows young people to influence each other for the better. All of this leads inexorably to the true characteristic of what it means to be human, according to St Francis de Sales, which is love.\textsuperscript{72} It is living love that enables us ‘to become who we are, and be perfectly well who we are’.

\textsuperscript{71} \textit{OEA} IX :335.
\textsuperscript{72} Pocetto points out that according to Blaise Pascal it is ‘thought’ that constitutes humanity’s grandeur whereas for the Christian humanism of St Francis de Sales, since “love is the perfection of the mind”, then, it is love that constitutes our grandeur. Pocetto, ‘Love and Critical Thinking in the Writings of Francis de Sales’, Proceedings of the Patristics, Medieval and Renaissance Conference, at \url{http://web1.desales.edu/assets/salesian/PDF/PocettoSalesianMissionDSU.pdf}, accessed 23/04/2012.