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**St. Francis de Sales, Zealous Pastor,
Dynamic Missionary and Apostle of Chablais
The Chablais Mission - a Noble Example and Inspiration to the
Pastoral and Missionary Dynamism of the Catholic Church**

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Foreword

As a member of the congregation of Missionaries St. Francis de Sales, a congregation founded after the spirit and spirituality of St. Francis de Sales, I was always influenced by the pastoral and missionary dynamism of St. Francis de Sales. As a priest in my pastoral activities in various parishes and missions St. Francis de Sales was a great inspiration for me. During my formation days, I learned more about the pastoral spirit of St. Francis de Sales and it brought in me a fascination for this great saint and, in turn, it sprouted in me the desire to become a pastor following the example of St Francis de Sales. Therefore, at times, I used to ask myself what the real contribution of St. Francis de Sales to the Church and to the world is. In my earnest effort to learn and know more about St. Francis de Sales I came to the conviction that it is the Chablais mission which formed St. Francis de Sales as the great pastor of the Church.

In the year 2022, as the 400th anniversary of the death of St. Francis de Sales was being celebrated and I was at the end of my master studies, I thought writing a master thesis on the Chablais mission would be a great occasion not only to commemorate this great saint but also to give a fitting tribute to St. Francis de Sales. I presented my idea of choosing the Chablais mission as my master thesis to my guide, Prof. Johann Pock, and he wholeheartedly accepted the suggestion and gave me permission to go forward with this theme. At the completion of this paper, I am extremely thankful to Prof. Pock for accepting my theme and giving me timely corrections for the improvement and completion of this paper. In the process of writing this paper, many people have helped me in various ways. Without mentioning any of their names, I acknowledge their great contribution in writing this paper. I also acknowledge the support and encouragement I got from various corners.

This paper is an attempt to understand and analyse the particular missionary context of the Chablais mission and the strategies developed by St. Francis de Sales. This paper studies, on the one side, the challenges of St. Francis de Sales and to understand the historical situation of that time and how he was responding to a particular historical situation; and, on the other hand how it influenced the person and personality of St. Francis de Sales as well as the missionary dynamism of the Church. This paper is an eye-opener for me in various areas of my pastoral work and I hope this paper will also help a lot of people to know more about the ground realities of the Chablais mission and the person of St. Francis de Sales. I wish to acknowledge the support and encouragement of various

people and honour the dedication and hard work of all the missionaries, who were influenced by the missionary spirit of St. Francis de Sales and thank God for all his blessings as I present this paper for your reviews.

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General Introduction

The Catholic Church is pastoral and missionary by her origin and nature and she attempts to be true to the mandate entrusted to her by our Lord Jesus Christ. This missionary character of the Catholic Church was clearly recognised by the Second Vatican Council (AG.2). Grippled by her zeal for missions, she seeks to transmit the Gospel of Christ to all corners of the earth at all times. Faithful missionaries, responding to Christ's call, have carried out this task for generations. They personalize and live the Gospel message, thus becoming the true followers of our Lord Jesus Christ. By personalizing this message, they strengthen their ability to proclaim it with conviction. However, this missionary journey has been tested by fire in almost every era. At the same time, the missionaries have embraced the challenges and this has served to further galvanize the message of Christ. Even though there are differences of opinions, the missionaries went forward with real conviction and a true faithfulness to their master, Jesus Christ.

One such charismatic missionary and ardent pastor was St. Francis de Sales. He was a sincere messenger of Christ who lived and proclaimed the Christian message in a way that read and responded to the challenges of his time in an appropriate and adequate manner. St. Francis de Sales (SFS) lived from 1567 to 1622, during an era known as the Counter Reformation, and was most active in the town of Annecy. At that time, the Church understood its mission differently than it does today. The Catholic Church carried out her missionary activities with the concept that the Church is the only way of salvation. Therefore, the attempt of the Church was to baptise and bring everyone into the fold. The Catholic Church was considered the only way to Salvation. The Church believed that she had the custody of the whole truth and this truth should be brought to all peoples and nations. Because of this concept, even the non-Catholics were considered to be outside the realm of Salvation.¹ Francis was very much influenced by this thinking of the 17th century and, with this thinking, he started his missionary activities in Chablais.

Soon after his ordination, he was appointed as the Provost of the Cathedral of Annecy; but he had a missionary heart and, at the request of his Bishop Granier, Francis responded positively to take up the mission of Chablais. It was the earnest desire of Francis to bring the whole region of Chablais back to the Catholic faith.² With the ardent desire to convert

¹ Cf. MOREROD, "No Salvation outside the Catholic Church", 517f.

² Cf. MARSOLIER, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales* (vol.1), 132.

Calvinists and to restore the public practice the Catholic faith, he worked hard in Chablais. He responded to the challenges in a very efficacious manner and he developed new methods to win the heart of the people. His methods and strategies were quite novel for the time; especially in his work among the Calvinists. Even in the midst of struggles and obstacles, he was not ready to give up his attempt to convert Chablais, but rather, he invented new strategies and methods to overcome these challenges. He was an example of how a person can use all his talents and abilities for the good of the Church. As a leading figure in the revival of Catholicism in the 17th century, he played a vital role in translating the Catholic teachings in the hearts of the people. He had his special method of approaching people who had difficulties. His approach was very practical and even the ordinary people appreciated his methods and way of life. Francis could influence many people by the example of how he lived his life.

The spirituality of Francis has inspired many studies throughout history, but this present study focusses exclusively on his pastoral ministry in Chablais. It investigates, as a missionary, how Francis responded to the challenges of his times. There is an earnest attempt made in this work, to understand better the real missionary spirit of Francis. It analyses the particular pastoral situation of Chablais from a historical context and tries to determine how this particular situation contributed to the life of the great saint Francis. It also analyses the special contribution of the Chablais mission in the Church and it explores the particular challenges of Francis, his responses to these and how they have borne fruit at various levels. It also studies how the Chablais mission made Francis into an important figure in the Church. It highlights how much time and energy Francis invested towards the success of this mission.

This work attempts to explain how the Church's methods of evangelisation evolved from the successful evangelisation methods of Francis. It is an attempt to understand the challenges of Francis during his time and in order to analyse its importance in today's missionary context; especially by analysing the particular mission strategy of Francis. This research chiefly engages the sources of literature relevant to this topic. The study emphasizes on the methods and methodologies that Francis used to overcome the various challenges of his time. He took Jesus the Good Shepherd as his model and inspiration and he gave real faith formation to the ordinary people. He taught the people about the foundations of their faith, so that they would be able to overcome the internal and external challenges to their faith.

Studying Francis would prove helpful to modern missionaries. From the missionary dynamism and spirit of Francis in Chablais, this paper derives lessons how this missionary spirit of Francis can be a great help to the missionary dynamism of the Church as a whole and in various levels of the ministry of Church from a historical perspective. The readers can attain knowledge from this work about the challenges and missionary tactics of the 17th century and how Francis responded to these challenges in a very positive way. It also gives an answer to the question of how Francis and his missionary spirit still lives in the minds of the people. In a real missionary situation, this paper could become a guide to address today's missionary challenges and it presents the mission tactics of Francis as an approach to the proclamation of the Good News even in the midst of the challenges of our time.

Chapter I

The Manifold Challenges of Young Francis in the Mission of Chablais

1.0 Introduction

Soon after his ordination, Francis was appointed as the Provost of the capital of Geneva, the second most significant position in the diocese. In his inaugural address as Provost, he asked the members of the capital to work for the conquest of Chablais.³ At the same time, Claude de Granier the Bishop of Geneva, was asking his priests to take up the perilous work of evangelising the region of Chablais and bringing people back to the Catholic faith. Young Francis, only in his twenties and recently ordained, was the only one ready to take up this difficult mission.⁴ This mission lasted almost four years (1594-1598). In these four years, he faced innumerable challenges which changed his life as well as the missionary perspectives of the Catholic Church itself.

The first of his many challenges to accepting the Chablais mission was the opposition of his family, especially that of his father. His parents were completely against him taking up this mission.⁵ As Provost, he enjoyed all the powers and privileges attached to this office. Therefore, his family and friends could not understand his choice to leave his position as Provost for what they felt was a hopeless effort to convert Chablais.⁶ They believed the Calvinists would seek to defend their religion at any cost and would not be hesitant to kill him if necessary. It was well-known that Charles Emmanuel, the Duke of Savoy, was unable to establish this mission despite his military might, and so many questioned what Francis himself could accomplish. To dissuade him from his decision, they warned him of various dangers he might face, but Francis remained steadfast⁷.

Francis formally accepted the assignment of Chablais, becoming the second missionary to the area. His predecessor had attempted to re-establish parishes in the region but they were unsuccessful. Francis, aware of the setbacks his predecessors had faced, undertook the mission with complete trust and confidence in God.⁸

³ Cf. WEHL, Franz von Sales zwischen den Fronten, 152.

⁴ Cf. KLEINMAN, Saint Francis de Sales and the Protestants, 59.

⁵ Cf. NIGG, Vier große Heilige, 108.

⁶ Cf. BERGHUIS, Nichts so sehr als Mensch, 74.

⁷ Cf. RING, Die Mission in Chablais (1594-1598), 24.

⁸ Cf. RING, Die Mission in Chablais (1594-1598), 23.

From the very moment of his arrival in Chablais, he worked hard for the spiritual well-being of the people there. He had hoped to receive support from his cousin, Louis, who had accompanied him during the early years of his missionary work. But soon after starting the mission, Louis left and returned home. For the next couple of years Francis worked alone. The only proofs that he was a Catholic missionary were the letters from the Duke of Savoy and of his own bishop. This caused him difficulties, but he persisted and became an example to those facing obstacles in their missionary undertakings. One of his driving factors in working for the conversion of Chablais was his impression that since the Duke of Savoy was a Catholic, the inhabitants of Chablais should be Catholics too.⁹ Through perseverance and hard work, he was able to win over the hearts and minds of the people.

1.1 Geographical and Political Environment of Chablais

Chablais was part of the province of Savoy and was situated in the neighbourhood of Geneva. The city of Thonon was the centre of Savoy's religious, political, and cultural activities. It was also the hub for trade and business in the region. The significance of Thonon was such that the duke himself had his own assistant positioned there as a representative.¹⁰ It was a small area, situated on the northern side of Lake of Geneva and on the south side of the mountains of Faucigny. It was a small area of 10 miles long and 5 miles wide. Out of 25000 people living there, only 100 were Catholics. This area was shared between the Duke of Savoy and the King of France.¹¹ The war between the Duke of Savoy and the King of France had given the Calvinists of Geneva ample opportunity to take possession of Chablais and stamp out Catholicism from the area. Chablais had been traditionally Catholic for many centuries, but because of the invasion of the people from Geneva and Bern, it had fallen into the hands of the Calvinists. The citizens of Geneva had rejected the authority of the Catholic bishop and the duke; therefore, the repossession of Chablais became a priority for the Duke of Savoy.¹² Once Henry II assumed the throne of France after the death of Francis I, the Duke of Savoy regained possession of these provinces in a treaty established between them both. The treaty did not permit the re-establishment of the Catholic faith in this area. Nevertheless, when the duke got back to his territories, he believed that as long as the inhabitants adhered to a religion other than his, he could not trust them. He, therefore, desired to bring back Catholicism and wrote to

⁹ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales, 117.

¹⁰ Cf. RING, Die Mission in Chablais (1594-1598), 28.

¹¹ Cf. RING, Die Mission in Chablais (1594-1598), 22.

¹² Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales, 117.

Claude de Granier, the Bishop of Geneva, to send some learned and qualified missionaries to Chablais for the conversion these people. He promised the bishop that he would protect them and ordered letters to governors to support them.¹³

1.1.1 A Glance at the Missionary Environment of Chablais

Henry IV, the King of France, and Charles Emmanuel, the Duke of Savoy, had made an agreement in the year 1593. This returned sovereignty over the territories of Chablais back to the duke. The ceasefire, lasting between 1593 and 1598, had provided an opportunity for missionary activities. The political situation was also conducive for the missionary activities. The Duke of Savoy, a strong Catholic, was eager to re-establish the Catholic faith in Chablais, providing opportunity to the missionaries in the region of Chablais. In the years 1593-94 the duke requested the Bishop of Geneva, Claude de Granier, to send missionaries to Chablais.¹⁴ The duke assigned this area to the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Geneva. But the bishop considered that the religious situation of this area was entirely different from other parts of his diocese.¹⁵ There were only a few Catholics in the region of Chablais at that time. They were supported by a group of missionaries working there under the leadership of Francis Bochut. The duke, requiring a military presence on the French frontier, withdrew his military support from Chablais. Once troops were no longer present in the area, the Genevans started an offensive and Bochut, lacking army protection, felt insecure and abandoned his mission.¹⁶

The missionary situation of Chablais when Francis arrived was very critical. Churches were burned, abbeys were demolished, and crosses were prohibited. Only a few religious symbols remained. No priests were willing to go to this place and missionary activity was almost impossible. In the entire district of Savoy, only the parish of Les Allinges survived. This parish contained the only altar to celebrate the Holy Mass for the 80 Catholics that remained in this area.¹⁷ The lack of a Catholic presence enabled superstitions to flourish during this time. For example, farmers believed in black magic, witchcraft, and devils. Additionally, Catholics were considered possessed persons. As a child, Francis could see this area from his house and he knew the exact situation of this area. It was like an abandoned and deserted area. The missionaries could not receive any support there and it

¹³ Cf. MARSOLIER, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales* (vol.1), 126-127.

¹⁴ Cf. KLEINMAN, *Francis de Sales and the Protestants*, 58.

¹⁵ Cf. BERGHUIS, *Nichts so sehr als Mensch*, 73.

¹⁶ Cf. WEHRL, *Zwischen den Fronten*, 156.

¹⁷ Cf. LAJEUNIE, *Franz von Sales. Leben – Lehre - Werk*, 118-119.

was impossible to evangelise these areas. The inhabitants were very hostile to the mission.¹⁸ The council of the city of Thonon passed a resolution preventing people from attending Catholic services. It was detrimental to the Catholics to declare their allegiance to Rome.

1.1.2 Francis's Preparations for the Mission

When the duke, Charles Emmanuel, asked Granier, the Bishop of Geneva to send missionaries to Chablais for evangelisation, Bishop Granier found it difficult to find missionaries willing for this work. Bishop Granier called a diocesan Synod and presented the religious and moral situation of the people of Chablais and requested help from his priests. The duke also sent the bishop a letter explaining the religious situation and requested him to send missionaries to Chablais. The bishop tried to convince his priests that it would be very shameful to reject the call of the duke.¹⁹ The bishop had the following opinion about sending the missionaries to Chablais: "He did not believe it necessary to send in the first instance a great number of missionaries to Chablais; that a few would be sufficient to explore the country and feel the dispositions of the people with respect to their return to the Catholic Church; that depending to their success, more missionaries might be employed."²⁰

No one expressed interest in this call of the bishop. The entire assembly waited to hear Francis's reaction. As a last resort, the bishop directly requested Francis to take up this difficult mission of Chablais. Francis was quite sure that he would not get permission from his father to take up this mission. He presented his problems and difficulties to the bishop. The bishop was not deterred but insisted that Francis take up the mission. Francis could not refuse. He complied and expressed his willingness to take up this mission.²¹ In the next step, Francis was asked to select his associates, but no one offered their services except his cousin Louis. The bishop was concerned about sending just the two of them alone, but Francis believed that larger numbers of missionaries were not required at the beginning of the mission. Francis requested the prayers of his diocese and in the year 1594 he began his ministry in Chablais at the age of 27. Following four years Francis lived and worked in this region of Chablais.²²

¹⁸ Cf. NIGG, *Vier große Heilige*, 108.

¹⁹ Cf. MARSOLLIER, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales* (vol.1), 129.

²⁰ MARSOLLIER, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales* (vol.1), 132.

²¹ Cf. BERGHUIS, *Nichts so sehr als Mensch*, 72.

²² Cf. WEHL, *Zwischen den Fronten*, 156.

Knowing all the challenges he had to face in his ministry in Chablais, his first step was to take Our Lady as the special patroness of his mission. With fasting, night vigil and mortification he prepared for the mission.²³ He believed that he was called to this mission through the Holy Spirit. He also made a general confession to prepare himself for the mission. In his missionary journey, he took a Bible and a few other books, including the *Controversy of Robert Bellarmine*. His dress was very simple and free from all pretensions. He was going to the mission as if Jesus was sending his apostles into the field,²⁴ “I am sending you like sheep among the wolves. Therefore, be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves” (Mt 10, 16). It was the dream and vision of Francis to conquer Chablais. Before relocating to the mission, he received the paternal blessing of the bishop. He also went to his house and spent time in prayer. On 14th September 1594, Francis and his cousin Louis started their journey to Chablais after spending the night in prayer.²⁵

1.1.3 Opposition from his Family

Francis’s first challenge was to obtain permission from his father, Boisy. His father was vehemently against his traveling to Chablais as a missionary. It was very difficult for Francis to convince his father that his missionary endeavours in Chablais would succeed. Boisy never wanted his son to go to a godforsaken area like Chablais and he believed that his son would be murdered there. According to him, the decision of Francis was completely wrong. His father communicated these sentiments to Francis without any reserve. He told his son that the Chablais mission was not a well-thought-out plan and Francis should use his prudence before undertaking this mission. His father told him that if he had not seen the order of the bishop and duke, he would not have believed him.²⁶ With the God given authority as father, he ordered his son not to undertake the mission. His opposition had continued even during the early, unsuccessful years of the mission when he had written to the bishop asking that his son not be made a martyr there.²⁷ Trusting in the providence of God, Francis tried to convince his father about the importance of this mission. He told his father that he would fight with spiritual weapons and that his strength and courage would come from God. He explained to his father that obedience to the bishop was a necessity and that even if he had been sent to India or England, he would be ready to

²³ Cf. BERGHUIS, *Nichts so sehr als Mensch*, 77.

²⁴ Cf. LAJEUNIE, *Franz von Sales. Leben – Lehre – Werk*, 118.

²⁵ Cf. MIDATHADA, *Missionary Spirit of Saint Francis de Sales*, 24.

²⁶ Cf. MARSOLLIER, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales* (vol.1), 136.

²⁷ Cf. WEHRL, *Zwischen den Fronten*, 158.

accept. His father told him that if the mission was not successful, he himself would have to take the responsibility.²⁸

The next step for Francis was to bid farewell to his mother. When she heard about his plan to depart, she shed tears continuously. The night before his departure, he spent time in prayer with his parents.²⁹ The next morning, Francis and his cousin, Louis, started their journey for the mission. Soon after his departure, his father wrote to his friends asking them to advise Francis on the risks of the mission. His father understood the difficulties and struggles his son would face in Chablais, and so remained opposed to the mission and continued to try to make his son return home soon. For example, he sent a horse with a servant to take Francis back, but Francis sent the horse back.³⁰ His father even tried to replace his son with a Capuchin priest. During these days, the bishop had tried to convince Boisy with the letters from Francis that there was hope in the mission and that the people were slowly accepting the works and services of the mission. But Boisy would not give up his attempt to bring his son back. He strongly believed that the people of Chablais could only be won over to the Catholic faith by force and any attempt to convert them peacefully was a waste of effort and time. Therefore, his father refused to provide Francis with any support or essential provisions. His mother however was able to secretly provide him some support.

The violent disapprovals and angry outbursts of his father did not prevent Francis from undertaking this mission. Francis had accepted the fact that his father would not support his mission and maintained a steadfast and clear conscience. Boisy could not easily reconcile with the departure of Francis. When Francis went to see the bishop prior to his departure, his father was present but left furiously without saying a word.³¹ Francis accepted his father's disposition calmly and quietly. Ignoring the challenges raised by his father and other relatives, he began his mission. His father and family never understood his reasons for accepting the mission; throughout, the only family member who sought not to discourage him was his mother.

²⁸ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. Leben – Lehre – Werk, 119.

²⁹ Cf. BERGHUIS, Nichts so sehr als Mensch, 77.

³⁰ Cf. BERGHUIS, Nichts so sehr als Mensch, 122.

³¹ Cf. BERGHUIS, Nichts so sehr als Mensch, 74.

1.2 The Real Situation of the Mission of Chablais

As the missionaries reached Chablais, it was very difficult for them to find a place to stay. Almost all the parish houses were destroyed, others were in a very dilapidated condition, and it was extremely difficult for them to find an accommodation there. They finally found a castle in Les Allinges. Baron d' Hermance, the provincial governor for the Duke of Savoy resided there and he offered them his castle in which to stay. He was an intimate friend of the family of Sales and had a special regard for Francis. They were welcomed by him with great joy, and he entertained the new missionaries in a manner befitting his esteem for them and gave them lot of advice.³² Baron d' Hermance was not only famous for his military talents but he also possessed enough experience and understood the people who were entrusted to his care. His zeal for the Catholic religion was ardent. He advised the young missionaries how to go about with their work. He cautioned them that great prudence was required for the mission to succeed. He instructed them to start their mission in Thonon, the capital city of the province of Savoy. Francis and Louis listened carefully to him, accepted his advice, and followed it scrupulously.³³

It was the beginning of a challenging mission because the political situation was not favourable, resulting in great opposition and danger to them. Even though the duke could bring a military unit to this area, there would always be turmoil amongst the people themselves. Many in this area were forced to convert to Calvinism through intimidation, and others did not know to which religion they belonged.³⁴ These people had been reacting to any religious situation very precariously and they were fighting vehemently against the duke. Nevertheless, Francis decided to set out directly for them.

From his childhood onwards, Francis had learned much about the Calvinists. He knew their teachings and realized how difficult it was to convince them to convert. Although he was going there with political and religious powers supporting his mission, commissioned by the bishop and had the approval of the duke, he knew that no one was ready to accept him. There were many instances of him feeling lonely during the mission, and he occasionally thought of retreating home.³⁵ When the time came for him to take formal responsibility for the mission, Francis settled in the problematic area of Thonon. His cousin took up a nearby residence in Les Allinges. They were like Abraham and Lot.

³² Cf. MARSOLLIER, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales* (vol.1), 144.

³³ Cf. MARSOLLIER, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales* (vol.1), 145-147.

³⁴ Cf. LAJEUNIE, *Franz von Sales. Leben- Lehre- Werk*, 120.

³⁵ Cf. LAJEUNIE, *Franz von Sales. Leben- Lehre- Werk*, 123.

Francis went there not as an experienced missionary, but as someone who needed to inquire and learn about the city and its peoples, and act accordingly and responsibly in order to support his commissioned task. Francis's aim was the total conversion of Chablais despite the strong opposition he could face from the Calvinists.

1.2.1 The Initial Difficulties

When Francis began the mission, Chablais had been under the control of the Calvinists for almost 48 years. Despite his spirit and zeal when entering the mission, he was not readily accepted by the people.³⁶ When Francis reached the city of Thonon, the Catholic assistant of the duke, Claude Marin, allowed him to call a meeting at his house. The meeting included several important Catholic figures from the city.³⁷ On 18 September 1594, Francis made his first homily, directly attacking the Calvinists. They, upon hearing about about the homily, wanted to get rid of him. His father came to know about the Calvinists seeking retribution and wanted to bring his son and cousin back home. He sent his servant Roland to escort Francis, but only Louis returned.³⁸ Influential people like Baron d` Hermance invited the public to hear Francis's homilies, but the Calvinists made a collective decision not to attend the homilies of Francis. The situation was very difficult for Francis. Almost everyone in Chablais accepted Calvinistic doctrine and was not open to accepting other religious teachings. Francis didn't immediately realize the strong opposition he would face and did not grasp that his life was under constant danger. His homilies failed to have any positive impact on this perilous situation.³⁹

During the early years, Bishop Granier thought about bringing Francis back to Annecy because he did not get any positive news about the progress of the mission. The political situation in Savoy was consistently unstable and brought anxiety and fear to the people of Chablais. This instability affected the missionary activities of Francis.⁴⁰ Francis did not have many provisions during his mission. He maintained a very simple life in the Fortress of Les Allinges, where he stayed in a dark room without even candlelight. He often found solace in the fortress's chapel. The first year of the mission was a complete disappointment for Francis. He lived in the fortress and travelled daily from there to Thonon. He rose very early in the morning and walked many hours to reach his destination, returning very tired

³⁶ Cf. FEHLEISON, *Boundaries of Faith*, 55.

³⁷ Cf. BERGHUIS, *Nichts so sehr als Mensch*, 78.

³⁸ Cf. RING, *Die Mission in Chablais (1594-1598)*, 29.

³⁹ Cf. FEHLEISON, *Boundaries of Faith*, 53-55.

⁴⁰ Cf. BERGHUIS, *Nichts so sehr als Mensch*, 82.

in the evening. He often felt that these journeys were futile because no one came to listen to him. He felt that he had been sent to the midst of excessive hardship and difficulty. He slowly came to an understanding of the seriousness of the situation and realized that it might be impossible to evangelise the area and it might even cost him his life.⁴¹

1.2.2 The Situation of the Churches and Parishes

From the very first day, Francis realized that it would be a great challenge for him to re-establish the destroyed churches and parishes. At first, there was no hope of re-establishing this mission. Francis and his cousin Louis were disappointed by the appearance of the parish churches. What were left in Boringe were some ruins of the parish church. In Brens, the church had no floor and in some other places the bells had already been sold. The church in Lully had a roof, but no floor, altar stone or crucifix. Most of the places of worship were in a dilapidated condition or in complete ruins.⁴² In the entire district of Thonon, there was only one church with 80 Catholics. Fifty of these were from Thonon and others were from other areas of the region. The city of Thonon contained two historically significant churches: Saint Hippolytus and Saint Augustin. But even these two were not in a condition to host holy services. Throughout Thonon, the abandoned churches and parishes were sad testaments to the current situation.

Out of the 64 churches of Chablais, most of them were partially or fully destroyed and many had no altars or crosses. Even worse was the spiritual situation of the people, who had been forced to change their faith many times because their rulers often changed their faith between Catholicism and Calvinism. Most of the churches were plundered or destroyed and there was not even a single cross there as the mark of the old faith. Everywhere there were only Calvinist pastors.⁴³ The Holy Mass and ecclesiastical practices were forbidden. Altars, crosses, statues, and other sacred images had been destroyed. Friars were forced to shut down their monasteries. Priests and monks were chased away from this area. The properties of those who opposed the Calvinist rule were confiscated.⁴⁴ Almost all parishes lost their properties. The churches were in ruins, crosses overturned, and both castles and villages lay waste. It was the earnest desire of Francis to recover the lost properties of the parishes.

⁴¹ Cf. WAACH, Franz von Sales, 179.

⁴² Cf. RING, Die Mission in Chablais (1594-1598), 28.

⁴³ Cf. RAVIER, Franz von Sales, 43-35.

⁴⁴ Cf. MIDATHADA, Missionary Spirit of Saint Francis de Sales, 2.

1.2.3 Scarcity of Priests

In the year 1589, as a first attempt to evangelise Chablais, the Bishop of Geneva sent 50 priests for the conversion of Chablais and to re-establish the parishes. However, it was a total failure. Some lost their lives and the others escaped. When Francis arrived in Chablais, he faced great difficulty in his mission and, because of this; other priests were not ready to join him despite his need for them.⁴⁵ Francis understood that he needed the help of missionaries for the conversion of the Calvinists. In his inaugural address, Francis stressed the importance of converting Chablais to Catholicism, but the missionaries and priests were not ready to accept the difficult mission. In 1595, when Francis was in Chambery, he asked the Jesuits and Capuchins to send a suitable number of missionaries for the mission in Chablais.⁴⁶ During the first two years of his missionary work, he worked mostly alone, because the other missionaries were sent to adjacent areas. Time and again, Francis requested the support of Jesuit and Capuchin missionaries, but to no avail.

After the unsuccessful mission of Bochet, the predecessor of Francis, the duke believed that the mission should start somewhere in the nearby area of Thonon. His companion, Louis, went back to Annecy after having worked in the mission for some time. As more and more Calvinists were eventually converted to Catholicism, a greater number of priests were required to fulfil the pastoral needs of the people. Realizing this, he wanted to secure the mission with sufficient missionaries. When the bishop asked the missionaries to travel to Chablais, most of them remained silent because of their previous experience.⁴⁷ Only a few missionaries decided to take up the call and joined the mission. There were no houses for them to reside in and no churches to celebrate the Holy Mass. In the course of time although many Calvinists came back to the Catholic faith, it was still not possible for the bishop to tend the spiritual needs of the people by constructing enough churches and providing necessary catechism to children.

1.2.4 The Unfriendly Attitude of the Local People

When Francis first reached Chablais, the people were not ready to welcome him because they were afraid of political retaliation from the rulers of Geneva. They were willing even to strike him. The Calvinists had succeeded in convincing the people that Francis and

⁴⁵ Cf. ORENSBY, St. Francis de Sales, 28.

⁴⁶ Cf. RING, Die Mission in Chablais (1594-1598), 34.

⁴⁷ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. Leben – Lehre - Werk, 118.

Louis were possessed by the Devil.⁴⁸ When Francis started his mission in Chablais, his first attempt was to evangelize by preaching in Thonon. The duke was afraid of deteriorating the situation and starting another war.⁴⁹ People viewed the mission of Francis with great suspicion, and he had no public credentials to support his right to evangelize other than the letters from the bishop and the duke. People resisted his mission and preaching. When the city council of Thonon passed a resolution prohibiting people from attending his sermons, Francis felt completely isolated.⁵⁰ He had believed that his homilies were his best chance to attract and gain the attention of the people. To support Francis, the influential Catholics of Thonon tried to bring people to his homilies, but Calvinists in Thonon swore they would not allow the public to hear his homilies. Although the Calvinists sought to discourage him from his ministry, the struggles and obstacles he faced increasingly motivated him to continue his mission.⁵¹

Francis faced threats to his life from the Calvinists. He was offered protection by the soldiers of Baron d' Hermance, but Francis rejected it. The constant threats did not stop him from continuing his ministry and, with renewed energy and enthusiasm, he pursued in his mission.⁵² Once, he had a mystical experience where he heard a voice from above stating that he would never experience martyrdom but would become an instrument of his martyrdom. From that moment onwards, he decided to die for the salvation of the people.⁵³ He was greatly disappointed by the attitude of the people: "The town people demurred that the duke did not wish them to have any dealings with missionaries and Francis de Sales's protest they replied that if the duke had indeed wanted them to be converted, he would have let them know."⁵⁴

A few Catholics who had not accepted the Calvinistic faith gathered together in the church of St. Hippolytus. Even though he invited Calvinists, none of them, not even the simple farmers from the village, turned up.⁵⁵ People were not ready to hear his homilies nor seek counsel from him or listen to anything he said. The people of Chablais had a very negative attitude towards Rome. Additionally, they believed that they had to persist in their Calvinist faith to preserve their political rights and privileges. Therefore, they were not

⁴⁸ Cf. EBNER, *Die Liebe genügt: Franz-von-Sales-Erzählungen*, 38.

⁴⁹ Cf. LAJEUNIE, *Franz von Sales. Leben – Lehre - Werk*, 122.

⁵⁰ Cf. KLEINMAN, *Saint Francis de Sales and the Protestants*, 60.

⁵¹ Cf. CONGAR, *Franz von Sales*, 36.

⁵² Cf. FEHLEISON, *Boundaries of Faith*, 55.

⁵³ Cf. LAJEUNIE, *Franz von Sales. Leben – Lehre - Werk*, 127.

⁵⁴ KLEINMAN, *Saint Francis de Sales and the Protestants*, 72,

⁵⁵ Cf. WEHL, *Zwischen den Fronten*, 161.

ready to accept the preaching of the missionaries. When the inhabitants heard that the missionaries had arrived, they threatened to attack them with weapons. People considered that their rights were associated with Calvinism. Francis faced complete indifference from some of the people there. In actuality, the people whom Francis sought to convert were good, but they were misinformed and had been misled by the Calvinists. Therefore, it was very difficult for Francis to convince them to listen to him and accept Catholic convictions. They believed that their freedom was very much associated to the Calvinist faith.⁵⁶

1.2.5 Lack of Proper Political Support

Francis asked the authorities to persuade people to come to his homilies, even if it required coercion. Many times, he did not receive the needed political support. Charles Emmanuel, the Duke of Savoy, wanted to convert Chablais to the Catholic faith, but he was not ready to provide enough supplies or political effort required for this task. He was very reserved in publicly acknowledging the missionary efforts of Francis. He was also hesitant to take legal action against Huguenots to force their conversion.⁵⁷ According to Francis, those who hesitated to convert to Catholic faith had to be offered some kind of incentives. He reasoned that the younger persons could be enticed to Catholicism by being allowed to form into special troops. On several occasions, Francis had asked the duke to allow such considerations.⁵⁸ Although there was peace in this region between 1593 to 1598, there remained a question of how long it would continue. There was also a fear amongst the people that if they were converted to Catholicism, parts of Bern or Geneva would seek to avenge their conversion.

At this time, neither the Catholic Church nor Protestants were free from political interference. Francis put forth the traditional Catholic principle of “one state, one law, and one king”. This principle enabled him to tell the duke that if people were not ready to come back to the Catholic faith, they should not be allowed to take part in public functions. However, he later changed his opinion because of his missionary objectives and wrote that people should be converted only through teaching and preaching. He wanted the parishes to be re-established and desired that missionaries be allowed to move freely among districts. The Duke of Savoy remained distant in his support to provide the military assistance to his mission. But Francis pursued his mission objectives slowly but steadily.

⁵⁶ Cf. ORENSBY, St. Francis de Sales, 31.

⁵⁷ Cf. FEHLEISON, Boundaries of Faith, 58.

⁵⁸ Cf. WEHRL, Franz von Sales im Dienst der Kirchendiplomatie, 26f.

Even though Francis had the backing of the duke, the duke's personnel did not want to mix religious and political affairs. They also did not care if this resulted in two priests losing their lives. It was just two lives, as far as they were concerned, and it was nothing to them.⁵⁹ After many months, the bishop began to become concerned whether the mission would succeed, and whether there was any meaning in continuing the mission. He asked Francis to provide a report, detailing developments of the mission. In response to his bishop, Francis described the current situation of the mission, depicting various setbacks he had faced. When he attended the diocesan synod, many asked him how successful the mission was without considering the hardships he had faced.⁶⁰ Lacking proper support, he placed his trust in the providence of God.

1.2.6 His Loneliness and Disappointments in the Mission

Francis faced numerous setbacks in his missionary activities in Chablais and often he felt lonely and abandoned. He often had no one to speak with when returning to his residence after missionary work in the evenings. Hardly anyone listened when he preached, and he often felt as if he was talking to the walls. Francis felt as if he was in solitary confinement. On various occasions, he was very disappointed in the progress of the mission and contemplated giving it up. In 1595, in a letter to Bishop Claude de Granier, he wrote that he felt like an ailing person and was unsure of his health. He wrote a similar letter to his friend Peter Possevino. After almost seven months of preaching every Sunday and feast days in Thonon, his homilies had converted no heretics.⁶¹ This was a personal disappointment that affected him a lot. Initially, he had thought that he would need only four months of ministry in Chablais to achieve the desired goal of conversion. He felt overwhelmed from his missionary work and began to feel powerless to do anything to change the tide.

From the onset of his ministry in Chablais, he desired to establish personal contact with everyone. As a priest, he tried to reach out to the people directly, but their response was not initially positive. His kindness and cordiality did not melt the hearts of the people, and their unfriendly attitude remained. They even went so far as to make false accusations against him, distancing people further away from him. Despite exhaustive efforts to win over people, the mission seemed to be fruitless and disappointing. When people refused to

⁵⁹ Cf. WAACH, Franz von Sales, 178.

⁶⁰ Cf. WAACH, Franz von Sales, 186.

⁶¹ Cf. WEHL, Zwischen den Fronten, 166.

come to hear his homilies, he would try to gain their attention by approaching them on market days, to try to get to know them better. But this too was futile as they were obstinate to the point of refusing to provide him with even lodging or accommodation of any kind.⁶² Francis also tried in vain to get support from his fellow priests in the diocese since some began to doubt his sincerity to his mission.⁶³

The Calvinists issued strong orders for people to not listen to Francis or to have any communication with him. When this ban was formally executed, Francis became completely isolated.⁶⁴ Even when preaching, there was no one to listen to him and he often felt he was preaching to nature. Hardly anyone supported him and his initial periods of travel throughout Thonon were without any hope. The Calvinists, at least initially, had succeeded in blocking him from progressing in his mission.

1.3 The Theological Challenges of Francis as a Missionary in Chablais

Francis faced together with physical challenges the intellectual as well as theological challenges during his mission and ministry in Chablais. During those years the theology of Martin Luther questioned almost all the existing structures of the Church. Francis had to really fight with this issue. Calvinists felt that the Word of God needed to be proclaimed from every church. They were aware of the main abuses and anomalies of the Church of that time. The greatest challenge of Francis was to defend the holiness of the Church in the midst of Calvinistic criticisms. He addressed the condemnations as best as he could. According to him, the Church is holy, but there can be unholy persons and elements in the Church. He felt that the Church is the work of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit always renews the Church.⁶⁵

Francis often spoke about the four qualities of the Church that separated it from the Protestant churches. He preached that the Church is One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic. These are the four fundamental marks of the Church. He proclaimed to Protestants that any deviation from it was an incorrect teaching. He answered various questions about the Catholic faith, formulating answers explaining the basic teachings of the Catholic Faith. Another important point of contention for Protestants was the succession of Peter. Francis

⁶² Cf. WOOLSEY, *Two sides to St. Francis*, 393.

⁶³ Cf. WOOLSEY, *Two sides to St. Francis*, 393.

⁶⁴ Cf. MARSOLLIER, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales Bishop* (vol.1), 157.

⁶⁵ Cf. MARSOLLIER, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales Bishop* (vol.1), 122.

looked at this from an ecclesiastical perspective and taught that the function of Peter is solely for the welfare of the Church.⁶⁶ According to Francis, the infallibility of the Pope is applicable only in relation to the Scripture. The Pope, he taught, is the universal shepherd of the sheep and has directly received the command from the Jesus - through Peter - to feed the sheep. He reasoned that the pope is appointed as the shepherd of the folk.⁶⁷

1.3.1 To Stress the Importance of the Sacraments especially the Holy Eucharist

In order to stress the importance of the Holy Eucharist, Francis gave a series of homilies. From the mission he wrote to his friends inviting them to hear his homilies about the Eucharist. Slowly even the Calvinists started to come to hear his homilies. By the end of 1595 there were a lot of Calvinists who came to hear the homilies of Francis and to discuss questions regarding faith with him.⁶⁸ Francis stressed the communal and ecclesial aspects of the Eucharist. It was a challenge for him to preach to the Calvinists about the real presence of the Lord in the Eucharist. In preparation for his preaching, he made brief meditations on the Apostles Creed.

When reformers questioned the Sacraments, Francis gave concrete replies grounded in the Holy Scriptures. According to Francis, there was ample evidence in the Bible supporting the Sacraments, such as Paul speaking about the sacramentality of marriage. The ancient Church, Francis taught, even used the term 'sacrament'. It is evident that the famous Calvinist leader Ulrich Zwingli and others wanted to reject Sacraments.⁶⁹ Zwingli was a famous leader of the reformation in Switzerland, who placed the authority of the scripture above everything.⁷⁰ In order to stress the importance of the Eucharist, Francis relied upon St. Paul's Letter to the Corinthians to explain the Last Supper including Jesus's instructions to institute the Eucharist (1 Corinthians 11, 23-25).

For a long time, Catholic instruction had not been provided to the children of Chablais. So, Francis made a special effort to ensure that Catholic instruction to the children should be started again. In his book, *The Controversies*, he writes extensively about the importance of the sacraments. According to him, even the first Christian community used the term 'sacrament'. He argued that sacraments have a healing effect on the life of

⁶⁶ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. *Leben- Lehre- Werk*, 141.

⁶⁷ Cf. VON SALES, *Kontroverschriften* 1, 177-180

⁶⁸ Cf. RING, *die Mission in Chablais (1594-1598)*, 35.

⁶⁹ Cf. VON SALES, *Kontroversschriften*-1, 250.

⁷⁰ Cf. C. MACMAHON, *Ulrich Zwingli and the Beginning of Reformed Tradition*.

Christians. In this book, he made a clear separation between the sacraments and homilies.⁷¹ According to him, when St. Paul spoke of the Last Supper, he had never preached that the homilies and sacraments must be given together. For example, Francis claimed, Jesus had given a homily that was not a part of the institution of the Last Supper. He felt the Calvinist preachers were trying to connect the homily and sacraments together, and that this went against the very essence of the sacraments. He felt that the Protestants' detestation of the sacraments went against the very spirit of the Scriptures.⁷²

1.3.2 To Refute the Arguments of the Calvinists

Francis took every opportunity to explain the difference between the Catholic and Protestant faiths. When Francis conducted 40 hours of adoration in Thonon, there was an atmosphere of reflection and absolute silence throughout Geneva. A large group of people had gathered to participate in the adoration. According to Francis, what separated Calvinists from the Catholic Church were their doctrinal errors. He also defended the authority of the Church and taught that because Calvinists did not adhere to Catholic tradition and lacked allegiance to Rome, their teachings were unlawful. He asserted that Catholic teachings were sourced from the Bible. He also warned that translating the Bible would result in different interpretations from region to region.

Francis, a product of the Jesuit educational system, had determined that he could win over the Calvinists by studying their teachings in an effort to refute them.⁷³ After obtaining special permission from Rome to study Calvinist doctrine, he gained a deep knowledge of their faith by reading their religious and historical books. Some of these books were borrowed from the library in Chambery, and others he received from persons like Poncet and Avully.⁷⁴ From his studies, he deduced that Calvinist preachers spoke with the specific intention of criticising the Catholic faith. After immersion into Calvinist theology, he attended several debates with Theodor de Beze, a leading successor of Calvin.⁷⁵ During these debates, Francis raised issues with Calvinist theology and was able to articulate in his defence of the Catholic faith. Beze could not adequately answer many of the objections of Francis to Calvinist doctrine. Francis was able to publicly express the fact that the Calvinist faith lacked fundamental biblical truths. According to Beze, new preachers could

⁷¹ Cf. VON SALES, *Kontroversschriften*-1, 252-255.

⁷² Cf. VON SALES, *Kontroversschriften*-1, 253.

⁷³ Cf. WEHL, *Zwischen den Fronten*, 163.

⁷⁴ Cf. WEHL, *Zwischen den Fronten*, 164.

⁷⁵ Cf. NIGG, *Vier große Heilige*, 110.

be established only if they gained permission by existing ones. Francis refuted this idea by stating that leaders like Martin Luther, Calvin and Zwingli had not been commissioned or approved by others. Francis was able to demonstrate that other Calvinistic teachings were clearly new and unfounded in historical tradition.

Francis was very critical of the Calvinists and opposed their claims of authority. He argued that Calvinists were a group without clear theological foundations. He also criticized their lack of the apostolic succession and stated they did not possess the ecclesiastical authority either to preach or teach. He explained that apostolic succession originated from the laying of hands by the Apostles and continued in this manner throughout history. He argued that without apostolic succession, Protestants could not be commissioned and did not possess the ordinary and extraordinary rights to preach. According to him, Jesus needed to be commissioned by His Heavenly Father prior to beginning his ministry; therefore, a commission from apostolic successors was required to claim legitimacy. He argued that since Protestants could not legitimately obtain a commission, they had no authority to teach and convert. Francis argued that Protestants had no authority to profess theological truths and lacked the directive to convert anyone.⁷⁶

1.3.3 To Instruct and Teach the People the True Catholic Faith

Francis understood that the people of Chablais had not only accepted Calvinist teachings, but that they also held many superstitions and were prone to supernatural beliefs. They believed that accepting the Pope as the religious head was a sign of demonical possession. They also could not understand truths such as the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. In an effort to reach them during the early years of his ministry, Francis often preached to them on the streets rather than celebrating Mass.⁷⁷ The Calvinists had raised several objections that questioned the foundational teachings of the Church. Francis responded by providing a clear defence of the Catholic faith. One point of contention was the veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints. The Calvinists claimed that the Church worshipped the pictures and relics of the saints. Francis countered by explaining that the Church believed that the salvific actions of Jesus had imparted the graces to saints, permitting them to work in our lives. In this regard, he had given solid arguments for the veneration of the saints and relics.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Cf. VON SALES, *Kontroversschriften I*, 27-31.

⁷⁷ Cf. LAJEUNIE, *Franz von Sales. Leben- Lehre- Werk*, 121.

⁷⁸ Cf. VON SALES, *Kontroversschriften-1*, 315-317.

Francis relied upon the decrees issued by the Council of Trent to support his teachings. His arguments were based on dogmatic and spiritual truths and others were unable to counter him. His clear and concise justifications surprised the Calvinists and allowed him to reach the hearts and minds of many. An example of a person affected by Francis's teaching was Pierre Poncet. Francis had provided him with personal instruction from the *Catechism of Peter Canisius*, after which he was able to deflect various Calvinist heresies.⁷⁹

When Francis started his mission in Chablais, he did take along with him books to refute the arguments of the Calvinists. From his Jesuit education, he had gained sufficient foundational knowledge to dispute the arguments of the Calvinists. He strongly believed that the Catholic Church is the only true Church. According to Francis, leaving the Church was equivalent to the New Testament's concept of becoming a tax collector or a pagan. Christians are called together because of the Word of God and are united by the preaching of the apostles and their successors. The Church is a holy gathering that professes the same faith, participates in the same sacraments, and remains obedient to Jesus Christ and his successors: the pope and his bishops.⁸⁰

1.3.4 To Protect and Stress the Important Structures of the Church

The Calvinists questioned almost all the structures of the Church. Francis confronted this in his discussions by teaching that the Church is a community of believers who believe in the same faith, participate in the same Sacrament, and proclaim obedience to the bishops. This union is of an ecclesiastical origin. As such, the Church cannot be held responsible for personal incidents committed by individuals behaving on their own accord. Francis argued that the Church acts as a singular whole, so it is counterproductive to focus undue attention on individual clergy members. The Calvinists could not refute the logical arguments of Francis. Another aspect Francis had to defend was the holiness of the Church. Francis taught that holiness of the Church is a gift from the Holy Spirit. He argued that because Jesus is holy, then the Church, the bridegroom of Jesus, by rational deduction must also be holy.⁸¹

According to him, any teaching separated from Catholic Church cannot be correct. There are two types of truths in the Church: formal and informal. The formal truth is the

⁷⁹ Cf. WEHL, FRANZ VON SALES zwischen den Fronten, 164.

⁸⁰ Cf. VON SALES, Kontroversschritten-1, 39-42.

⁸¹ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. Leben- Lehre- Werk, 138.

Word of God and the informal one is the ecclesial interpretation of the offices of the Church. Both truths derive from the infallibility of the Church.⁸² Another issue of contention between Calvinists and Catholics was the succession of Peter. According to Francis, the office of the Pope was created not for the benefit of the individual holding the post, but instead for the good of the Church via authority granted to the Vicar of Christ. Francis stated that, similar to other governing bodies, the Church could not always depend on calling a council every time it faced issues; therefore, she needed someone to readily protect it.⁸³

According to his teaching, the infallibility of the Pope could only be valid when inspired by the Holy Spirit to address and clarify matters of faith. He preached that the Church was founded by Jesus and his apostles, and that the succession of bishops was granted the same authority as the apostles. Another issue that Calvinists had with the Church was its dogma on the celibacy of priests. There was a lady in his audience who considered celibacy as a form of priestly persecution from Rome. Despite the sensitivity to this question, he was calm and explained to her that a family would preclude him from conducting his missionary obligations, as well as attending to people like her. Having gained much satisfaction and understanding from his answer, she returned to the Catholic faith.⁸⁴ These are concrete examples of Francis supporting the institutions and core teachings of the Church.

1.3.5 Opposition from the Calvinists Pastors

During the Reformation, Luther had questioned the institutions of the Catholic Church. He questioned both the visible and invisible elements of the Church, including the evil practices of its religious leaders. For example, many priests and monks had clandestine concubines and illegitimate children. Luther questioned whether such an intrinsically sinful Church could claim to be the body of Christ on Earth. Francis had to address these and other issues during his missionary work in Chablais.

When Francis began his mission in Thonon, a Calvinist pastor, Ludwig Viret, was appointed as the pastor of the city. When news reached Viret that Francis was preaching against Calvinistic doctrines, he expressed his displeasure and hurled insults directly at Francis. This was a very difficult situation for Francis, but he remained calm and directed

⁸² Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. *Leben- Lehre- Werk*, 139.

⁸³ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. *Leben- Lehre- Werk*, 140.

⁸⁴ Cf. WAACH, Franz von Sales. *Das Leben eines Heiligen*, 194f.

his cousin to do so as well. As an envoy and representative of the bishop, he faced opposition from all corners. When the governor of Thonon sought to bring people to hear his homilies, the Calvinist pastors strictly opposed it. They swore that neither they nor their congregation would listen to Catholic homilies.⁸⁵

When Francis travelled, he often went door to door to discuss the Catholic faith. He faced severe opposition for doing this. For example, when he travelled to Annecy, its people tried to persuade the bishop to order Francis's return. The opposition he endured inspired him to write letters to Calvinist pastors. Francis hoped his letters would enable the pastors to reflect on his mission and support him. Later, these letters were collected and codified in a book called *The Controversies*.⁸⁶ Facing enduring opposition, he hardened in his opposition to Calvinism. He wrote Anton Favre saying, "I will more strongly force them, because I have reached the end of my power and now I need the necessary permission to do it."⁸⁷ The Calvinists tried their best to avoid encounters with Francis due to his mastery in defending the Catholic faith. According to him, Calvinism was not only a religious heresy but also a political liability. Francis held meetings with Protestant pastors. One such meeting was described in the following manner: "The affair being reported only by the friends of Francis, it is needless to say that the wretched Protestant was overwhelmed with argument at all points; fanatic with rage, he broke out in a torrent of insulting language."⁸⁸

1.4. Personal Oppositions and Assaults against Francis

There was a constant danger of physical violence by Calvinists, and, on other occasions, they hurled insults at him. Francis knew very well the risk to his life, and he was ready to lay down his life for the mission and his people. On his missionary journeys, he often had to take byroads to avoid detection. In spite of these attacks and abuses, he remained calm and continued his ministry.⁸⁹ He believed that if God was with him, nothing evil would ever happen to him. In Thonon he was offered the protection of Catholic soldiers by Baron d' Hermance, but Francis declined this offer and told the Baron that he would rather abandon the mission than preach under the protection of the military. According to Francis, it would give the impression that the conversions took place with the help of the military.

⁸⁵ Cf. RAVIER, Franz von Sales, 36.

⁸⁶ Cf. CONGAR, Franz von Sales, 37.

⁸⁷ CONGAR, Franz von Sales, 42.

⁸⁸ L. WOOLSEY, Two sides to a St. Francis, 393.

⁸⁹ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. Leben- Lehre- Werk, 134,

He declared that he had entered Chablais as an apostle of Christ and was determined to keep that character and would never employ any means other than the word of God.⁹⁰ Kings and princes could use military pressures to convert people but not him. Francis, himself, knew many people who had to abandon their religion because of violent intervention by authorities. Therefore, he decided to endure the insults of the Calvinists who called him a hypocrite, idolater, and false prophet. In a letter dated 27 November, 1594 he wrote: "Today I will start to preach to four or five people; others are keeping malice against me and do not want hear the meaning of Advent."⁹¹

1.4.1. Various Incidents of Physical Attack against Francis

Various incidents of physical attacks against Francis are noted in his biography. Every morning Francis used to go to the chapel of St. Stephan in Marin on the other side of the Lake of Geneva. One day, Francis and his three companions were on the road to Les Allinges when they were attacked by robbers. The missionaries managed to maintain their calm and no one was injured. Mr. Boisy came to know about this incident and he asked his son to come back to Annecy.⁹² When the conversions slowly started, the Calvinists became all the more annoyed. When Avully and Poncet, two important Calvinistic personalities, became Catholics, and started to persuade other Calvinists to come back to the Catholic Faith, the Calvinists' anger knew no bounds. As Francis organised regular meetings and invited the Calvinists to his discourses, many of them came back to Catholic faith. To prevent more conversions, the Calvinists planned to kill a gentleman in whose house the meetings used to be held. Somehow, he came to know about their plot and managed to escape. Their next attempt was to take the life of Francis.

When the Calvinists realized they were no match for his logic and theological arguments, they resolved to assassinate him. Two assassins were sent to attack him on his return to Fort Les Allinges. On his arrival, they rushed Francis with drawn swords, but, on seeing his gentle and peaceful composure, they could not attack him.⁹³ On another occasion, some people surrounded the house where he was conducting a prayer service, intending to kill him, but he managed to hide and save himself.⁹⁴ Later on, when he started distributing pamphlets from house to house, the Calvinists became very angry and they

⁹⁰ Cf. MARSOLIER, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales* (vol.1), 154.

⁹¹ RAVIER, *Franz von Sales*, 36.

⁹² Cf. M. STACPOOLE KENNY, *St. Francis de Sales. A Biography of the Gentle Saint*.

⁹³ Cf. M. STACPOOLE KENNY, *St. Francis de Sales. A Biography of the Gentle Saint*.

⁹⁴ Cf. M. STACPOOLE KENNY, *St. Francis de Sales. A Biography of the Gentle Saint*.

sent people with weapons to attack him. Francis really believed it was his last day, but, boldly, looked his attackers in the eyes and walked away from them without showing any fear. The biographers of Francis narrate this incident as a real miracle.⁹⁵

On many occasions fanatics tried to shoot him down but it was unsuccessful. On another occasion, a Huguenot asked to talk to Francis, and he could not reject this offer. Francis had to travel a long distance through the forest in order to have this conversation with him. As he was returning that night to his residence in Les Allinges with his cousin and a servant, they lost their way. There were wolves and bears all around them and they had no choice but to seek shelter somewhere. They saw a ruined structure far away, which was one of the ancient churches the Calvinists had destroyed. They took refuge in it and while his companions rested, Francis stayed awake the whole night lamenting the fate of this temple of God.⁹⁶

Another occasion of conflict with the Calvinists was the restoration of the church of St. Hippolytus. He decided to open the church by Christmas of 1596. This announcement was a provocation to the Calvinists and they closed all the gates to prevent assistance coming to the Catholics and threatened to burn Francis at the centre of the city of Thonon. The Catholics, on the other hand, guarded Francis and protected his life. When the crowd had dispersed, Francis sent workers over and had the church restored. On the next day, both Catholics and Calvinists confronted each other for a fight but Francis intervened and pacified the Calvinists and told them that the Catholics needed at least one church for their spiritual needs.⁹⁷

1.4.2. False Accusations against Francis

The Calvinists tried every means possible to stop him from his missionary activities. They fabricated all sorts of lies about him and spread rumours that he was possessed by the devil and that anyone who converted to Catholicism would face the wrath of God and go mad. In those days, such accusations were very serious and the accused could face death. They branded him as an emissary of the devil and charged him with practicing witchcraft. The common people of Thonon believed in black magic and witchcraft, and some even believed that the Catholics were possessed by the devil. Some even tried to destroy him with black magic, while others wanted to burn him alive for practicing witchcraft. They

⁹⁵ Cf. WAACH, Franz von Sales. *Das Leben eines Heiligen*, 185.

⁹⁶ Cf. ORENSBY, St. Francis de Sales, 36.

⁹⁷ Cf. ORENSBY, St. Francis de Sales, 36.

looked upon the Pope as an Antichrist and bishops and priests as his agents. They looked upon Holy Mass as the profession of idolatry, and Catholic laws as tyranny.⁹⁸

The daily trip between Les Allinges and Thonon was burning all his energy out and he decided to move his residence to Thonon. This would give him more time for his ministries. The Calvinists did not like this and, for more than six months, they tried their best to send him back to Annecy, but he remained steadfast. Around this time, a pious Catholic lady called Madame de Foug offered him a room in Thonon. She also gave him a room in which to hide, in case Calvinists came to attack him. The very next day, armed men in masks came looking for him, but they could not find him. Before they left, they spread the rumour that he was in the protection of sorceress and people should be wary of him. The Calvinists pastors also spread these lies and people believed them. One night, while returning from Thonon, he and his companions lost their way. No one in the village would give them shelter, and they had to stay in the village bake house overnight.⁹⁹

1.4.3. Hunger, Poverty and Financial Problems

Finance is an important factor in the work of any mission. As Provost of the Diocese of Geneva, Francis had a decent life with financial stability, but, as a missionary, he lived a life of poverty. Even though he went to work in the mission at the behest of Bishop Granier, the financial help he got from him was meagre. Though Francis could use other methods, he decided to live in the spirit of poverty. He lived a poor life in the mission, deprived of all the resources. Even in the midst of his poverty, Francis used to share his meagre resources with the poor and, because of this, he often had to go hungry. Since he had left for the mission against his father's wishes, he could not expect any help from him either. At that time the finances of the state were bad, that of the diocese were even worse.¹⁰⁰ The duke and the bishop each expected the other to come up with the necessary resources, but neither did. Francis continued his work, relying on the providence of God. The thought that he was following the path of Jesus in his life of poverty made him happy and lent dignity to his life.

During his entire stay in Chablais he was plagued by financial problems. Whatever funds available to him were not sufficient to meet the needs of the parishes and for the maintenances of the clergy. He could not expect the amount to come from the treasury of

⁹⁸ Cf. MARSOLLIER, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales* (vol.1), 146.

⁹⁹ Cf. ORENSBY, *St. Francis de Sales*, 86.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. LAJEUNIE, *Franz von Sales. Leben- Lehre- Werk*, 132.

the duke.¹⁰¹ He requested the state to offer some benefits for those who were reluctant to convert to Catholicism. He also sought tax exemptions for the newly erected parishes and payment of pensions to those in hardship. When the conversions began, there was also another problem. Because of the change of faith, many people lost their jobs and Francis had to support them from his own livelihood. The duke had many military responsibilities at that time, and he was not able to give Francis any financial assistance to establish new parishes, organise different church activities or establish new colleges for the education of the youth.¹⁰² Whenever there was war there was destruction, and the duke had to spend money for reconstruction. It was the ordinary people who had to come up with the resources for the reconstruction. Savoy's main industry, cattle ranching, was almost destroyed because of the war and the people were on the verge of starvation.

His financial problems seemed insurmountable when it came to the establishment of the parishes and providing livelihood for priests.¹⁰³ The secular clergy was supported by the diocese of Geneva, and the Capuchins were supported by their congregation. Since people in the area were mostly Calvinists, there were hardly any church revenues that could be used for the maintenance of the Catholic parishes. Due to the war, the treasury of the duke was totally empty.¹⁰⁴ His only hope was that the mission would be supported by third orders like St. Mauritius or St. Lazar because they were in charge of almost all Church properties.¹⁰⁵ But the dealings with them were slow and difficult. The initial two years of discussions went nowhere and it took almost ten years to get the necessary funds from these orders. Francis even wrote to them that he needed the money not to enrich himself, but for the sustenance of the priests and for the survival the mission. He told them that without sufficient funds, it might be difficult to continue with the mission.¹⁰⁶

Once he wrote to his friend Antony Favre about his life in the mission. He described it as leading a poor life under a rich duke and a rich Church.¹⁰⁷ When more and more people came back to Catholicism, he asked for help from the diocese. He argued that without sufficient funds, the priests could not perform ministries or repair the churches destroyed by the Calvinists. New funds were needed to establish new projects and for the survival of

¹⁰¹ Cf. KLEINMAN, Saint Francis de Sales and the Protestants, 64.

¹⁰² Cf. WEHRL, Franz von Sales im Dienst der Kirchendiplomatie, 49.

¹⁰³ Cf. WEHRL, Franz von Sales im Dienst der Kirchendiplomatie, 50.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. KLEINMAN, Saint Francis de Sales and the Protestants, 68.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. RING, die Mission in Chablais (1594-1598), 33.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. WEHL, Zwischen den Fronten, 174.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. RAVIER, Franz von Sales, 55.

the priests. He still continued his work in the ministry with whatever resources he could find and was very content and satisfied in his life.¹⁰⁸

1.4.4. Fight against inclement Weather

Every day after celebrating Mass in Fort Les Allinges where Francis was residing, he walked to the mission. Even any inclement weather could not prevent him from travelling to the mission. During the hard winter of 1594-95, Francis had to go from Les Allinges to Thonon in freezing weather to deliver his homilies.¹⁰⁹ There were occasions when there was no one to hear his homilies, and he had to go from house to house knocking on doors. He was not disheartened when people refused even to open the door for him. He continued his work all through the freezing winter, at times crawling through the snow.¹¹⁰ Later on, he started to write pamphlets, but this did not make his work any easier as he had to travel from house to house to distribute them. Francis usually made his trip around the mission on foot. He was trying to imitate Jesus who had walked the streets of Judea and Galilee to spread his message.¹¹¹ On many occasions, while returning from the mission, he had lost his way and was compelled to spend the night in the open air with no one to help him. It was not easy for a high-born nobleman to live such a wretched life. He was continuously on the move in search of Catholics and, occasionally, he made contacts with some of the Calvinists. One day, while returning from his mission, he was attacked by wolves and he had to take refuge in a tree, spending the entire night tied to a branch. The next day some farmers found him cold and numb in the tree and rescued him.¹¹²

He used to travel from Allinges to Thonon in rough weather, when people of much sturdier build would not dare go out. Neither the extreme weather nor the horrors of the night could deter him from his daily trip to the mission. There were occasions when he almost froze to death. He took it all in the spirit of adventure, and no amount of warning could keep him from venturing out day after day. “Rain, snow or even the most furious blasts of winter were not sufficient to deter him from undertaking the journey.”¹¹³ One very cold night, he was on the verge of death by freezing, and he remained motionless until he recovered his strength; nothing could stop his missionary spirit. On reaching Thonon, it

¹⁰⁸ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. *Leben- Lehre- Werk*, 346.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. MADRID, *On a Mission. Lessons from St. Francis de Sales*.

¹¹⁰ Cf. NIGG, *Vier große Heilige*, 109.

¹¹¹ Cf. L. WOOLSEY, *Two sides to a St. Francis*, 390.

¹¹² Cf. BERGHUIS, *Nichts so sehr als Mensch*, 84.

¹¹³ MARSOLLIER, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales* (vol.1), 158-160.

was not uncommon for him to find no one there to listen to him. At other times, he lost his way in the snowstorm and wandered about. When he finally found his way to the village after great difficulty, people would not even open the door for him. Through all these tribulations he trusted in the providence of God to protect him. On another occasion, he faced terrible wind and rain. He tried to search for shelter but to no avail. He had to spend the whole night in the open air in freezing conditions, but miraculously survived. Francis always went on foot from village to village. After he started to live in Thonon, he used to go to Marin, a small village on the other side of the River Drance. In June 1596, the river was swollen and Francis had to cross the river on a plank. He never stopped saying the Mass, even if he had crawl on his hands and knees risking his life.¹¹⁴

1.4.5. Political Turbulences and Threat of War

The political turbulences in Chablais did not end even after the mission came to an end in the year 1598. “The conflicts between France and Savoy and the involvement of the neighbouring Protestants certainly impinged on the progress of de Sales’s mission though his determined efforts ultimately did bear some fruit.”¹¹⁵ The inhabitants of Chablais had always feared that retribution might come from Bern or Geneva if they converted back to the Catholic faith. In the year 1595, Francis had suggested to the duke that he take appropriate steps to ensure that the city was speedily converted. He also wanted the duke to write to the City Council of Thonon, so that people could make use of current opportunities to consult Catholic preachers to clarify their doubts and come back to their true faith. In the following year, he wrote to his friend Antoine Favre exhorting him to write similar letters to the City Council of Thonon. Unfortunately, both demands fell on deaf ears.¹¹⁶ Besides, Favre was not only exhorting conversion but he was also threatening consequences for anyone not converting to the Catholic Faith. Francis believed that political pressures could be used for conversion even though he believed in the separation of Church and State. Furthermore, he believed that Calvinism was a subversion of faith and it constituted a real threat to the Catholic Church.¹¹⁷

Francis’s efforts to convert Chablais also put tremendous pressure on the duke because it brought him in direct confrontation with Bern. There was a constant threat of war adding to the instability in the region and the duke was in no position to help Francis in any

¹¹⁴ Cf. ORENSBY, St. Francis de Sales, 43.

¹¹⁵ FEHLEISON, Boundaries of Faith, 57.

¹¹⁶ Cf. KLEINMAN, Saint Francis de Sales and the Protestants, 71.

¹¹⁷ Cf. KLEINMAN, Saint Francis de Sales and the Protestants, 132.

meaningful way.¹¹⁸ During the wars between Savoy with Bern, and between Geneva and France, Chablais changed hands at least four times. The truce between Savoy and France was only short lived and the hostilities continued. The negotiations for general peace were very slow. This political instability was not at all conducive to the conversion of people to Catholicism.¹¹⁹

1.4.6. His Sickness and his Absence from the Mission

The intensive strain of his work was beginning to take a toll on Francis's health, and he mentioned this fact to the Nuncio in a letter. However, his ill health did not deter him in any way from his numerous activities.¹²⁰ One day while visiting Annecy, he fell so ill that his companions lost all hope of his recovery. At that time, his mother came to visit him. The fear of God's justice and the thoughts of hell tormented him during his illness and he prayed for God's mercy. The canons of the cathedral came to administer the anointing of the sick to Francis. He lost consciousness for almost an hour and people around him thought that he was already dead. During this illness, he was confronted with doubts about the Eucharist and he called the name of Jesus in order to get rid of this temptation. Even though he escaped death this time, the healing process was long and slow.¹²¹

Though he had a strong constitution, he always suffered from poor blood circulation and in winter his condition worsened. His relentless fasting and hard work for the conversion of the Calvinists was slowly affecting his health. He did not get enough sleep and very often he had to sleep on the floor. Even in harsh winters he used to travel to the mission and his feet and legs used to be covered in sores. The greatest threat during this time was from the Calvinists themselves. They watched his every move and tried their best to frustrate his efforts in every way possible. Their distrust and hatred for Francis continued long after he had left active missionary work in the region.

1.5 Conclusion

Even though some of these challenges which Francis had to face in his mission were similar to those of many other missionaries, his courage and perseverance in the midst of

¹¹⁸ Cf. FEHLEISON, *Boundaries of Faith*, 57.

¹¹⁹ Cf. KLEINMAN, *Saint Francis de Sales and the Protestants*, 66-67.

¹²⁰ Cf. LAJEUNIE, *Franz von Sales. Leben – Lehre – Werk*, 176.

¹²¹ Cf. RAVIER, *Franz von Sales*, 49.

all the difficulties are really admirable.¹²² To achieve his goal, he was ready to face any challenges. An elaborate study of these challenges made him realize the enormity of the task ahead of him. The duration of his mission in Chablais was merely four years but the challenges he faced were innumerable. Probably no other mission in those times had so many struggles and difficulties. It is worthwhile to note how he faced these challenges singlehandedly. His total and unfailing trust in God was the driving force behind his missionary endeavours. On his very first visit to the province, he fell on his knees and with tears he begged God's blessings for their future residence and work in the province.¹²³ His noble birth and his high position in society were not an obstacle to him in facing the challenges. In all his struggles he had total dependence on his Master, Jesus Christ. In everything, he sought the will of God and the needs of the diocese and with Christian optimism he faced all his challenges.

One of the important things we must remember about Francis is that he was not ordered to go into this mission; on the other hand, it was his free choice. Therefore, he put his mind and heart into the mission and was ready to take up any challenges for the success of this mission.¹²⁴ In the midst of all these challenges, he was never disappointed but completely trusted in God. In his mission, each person was important to him. He went in to the mission to do the work of God, and in everything he did, he tried to realise that aim. We can find everywhere his total dedication to the mission. He was very firm regarding the foundations of faith. He was never ready to sacrifice his principles for his own success. In presenting his theological arguments, his tone was that of reconciliation, persuasiveness and eloquence. He was in the mission like a suffering martyr, courageously facing all struggles. In the mission, he was considered the religious and political enemy of the Calvinists. When it came to the salvation of souls there was nothing that would stand in his way. He remained steadfast where most others would have failed.

¹²² Cf. M. STACPOOLE KENNY, *St. Francis de Sales. A Biography of the Gentle Saint*.

¹²³ Cf. MARSOLLIER, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales* (vol.1), 141.

¹²⁴ Cf. NIGG, *Vier große Heilige* 108.

Chapter II

The Response of Francis to the Manifold Challenges: His Methods and Tactics in Dealing with the Challenges of his Time

2.0 Introduction

Francis came to the mission of Chablais as a very energetic and dynamic missionary, and he had developed his own method to win the hearts of the people. As a well-educated and noble man, he understood the signs of the time, and he had a far reaching vision about a wide range of things. He was open to everything, especially to the world. Accordingly, he was convinced that everything should be done out of love and not out of compulsion.¹²⁵ At the very outset of his mission, he had decided that he would approach everything with charity and fraternal love. His primary intention in taking up the mission was the well-being of his people in Chablais and he made everything possible for the well-being of the people, especially for their spiritual well-being. There was a lot of novelty in the methods of Francis and it was more of going into the heart of the people. Even before reaching the mission he was meticulously planning various ways and methods for the success of his mission. As it was his free choice to go to Chablais, he was ready to take up any challenges which might come his way. He worked solely for God and his mission. His method was very solid and concrete. The method he adopted in the mission was purely religious. Since people were not coming to hear his homilies, he decided to go to the people.¹²⁶

He was using many methods in order to tackle various challenges he was facing in the mission of Chablais, but he never used physical violence as a means of conversion. He was always against using physical force for the conversion of the Calvinists.¹²⁷ His method of converting the Calvinists was the same as his method for converting Catholics from worldly life: through love and compassion. He was influenced by the picture of Jesus, the good shepherd, and he wanted to be a good shepherd for the people of Chablais. He was fighting this war against Calvinists with spiritual weapons.¹²⁸ He wanted to help the people who had fallen into the hands of the Calvinists and wanted to bring them back to the true

¹²⁵ Cf. FRANCIS, *TOTUM AMORIS EST*.

¹²⁶ Cf. KLEINMAN, Saint Francis de Sales and the Protestants, 62.

¹²⁷ Cf. WEHRL, Franz von Sales im Dienst der Kirchendiplomatie, 36f.

¹²⁸ Cf. WEHRL, Franz von Sales im Dienst der Kirchendiplomatie, 80.

faith. After four years of hard work in this mission, he was even able to bring the duke, the bishop, and the cardinal to Thonon for the forty hours of adoration. Finally, his method became very successful and he was able to bring the whole of Chablais back to the Catholic fold.¹²⁹

The obstacles which stood in his way could not reduce his zeal; the obstacles inflamed his zeal. Because of his gentleness, meekness and his readiness for the dialogue with Calvinists, he could even break the enmity and hatred between the Catholics and Calvinists. It led slowly to the success of the mission. His method was in contrast to the method of the Calvinists. They had used force to conquer Chablais. But Francis had defeated the hatred and enmity with the weapon of love. His weapons were the Bible, breviary, rosary, the word of God, prayer and devotion to Mary.¹³⁰ This approach and method of Francis was even criticised by his friend, Anton Favre, because it was very gentle, peace-loving, slow and less rigorous. Francis was convinced that he was following the method of the Gospel. He was always in favour of peace and reconciliation.¹³¹

2.1 Francis: A Creative Evangeliser

As a creative evangeliser, Francis had two important missions in Chablais: to fight against Calvinist heresy and to bring people back to the Catholic fold. In his mission of achieving these objectives, he was using pure mission methodology of convincing the people with his arguments. In his attempt to bring back people to the Catholic fold, Francis suggested various ways and means to Charles Emmanuel, the duke of Savoy. He suggested the establishment of a troop so that the young men would be attracted to Catholic institutions. He also found that it was necessary to establish consistories to maintain the moral standards and public decency.¹³² In dealing with different challenges, he was very practical in his approaches but he was against changing any local custom or culture. Francis suggested further conversion measures, including a prohibition on sending children abroad for their education without the duke's permission and granting citizenship to the Catholic inhabitants of every town so that the Calvinists would lose their monopoly.¹³³ He was very oriented to making spirituality available to everyone to show that lay people could also

¹²⁹ Cf. EHRENBORG, Franz von Sales als Vorbild und Lehrer, 22.

¹³⁰ Cf. RUSSMANN, Ein Heiliger des Christlichen Humanismus, 24f.

¹³¹ Cf. F. CHORPENNING, What is the "Chablais Spirit"?, 3.

¹³² Cf. KLEINMAN, Francis de Sales and the Protestants, 77.

¹³³ Cf. KLEINMAN, Francis de Sales and the Protestants, 78.

practice the various virtues. He was trying to give an internal definition for the external observances.

He was working for the conversion of Chablais slowly but patiently completely trusting in the providence of the Lord.¹³⁴ Concretely speaking, his missionary activities in Chablais were based on three important aspects: making contact with the people, giving homilies and offering instruction on Catholic teachings. He always found time to discuss the question of faith with the people, especially with the Calvinists. His private discussions with the important people of Chablais were always a great opportunity for Francis to explain the aspects of faith to the people. He guided the people in all aspects of their faith. He was always very clear about his faith and the different questions regarding the faith. He considered these conversations as a great success in his life. These conversations gave him a great hope in his missionary career.¹³⁵

He was making use of every opportunity to address the people. On a market day, he climbed upon an empty box and gave his homily. The people were eager to hear him and nobody could silence him in public. He spoke with such energy and enthusiasm, which the Calvinists were not able to do in a public discourse with him. What they could do was simply avoid him and to prevent people from attending his homilies.¹³⁶ Francis was fully aware that the religious war should only be fought with spiritual weapons. He was also aware of the consequences. If the religious wars were fought with other weapons, there would be destruction, bloodshed, rancour and hatred everywhere and it would not bring any kind of spiritual conversion. Therefore, he was trying to remove all the barriers to come to dialogue with Calvinists. It was his important objective to bring unity in the church, which was broken through different kinds of dissensions. For him, the church was a unity and was based on the teachings of Christ.¹³⁷

2.1.1 The Innovative Method of Preaching

One of the important means to which he gave the utmost priority in his mission was his preaching. The homilies of Francis were overflowing with knowledge and with his homilies he could really convince the people and even heretics. Even when speaking to a small group of people, he took so much time and energy as if preparing a homily for a

¹³⁴ Cf. WAACH, Franz von Sales, 178.

¹³⁵ Cf. RAVIER, FRANZ von Sales, 41.

¹³⁶ Cf. BERGHUIS, Nichts so sehr als Mensch, 103.

¹³⁷ Cf. WEHRL, Allen Alles, 78.

large group of people. In earlier homilies in Chablais there were very few people, but he prepared his homilies as if he were preparing his homilies in Annecy for a large group of people. He was trying to explain the Christian teaching through his homilies in such a way that even the simple people could understand his message. He preached from his heart to the head of the people.¹³⁸ He explained very clearly the contentious issues between Catholics and Calvinists. In his homilies he also told the Calvinists that the scripture relates to the traditions of the Church and these traditions help people to understand the scripture in a better way.¹³⁹

At the beginning of his mission he prioritized preaching over writings, because he believed that the Holy Spirit was very much active through his homilies and his message could reach more easily the people. This method proved especially effective at reaching illiterate people in the countryside. In his homilies, he addressed the various themes which were very important to the Church.¹⁴⁰ His homilies were very understandable, even for the ordinary people, and he used simple language and parables, so that everyone could understand it. With the parables and allegorical examples, he explained to the people the love of God and the love of neighbours. Even the poor farmers, and especially the women, could simply remember and repeat his homilies. In giving homilies, Francis believed that the Catholics had an edge over the Calvinists because the quotations of the Catholics were very fitting as well as very easy to understand. In his homilies, he was able to prove his premises with evidence. He was proposing not only thesis and anti-thesis but he was also able to bring out the synthesis.¹⁴¹

As soon as he received the permission to preach in Thonon, he called a meeting of some of the Catholic families in Thonon who had agreed to come for his homilies in the house of Claude Marin. Of the fifty Catholics from Thonon, only seven of them came, but his homilies were very well prepared. When people came for his homilies he spoke about the Eucharist, the visible Church and he was always quoting examples from the Bible. As Francis was quoting from the bible, the Calvinists were also asking their preacher Viret for bible quotations.¹⁴² Through his homilies he was able to show the mistakes of the Protestant theology. In such a way, his homilies inspired a new vigour and enthusiasm among the people. The Calvinists were surprised by his homilies. “But we are informed by

¹³⁸ Cf. HAAS, Predigt, 221.

¹³⁹ Cf. HAAS, Predigt, 223.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. VON SALES, Kontroverschriften 1, 291.

¹⁴¹ Cf. RING, die Mission im Chablais (1594-1598), 38 - 40.

¹⁴² Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. Leben- Lehre- Werk, 122.

the historians of his life, that he preached on the presence with so much energy, that a confused murmur arose from his audience, as from persons, who were overpowered by the force of truth, and that this sermon converted six hundred people.”¹⁴³

Francis limited his discussion to two important themes: the Church and the Sacraments. He argued that the Catholic Church and her Sacraments were more oriented in the scriptures than the teaching of the Protestants.¹⁴⁴ Francis had a clear idea about the teachings of the Church and in the light of these teachings, he put forward different questions to Calvinists. In one of his homilies, he stressed the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. According to him, the real presence is possible, because the same Christ can be present in supernatural ways at the same time in two places. In this way, Jesus was also present to the apostles after his resurrection. In this method of preaching, Francis was able to defeat the Calvinists, who considered the Catholics as cannibals. He explained the last supper as the great sacrifice of Jesus Christ.¹⁴⁵

Francis was speaking vehemently about the Eucharist. Even the mayor of Chablais and one of the principal proponents of Calvinism in the city came to hear the homilies of Francis about the Eucharist. This was before Avully's conversion. Francis was very happy that such great personalities came to hear his homilies on the mysteries of the Eucharist. Francis noticed them sitting in a corner carefully listening to his homilies.¹⁴⁶ At that time, many of the people were very much influenced by Calvinists ideas, and the big question of discussion was the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. The question was: how the bread and wine can become the body and blood of Christ. According to Francis, it is a total change of the substance. It is like the miracle in Cana. In Cana there was a complete change in the substance of the water when it became wine. It happens now as well but in an invisible way.¹⁴⁷ Accordingly, Francis was explaining that Jesus is fully present in the Eucharist but without the space and time.

2.1.2 Distribution of Pamphlets: The Innovative Method of Writing

After beginning his missionary activities in Thonon, Francis started to give homilies in the church of St. Hippolytus to a few Catholics. He also invited the Calvinists but no one turned up. Because of the opposition of the Calvinists, direct contact and discussion with

¹⁴³ MARSOLLIER, The Life of St. Francis de Sales (vol.1), 210f.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. VON SALES, Kontroverschriften 1, 250.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. Leben – Lehre - Werk, 122.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. Leben – Lehre - Werk, 135.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. Leben – Lehre - Werk, 160.

people was not possible. Therefore, Francis had to start indirect means of communication to reach out to the people. He started writing pamphlets and distributed them from house to house. He also posted these pamphlets in public places.¹⁴⁸ Through these pamphlets, he wanted to show that what separated them from the Catholic Church was the false teaching of the Calvinists. As the Calvinists did not want to hear from him, he found it as an effective method according to the situation. This method made him more accessible to the people. From the year 1595 onwards, he started distributing pamphlets, disputing the claims of the Calvinists and explaining the real Catholic faith. Like his homilies, the people could not simply ignore those pamphlets because it came directly to their homes. They had the opportunity to read and reflect, which subsequently opened for them a way for further discussion.¹⁴⁹

With these pamphlets, he explained to them that the issues that separated them from the Catholic Church was illusory and most of the teachings of the Calvinists were baseless. He defended the Catholic Church and said that the Christian faith depended on the bible, the teachings of the councils, and the pope. He centralised his teachings in Jesus Christ and taught that salvation comes from Jesus Christ. Through these pamphlets, he propagated the very truth of the Christian faith. These pamphlets were published after his death as his famous book *Controversies*. In his letters, he explored the important mysteries of the Catholic teachings.¹⁵⁰ He explained the controversies separating Catholics and Protestants because religion was the central point of intellectual discussion at that time. His opponents were interested in hearing the arguments of others before accepting or rejecting them. These letters were also meant to raise the interest of the Calvinists in order to discuss the issues of faith. Francis was also presenting new themes to them and discussing in detail the sources of faith. These themes came out of the need of the situation.¹⁵¹ They were also addressed to the simple people of Thonon and therefore they are not scholarly essays in theology. It was also prepared for the future discussion.¹⁵² Because of his innovative method of writing and his ability to influence people through his writings, he is recognized as the patron saint of Catholic writers and journalists.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁸ Cf. BERGHUIS, *Nichts so sehr als Mensch*, 89.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. RING, *Die Mission in Chablais (1594-1598)*, 40f.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. CONGAR, *Franz von Sales*, 37-39.

¹⁵¹ Cf. BERGHUIS, *Nichts so sehr als Mensch*, 83.

¹⁵² Cf. KLEINMAN, *Francis de Sales and the Protestants*, 64.

¹⁵³ Cf. NUSSBAUM, *Franz von Sales. Patron der Journalisten*.

2.1.3 The Personal Initiatives of Francis

In the mission of Chablais Francis took many personal initiatives to bring the Calvinists back to the Catholic faith. He put forth his heart and soul for the success of the mission. The success of the mission greatly depended on the personal initiatives of Francis. Always ready to dialogue, Francis remained meek and considerate in his dealings with others. Actually, the success of the mission can be attributed to the patience and tactics of Francis. He had a special ability to deal with people from all walks of life. He dealt with the people, understanding their human aspects.¹⁵⁴ Even the Calvinists were surprised by the personal initiatives of Francis. In order to celebrate Mass in Thonon during Christmas, he took independent action making a temporary altar to celebrate Mass without getting permission of the secular authorities.¹⁵⁵ In the midst of great opposition, Francis was very clear about his mission and, with the support of worldly and church authorities, he went forward with his mission. He was very clear about his methods and this brought great success to his mission.

As a missionary, he was on the front line and he assumed total responsibility. He gave special concern, even to the most ignored ones. In whatever he was doing, he was promoting the goodness of the Church. He was very humble and gentle and he knew how to go along in the mission. As a jurist, he was exposed to the various positions of the Church and society of his time and he defended his positions both politically and religiously.¹⁵⁶ He wanted to have an open debate between Catholics and Calvinists and wanted an honest exchange between them. What he wanted was not to triumph over the Calvinists, but to bring them back to the Catholic fold through fruitful discussions and dialogues. He had a special passion for preaching.¹⁵⁷ Because of his exemplary character, even some of the Calvinists accepted him into their homes and later returned to the Catholic faith. Francis had his own convictions and he acted according to them. Even though several factors have contributed to the success of the Chablais mission, the most important factors were the methods that Francis used in his personal initiatives to overcome his challenges.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. WEHRL, *Dienst der Kirchendiplomatie*, 40.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. KLEINMAN, *Francis de Sales and the Protestants*, 72.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. LEROUX, *Mission According to St. Francis de Sales*, 11-12.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. WEHRL, *Allen Alles*, 72.

2.1.4 Conversion of Influential Persons to the Catholic Faith

Through his homilies and his clear teachings, Francis brought back more and more people to the Catholic faith. He could even get some influential people from the city back to the Catholic faith. The conversion of these prominent people became a very important subject of discussion in Chablais. He welcomed all of these people with big celebrations and admitted them into the Church. The conversion of the important people influenced others and, in the course of time, these conversions led to further conversions. He dialogued with important people like Avully, Poncet, Fournier, and Deprez.¹⁵⁸ The conversion of persons like Poncet and Avully brought a new era to the Chablais mission. Both of them were very convinced personalities but, because of their earnestness, they were led to the false teachings of the Calvinists. Francis also made sure that the conversion of Poncet and Avully occurred in public because they were very influential people. Francis hoped that their conversions would attract others to the Catholic faith.¹⁵⁹ Francis cordially welcomed all the people who entered into dialogue with him. A great number of conversions followed in Chablais.

The first important person to come back to the Catholic faith was the Baron of Avully, one of the principal proponents of the Calvinism in Chablais. He was the brother of a strong Catholic, Baron d'Hermance, a friend of the Sales family. Avully was interested in young Francis and his defence of his faith. Avully had been doubting some of the teachings of Calvinism for a long time. He came to hear the homilies of Francis and, slowly, he was attracted to the teachings of the Catholic Church. Avully also visited Francis regularly.

Avully led the Calvinists in Chablais and he had a great reputation in Geneva and the neighbouring area. Francis and Avully frequently went to nearby places for discussion so as to be not noticed by others. He was very much satisfied by the arguments put forth by Francis and asked the Calvinist ministers whether they had any other arguments. The conduct of the Calvinists ministers, especially in refusing to confer with Francis, aroused in him more doubts about Calvinism. He decided to go to Geneva with Francis, Louis and other important persons to meet the pastor of de la Faye, who was an authority in the Calvinist faith. The pastor welcomed them and explained to them about the faith but he became very angry when they began to ask about the veneration of the saints. This irritated

¹⁵⁸ Cf. RING, *Die Mission in Chablais (1594-1598)*, 37.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. WACH, *Das Leben eines Heiligen*, 192.

Avully and he decided to return to the Catholic faith. On 19th February, 1596, he officially came back to the Catholic faith.¹⁶⁰

Another notable example of the conversion of important persons was the conversion of Mr. Merchand. One day, out of eagerness he went for the Mass of Francis in the chapel of St. Bernard. He was greatly edified by the piety of Francis and, afterwards, he approached Francis in order to get the necessary preparations to be converted back into the Catholic faith. The next important person to be converted to the Catholic faith was Mr. Peter Petit. He wanted to become a Protestant preacher and applied for it but he could not fulfil the requirements. In this situation, he turned back to the Catholic faith, and received the necessary classes from Francis to convert back to the Catholic faith. After his conversion, Francis wrote to the Duke of Savoy that Mr. Peter Petit was converted and now he would convert many more to the Catholic faith.¹⁶¹

Now it was the turn of Poncet. He had a piece of land in Geneva and he was discussing the questions regarding faith with Francis. Even though he was convinced of his faith, he was ready to hear the arguments of his opponents and was ready to evaluate and to find the rightness of it according to his convictions. He always found a reason to begin controversial discussions with Francis. With great patience, Francis was ready to hear him and he was also a very patient listener in those discussions.¹⁶² Francis explained to him over many weeks the foundations of the Catholic faith. As Poncet was convinced of the Catholic faith, nothing hindered him from coming back to the Catholic faith. In this attempt, he was threatened by the Calvinists with losing his property in Geneva. The courage and convictions of Francis helped him to overcome all obstacles and, in the spring of 1595, he abandoned his Calvinistic faith and came back to the Catholic faith. He wanted to keep his conversion a secret, but Francis stressed the need to publically profess his faith so that it could inspire other Calvinists to return to Catholicism. Francis's believed that Jesus did not want secret followers but followers who publically profess their faith. With Francis' encouragement, Poncet's open profession of his faith was recognised as an extraordinary event in Chablais.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Cf. KOSTER, Franz von Sales, 65-66.

¹⁶¹ Cf. KLEINMAN, Francis de Sales and the Protestants, 160-161.

¹⁶² Cf. BERGHUIS, Nichts so sehr als Mensch, 95.

¹⁶³ Cf. BERGHUIS, Nichts so sehr als Mensch, 95f.

2.1.5 Personal Contacts and Relationships with People

One of the basic missionary methods of Francis was the personal contact with people from various areas of life. In the beginning of his ministry, it was with a small group of elite people like Avully, Poncet, Fournier and Deprez. Over time he established good contact with quite a number of people. He tried to greet everyone he encountered, but it took almost a year for him to establish real contact with people.¹⁶⁴ In all his dealings, he wanted to be a real missionary and he never sought personal advantage. This attitude of Francis helped him to meet people from different walks of life in their homes as well as in their places of work. He wanted to be one amongst them. In this way, he broke away all the chains which separated him from the people and he could become one among them. In order to have easy access to the people, he wore civil dress when he was going from house to house.¹⁶⁵ With his simple approach, he could simply inspire and motivate the people.

Even in the most unpleasant weather he decided to walk through the villages so that he could have personal conversations with the local people. With his frequent visits and with friendly greetings, he could enter into serious conversations with important people there.¹⁶⁶ From already existing friendships, he made new friends and, in this way, he was able to contact many people. It was not very easy for him to establish contact with people in a Calvinist region. In his mission he used every means to establish relationships with people in order to break the barriers of communication with the Calvinists. He even wanted to have dialogue with Calvinists. In *The Missionary Spirit of St. Francis de Sales*, Mariadas wrote “Moreover, the Catholic missionary maintained most cordial relationship with some the Protestant ministers like Charles Perrot, and Simon Goulart und Louis Viret.”¹⁶⁷ His efforts were very successful and the people developed slowly a deep spiritual relationship with Francis.

2.1.6 The Approach and Attitude of Francis towards the People

Francis went to everyone and spoke with everyone. He did not make any distinction between rich or poor and high class or lower class. He spoke with everyone and he was interested in the life and works of everyone. He was there for everyone in their needs. In this way, he won the heart of the people and motivated everyone to come to him to discuss

¹⁶⁴ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. *Leben- Lehre- Werk*, 125.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. RING, *die Mission in Chablais (1594-1598)*, 37.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. *Leben- Lehre- Werk*, 125.

¹⁶⁷ MIDATHADA, *Missionary Spirit of Saint Francis de Sales*, 42.

their questions regarding faith. He took everyone seriously and made friendships with nobles, manual labourers and people of every walk of life.¹⁶⁸ He lived a people-oriented life and his teachings were also people-oriented. He discussed with people different themes which were very relevant in the day-to-day life of the normal people. He tried to become everything to everyone. That is why he is known as the gentleman saint. He even established relationships with hard-core Calvinists. His approach to the people was very kind and gentle. Through his method of reaching out to the people, he could reach into the heart of the people. People could approach him at any time to ask about their doubts in their faith.¹⁶⁹

In establishing contact with people, he considered the love for others as his maxim. He had a lot of influence amongst the people and he could speak to the people of his world view from a human level. He always spoke with people in very mild words and he also dealt with Calvinists in the same way as he was dealing with other people. Even when he was opposing the teachings of the Calvinists, he was a good friend to them. With his loving and gentle spirit, he confronted the Calvinists. He even met the Calvinist ministers in public disputation as well as private interviews. The Calvinist ministers were ignorant of many of the questions regarding the faith and through his teachings Francis tried to bring them awareness of these questions. Even when opposing the heresy, he loved people with all his heart and he never got angry or hated anyone. He believed that if these people were well instructed, they would come back to the Catholic faith. Even when provoked, he considered everyone as a friend rather than enemy. He confronted the Calvinist ministers with his gentle spirit. When necessary, he undertook long journeys to meet them in their residences, even in Calvinist strongholds.¹⁷⁰

Francis went out to the people and conversed with them about various subjects and slowly he won the confidence of the people. He had such a charm to attract the people. When he started his conversation, because of his affection and love for the people, they were simply attracted to him. He considered everyone to be important. Because of his approaches, no one was afraid of going to him. He was also open and ready to hear the people. He disappointed no one. He gave due respect to each person.¹⁷¹ On the other hand, the Calvinist ministers were very harsh which meant they did not have the charm to attract

¹⁶⁸ Cf. KLEINMAN, *Francis de Sales and the Protestants*, 128.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. WEHRL, *Dienst der Kirchendiplomatie*, 40.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. MIDATHADA, *Missionary Spirit of Saint Francis de Sales*, 40-41.

¹⁷¹ Cf. AMALRAJ, *The Relevance of St. Francis de Sales Methods for Today's Communication World*, 682.

people. M. De Marsollier, in his biography on Francis, describes an incident in which Francis personally intervened in the life of the people to bring them peace and harmony:

Affairs were, in the situation, when Francis received intelligence that two gentlemen of his acquaintance, had just left town, to proceed to the country, in order to terminate a dispute by the duel. He hastened to the spot with a zeal, which never left him. They were already engaged in a furious combat; and the rage painted on their countenances left no doubt, that the affair would end in the destruction of one or perhaps both the parties. Francis separated them at the hazard of his life, and succeeded in representing them in such lively colours the enormity of single combats, forbidden by every law of heaven and earth, and the danger to which they had exposed themselves of perishing eternally.¹⁷²

2.1.7 Francis' Relentless Zeal for the Mission

Jesus, his master, was the inspiration in Francis' missionary work. In the mission, his vigour and perseverance were tremendous. He had his own understanding about the missionary work. Before going to the Chablais mission he also earned the necessary experience for the mission. As a young priest, he went around preaching throughout the Calvinist area of his home town. In such a way, he knew the Calvinists and their approaches well. He had a massive power to attract the people with his life and example. He was not a complicated person and his approach was with humanness and love.¹⁷³ He understood the realities of the mission. Even when the oppositions came his way, he was ready to overcome all obstacles for the success of his ministry.

No amount of compulsion or disappointment was able to dissuade him from his attempts of venturing into the mission. At times, when there was tension between Catholics and Calvinists, he stood between them even at risk to his life. His perseverance was tremendous: "He assisted at the funerals; he relived the sick; he went himself to hamlets and mean cottages, to visit persons in the most destitute and deplorable condition; nothing eluded his vigilance; his charity was extended to every want; he was assiduous in his attention to persons of the lowest condition, as to those who were distinguished by their birth or their employment."¹⁷⁴ He celebrated the Mass at night because he feared the Calvinists would disrespect the sacrament if he distributed Holy Communion during the day. He never cared about his health or about his own personal benefits, but his utmost priority was the success of the mission.

¹⁷² MARSOLLIER, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales* (vol.1), 170f.

¹⁷³ Cf. WEHRL, *zwischen den Fronten*, 156.

¹⁷⁴ MARSOLLIER, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales* (vol.1), 292f.

2.1.8 The Pastoral Spirit and Best Articulated Pastoral Plan

If it was for saving a soul, Francis never hesitated in taking action and he was even ready to sacrifice his own life. Francis made an exact pastoral plan for the mission of Chablais, foreseeing the conversion of the whole region. The success of his mission can be partially attributed to his pastoral plan for the region.¹⁷⁵ This plan was fully understanding of the local situation and fully aware of the challenges of the Church in his own time.¹⁷⁶ In preparing his pastoral plan for Chablais, Francis wanted to reduce the 45 parishes of Chablais into 18 parishes and each parish priest had to appoint an assistant for the people who were living far away from the parishes. He made use of all the opportunities and available means for his missionary endeavours. He presented his plan to his bishop, the duke, and eventually the pope. He also made close contact with Mgr. Riccordi, the Nuncio of Savoy. One of the important needs in the mission was sufficient number of missionaries for preaching and evangelisation. He appealed to various religious congregations to send at least six missionaries to the mission for evangelisation. He asked the duke to send some senators to Savoy for the speedy implementation of the orders of the duke regarding the reestablishment of the Catholic faith. He also asked the duke to repair the churches and to equip them with everything they required.¹⁷⁷

Francis foresaw what needed to get done for the future of the mission. Besides the missionaries, he also planned to select eight preachers who would not remain in a particular place but would preach in different parts of the mission. He also had a particular plan for Thonon, the centre of the mission.¹⁷⁸ He believed that for the preservation of the religion it was very important to take up education of the youth. In order to give proper education to the youth, he planned to build a college in Thonon and he demanded the duke put the college under the directions of the Jesuits. He believed that this college would also serve the purpose of a seminary and produce the persons who would be capable of conferring faith to others.¹⁷⁹ Fully knowing about the oppositions which might come his way, he submitted his plan to the duke. After the duke discussed the plan with his counsellors and after sufficient discussion and consideration, the demands of Francis were granted. The duke ordered the governor of Chablais to execute the orders of Francis.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. WEHRL, Allen Alles, 73.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales, Leben- Lehre- Werk, 154.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. MIDATHADA, Missionary Spirit of Saint Francis de Sales, 48.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. MARSOLIER, The Life of St. Francis de Sales (vol.1), 273.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. MARSOLIER, The Life of St. Francis de Sales (vol.1), 274.

2.2 The Ministry through the Sacraments and Life of Prayer

Francis lived a life of intimate union with God. He considered prayer as the real relationship with God and, accordingly, helps the Christians to understand the will of God. In his ministry, he gave highest priority to the spiritual life of the people and he was always concerned about the spiritual well-being of the people. Through his own spiritual life, he tried to bring people closer to God. Even from his childhood onwards, he had a special devotion to Mother Mary. He had taken Mother Mary as the special Patroness and Protectress of the mission. When he faced setbacks in his mission, he wrote to his friend, Antony Favre, that prayer, almsgiving and fasting are three parts of a rope which is difficult for the enemy to break.¹⁸⁰ Even in the most difficult situations he strengthened his faith through his extraordinary piety. He was always very ardent in keeping the commands of God. In his mission, he gave highest priority and importance to spiritual exercises. He wanted to make Thonon a centre of spiritual power for the whole Diocese of Geneva. With the presentation of various kinds of religious objects and cultural programs, he created an atmosphere of prayer and devotion in Chablais. These pious practices brought real conversion in the minds of the people.

Francis had complete trust in God and he believed that in doing anything, he had to be accountable only to God. In his life and activities, he really encountered God. He believed that the experience of God is a realisation of human hearts. This is a process that occurs in the heart whereby one becomes aware of oneself and God. According to Francis, faith is not blind but rather an approach of the heart. For him, this whole process of realisation happens in the heart of a person.¹⁸¹ According to him, prayer is a means to love God and all forms of prayer were important to him. His deep prayer life was very much manifested in his missionary activities. In his ministry, through prayer and activities, he was successful in bringing conversions in the hearts of the people. He tried to give real spiritual experiences to the people, something lacking under the Calvinists. It was very interesting to examine how he brought true conversion in Chablais through his various spiritual exercises.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. WACH, *Das Leben eines Heiligen*, 182.

¹⁸¹ Cf. FRANCIS, *TOTUM AMORIS EST*,

2.2.1 Forty Hours of Adoration

Francis conducted 40 hours of adoration twice in the mission of Chablais: in Annemasse and in Thonon. The plan of Francis to conduct 40 hours of adoration was taken to the bishop and the Duke of Savoy by Fr. Cherubin, a close associate and collaborator of Francis. The bishop gave the necessary permission for adoration and the duke granted the necessary financing for conducting the celebration. Fr. Cherubin took all the initiatives to realise this program and he made announcements in a 10 kilometre radius. It was a two-day programme with a lot of festivities. There were programs such as Masses, homilies, confession, prayer, adoration, and more. He planned a procession, indulgences, homilies, and erected a cross. The first adoration was in Annemasse from 7-9 September in the year 1597. The festivities were very popular with people as it was a big celebration with music, fireworks, and light shows, but Francis gave utmost importance to the religious aspect of the celebration.¹⁸²

The next forty hours of adoration was in Thonon from 1-2 October, 1598. Compared to Annemasse, Francis took all the initiatives in Thonon for conducting the forty hours of adoration. The climax of this program was an erection of a cross on a mountain, where earlier there was already a cross. The official beginning of the celebration was on October 1st. The bishop celebrated the high Mass and he carried the Eucharist through the city. It was the first procession of the Catholics after the invasion of Thonon by the Calvinists. There were also religious and worldly elements in this celebration but religious elements were the vital aspect of this celebration. The procession with a monstrance to the city gave a special emphasis to this procession.¹⁸³ Bishop Granier was leading the opening session of the celebration. There were also confirmation and ordination. It was the first ordination after the Calvinists took over the province of Savoy. There were also some miracles associated with the forty hours of adoration in Thonon. The celebration came to an end with the erection of a cross in the centre of the city and more than 4000 people attended this function.

During the time of forty hours of adoration, there were more than 3500 conversions in Thonon. Many people participated in the celebration, including civil authorities, political personalities, and ecclesial dignitaries including Cardinal Alexander of Florence, the papal

¹⁸² Cf. RING, *die Mission in Chablais (1594-1598)*, 57-60.

¹⁸³ Cf. RING, *die Mission in Chablais (1594-1598)*, 60-61.

legate, and many other clergy.¹⁸⁴ The forty hours of adoration brought mixed reactions amongst this part of Geneva. While the Calvinists were very angry and sarcastic, they were very anxious for the success of forty hours of adoration. The Genevans mocked and disregarded such a big event. It brought big challenges to Genevans, especially the Calvinists. The biggest challenge for the Calvinists was the cross which the Catholics had raised in front of the city of Geneva. The words which appeared on the cross shamed the Calvinists of Geneva. Catholics were not praying to the stones or woods, but rather they were praying to God, who died for us on the cross.¹⁸⁵ In the aftermath of these forty hours of adoration, there was verbal fighting between Calvinist pastors and Francis and his companions.

2.2.2 Various Pious Practices

The practice of virtues was more of an internal matter for Francis but he was sure that through the practice of various virtues he could bring the people back to the real Catholic faith. He wanted to make a community of zealous people who could gather around the altar on every occasion. He thought that through these pious practices he could build a community and, slowly, through this community he could evangelise Chablais. He gave great importance to various pious practices, such as the recitation of the Rosary, paying visits to the Eucharist, both of which were strange to the Calvinists of his time. The Calvinists were completely against these kinds of pious practices. The forty hours of adoration in Annemasse and Thonon were notable examples of how he gave utmost priority to pious practices in his ministry in Chablais. Many of the people were sceptical about this action of Francis and they thought that it would bring retaliation from parts of Geneva. Francis asked his assistant Rolland to carry the cross during the procession and, in order to give him courage and support, Francis remained near to him during the entire procession.¹⁸⁶

According to Francis, all are called to holiness in various ways and the pious practices are one of the ways to attain this holiness. He was winning the heart of the people through his gentle persuasion. He was humble in all his approaches. He spoke a lot about piety and pious practices. According to him, piety should be real and the real devotion is to love God. In his mission, he gave special importance to Mary, Mother of God and asked the

¹⁸⁴ Cf. MIDATHADA, *Missionary Spirit of Saint Francis de Sales*, 55.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. LAJEUNIE, *Franz von Sales. Leben- Lehre- Werk*, 183.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. WACH, *Das Leben eines Heiligen*, 202.

people to recite the rosary every day. He was convinced that in order to receive the power of the Holy Spirit the faithful had to remain with Mary the mother of God.¹⁸⁷ In propagating the piety amongst the people, his ultimate attempt was to kindle the real love amongst people for the Catholic Church. He wanted mission-oriented parishes everywhere and these parishes had to be open to the realities of the world. He believed that if the real zeal and piety were enkindled in the people, it would go beyond the Chablais and it would also help towards the conversion of Geneva. According to his opinion, an active liturgy could be celebrated only among faithful people.¹⁸⁸ Therefore, his attempt was to make people active through various pious practices. He was preparing the people to achieve holiness through various ways. He instructed people that by living virtuously they could achieve holiness. In all these attempts he was trying to bring the people closer to God.

2.2.3 Renewal of Christian Life

Francis made an exemplary plan for the renewal of Christian life in Chablais. It is interesting to examine some of the suggestions he made in order to execute his plan. He insisted the bishop send a group of preachers for the renewal of Christian life in Chablais. A senator had to ask the people to come to hear the homilies. Francis also asked to erect fifty new parishes with fifteen to sixteen parishes together as a deanery and there should be a priest who would take responsibility for this deanery. A high Mass should be organised in Thonon. There should be a group of six priests to help the parish priest in their ministry. In order to awake the religious spirit among youth, he suggested establishing a college for the youths in Thonon. Regarding this matter, he had already started discussions with Jesuits. According to him, for the renewal of Christian life, the priests and laity have to work together, hand in hand. Francis had a place in his heart for people from all walks of life; he worked especially hard for the cause of poor people.¹⁸⁹ According to him, conversion is more of a spiritual process. In his mission and ministry, he had multiple tasks for the revival of faith amongst Catholics and the conversion of Calvinists to the Catholic faith. Both of these were necessary for the renewal of Christian life in Chablais. The conversion of Calvinists is from one faith to another, but the conversion of Catholics is more of a spiritual one.¹⁹⁰ He gave more emphasis to the interior conversion of the people.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. *Leben- Lehre- Werk*, 101.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. *Leben- Lehre- Werk*, 161.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. WACH, *Das Leben eines Heiligen*, 202.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. KLEINMAN, *Francis de Sales and the Protestants*, 38.

One of the important aspects which he stressed even in the conversion of the Calvinists was the achievement of holiness. Through his gentle methods he proved that holiness can be achieved by each person and Francis prescribed his own methods to achieve this holiness. He made holiness attractive through his Salesian methods. According to him, gentleness and optimism are key virtues to achieve holiness.¹⁹¹ In his own times Francis brought about the idea that everyone is called to holiness. This notion of Francis played a vital role in his mission and ministry in Chablais. He believed that holiness consisted not only of practicing extraordinary virtues but, more importantly, should consist of a life of charity. Therefore, a strong person could live in this world without being distracted by the world and the temptations of this world. In order to be holy one has to obey the commandments and fight against evils. This holiness can be achieved by remaining in the world and engaging in one's own activities and taking up the challenges of one's life. For that, the person has to be open to the will of God.¹⁹² Through this new teaching, he brought a new understanding of the spirituality and it brought a lot of renewal in the Christian spirituality.

2.2.4 Strengthening of Parish Life through the Celebration of the Liturgy

In his mission in Chablais, Francis gave a good example of how the liturgy could be practised actively and lived in the parishes. He regularly attended all of the liturgical activities in the church. On the occasion of the special feasts he celebrated the liturgy, especially the holy Mass, which was a special experience for all those who participated in it. He tried to conduct the liturgy with all integrity and perfection.¹⁹³ He wanted to establish strong and zealous parish communities and he also wanted to make a radiating and missionary parish community. He believed that the zeal in the parishes could be awakened through the active participation in the liturgical life. He was of the opinion that liturgy could be practised only amongst the faithful people. He wanted to form his faithful and his priests to become good examples. He considered his companion priests as active participants in his ministry and he loved them like brothers. Every now and then they prayed together and he motivated his fellow priests in the difficult situations of their lives. He also formed a group of lay people and asked them to strive for holiness, each one according to his ability and capacity.

¹⁹¹ Cf. BENT, St. Francis de Sales. For the Love of God.

¹⁹² Cf. KOLENCHERRY, St. Francis de Sales and the Lay Spirituality, 72-75.

¹⁹³ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. Leben- Lehre- Werk, 102f.

As a zealous missionary, Francis was very ardent in the celebration of the liturgy, especially the Holy Eucharist. At least two or three times in a week he went for confession and prepared himself for the holy Mass. Just before Mass he recited a special prayer to Mary and made immediate preparations for the Mass.¹⁹⁴ Once he was in the mission and the conversion slowly began, he tried different ways to get more priests in the mission in order to have daily celebration of the liturgy in all the parishes. He appealed to the influential canons of the Annecy Cathedral with the intention of recruiting more priests. He continuously instructed the people about the reception of the sacraments. He was sure that through the celebration of the liturgy the spiritual life of the faithful could be strengthened. A great necessity for him was to get permission from the duke so that Catholic priests could travel through the duchy administering the sacrament, celebrating the Holy Mass and receiving converts to the Catholic Church.

2.2.5 Conversion through the Sacrament of Confession

The sacrament of reconciliation had a very important place in the pastoral ministry of Francis as well as in his dealing with the Calvinists. From his ordination until his death, he used this sacrament as the best means of reconciliation. He was very merciful and lovable towards the penitents and he could never think evil in his heart. According to him, the ministers of confession did the same thing that Jesus had done in his ministry. In the confessional Francis considered himself as a messenger whom God sent as the channel of reconciliation. In the confessional he was showing the mercy of God to penitents. Francis was also instructing priests to communicate the mercy of God through the sacrament of confession. He was showing the depth of the mercy of God through the sacrament of confession.¹⁹⁵ He could easily understand human weaknesses and failures. He was of the opinion that we have no right to judge our brothers and sisters and he never doubted the genuineness of the sinners.¹⁹⁶

For Francis, preaching and hearing confessions went hand in hand. He did both, preaching the sermons and hearing the sacrament of confession in the mission of Chablais. Through his preaching he prepared and inspired the people to come to the confessional where the real conversion happened. The climax of this was seen in the forty hours of adoration in Annemasse and Thonon. With the sacrament of confession, he prepared the

¹⁹⁴ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. *Leben- Lehre- Werk*, 103.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. F. CHORPENNING, *The De Sales Oblates*, 8.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. PIERRE CAMUS, *Vom Geist der Heiligkeit*, 74.

people for this great event. He was really a father to the lost sheep.¹⁹⁷ He was not only a father in the confessional but he regularly gave guidance to the people. He also regularly accompanied people in their spiritual life.

For him, the sacrament of confession was a way of coming back for sinners. Some days he sat almost nine hours in the confessional. In the confessional he was father to everybody: the rich, the poor, the friends and the enemies of the Church. For him, hearing confession was more important than the recitation of the breviary or any other spiritual exercise. One of the best examples of how he led the people to a total conversion of heart through the sacrament of confession was his ministry amongst the soldiers of Les Allinges. When he was living in the fortress of Les Allinges, the drunkenness, blasphemy and immoral life of the soldiers was notorious. With his gentle and merciful approach, Francis came into their lives, influencing them until gradually they came to him for confession. Eventually all of the soldiers wanted to receive communion from Francis. Because of the influence and hard work of Francis, the soldiers started a new life. They started to live a life of peace, love and harmony. Francis aroused in them the spirit of forgiveness and repentance.¹⁹⁸

2.3 The Personal Life and Devotion of Francis: An Inspiration for People of all Times

The success of the mission and ministry of Francis in Chablais is very much associated with his life and example. His life was an edifying example, not only to the people of his own times, but also for generations since. He instructed his canons to live a life of edification and extraordinary piety, hoping thereby to inspire the Calvinists by their faithful example.

The daily prayers of Francis are very interesting to study. He began his day with prayer and often he prayed to God like a child. With spiritual readings, he strengthened his soul. He not only heard confession, he confessed regularly. He won the heart of the people with his human approaches, his friendly words, his simple smile and his deep trust in God during times of difficulties and pain. He proclaimed the power of love in such a way that he was even loved by his old enemies.¹⁹⁹ Through a life of prayer and fasting, he lived

¹⁹⁷ Cf. HAAS, Bußsacrament, 10.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. Leben- Lehre- Werk, 162.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. RUSSMANN, Franz von Sales, 25.

worthily and led others to pray. His mission in Chablais basically originated from his faith, his love and his conscience and he was ready to offer himself for this mission.

The modern means and methods he used in his mission are really admirable. It was very important for Francis to set good examples before the heretics because even in those times, the scandalous conduct of priests and religious brought a lot of harm to the church. He advised his fellow missionaries to lead exemplary lives.²⁰⁰ His prayer and the daily Mass were the biggest sources of energy in his life. According to him, it is not God who needs our prayers; we need God. For Francis, time of prayer was the time of great grace. In his life, prayer gave him great courage and hope in his missionary endeavour. “His life supported his preaching; and his discourses completed what his good example had begun.”²⁰¹ His personal example of life, his faith and his way of life have influenced a lot of people. While accepting the mission of Chablais, Francis completely entrusted his life and care of the mission to divine providence. In accepting the mission, he had only one interest: the glory of God and the salvation of the people.

2.3.1 The Inspiring Life of Poverty

As he worked in the mission in Chablais, he lived as one of the ordinary inhabitants of the town. Even though it was not a wise decision, he did not take enough food needed for his survival. His friend Antony Favre once saw his poor bodily condition and complained to the bishop about the rigorous fasting of Francis.²⁰² While living and working in Chablais he lived on the meagre things offered to him by other people. Whatever people offered, even if it was not worthwhile, he took with an open heart, great love and thankfulness. When he received money, he shared it with the poor but he took the fruits for himself, telling them that out of the fruit of the work the priests have to live.²⁰³ He rarely had enough resources to satisfy his need for daily sustenance. When he did not have enough food or clothing his mother secretly sent what Francis required, without the knowledge of his father.

M. De Marsollier, in his biography *The Life of St. Francis de Sales*, writes about the personal poverty of Francis in the beginning of the mission: “His dress was simple, but free from affectation; and agreeably to the practice of that time, he generally bore short boots;

²⁰⁰ Cf. MIDATHADA, Missionary Spirit of Saint Francis de Sales, 23.

²⁰¹ MARSOLLIER, The Life of St. Francis de Sales (vol.1), 197.

²⁰² Cf. WACH, Das Leben eines Heiligen, 182.

²⁰³ Cf. EHRENBORG, Franz von Sales als Vorbild und Lehrer, 235.

the management of his hair and beard, which he adapted to the prevailing fashion, together with the whole of his dress, rendered him as to external appearance, but little different from those who were accounted respectable in the world.”²⁰⁴ Francis was very charitable to others and out of his charity, he spent all his resources on others, many times he could not even meet his most common necessities. His charity was so boundless that he was always asking his friends and relatives to assist the poor people of Chablais. Very often he received considerable amounts donated to his mission, but it was only a small amount considering his charity. Some of the good Catholics of Savoy were economically supporting him for his missionary work.²⁰⁵

2.3.2 The Practice of Virtues

Francis was an inspiring model for people from every walk of life. He was very cordial to everyone and his courtesy was not a false pretence, but came from the depth of his heart. According to Jane de Chantal, he had never acted reluctantly or bitterly in his life and no one could match his sincerity.²⁰⁶ He never displayed pride, arrogance, or deceitfulness in his life. He was very mild in his approaches and dealings. He never compelled anyone to act unwillingly and treated everyone lovingly. Several incidents from his life demonstrate his meekness toward others. Once a priest failed an exam for which he could have received great benefits. The priest became very angry and disappointed but Francis told him to repeat the exam. On another day, someone brought a book to Francis in which he had written abusive accusations against him. Francis quietly accepted the book and put it in his bag. With such a friendship and love, he could win over that person. In various occasions, when others grew angry, he kept calm and quiet. Even if he felt disturbed or angry, he always tried to remain cool and calm. He demonstrated that meekness was the best medicine against anger.²⁰⁷

During his life in Chablais, he had ample chances to practice virtues. For him, humility and gentleness were two basic virtues. In the practice of virtues, he gave utmost priority to the love of God. The goodness of Francis was really revealing the goodness of God.²⁰⁸ He always spoke in a very calm manner with his opponents and he was always ready to hear them. By this he could simply win the heart of the people. Francis believed that great and

²⁰⁴ MARSOLLIER, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales* (vol.1), 148.

²⁰⁵ Cf. MARSOLLIER, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales* (vol.1), 198.

²⁰⁶ Cf. MARSOLLIER, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales* (vol.1), 102.

²⁰⁷ Cf. MARSOLLIER, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales* (vol.1), 106-107.

²⁰⁸ Cf. J. HILLYARD, *Little Virtues*.

heroic actions performed for the love of God have great value but that such actions are rare. Small actions offer the chance to practice virtue. He was very patient in dealing with the Calvinists of Chablais. He greeted everyone and made friendships with everybody.

Humility is the fundamental aspect of any mission and Francis won the heart of the people with his humble approach. He believed that everything had to be done out of love for souls. There are many incidents in his life that show his meekness and humility. His humility and meekness were also visible in his dress and in his appearance. He believed that people possess many imperfections so one shouldn't be worried about the imperfections of others.²⁰⁹ According to Francis, the three basic virtues of humility, gentleness and patience were interrelated and they stand together. For him, humility helped to acknowledge one's own lowliness before God and he acknowledged his own worthlessness. When a person is humble, he acknowledges himself and he participates in the humility of Jesus. The practice of humility helped Francis to depend totally on God in the difficult times of his ministry in Chablais.²¹⁰

Francis was also very gentle in his approach, even to hard-core sinners. His gentleness helped him to solve many of the disputes of the people. He patiently heard them and brought them to peace. He was also very gentle and patient with his co-workers. Francis was very patient with all kinds of trials which came his way. In the mission, he had to face many inconveniences and trials but was never impatient in his dealings. Even when the Calvinists raised many allegations against him, he never lost his patience, but simply accepted it as the will of God. For him, the virtues practised in the midst of tribulations offered the best chance to win the people. He preferred a gentle character in his ministry over any other virtue.²¹¹

2.3.3 Special Devotion to Blessed Virgin Mary

Devotion to Mary played a vital role in the life and ministries of Francis. In his book *Treatise on the Love of God* he wrote: "The most sacred Virgin, with incomparable melody, praises and magnifies the Divinity more highly, more holily and more delightfully than all other creatures together could ever do." (Love of God, V, 11) Francis had a special devotion to Mary and, at the beginning of his ministry in Chablais, he wanted to make a pilgrimage to the destroyed sanctuary of Mary on the mountains of Voirons. On 2nd of

²⁰⁹ Cf. MCKINNEY, Peace of Soul and Humility.

²¹⁰ Cf. EHRENBORG, Franz von Sales als Vorbild und Lehrer, 194-196.

²¹¹ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. Leben- Lehre- Werk, 123.

July, 1595 he went to the mountains of Voirons in the uplands of Chablais and he recited his breviary on the ruins of the sanctuary and asked for the intercession of Mother Mary for the conversion of Chablais.²¹² His devotion to Mary started in his childhood. In his youth, he experienced a special kind of salvific grace from the hand of Mary. For him, Mary was a loving mother who always stood by him even in the difficult times in the mission of Chablais. He always let himself to be formed in the hands Mary. As a young man of 19 years, he was confronted with the temptations of despair, which lasted almost six weeks. At that time, he went to the church of St. Stephen and prayed to the Blessed Virgin. He was kneeling before the statue of Mary, filled with tears. He found a card there with the prayers of St. Bernard. He recited the Memorare prayer and his temptations suddenly disappeared. He experienced peace and tranquillity in his mind.²¹³ In all his undertakings, she was for him the protective mother and patroness. In his homilies, he always mentioned Mary as the bride of the Holy Spirit.²¹⁴ As the mother of Jesus, he considered her as his own mother.

Francis considered Mary as the ideal of Christian life because she practised all the virtues. She is the mother of all Christians because so many graces come through her intercession. Therefore, the Christians have to show all their love and devotion to Mary. In his letters to Jane de Chantal, he wrote about the importance of Mary in his life as well as in his missionary activities in Chablais. He saw Mary as the model of all the virtues. He always wondered how Mary excelled in all virtues. He considered Mary as the means of redemption and Jesus her son told us to make use of this means of redemption. From the very beginning, she was chosen to be the mother of Jesus.²¹⁵ He offered the Mass of the Blessed Virgin on Saturdays and recited other special prayers on that day. Mary occupied a special place in his prayers, and his book *Controversies* contains a prayer that shows his real devotions to her.²¹⁶ He believed that she had great power to present our needs to her son.

Francis also had a special devotion to the rosary. In his book *Introduction to the Devout Life* he wrote that the rosary is a very profitable kind of prayer, provided that we understand how to say it properly. In order to say the rosary properly, he recommended using one or another of the little books which explain how it should be recited.

²¹² Cf. MOGET, *Relevance of St. Francis de Sales*, 30.

²¹³ Cf. MOGET, *Relevance of St. Francis de Sales*, 29.

²¹⁴ Cf. WACH, *Das Leben eines Heiligen*, 190-191.

²¹⁵ Cf. MOGET, *Relevance of St. Francis de Sales*, 20-25.

²¹⁶ Cf. Von SALES, *Kontroverschriften*, 328.

(*Introduction to the Devout Life*. II, 1.) In a Calvinist-ruled region of Chablais, he was teaching people to recite the rosary. In his life, he gave utmost priority to the recitation of the rosary. Among other prayers, he recited the Rosary every day. Mary was, for him, the mother of grace and he used the recitation of the rosary as the weapon to receive graces from Mary. He did not hurry when he prayed the Rosary, but prayed slowly and meditatively instead. During the recitation of the Rosary, in order to avoid falling sleep, he used to walk around his room.²¹⁷ When he was saying the Rosary he was completely immersed in it: “One day, the parish priest of Cernex, Fr. Michel Charbonnel, came to see him. He went up to his room and found him alone saying his rosary with such an attention and mind that he did not hear the priest enter. Fr. Charbonnel went out to let him complete this prayer.”²¹⁸ “He always bore a Rosary and advised the people to do the same.”²¹⁹ He considered himself as a servant of Mary.

2.3.4 Endurance, Practice of Piety and Self-denial

There were many difficult moments in his life where he had to practise the virtue of endurance. In the initial days of his mission in Chablais, when his father wanted to bring back Francis from the mission, Francis sent back his cousin Louis to console his father. Francis was all alone in the mission but it did not prevent him from going further in it. Even when his bishop was asking him to come back from the mission, he persisted in hoping for success.²²⁰ He was ready to drink the chalice, which he has taken out of his free will. He was not only concentrating on his success but entrusting everything to the power of God. In the mission, he wore no silk garments, took no carriage with him, travelled everywhere on foot, and fasted on Fridays, Saturdays and important feast days. He made annual retreats. As his missionary work became more and more difficult, he decided to observe a severe fast but his bishop learned of his plan and persuaded Francis to abandon it. As it was the command of his bishop, he joyfully accepted the advice of his bishop. He knew that the bishop gave him this advice, because of his love for him.²²¹ As the duke hesitated to give him the necessary financial support, he depended completely on God.

Even though the Calvinists had many prejudices against Francis, they were edified by his practice of virtues, especially his piety, meekness and his patience. He had a great zeal

²¹⁷ Cf. MOGET, *Relevance of St. Francis de Sales*, 27.

²¹⁸ MOGET, *Relevance of St. Francis de Sales*, 27.

²¹⁹ MOGET, *Relevance of St. Francis de Sales*, 27.

²²⁰ Cf. BERGHUIS, *Nichts so sehr als Mensch*, 81.

²²¹ Cf. BERGHUIS, *Nichts so sehr als Mensch*, 83.

for the salvation of souls. The Calvinist ministers accused him of a secret ambition but he accepted all of their accusations with love and tenderness. Because of his piety and his practice virtues, these accusations had no place in his life. His virtues, his detachment, and the pain he took for the mission helped to neutralize all these accusations. Because of his behaviour, even his enemies were intrigued to him and they started to listen to his homilies.²²² Even when his enemies called him a sorcerer and black magician, he did not react angrily but instead blessed them by making the sign of the cross.²²³

2.3.5 Deep Rooted Prayer Life and Relationship with God

During his years in Chablais, as he was going to the people, his heart always remained in prayer and union with God. Even if he was very busy, he never failed in reciting his daily offices. In the midst of all the difficulties of the mission he found his solace in prayer. He used to get up early in the morning even at 3: 00am to spend time with the Lord. In these early hours, he meditated about the Eucharist.²²⁴ In his mission, he gave first priority to God and he attributed his success to God. He always believed in the power of prayer and gave it first priority in his life and mission. He fixed a specific time in his life for prayer. He started his day with prayer and after the vesper in the evenings he prayed special prayers preparing himself for the next day.²²⁵ For him, prayer was praising God, adoring him, thanking of him and doing the will of God.

He spent days in prayer before executing every major decision. He requested the prayers of the people, especially for the public re-establishment of faith in Chablais. M. De Marsollier wrote in his biography of Francis de Sales: “He produced the order of the Duke for this purpose, and spent many days in prayer and fasting, to beg of God, that this event might take place without confusion, and that the extremities to which the Duke might be obliged to proceed, in the event of any opposition to his will, might by the divine blessing, be averted.”²²⁶ Francis spent long hours in the chapel of the fortress of Allinges. In his prayer, he received the power from his Master, Jesus, for his mission in Chablais. He was convinced that the Church could be holy only when the priesthood is holy. He was trying

²²² Cf. MARSOLLIER, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales* (vol.1), 168.

²²³ Cf. ORNSBY, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales*, 42.

²²⁴ Cf. CONGAR, *Franz Von Sales*, 39.

²²⁵ Cf. EHRENBORG, *Franz von Sales als Vorbild und Lehrer*, 54.

²²⁶ MARSOLLIER, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales* (vol.1), 284.

to attain this personal holiness in his life through his prayer life. He wanted to dedicate his life solely to God.²²⁷

2.3.6 His Devotion to the Eucharist

The daily celebration of the Eucharist was a great strength for him in his life. His relationship with God was very deep. Even in the most difficult situations of Chablais, he found the time to celebrate the Holy Mass. In the initial days, he could only celebrate Mass in Les Allinges and very few people attended the Mass on this mountain.²²⁸ He believed that through the celebration of the Eucharist he could bring back sinners and heretics to the Catholic faith. As he reached Savoy, one of his special considerations was how to bring communion to the sick. He approached a goldsmith to make a silver pyx to carry the hosts. After getting it made, he showed the pyx to everyone and told them that Jesus lived in it when he carried the Eucharist to the sick. When he carried the Eucharist to the sick, his heart overflowed with joy and happiness.²²⁹

Francis considered the Eucharist as the sun of all the spiritual exercises and the heart of all devotion, from which all the graces flow to the human race. In his homilies, he stressed the presence of the Lord in the Eucharist. He always quoted from the bible to explain how Jesus is present in the Eucharist.²³⁰ Therefore, he strived to return all the churches of Chablais to the Catholic faith in order to have Eucharist celebration within them. According to him, through the Eucharist, divine charity can be instilled in Christian hearts and God is granting his graces and blessings to us. He believed that Eucharistic celebrations could unite the Christians in Chablais. The Eucharist strengthens the bond between the Christians. Through the celebration of the Eucharist, the divine grace can flow upon the Christian community and it unites the Christians with Jesus Christ.²³¹

2.4 The Importance of the Teachings of Francis: His ministry through his Teachings

In his teachings he stressed that: “the fundamental elements of the church such as Scripture, Apostolic tradition, the authority of the Church, of the councils, of the fathers and of the popes; the authority of the miracles and finally the authority of the natural

²²⁷ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales, *Leben- Lehre- Werk*, 100.

²²⁸ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales, *Leben- Lehre- Werk*, 146.

²²⁹ Cf. EHRENBORG, Franz von Sales als Vorbild und Lehrer, 52.

²³⁰ Cf. VON SALES, *KONTROVERSSCHRIFTEN* 1, 322.

²³¹ Cf. WENZEL, FRANKLIN(eds.), *In the Midst of the World*,

reason.”²³² Francis recognised that the Calvinists rejected these basic principles of the Catholic Church and, therefore, he vehemently opposed the teachings of the Calvinists.

He developed a special method to reach the youths of his time. With his brother Bernhard, he organised dialogues with youth in private houses. These dialogues were very successful and some other Jesuit and Capuchin missionaries also followed this method.²³³ In order to get clear knowledge of the teachings of the Calvinists, he got permission from Rome to read the writings of Calvin. At that time, Catholics were forbidden from reading Calvinist teachings. Francis travelled throughout the entire district of Savoy refuting the teachings of the Calvinists and instructing people about the Catholic faith.

2.4.1 His Clear Teaching about the Foundations of the Catholic Faith

Francis taught clearly about the biblical foundations of Church teachings. He believed the Calvinists misunderstood the true nature and foundations of the Church and consequently criticized the Church with their false teachings.²³⁴ One of the contentious issues between Catholics and Calvinists was about the Eucharist. Francis gave a very clear theological explanation about the foundations of the Eucharist. In order to explain the contentious issues between Catholics and Calvinists, he wrote his famous book, *The Catholic Controversies*. He wrote this book by candlelight in the fortress of Allinges.²³⁵ Francis frequently preached to the people and gave correct answers to their questions. On the other hand, the Calvinists preached only once a week and they were unable to directly answer the people's questions. Francis had an in-depth knowledge of the teachings of the Church. Because of his deep knowledge, he could easily refute the arguments of the Calvinists in public discussions. Francis was fully aware of the circumstances of his time and he acted according to it.

Francis used to give regular conferences. In these conferences, he spoke about the signs of the Catholic Church. In different articles, he described these signs one after the other.²³⁶ According to him, the schism was one of the greatest evils of the church and it could bring eternal punishment even to the faithful. Schematics offered many reasons for separating from the Catholic Church, but many revolved around fears that the veneration of saints or their relics amounted to idolatry. Francis refuted them and said. “No interior motives could

²³² KLEINMAN, Francis de Sales and the Protestants, 63.

²³³ Cf. RING, die Mission im Chablais (1594-1598), 46.

²³⁴ Cf. VON SALES, KONTROVERSSCHRIFTEN 1, 39.

²³⁵ Cf. BERGHUIS, Nichts so sehr als Mensch Franz von Sales, 90.

²³⁶ Cf. VON SALES, KONTROVERSSCHRIFTEN 1, 74-117.

justify a schism, which had occasioned so many rebellions, had deluged the country with blood and had produced such a fatal effect.”²³⁷ He then explained how the Church remained faithful to the teaching of Jesus Christ, her founder and master. The fathers of the Church had not only remained faithful to the teachings of Jesus but they also instructed about this faith. Regarding the sacred ministries, he taught that it is the mark of the true Church.²³⁸

2.4.2 The Discourses with the Calvinists

Francis pursued every opportunity to enter into positive discussions with his opponents. He wanted to convince his opponents with his clear arguments. In the beginning, they were ready to discuss different themes with Francis, but after coming to know about his wisdom, knowledge and erudition, they more often tried to evade Francis. Through the initiative of Baron of Avully, one of the first converts from the Calvinists, Francis asked the Calvinists to come to a direct debate with him. Francis promised that he would become a Calvinist if they won the debate, but no one was ready to directly debate him.²³⁹ Even in the initial years in Thonon when the people were not ready to come to hear Catholic homilies, he invited the Calvinist ministers for public debate. Because of his knowledge in theology and civil laws and because of his talent in dealing with people, Francis even established a relationship with Theodore de Beze, the successor of John Calvin. Francis directly encountered him three times in Geneva.²⁴⁰

Even though Francis could not bring him back to the Catholic faith, these meetings with Theodore de Beze had a tremendous impact in bringing back Calvinists to the Catholic faith. Baron of Avully, his cousin Louis and some other people from Thonon were with Francis. This had taken place not in a public place but in the house of de Beze. Louis de Sales wrote down the report of this meeting. Francis allowed his opponents to take different themes such as the unity of the Church, the Eucharist, the intercession of Saints, or purgatory. His opponents could not win and became very angry.²⁴¹ Francis aimed solely at the salvation of souls and therefore dedicated the rest of life to pastoral duty among the Calvinists. According to Francis, since there is no salvation outside the Church, the

²³⁷ MARSOLLIER, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales* (vol.1), 175.

²³⁸ Cf. MARSOLLIER, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales* (vol.1), 173-174.

²³⁹ Cf. WACH, *Das Leben eines Heiligen*, 192.

²⁴⁰ Cf. CONGAR, *Franz von Sales*, 53.

²⁴¹ Cf. RING, *die Mission in Chablais* (1594-1598), 44.

Calvinists would lose eternal life and, therefore, they needed to be brought back to the Catholic faith.

When he was opposing the teachings of the Calvinists, he never used abusive words, insults or outrages; rather he showed meekness and patience. In this regard, his companions accused him of being too lenient and merciful to the enemies of the faith and he was not making use of his authority from the duke. He had no purpose for creating enmity with his opponents or to fly away from them; rather, he wanted to establish peace with them.²⁴² In his relationship with Calvinists, he always followed the method of charity. According to Francis, charity is the first condition for any relationship. He opposed only the teachings of the Calvinists but he accepted them as real human beings.²⁴³ According to him, every heresy should be rejected and renounced.

2.5 The Methods of Francis from a Secular Perspective

Francis had a tremendous political influence in his time. He always had good contact with the duke of Savoy as well as the king of France. During his missionary years in Chablais, he visited the duke several times and explained to the duke about the progress of the mission and made various suggestions to Duke Charles Emmanuel regarding his secular plan for the mission.²⁴⁴ He suggested that the duke establish a Catholic regiment so that they could protect themselves if threatened by the Calvinists of Geneva. According to Francis, the Catholic rulers should help to restore the Catholic faith to the region. The method of secular rulers was to bring back people to the Catholic faith with force but Francis had a completely different approach. He always applied the method of dialogue. Some of his important suggestions to the duke were: the reinstallation of parishes, getting back the possession of the churches, removal of the Calvinist pastor Viret, bringing back the Catholic teachers, civil rights for Catholics and no public positions for Calvinists.²⁴⁵

From a secular perspective, the duke had to fulfil these demands which would help in the conversion of Calvinists, as well as strengthen the Catholic community. When many converted from Calvinism, it was necessary to provide necessary infrastructure for worship as well as for the education and training of the youths in Chablais. In order to do this, it was necessary to get the support of the duke. Therefore, Francis had to rely more on the

²⁴² Cf. EHRENBORG, FRANZ von Sales als Vorbild und Lehrer, 104f.

²⁴³ Cf. PAUELS, Gottes Leuchten auf einem Menschenantlitz, 114.

²⁴⁴ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales, Leben- Lehre- Werk, 154.

²⁴⁵ Cf. KOSTER, Franz von Sales, 76.

duke. Francis wanted an association between lay people and priests to work together for the success of the mission.²⁴⁶ According to Francis, the civil government and religion are intimately connected and one affects the other; therefore, the concerns of both should be addressed at the same time.

2.5.1 Political and Economic Pressures

In the year 1595, Francis asked the duke to take the necessary measures for the conversion of Chablais.²⁴⁷ The duke had a political plan in converting Chablais to Catholicism because he thought that if Chablais was converted to Catholicism the people would remain loyal to him. In his meeting with the duke, Francis asked the duke to send a member of the senate to Thonon to persuade people to hear Catholic homilies. This was because many Calvinists in Chablais could not be persuaded by gentle means. Of the Calvinists who were not converted by gentle means, stronger measures might bring them back to the Catholic faith. For example, Calvinists could be removed from public office, exiled from Chablais or prohibited from teaching in the schools.²⁴⁸ The duke also made a decree stating the Calvinists were ineligible for any public office of dignity.²⁴⁹ Exile was the strongest measure against heretics. Francis asked the duke to write a decree demanding all the Calvinists to come back to the Catholic faith.

Francis was very particular in getting permission from secular authorities when it was necessary. Even during his busy schedule in the mission, he submitted timely reports to the duke about the development of the mission. He also requested support from the nuncio for the success of the mission.²⁵⁰ In the year 1596, he was in the court of the duke and, while addressing the council, he demanded the state to put forth its energies for the conversion of Chablais. The duke was afraid of the Genevans and of King Henry IV of France. Francis thought that, if force was used, they would take advantage of the situation. Francis was not demanding to use force. He was showing the dangerous connection between Calvinism and rebellion, and he was of the opinion that the people were holding to Calvinism not because of their convictions but because people were misled by the false teachings of Calvinists.²⁵¹ Therefore, Francis was requesting that all Calvinist ministers be sent out of the country and

²⁴⁶ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales, *Leben- Lehre- Werk*, 155.

²⁴⁷ Cf. KLEINMAN, Francis de Sales and the Protestants, 71.

²⁴⁸ Cf. KLEINMAN, Francis de Sales and the Protestants, 78.

²⁴⁹ Cf. CONGAR, Franz von Sales, 42.

²⁵⁰ Cf. BERGHUIS, *Nichts so sehr als Mensch*, 110.

²⁵¹ Cf. RING, *die Mission im Chablais (1594-1598)*, 34.

the state patronage be taken back from the Calvinists and be given back to the Catholics. He also demanded the suppression of the Protestant books and establishment of a Catholic press in Annecy.²⁵²

2.5.2 Reconstruction of the Destroyed Churches and Reestablishment of Catholic Practices

Francis asked the duke to set up enough revenues for the reestablishment of parishes, the reconstruction of the destroyed churches and to buy the things which are necessary for worship.²⁵³ The sustenance of the priests was another big concern. In order to provide this, he planned to sell costly items from the existing churches which were unnecessary. He planned to use the proceeds to pay his priests' salaries and to meet the different pastoral needs of the people. In order to meet the sustenance of the preachers, he foresaw that the revenues which were given to the Calvinist ministers should be used for the maintenance of the Catholic preachers.²⁵⁴ He asked the duke to reconstruct the churches which were destroyed by the Calvinists because, according to Francis, the faith can only be protected and grown in a church and in the presence of good pastors. In order to give momentum to the massive conversion of the Calvinists, Francis employed many means. One of these means was the reestablishment of parishes and the reconstruction of destroyed churches but, because of the lack of the resources, this was not progressing as expected by Francis.²⁵⁵

He wanted to begin the reestablishment of the parishes from the centre of the province. In this regard, his first attempt was the renovation of the church of St. Hippolytus in Thonon.²⁵⁶ Francis was authorised by the duke to take possession of this church. He got the assurance of protection from the governor. Without fearing the threats from different corners, he succeeded in erecting a wooden altar in the church of St. Hippolytus and celebrated the Eucharist for the first time in 60 years in 1596. The midnight Mass of Christmas 1596 was a very joyful occasion for the Catholics of Thonon. Hundreds of people attended this midnight Mass.²⁵⁷ After his great success in Thonon, he planned to

²⁵² Cf. ORNSBY, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales*, 47.

²⁵³ Cf. WEHRL, *Franz von Sales im Dienst der Kirchendiplomatie*, 49.

²⁵⁴ Cf. MARSOLLIER, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales* (vol.1), 273.

²⁵⁵ Cf. RING, *Die Mission in Chablais (1594-1598)*, 49.

²⁵⁶ Cf. RING, *Die Mission in Chablais (1594-1598)*, 48.

²⁵⁷ Cf. MIDATHADA, *Missionary Spirit of Saint Francis de Sales*, 46-47.

reinroduce more church services, not only in Thonon but in other areas of the mission as well.

2.5.3 Special Regard and Love for the Poor and Needy

In the mission of Chablais, Francis saw the cry and need of the poor as his own need. In his book *Introduction to the Devout Life* Francis provided many examples of how the poor people must to be respected and considered.²⁵⁸ In his mission he personally practised evangelical poverty. He lived a very poor life in the mission, devoid of all material comforts. Even in his poverty, he was very generous to the poor. He felt himself as one amongst them and wanted to become everything for everyone. He found time to receive everyone and never allowed people to wait for him. At this time, the poor included orphans, peasants, widows, and the people who lost everything in the Protestant revolution, even his own clergy and canons.

During his mission years in Chablais, he demanded from the duke the tax exemption for the villages of Mesinge, a parish just near to the Allinges. He was not only helping the poor and needy, but also he was fighting against injustice. For example, the revenues of Ripaille were not used for the poor, but they were used to feed the needs of the military of the duke in Les Allinges. He considered it as an injustice and, regarding this matter, Francis wrote many times to the duke.²⁵⁹ He made a countless number of charities. At times when he had no money to help the poor, he either sold or leased items from his house. He had a special concern for his servants and he was always ready to help them in any way possible. He wrote to the duke that he was in the mission by the order of the bishop and the duke but he was always forced to wait for any necessary financial support.²⁶⁰ All of his activities were centred on other human-beings. He was entirely devoted to his vocation and he was ready to spend his time and energy for others, especially for the poor and needy.

But nothing so powerfully struck as were not entirely hardened, as to see the way in which the poor and the sick were succoured. Francis used to employ all he had to live upon in this; so that after having fed others, he was himself often reduced to hunger: he kept continually soliciting his relations and friends to help the poor faithful of the Chablais. He often received sums considerable in themselves, but which were trifling when measured by his Charity.²⁶¹

²⁵⁸ Cf. VON SALES, *Anleitung zum frommen Leben*, 145-150.

²⁵⁹ Cf. MOOKENTHOTTAM, *Preferential Option for the Poor*, 148.

²⁶⁰ Cf. WEHRL, *Franz von Sales im Dienst der Kirchendiplomatie*, 50.

²⁶¹ ORNSBY, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales*, 41.

In his ministry he gave the same attention to the poor as to the rich. He extended his charity in their wants. There was an incident recorded in the life of Francis. Once after hearing his homilies, the Princess of Longueville and Merceur sent a noble of their acquaintance to Francis with a purse full of ornaments and golden crowns. Francis was not willing to accept such kind gifts. Francis was very much satisfied with the meagre resources he possessed. The noble man told Francis about the instruction of the princess to not bring this present back to her. Francis replied that he would offer it to the poor if the princess refused to accept its return. Francis showed his concern for the poor in his life.²⁶² For Francis, charity arises from two necessities, for rich people to give alms in order to practice poverty and for the poor to receive alms for their survival.²⁶³

2.5.4 The Detailed Plan for the Financial Stability of the Mission

Financing was an important concern in all of his missionary activities and in the maintenance of his priests. For the needs of the mission, he earnestly appealed for the help from the ecclesial authorities as well as the Duke of Savoy. The wars of that time were one of the reasons for delaying the support of the duke. Therefore, he also asked for the support and supervision of the high officers.²⁶⁴ He needed a lot of money to do pastoral care there. His utmost priority was to rebuild the churches which were destroyed by the Calvinists and rebuild the presbyteries. He was always writing letters to the duke explaining the financial situation of the mission. He was even prepared to spend his private money for the mission. He wanted to bring financial stability to the parishes, so that the parish priests would not suffer from a lack of sufficient funds. Francis even sold two candlesticks in order to help the parish priest of Thonnay, who was in great financial need.²⁶⁵ He wrote to the papal Nuncio Riccardi about the financial condition of the mission and how the success of the mission depended on financial stability. He wrote to the Nuncio Riccardi that priests have to be rich in their lives and in their knowledge. He made an exact plan of the financial needs of each parish and sent it to the duke.²⁶⁶

His main financial sources were from the knight and from the princes. Another option to bring financial stability to the mission was to get back the money from the third orders like St. Maurius and Lazar. This amount was almost 4000 ducat. It was sufficient to fulfil all

²⁶² Cf. MARSOLLIER, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales* (vol.1), 441f.

²⁶³ Cf. MOOKENTHOTTAM, *Preferential Option for the Poor*, 140f.

²⁶⁴ Cf. MIDATHADA, *Missionary Spirit of Saint Francis de Sales*, 50-51.

²⁶⁵ Cf. WEHRL, *Franz von Sales im Dienst der Kirchendiplomatie*, 53.

²⁶⁶ Cf. WEHRL, *Franz von Sales im Dienst der Kirchendiplomatie*, 52.

the pastoral needs of the region. In order to get back that money he had to write to the pope about the missionary situation of Chablais.²⁶⁷ He wrote in his letters to the duke about the financial need of a parish priest and the amount needed for the sustenance of the parish priest and his assistants. According to him, in order to get good preachers, good remuneration had to be paid.²⁶⁸

There were also many properties of the Church which was unjustly taken over by the Calvinists. Francis demanded to get back every property of the Church which had gone into the hands of the reformers. There were benefices held by private persons without any clerical titles. There was the restitution of dues which were unjustly held. If these things were taken back, it would help in the financial stability of the mission, the reconstruction of the churches as well as to provide financial support for the pastors.²⁶⁹ According to him, in order to attain financial stability of the mission, an accurate calculation of the revenues should be done. He calculated the amount which was needed for the yearly sustenance of a priest and the mission because it was necessary for him to organise the financial stability of the mission as well as the sustenance of his co-workers.

2.6 Conclusion

After analysing all of Francis's missionary activities, it is clear that he had his own methods and methodology when facing different challenges. His tactics and methods proved admirably successful. He employed new and creative ideas in both his approaches and his methods. The time in which Francis lived must also be taken into consideration. He addressed various issues, fully understanding his own limitations as well as the challenges of his time. Understanding every situation, he changed his methods and worked on a well thought-out plan. With brilliant arguments, he defended the Catholic faith, both politically and intellectually. He knew how to get the support of the secular as well as the religious authorities. He confronted every issue with solid arguments developed from his knowledge and experience. He fully made use of his vast knowledge in the civil as well as in the ecclesiastical laws for the success of the mission.

In developing his methods, he remained fully oriented to the welfare of the people entrusted to him. Taking even simple people of his mission into account, he used very

²⁶⁷ Cf. WEHRL, Franz von Sales im Dienst der Kirchendiplomatie, 59.

²⁶⁸ Cf. WEHRL, Franz von Sales im Dienst der Kirchendiplomatie, 54.

²⁶⁹ Cf. MARSOLLIER, The Life of St. Francis de Sales (vol.1), 272.

simple language to enter into the heart of the people. He loved everyone, and in this way he could simply enter into the heart of the people. In all his methods, he gave priority to the heart rather than his wisdom and intelligence. There was no place in his life for hatred or retaliation. He tactfully and politely opposed the doctrines of the Calvinists, countering their rudeness and insults with patience and humility. He was ready to accept everyone and he understood the needs of everyone. He knew very well what the people needed in a particular situation. He took each one into account and gave utmost priority to the personal relationships. He was very patient, not only with persons but also with different situations. His complete dedication to the mission is to be really appreciated. He put his heart and mind wholeheartedly into the success of the mission. He never did anything for his personal advantage, but everything was done for the love of God and for the welfare of the people.

In all his methods, his complete trust and confidence in God can never be forgotten. His priorities were the good of the Church and the well-being of the people. He developed his methods based on his faith in God as well as his knowledge of the Bible and in the teachings of the Church. Through his methodological teachings, he was not only able to show the distinction between Catholic and Calvinist teachings, but also succeeded in bringing the novelty into the Catholic Church. Understanding and taking into the realities of his time, he was fully oriented toward the future. He had the basic conviction that all are called to holiness and this holiness can be achieved only in the Catholic Church. He was open to everything and even was ready to have discussions with his opponents, the Calvinists. Through his innovative methods, he opened a door for Calvinists to return to the Catholic Church.

Chapter III

The Pastoral and Theological Impacts and Influences of the Chablais Mission in the Person, Life and Ministry of Francis de Sales

3.0 Introduction

The Chablais mission formed a vital role in the formation of the person and personality of Francis and it made him an important figure in the renewal of the Church. His four years of ministry in the mission of Chablais was filled with various kinds of experiences. The vast missionary experiences in Chablais formed Francis into a great personality of the Church and it formed in him such a great missionary spirit that he was even ready to sacrifice his life for the mission.²⁷⁰ The mission of Chablais formed Francis, not only as an ardent missionary, but also as a great visionary. The methods he used for the conversion of Chablais had a wide range of impacts in his personal life, as well as in his missionary activities. Many of today's missionaries take Francis and the Chablais mission as excellent models for their own missionary activities. His vibrant missionary spirit and enthusiasm continue to influence the world today. It is the Chablais mission which formed Francis as an important figure in the Church and he gave his share for the spiritual renewal of the 17th century Church. Considering his arduous missionary activities in Chablais, he can be truly called as the apostle of Chablais. Therefore, after analysing the missionary challenges and the methods of Francis used to overcome these challenges, it is worthwhile to examine how his missionary spirit and activities influenced his life, the life of the church and the world at large. Fr. Antony Kolencherry writes about the missionary spirit of Francis de Sales: "Francis was a priest endowed with exceptional pastoral wisdom. With unalloyed apostolic zeal, he dedicated his life to preaching, hearing confessions, spiritual direction, composing letters of spiritual direction, and setting in motion the 'social media' for the proclamation of the Word."²⁷¹

Chablais was the ground which became the foundation of his sainthood. Such was the impact of the Chablais mission that his life can be divided into two eras, before and after

²⁷⁰ Cf. MIDATHADA, Missionary Spirit of Saint Francis de Sales, 19.

²⁷¹ KOLENCHERRY, St. Francis de Sales - The Person and his Spirit, 25.

the mission. The impacts of the Chablais mission are visible in various stages of the life of Francis. The missionary years of Francis are reflected in all his undertakings, especially later on in his pastoral activities as a bishop. Robert Ornsby, in his biography on Francis writes about the episcopate of Francis: “He had now entered on the career which made him what he is in the history of the Church, and previously to which, notwithstanding the great actions he had achieved, and the extensive influences he had acquired, the purpose for which such graces had been lavished upon him would have fulfilled.”²⁷² The mission of Chablais made Francis a very practical person and a reflection on his life and ministry reveals that Francis was a very practical saint and his teachings and ministries were also very practical. His activities were future oriented and his teachings were not only meant for his own times, but also for the centuries to come. His main teachings were based on the bible and fathers of the Church.²⁷³ The life and mission of Francis in Chablais, helped him to work ardently for the renewal of the Church especially in the areas of the renewal of priesthood, piety, homilies and in the spiritual directions. His vast experience helped him to take a practical position regarding different issues of his time.

At that time there were many issues in the Church which had to be adequately addressed. After the untiring mission in Chablais, Francis understood what the Church of his time really needed and this helped him to reform the Church generally and the clergy particularly. With his innovative ideas, he gave a new direction to the Church and he could influence almost every aspect of the Church. In all the issues, he had his own position and he neither joined nor stood for any particular faction of the Church. He had a universal approach in his thinking and tried to include everyone in his activities. He was very practical in his approach as well as in his activities.²⁷⁴ Therefore, this chapter examines the positive impacts of the Chablais mission from various perspectives; especially in the person and ministry of Francis. It looks into the life and personality of Francis, the background of the Chablais mission and how Francis, serving as an instrument of God’s love, contributed to the Church’s renewal through various aspects of the Chablais mission.

²⁷² ORNSBY, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales*, 77.

²⁷³ Cf. LAJEUNIE, *Franz von Sales. Leben- Lehre- Werk*, 447.

²⁷⁴ Cf. MOGET, *Relevance of St. Francis de Sales*, 91.

3.1 Implications and Impacts of the Chablais Mission from an Ecclesiastical Perspective

After the persecution of the early Church, the Church enjoyed many privileges in society and, therefore, many members of the clergy were less willing to undertake any perilous mission. As an ardent missionary, Francis ventured to take up such a great mission for the glory of the Church. Francis was a Church man and his sole intention of taking up the mission was for the victory of the Church. The Chablais mission brought not only the conversion of Calvinists, but gave a lot of energy and enthusiasm to the life of Francis and the Church. In all his years of missionary activities in Chablais, he tried to rejuvenate the spiritual life of the people.²⁷⁵ He accomplished a great deal for the Church and influenced many people, including George Rolland, his servant. Francis's mother sent Rolland to him while he ministered in Chablais, and under his spiritual influence, Rolland later became a priest. Through his spiritual charm, Francis simply attracted people to him.

In order to understand the spiritual charm and vibrancy of Francis, it is necessary to understand the spiritual situation and challenges of his time. The religious situation of France was very disastrous, as evidenced by many problems, misuses and abuses. Powerful clergy and money controlled practically everything. Worldly elements and rationalists inside the Church undermined its pursuit of holiness, and Francis fought against those influences. Liturgical celebrations were often monotonous and unattractive to most people, and many priests focussed primarily on rubrics and cults.²⁷⁶ Despite all these forces, Francis accomplished a great success in the Chablais mission and became a spiritual guide to the faithful and gave new direction in their life. From the mission of Chablais, Francis learned that in order to influence the life of people, he had to become everything to everyone. He was a down-to-earth missionary in Chablais and he became, like St. Paul, a Jew for the Jews and a Greek for the Greeks.²⁷⁷

During his missionary life in Chablais, Francis developed his own method of performing pastoral duties and providing spiritual direction. In these years, he acquired deeper knowledge of the heart of the human person and he gave special importance to the pastoral care of the women as the mothers of the next generation.²⁷⁸ The years following

²⁷⁵ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. *Leben- Lehre- Werk*, 214.

²⁷⁶ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. *Leben- Lehre- Werk*, 452-453.

²⁷⁷ Cf. NIGG, *Vier große Heilige*, 120.

²⁷⁸ Cf. NIGG, *Vier große Heilige*, 133.

the Chablais mission witnessed a spiritual rebirth in the Church in France. Francis restored the dignity of the Church. Through his mission and vision in Chablais, he showed the world how even in a difficult situation a real orientation could be given to the Church. He showed the world how the pastoral care and especially the spiritual direction could be done in a better way. Ultimately, Francis arranged everything for the advantage of the Church. He learned the importance of hard work, practical experience as well as a total trust in the providence of God.

3.1.1 The Victory over Calvinism and Wave of Conversions

The immediate and great success of Francis in Chablais was the complete victory over Calvinism and the wave of conversion to the Catholic Church. Francis had his own method and employed it for the conversion of Calvinists.²⁷⁹ He applied his method to counter various positions held by Calvinist ministers in Chablais. As Calvinism slowly started to disappear and the whole area of Chablais became Catholic, the big issue was about the various positions held by Calvinist ministers and preachers. The members of the court and even the duke were supporting them to remain back in Chablais, but Francis was completely against it and believed that they should be expelled from the region, so that a complete victory of Catholic religion could be proclaimed in Chablais. Accordingly, Francis persisted and the duke banished the Calvinists from the region. Francis learned from his experiences, that it was necessary for freely practising of Catholic religion as well as a good rule in the state.²⁸⁰

Francis had tremendous power to attract people to the Catholic faith and it was in the mission of Chablais where he developed his own method for the conversion of Calvinists. He seized every opportunity to bring back people to the Catholic faith but he always opposed forced conversion. Actually, the mission of Chablais concluded in October 1598 with various religious functions attended by papal delegates and the Duke of Savoy. It was reported that almost 2000 families embraced the Catholic faith in this event. But in all these conversions, Francis never advocated for violence as the means of conversion.²⁸¹ Proof of Francis's commitment to peaceful persuasion emerged when Spanish soldiers approached the city of Thonon, triggering a panic among its inhabitants. Francis spoke with the army's commander and prevailed upon him to march along a different route so

²⁷⁹ Cf. SAGAR, Francis de Sales and Catholic Reform in the Seventeenth-Century France, 272.

²⁸⁰ Cf. RING, Franz von Sales - Missionar in Chablais, 75

²⁸¹ Cf. KLEINMAN, Francis de Sales and the Protestants, 81.

that the people would not flee. On the other hand, Francis also had his own views regarding the role of the duke for the conversion of Calvinists.²⁸² After the conversion of Avully, an important figure in Chablais, there was a wave of conversion in Chablais. Even the people from distant villages sought to have Francis visit them and reconcile them into the Catholic Church. The Duke of Savoy had visited Chablais to demand that its people return to Catholicism because he wanted a single religion to unite the country. The duke's drastic intervention led to many conversions. In the official list, there are 2331 names recorded but there were others who were converted by Francis. At the end of 1598, the number had gone beyond 3000.²⁸³

Francis formed his pastoral policies of the Church to win over Calvinists. Together with working hard in the mission, he trusted in the power God. Different experiences in his life, especially in Chablais, led him to have a deep faith in God. Even the pressures from inside and outside did not stop him from his missionary endeavours.²⁸⁴ Francis did everything with openness and earnestness. The earnest missionary efforts of Francis brought openness and fraternal love towards everyone.²⁸⁵ Two years after starting his ministry in Chablais, in the year 1596, on Christmas night, he consecrated Holy Communion for eight hundred people. From that time onwards, the conversion of Calvinists became very common; sometimes whole villages converted to the Catholic faith at once. Due to his exemplary life and hard work, he brought the whole of Chablais into the Catholic faith and it was the great success in the life of Francis. These conversions were not done by force but by real love and the missionary spirit of Francis. Today a study of Francis and his contributions to the Church would be pointless without considering the enormous contribution he gave for the success of the mission of Chablais.

3.1.2 Establishment of Active Parishes with Lively Liturgy

Throughout history, the pastoral care of the people was a great concern of the Church. The pastors have the duty to meet the spiritual needs of the people and they have to lead them to heaven.²⁸⁶ Francis was one of such great pastors who tried to establish a lively parish community. Even though, as the provost of the Cathedral of Annecy, Francis had the primary experience as a pastor, it is the Chablais mission which formed him as a real

²⁸² Cf. MARSOLLIER, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales* (vol.1), 267.

²⁸³ Cf. RING, *Franz von Sales - Missionar in Chablais*, 77.

²⁸⁴ Cf. WACH, *Das Leben eines Heiligen*, 200.

²⁸⁵ Cf. MIDATHADA, *The Pastoral Spirit of Saint Francis de Sales*, 249.

²⁸⁶ Cf. SAGAR, *Francis de Sales and Catholic Reform in the Seventeenth-Century France*, 269.

pastor of the people. Francis wanted to rejuvenate the parish life in Chablais and, therefore, he gave great importance to the re-establishment of destroyed parishes in Chablais. Francis understood the necessity of a parish oriented ministry for the propagation of the faith.

Francis continued to remark, that when all which could aid the progress of error should be removed, it would be necessary to re-establish whatever would tend to support the Catholic religion, principally the parishes and the pastors; that to accomplish this object, it would be necessary only to make an accurate search for the revenues of the benefices usurped by the Calvinists, or unjustly held by persons without title or even the clerical character.²⁸⁷

Francis had a tremendous experience in the Chablais mission and it influenced his subsequent episcopal ministry. Francis divided his diocese into 22 deaneries and he appointed the experienced priests as the head of each deanery.²⁸⁸ The priests had to submit timely reports about the parish and the life of the parish. After the spirit of the Chablais mission, he tried to make the parish communities active with very lively liturgy. Accordingly, the folk had to take a very active role in the celebration of the liturgy. He understood that the active celebration of the liturgy was the heart of parish life. He considered folk - oriented liturgy as the necessity of the time.²⁸⁹ In the parishes, he promoted a lively liturgy and he emphasised that the Latin had to be the language of the Mass but insisted on singing vernacular hymns. It was a very important duty of the priests to administer the Sacraments and he instructed the priests on how they had to properly administer the sacraments.²⁹⁰ He considered the chapels and altars as the important element in the propagation of proper devotion among the lay people. He proved to the world that lively liturgy could bring back active faith in the life of the people. He learned in the mission how the Eucharist could be used as a means of conversion of the people.²⁹¹

Due to his wide range of experience in instructing the people of Chablais, Francis understood that the proper instruction of Catechism was very important for creating an active parish. Francis became a model for other parish priests, not only in the instruction of Catechism, but he also instructed the other priests to do the same and instructed the parents to send their children to Catechism. He made the parishes active through catechesis, confession, and active liturgy. Because of the influence of Francis, there was a new awakening in the field of catechesis and Francis considered that it was the duty of the priests to identify proper teachers for the instruction of Catechism. Francis used the

²⁸⁷ MARSOLLIER, The Life of St. Francis de Sales (vol.1), 272.

²⁸⁸ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. Leben – Lehre - Werk, 340.

²⁸⁹ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. Leben – Lehre - Werk, 374.

²⁹⁰ Cf. NAZARETH, Little More about St. Francis de Sales, 58.

²⁹¹ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. Leben – Lehre - Werk, 614.

catechetical instruction as the best method for the spiritual formation. Francis was also influenced by the Catechism of the council of Trent. He used these teachings as a means of converting Calvinists.²⁹²

3.1.3 Francis`s Contribution to the Renewal of Priesthood

At the time of Francis, the parish priests had a central role in all the aspects of human life. They were present in all of the important events of society. People considered them the mediator between God and men. For the people, they were also a link between diocese and the parish. After the council of Trent, the role of the priest became even more important.²⁹³ Even performing all these functions, the moral and educational standard of the priests had not improved and needed radical renewal. From his experience in Chablais, Francis understood the urgency of the renewal of priesthood. Even though much remains unknown about his attempt to renew the priesthood, his missionary works in Chablais, and his later ministry as bishop, they do show that he worked strenuously to renew the priests of his diocese. This renewal was one of his top priorities for his diocese. He wanted to form a community of diocesan priests who live together. Francis also discussed with Saint Vincent de Paul the urgent need to renew the priesthood. He always believed that good and educated priests were required for the success of any mission.

As a bishop he worked strenuously for the renewal of the clergy and it had a long lasting influence in the formation of the priests in France. What he taught was not a systematic theology of the priesthood, but a practical spirituality for the priests. Francis believed that the bishops and priests form an apostolic entity and this entity is a mystical union and their ministry is closely related to the apostolic head. He recognised that the evangelical counsels of obedience, poverty and chastity were the very foundations of the priesthood. The bishops and his priests were to be holy, living in the spirit of poverty, chastity and obedience, so that each one could, by his very life, sanctify the people. In his own life, he showed how the priests had to be holy. He lived a life of holiness and gave utmost importance to the word of God. He was an excellent preacher and model catechist and he was a wonderful spiritual director.²⁹⁴

At that time there were priests who did not even know the formula of the baptism. Misbehaving priests caused people to lose respect for the sacraments. Some of the priests

²⁹² Cf. WEHRL, Allen Alles, 15.

²⁹³ Cf. FEHLEISON, Boundaries of Faith, 138,

²⁹⁴ Cf. NAZARETH, Little More about St. Francis de Sales, 43-44.

were ordained after paying the fixed amount of money.²⁹⁵ Many of the priests were not celebrating Mass according to the prescriptions of the Council of Trent. Francis understood that the basic problem was the spiritual situation of the priests. Therefore, in his diocese, Francis put forward exact instructions for the formations of the priests and he personally examined the candidates prior to ordaining them. He ordained priests either in his cathedral or in particular places where he went for the visitation.²⁹⁶ Francis made regulations regarding the celebration of the Mass, for the use of the chalice, altar, and ciborium. There were also rules regarding priestly residences, their dress, and their preaching.²⁹⁷ He believed the holiness of the diocese depended on the holiness of the priests and a priest had to belong fully to God and to his people. Francis ensured that priests received an income sufficient for their subsistence while remaining consistent with a life of poverty. He made the rules regarding the income of the priests. He never allowed the priests to take extra money from parishioners and the priests were not allowed to change office without sufficient reasons.²⁹⁸

He found that the best way to renew the priesthood was to educate the priests. Obedient to the direction of the council of Trent, Francis intended to establish a seminary in his diocese for the proper formation of the priests. In order to get the necessary permission, he wrote to Rome. Even though it did not materialise, he worked for it in his entire ministry. Francis instructed the candidates to learn the religious ceremonies, singing, catechism, homilies etc.²⁹⁹ He tried to bring back respect to the priesthood. Due to Francis's initiatives for priestly renewal, many priests began to adopt his suggestions for reform. Fr. Bourdoise, a parish priest of St. Nicolas de Chardonnet wanted to renew the clergy and he invited Francis to give conferences. Soon many other priests joined this effort. Another important person who was influenced by Francis was Vincent de Paul. After seeing the success of the Francis's conferences, St. Vincent de Paul began to give conferences in Paris. He was following the same method as Francis.³⁰⁰ Through his ardent missionary spirit, Francis inculcated in the heart of young people a real love for the priesthood. He loved his priesthood and gave so much to his call. His life was really an inspiration and a challenge to the priests of all ages.

²⁹⁵ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. *Leben – Lehre - Werk*, 333.

²⁹⁶ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. *Leben – Lehre - Werk*, 336

²⁹⁷ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. *Leben – Lehre - Werk*, 340.

²⁹⁸ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. *Leben – Lehre - Werk*, 347.

²⁹⁹ Cf. MARSOLLIER, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales* (vol.1), 274.

³⁰⁰ Cf. MOGET, *Relevance of St. Francis de Sales*, 92.

3.1.4 Francis's Initiative to the Reform of Catholicism

Reformation of the Church was one of the great intentions of Francis and he worked, not only for the conversion of Calvinists, but also for the renewal of the Catholic faith in every possible way. During his missionary years, he understood the various areas of the Church that were in need of urgent renewal. In his renewal efforts, his missionary spirit in Chablais played a vital role. He started the renewal in his diocese slowly, becoming a very important time in the Catholic Church of France. In this renewal, Francis was trying to bring the spirit of the Council of Trent to all aspects of the life of the Church.³⁰¹ In his reformation movements, he had a clear vision of the Catholic faith and through his teachings and works; he tried to establish how the Catholic faith should be. From his vast experience, he understood the need for the strong Christian communities for the renewal of Christian faith and through different methods he tried to bring a new awakening in the heart of the faithful. His method of rejuvenating Christian faith and re-establishing Christian communities had a wide range of importance in the Christian life in France.³⁰²

In his missionary endeavours the religious orders like Capuchins and Jesuits helped Francis to re-establish Catholic faith in Chablais and from this experience he understood the need of religious orders and monasteries for the renewal of Catholic faith. He also understood that some of the religious orders and monasteries needed their own reform. He also believed in the need of whole-hearted cooperation of the religious and diocesan clergy for the renewal of the Church and he worked hard to bring them together.³⁰³ It is interesting to know how he initiated the reform of the monasteries. A particular example of his reformation efforts was at the Abbey of Talloires, near Annecy. At the times of Francis, there were only a few monks there, without a superior and without any discipline and monks were greatly influenced by the worldly spirit. Seeing the dismal situation of the abbey, getting necessary permissions from the Pope, Francis started the reform process. In the midst of oppositions, Francis made a personal effort to reform this monastery and, using his authority, he brought back discipline in the monastery.³⁰⁴

The council of Trent initiated several important reform processes, including a reordering of lay confraternities. Francis investigated various dealings of these

³⁰¹ Cf. MOGET, St. Francis de Sales' Contribution to Religious Renewal, 679.

³⁰² Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. Leben- Lehre- Werk, 369.

³⁰³ Cf. MOGET, St. Francis de Sales' Contribution to Religious Renewal, 677.

³⁰⁴ Cf. MARSOLLIER, The Life of St. Francis de Sales (vol. 2), 159-166.

confraternities and gave proper guidance to them.³⁰⁵ The formation programme he started for the lay faithful in Chablais had a wide range of impacts in all levels of Church. It was a basis for the formation of the lay people in the Church. At the time of absolute clerical dominations, Francis stressed the same rights and obligations of clergy and the lay people in the pious associations. Francis brought an authentic sense of service in these associations. The aim of this association was the spiritual good of everybody. Even Francis himself participated in these lay associations and it had a marvellous impact among the people.³⁰⁶

3.1.5 Francis, the Defender of the Rights of the Church

Francis was an ecclesiastical man and he did everything to defend and protect the right of the Church. In various dealings with different political and ecclesiastical authorities in the mission, he learned to defend the right of the Church in public and he worked tirelessly to defend the Church on every occasion.

The mission of Chablais alone, will be to all succeeding ages an immortal proof of his zeal; he undertook it at his own expense, and conducted the work for many years almost alone, supported in appearance by the authority of his Sovereign, but in reality abandoned for a great length of time to tumults, conspiracies and to all those obstacles, which the violence of heresy is capable of raising against a single man, who was invigorated only by his own zeal and his confidence in God. As success is ever in the hands of the Almighty, and depends not on human exertions, it was sufficient for him to embark in those achievements, in order to prove the ardour of his love for the Church, and for Jesus Christ, its founder and invisible governor.³⁰⁷

He made a lot of efforts diplomatically to defend the right of the Church and paved the way for the practice of Catholic religion in the region of Chablais. As a missionary, and later on as a bishop, Francis participated in many of the diplomatic deliberations regarding the right of the Church and it helped him to bring back Catholic cult and religion in Chablais.³⁰⁸

From his studies and experiences, Francis developed his own ecclesiastical policy to defend the right of the Church. He recognised the importance of the Church's hierarchical structure to maintaining the unity of the Church.³⁰⁹ He foresaw the possibility of friction with secular authorities and believed that the rights of the Church must triumph. In order to defend the right of the Church, Francis put pressures on the secular world. According to

³⁰⁵ Cf. FEHLEISON, *Boundaries of Faith*, 216.

³⁰⁶ Cf. MIDATHADA, *The Pastoral Spirit of Saint Francis de Sales*, 206f.

³⁰⁷ MARSOLLIER, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales* (vol. 2), 461.

³⁰⁸ Cf. WEHRL, *Dienst der Kirchendiplomatie*, 87.

³⁰⁹ Cf. SAGAR, *Francis de Sales and Catholic Reform in the Seventeenth-Century France*, 273.

him, the Church should play an active role in all aspects of life of a society. Even as a young missionary in Chablais, through his pamphlets and letters, he explained the truth of Catholic religion and defended the Church in a Calvinistic region. He knew very well that it was necessary to bring out the truth to defend the right of the Church. The collection of letters called *The Catholic Controversy* was written to defend the right of the Church. He believed in the continuity of the Church throughout the centuries.³¹⁰ His ways of defending the right of the Church had influenced a lot of people to fight for the right of the Church.

3.1.6 An Inspiration and Interest for the Propagation of the Mission

The success of the Chablais mission, which nobody at that time had expected, instilled in Francis a real love for missionary activities and, through this success, he could instil in the hearts of the people a real interest for the mission. He was ready to go through any challenges for the success of the mission. Later on he explained to the world his success through his sermons and writings. There were many young people who became great missionaries following the example of Francis. He showed the world how a mission could be successful when committed persons work wholeheartedly for the success of the mission.³¹¹ Every mission involved challenges and Francis showed how these challenges could be surmounted with patience and persistence. The method and tactics used by Francis were long lasting. As an inspiring missionary he showed how the heart of the people could be won with different methods. The success of the mission depended on how the missionaries could reach into the hearts of the people and the dedication and sacrifice they showed in this regard.³¹²

After the example and inspiration of Francis, in the course of history, many missionaries came forward to take up challenging missions and numerous young people were ready to leave behind everything for Christ and his mission. Francis was able to inculcate in the hearts of the young people a real love for the mission of Christ. The mission of Chablais also paved the way for new evangelisation in the Church, which won the heart of the people. He made the lay people the active partakers of the mission and defined their role in the mission of Christ.³¹³ The mission was an undertaking of all the faithful. Francis

³¹⁰ Cf. DE SALES, *The Catholic Controversy*, 54f.

³¹¹ Cf. FEHLEISON, *Boundaries of Faith*, 83

³¹² Cf. DEAVEL, *Francis de Sales. A Patron Saint of our Age*, 15.

³¹³ Cf. KOLENCHERRY, *St. Francis de Sales and the Lay Spirituality*, 72.

believed that all had a share in the mission of the Church.³¹⁴ Francis brought a lot of newness into the missionary activities of the Church, which were hitherto unthinkable at that time. In the modern sense, he was using all the modern media and technics available at that time for the evangelisation. Through his letters, Francis could bring out solid arguments regarding the mission. His book *The Catholic Controversies* is a handbook for missionaries who wanted to confront the arguments of the Protestants.

3.2 A Glimpse at the Impacts and Influences of the Chablais Mission from a Secular Perspective

With his methods, Francis influenced not only the Church of his time but also the secular society in various ways. Together with the conversation of the people, he worked hard for the all-round well-being of the human person. In the Chablais mission, Francis understood the real human difficulties of his time and he worked hard to alleviate human sufferings and miseries. He was readily available to anyone in any situation. He was very much Christian in all his approaches.³¹⁵ Due to the missionary activities of Francis, there was a spiritual and intellectual awakening in France and the churches and communities were rejuvenated. In the year 1602, as Francis came to Paris, King Heinrich IV. wrote that Francis would bring France a solid foundation. Francis had so much influence in France that he could even be called the Father of the Church in France. He showed the correct way for the Church of the 17th century. He was the converging point of the renaissance and Christianity and he brought religion to the centre of everyday life.³¹⁶

Regarding different problems and issues of the society of his time, Francis had his own views and through his interference and teachings he gave direction to society. Francis always had good contact with secular leaders, and he gave direction to them regarding different matters, especially the relationship between state and Church. Francis also made a number of diplomatic initiatives, which was mainly in view of getting freedom for the exercise of the Catholic faith in the diocese of Geneva.³¹⁷ One of the important contributions of Francis in his time was the unity of the state. According to Francis, there should not be a separation between state and religion and, in this regard, Francis was of the opinion that the conversion of Chablais would give political mileage to the state. Francis

³¹⁴ Cf. DENELLA, Francis de Sales. A Contemporary Guide for the Lay Faithful, 135.

³¹⁵ Cf. DE CHANTAL PAPIN, St. Francis de Sales. His Relevance Today, 38.

³¹⁶ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. Leben- Lehre- Werk, 607.

³¹⁷ Cf. WEHRL, Dienst der Kirchendiplomatie, 95.

considered that by defeating Calvinism political unity could be brought to the state.³¹⁸ Therefore, it is worthwhile to analyse the contribution of Francis to society in various areas of secular life and a deep analysis of it will reveal that his experience in Chablais contributed a great extent in the secular world. It is reflected also in various areas of human life.

3.2.1 The Contribution of Francis for Humanism in the Light of the Mission of Chablais

Humanism refers to the human achievement in various areas of human life, especially with regard to faith and reason. Christian humanism holds the view that all are created in the image and likeness of God and all are intimately related to God. Because of this, all human-beings are to be respected. In turn, the human accomplishments show our relationship with God.³¹⁹ Two important movements of his time were renaissance and reformation and he has given his contribution to both of these movements.³²⁰ Considering his contributions to these movements, he could be called a humanist in the true sense of the term. Even during his study days, Francis was influenced by humanist thinking and, therefore, it is worthwhile to investigate his contribution to the humanism of his times.³²¹ With regard to humanism, he learned a lot from the Chablais mission, and he knew how to react to various situations. Through his ministry, Francis presented a new picture to the world. After the spirituality of Francis, a group of Jesuits began pious humanism in the Church and many people were influenced by this new movement. Through his ministry, he brought about a way of thinking that faith and rationality go hand in hand. This harmony is the basic element of his thinking.³²² Francis urged Christians to look into the truth behind everything and, according to him, for Christians the truth and faith are the same. It was also a time of pagan humanism and as a Christian thinker his humanism was more of a devout humanism, and he brought God to the centre of human thinking.³²³

Francis tried to bring together Christianity and humanism and his vast experience in Chablais helped a lot in his attempts. As a humanist, he took Jesus as his model and inspiration. With his Christian humanism, Francis brought a new energy and enthusiasm

³¹⁸ Cf. LEROUX, *Mission According to St. Francis de Sales*, 12.

³¹⁹ Cf. S. FIORELLI, *Christian Humanism*.

³²⁰ Cf. NAZARETH, *THE Humanistic Philosophy of St. Francis de Sales*, 414.

³²¹ Cf. DUVAL, *St. Francis de Sales and Salesian Spirituality*, 42.

³²² Cf. LAJEUNIE, *Franz von Sales. Leben – Lehre – Werk*, 391.

³²³ Cf. NAZARETH, *THE Humanistic Philosophy of St. Francis de Sales*, 417.

into the Catholic Church of France.³²⁴ For Francis, human culture and Christian culture are one and the same. For him, there was no conflict between human culture and divine love. As a true humanist, he was exposed to nature, and he admired the wonder and beauty of nature. He considered natural beauty as the reflection of the beauty of God. He considered that knowledge and culture had to be used for the service of God. As bishop, he worked for growth of humanism in France. He gave special emphasis to education and called Jesuits to open a college in Thonon.³²⁵ The approach of Francis in the field was “Let us be what we are and be that well, in order to bring honour to the Master Craftsman whose handwork we are.”³²⁶ That was a universal call to the all-round development of the human person. As a humanist, he had a clear vision regarding various matters of the human person and he opened the human person to excel in various areas of life.

3.2.2 The Formation of Francis as the Proponent of Human Love and Brotherhood

People of all ages long for love and respect. Francis was not only promoting the real human love among the people, but he also practised it in his life. Francis considered that everyone is created in the image and likeness of God and, therefore, everyone should be respected. He worked for promoting the dignity of human person.³²⁷ The promotion of love and brotherhood was one of his contributions to the world. He worked as an apostle of love and peace in Chablais. Even trying for the conversion of the Calvinists in Chablais, he promoted brotherhood and love among the people and, in the course of time, it made a big impact in his mission as well as in his life. As a promoter of peace and brotherhood, his attempt was to bring freedom among the Catholics and Calvinists. Through his ministry in Chablais, he showed real love for human beings.³²⁸

The experience of the real human situation in Chablais made Francis a promoter of integral human relationships. The credit for the success of the Chablais mission can be attributed to his method of the promotion of integral human relationships. He fostered a real love among all sorts of people and his initiatives had tremendous impacts in society. In his ministry in Chablais, he showed the world how a real human relationship can be built up. He gave a lot of importance to the mutual encouragement, and he believed that the

³²⁴ Cf. NIGG, *Vier große Heilige*, 123.

³²⁵ Cf. MOGET, *Relevance of St. Francis de Sales*, 74f.

³²⁶ DE SALES, *Letter CCLXXXIX*, 111.

³²⁷ Cf. KALARIPPARAMBIL, *Devout Humanism of St. Francis de Sales*, 346f.

³²⁸ Cf. BOENZI, *Da Mihi. Animas Cry of the Pastoral Heart of Francis de Sales*, 19.

mission could only be successful with mutual encouragement and support. Of course, he corrected his co-workers but always with fraternal love and charity and he supported them in the mission of Chablais, especially in difficult situations. He showed the world how the talents of others could be used for the well-being of society. He gave a lot of importance to the spiritual friendship and, according to him; loving relationship leads to the spiritual growth of the person.³²⁹ He excelled in all the virtues; he was very meek and gentle to everyone. As the promoter of human brotherhood, he considered everyone as equals, without considering their age, nobility, or status. He was very informal in his dealings and considered everyone as important.³³⁰ He was the promoter of real love and fellowship. Following the example of Jesus, he showed the world how a person can love even his enemies.

Francis, a man of noble birth, lived a simple life and stood by the poor and marginalised. In the mission, he heard the cry of his fellow beings and worked throughout his life to try to wipe away the tears of the poor. Francis brought the love of God to everyone, especially to the people who needed the love and protection of God. According to Francis, a person has to be transformed by the love of God.³³¹ His door was open to everybody and he spent so much of his time with poor people. His simple life was an inspiration to everyone and he was very charitable to everyone.

3.2.3 The Growth of Francis as an Inspiring Spiritual Mystic to the Secular World

Everything Francis did was for the love and glory of God and to the secular society, Francis showed the importance of spirituality and spiritual life. From his ministry, he learned the need of spirituality in a secular world and he was really a spiritual father in his ministry. Through his mission in Chablais, the world came to know more about the depth of spirituality and mysticism. The love was the basis of his spirituality. He had such a loving heart that he could simply attract people to him. From his childhood onwards, he had a great love for God and he loved God with an inner love.³³² Jesus always had the central place in his life and in his spiritual struggles he attempted to become one like Jesus. As a spiritual mystic, he could simply influence the life of thousands of people and he could bring a lot of people to the zenith of spiritual life. Francis offered a new spirituality

³²⁹ Cf. CROSSIN, Reflections on Salesian Anthropology, 5.

³³⁰ Cf. AMALRAJ, The Relevance of St. Francis de Sales Methods for Today's Communication World, 681.

³³¹ Cf. DENELLA, Francis de Sales. A Contemporary Guide for the Lay Faithful, 2.

³³² Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. Leben- Lehre- Werk, 515.

to the world. His spirituality was very deep-rooted and it touched all aspects of human life. Throughout his life he showed the world that a person could be strong in faith in the midst of all forms of false teachings and beliefs. He continues to inspire people of all ages and he showed the world how faith can be protected and nourished in the midst of various heresies. Through his mysticism, he brought people back to the faith they had abandoned.³³³

It is worthwhile to examine some of the features of the mysticism of Francis. His mysticism is reflected in almost all aspects of his life. As a mystic, the love of God always played a very important role in his life. His spirituality was an inspiration to the world. As a mystic, he showed the world how even the most difficult things can be taken positively. Through his deep prayerful life, he tried to find the will of God and to live according to it. He had a special kind of reverence and respect towards God and many people were inspired by it.³³⁴ He taught the world how a person could be calm and serene in the midst of various problems.

As confessor, he was a model for all the confessors. He showed the confessors how they had to show mercy towards penitents. He always foresaw the reconciliation and repentance of sinners and he inspired the confessors to understand human weakness and fragilities. According to him, the confessors had no right to judge sinners and it is merciful God who forgives the sinners. It is also possible that the worst sinners can one day repent and become a saint.³³⁵

There was no place in his life for disputes and fights. He showed the world how religion had to be practiced and how religious beliefs should be held. His life was an example how a noble person could live a simple life. Francis had a special capacity to come into the heart of the people and to take a place in their hearts. He had a special method of approaching situations and he could simply understand human hearts. Love had a special place in the mysticism of Francis.³³⁶ He showed the world how a person could work in the world filled with the love of God. With his mission, he could bring a strong faith to the people, so that they were ready to dedicate their lives completely to the mission of God. He could bring a complete trust in the heart of the people. As a spiritual mystic, Francis was an inspiration to the world, especially when the world went through a lot of struggles. In

³³³ Cf. EHRENBORG, Franz von Sales als Vorbild und Lehrer, 195ff.

³³⁴ Cf. KÖNIGBAUER, Das Menschenbild bei Franz von Sales, 31.

³³⁵ Cf. EHRENBORG, Franz von Sales als Vorbild und Lehrer, 208.

³³⁶ Cf. GREENAN, Salesian Mysticism. Towards the Ecstasy of Action, 263.

his writings, his mysticism is clearly expressed and in the following centuries many people were inspired by the mysticism of Francis. As a mystic, he was ready to die for God.

3.2.4 Education and Formation of the Youth

From his early childhood, Francis always had a special talent and interest in learning. One of the areas of his special interests in the mission was in the field of youth education. He spent a great deal of time studying and educating youth so they could benefit from the time they invested in their studies. He studied every day something new for his profession.³³⁷ From his missionary experiences, he understood the various dangers of lack of proper education. One of the reasons for the superstition and heresies of his time was lack of proper education. As a missionary and bishop, Francis cultivated an interest in learning in the hearts of many youth, resulting in a tremendous impact on contemporary society. “Jealous of Geneva as a famous cultural centre, he was itching to raise the level of education of his people in order to give his Catholic faith a firm foundation and the necessary tools.”³³⁸ He achieved a major educational milestone when he founded colleges in La Roche, Annecy and Thonon.

Finally Francis added, that as nothing contributes more to the prevention of true religion, than proper care in the education of youth, he judged it to be a measure of absolute necessity, to found at college in Thonon, to be placed under the direction of Jesuits; that it would serve as a species of bulwark against the enterprises of Geneva, and a constant resource against heretical depravity, which had prevailed to such an extent, as to excite the most alarming apprehension; that this college would answer the purpose of a seminary, which in a short period, would produce persons well informed, and capable of confirming their brethren in the faith.³³⁹

Under Francis’s influence, many youths developed a great appreciation for learning. His experience in Chablais helped him to address some of the concerns of the youth of his time. One of his special concerns was the intellectual formation of young women of his time. Therefore, he wanted to give good education to the young females. To better educate his sister, he reared her together with the daughters of Jane de Chantal in a convent. Francis believed that young women could discern whether to take permanent religious vows or peruse another way of life at the age of 16.³⁴⁰ He made schools and colleges in his diocese excellent centres of learning. Francis believed that the schools and colleges should become excellent centres for the formation of Christians. He found that the services of the

³³⁷ Cf. EHRENBORG, Franz von Sales als Vorbild und Lehrer, 61.

³³⁸ LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. Leben – Lehre – Werk (trans. by Author), 377.

³³⁹ MARSOLLIER, The Life of St. Francis de Sales (vol.1), 273f.

³⁴⁰ Cf. LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. Leben – Lehre – Werk, 386.

religious orders were necessary to bring back the standard of the educational institutions and the religious orders dramatically improved the standard of these institutions.³⁴¹

3.2.5 Evangelisation and Formation of Intellectual Elites

Francis understood that protecting the rights of the Church depended especially on educating the elite members of society as well as youth in general. He believed that educating youth would ultimately influence in the intellectual elites. Francis brought a lot of intellectualism to the Church and world and he wanted to create an educated society. “The first business which Francis took in hand after he was settled at Annecy was to establish a confraternity of Christian Doctrine, and to make catechetical instruction his strongest point.”³⁴² He tried to recruit convinced and learned elites in the heart of the city. He understood that if he was building up a group of intellectuals, it would be a great help for his future mission. In that endeavour he was preparing his spiritual sons and daughters.³⁴³

Francis carefully studied the teachings of Calvinism to discover its weakness and convert its adherents. In this way, Francis inspired many people to study Calvinism and, by doing so, he helped them to come back to Catholicism. The mission of Christ also demands a lot of intellectualism and he showed the world how, even in the mission, intellectualism could be promoted. Francis developed intellectual arguments that convinced some of the prominent Calvinist leaders to come back to Catholicism.³⁴⁴ The arguments of Francis were incredible and it was enough to defeat his opponents. Through his intellectualism, he showed the world that real truth could be found in the Catholic Church. He was very particular in bringing up his seminarians in intellectualism and, therefore, he himself took up the task of instructing the seminarians. Simultaneously, he gave importance to the ongoing formation of priests.³⁴⁵

3.3 The Chablais Mission - a Road to Salesian Spirituality

In 17th century France, the religious environment was in a very lamentable condition. Being fully aware of this environment, Francis wanted to bring the Church out of this

³⁴¹ Cf. MIDATHADA, *The Pastoral Spirit of Saint Francis de Sales*, 209.

³⁴² ORNSBY, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales*, 78.

³⁴³ Cf. LAJEUNIE, *Franz von Sales. Leben – Lehre - Werk*, 471.

³⁴⁴ Cf. MARSOLLIER, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales (vol.1)*, 221.

³⁴⁵ Cf. PAUL DEAVEL, *Francis de Sales. A Patron Saint of our Age*, 17.

dismal situation.³⁴⁶ During his whole life, he worked towards this change and his attempts to renew the Church led to the formation of what is now known as Salesian Spirituality. Even though the Salesian spirituality evolved from the whole of his life and activities, the experience in Chablais did more to form Salesian Spirituality. During his years in the mission of Chablais, Francis had ample opportunities to experiment his spirituality. Francis studied the spiritual situation of each person and found ways to improve that spiritual situation. In the history of the Church people were not only attracted to this spirituality, but also they studied and lived it.

In the Salesian perspective, love is the most important factor. During the Chablais mission, Francis promoted the love of God and neighbour and, therefore, the Salesian spirituality focusses mainly on relations with God and human-beings.³⁴⁷ The important feature of Salesian spirituality is glorifying of God. “For Francis de Sales, man is the perfection of the universe, the spirit the perfection of man, love the perfection of the spirit, holy love the perfection of the merely natural, but the will of God the perfection and the end of holy love, glorification of God, the object of the divine will.”³⁴⁸ According to him all human beings are created by God to love God and neighbours and, therefore, this love is the very centre of Salesian spirituality. Francis taught the world how the divine can be discovered, not only in Sacraments but also in all aspects of human life. God is actively present in routine life and activities.³⁴⁹ The Salesian spirituality has influenced almost all the aspects of human life. Therefore, it is important to look into the various characteristics and features of Salesian spirituality. In order to understand the deep relation between the Salesian spirituality and the Chablais mission, some of the important features of Salesian spirituality are reflected here.

3.3.1 The Development of a Solid Lay Spirituality after the Experience of the Chablais Mission

In the mission of Chablais, Francis worked mostly among simple peasants and villagers and from his experience with them he understood what the genuine spiritual needs of these people were. He understood the need for instructing the foundation of Christian faith to these people. Together with bringing these people back to the Catholic faith, he gave a strong spiritual foundation to their faith. The mission and ministry of Francis in Chablais

³⁴⁶ Cf. NIGG, Vier große Heilige, 121.

³⁴⁷ Cf. C. MARCEAU, Salesian Confidence in God and Man, 54.

³⁴⁸ LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales. Leben – Lehre - Werk, (trans. by Author), 618

³⁴⁹ Cf. S. FIORELLI, Die Leitung in der Salesianischen Tradition, 25.

had made a big contribution to the spiritual well-being of the lay people. Even though Francis was born in a noble family and he had the best education of his time, he felt solidarity with these people. This feeling of oneness is the basic foundation of lay apostolate. He was very clear about the role of the lay people in the Church. Through his ministry and writings, he instructed the lay people to fulfil their mission in Church.³⁵⁰ He understood the need of a lay-oriented mission and recognised the role of laity in all aspects of life. Francis recognised the talents and abilities of the lay people and he used various ways to make them partakers in the mission of Christ. The spiritual well-being of the lay people was a big concern for Francis. At a time when the monastic life was held as the sure way of perfection, Francis brought a revolutionary change to this kind of thinking and proposed everyone could achieve holiness.³⁵¹

Francis recognised the specific spiritual needs of the lay people, especially with regard to the practice of spirituality. The lay apostolate is an important element in the Salesian spirituality. Francis wanted to bring back the dignity of the human person even in the practice of spirituality. The Salesian spirituality is very simple and the lay people have an important role in the practice of spirituality. The Salesian spirituality has given the lay people a proper role in the Church.³⁵² From the mission, Francis showed that the spirituality should be accessible to everyone. According to Salesian spirituality, the true devotion should help for the well-being of everyone. This had a lasting impact in the practice of spirituality and it led people to peace and tranquillity. Francis specialized in lay spirituality and in the Salesian spirituality lay people have an important position. All are called to holiness and this is the basic concept of Salesian spirituality. Francis exhorted the people to practice spirituality in their given situation. Salesian spirituality is more of doing ordinary things in an extraordinary manner. At a time when there were a lot of distinctions between clerical and secular and temporal and religion, Francis developed spirituality of all the people.³⁵³ This was a revolutionary thinking at that time.

3.3.1.1 Universal Call to Holiness

“God commands Christians, the living plants of his Church, to bring forth the fruits of devotion, each according to his or her position and vocation.”³⁵⁴ The Chablais mission was

³⁵⁰ Cf. DENELLA, Francis de Sales. A Contemporary Guide for the Lay Faithful, 135.

³⁵¹ Cf. MIDATHADA, The Pastoral Spirit of Saint Francis de Sales. Relevant to our Times, Book III, 96.

³⁵² Cf. DENELLA, Francis de Sales. A Contemporary Guide for the Lay Faithful, 135.

³⁵³ Cf. KOLENCHERRY, St. Francis de Sales and the Lay Spirituality, 75.

³⁵⁴ DE SALES, Introduction to Devout Life, Part 1, Chapter 3.

animated by this teaching of universal call to holiness. Accordingly, holiness is not dependent on the status or position of a person, but what is important is how a person strives to achieve it. With the teaching of a universal call to holiness, Francis could simply attract people to his spirituality. He showed people how they could work in this world without succumbing to its temptations. The mission and ministry of Francis helped the people to inculcate complete trust and confidence in God and people became aware that they were also called to holiness. The life as well as the activities of Francis, was really an inspiration to the people; and from his life and example people learned how the holiness could be achieved by living a simple life. This teaching of a universal call to holiness led thousands of people to spiritual fulfilment. This spirituality of Francis could be practised by the people of all walks of life. According to Francis, even if a person is busy with the things of this world, his eyes are always raised toward heaven.³⁵⁵

In the mission of Chablais, Francis worked with people from various kinds of life and he understood the life situation as well as the spiritual needs of these people. From this experience he understood that all are called to holiness in different ways. He promoted it to the simple people in the mission of Chablais. The core of Salesian spirituality is that every person is called to holiness and, therefore, everyone has a place in Salesian spirituality. Existing and living in the world, one can practice the virtues and excel in his spiritual life. At the time of Francis, this was a very new way of thinking and teaching. According to this teaching, a strong person could live in this world without being harmed by the attractions of this world. Therefore, holiness is actually meeting the challenges of this world. In the pursuit of attaining holiness, the person has to take his given situation into consideration.³⁵⁶ At that time the clergy and religious were considered the elites in spirituality and ordinary people considered that only clergy and religious could attain the perfection. Through his teachings Francis brought a new understanding that in their own particular situation, everyone is called to holiness and one could achieve it in his own particular life situation. One of the impacts of the teachings of Francis is that striving to achieve holiness received the universal acceptance. Francis stressed the importance of inner solitude. On the path to achieving holiness, the solitude was one of the important aspects and people could achieve

³⁵⁵ Cf. EHRENBORG, Franz von Sales als Vorbild und Lehrer, 227.

³⁵⁶ Cf. KOLENCHERRY, St. Francis de Sales and the Lay Spirituality, 72-73.

it, even living in the midst of the world. This new teaching had a tremendous impact in the world.³⁵⁷

3.3.1.2 The Popular Piety and Devotion Among the People

Pope Pius XI in his encyclical *Rerum Omnium Perturbationem* writes:

St. Francis published many books of piety, among which we may single out his two best known books, *Philothea- Introduction to the Devout Life* and *The Treatise on the Love of God*. In the *Introduction to the Devout Life*, St. Francis, after showing clearly how hardness of heart discourages one in the practice of virtue and is altogether foreign to genuine piety (he does not strip piety of that severity which is in harmony with Christian manner of life) then sets himself expressly to prove that holiness is perfectly possible in every state and condition of secular life, and to show how each man live in the world in such a manner as to save his own soul, provided only he keeps himself free from the spirit of the work.³⁵⁸

At that time, people were associating the devotion with various austerities but, through his ministry and teaching, Francis led the people to true devotion. In order to spread the popular piety among the people, he wrote his famous book, *Introduction to the Devout Life*. “The piety of St. Francis de Sales shows no gaps, it neglects neither Gethsemane nor Calvary: their union is mythical, it takes place under the vital breath of love.”³⁵⁹ For Francis, the devotion was something interior. Devotion is the true love of God. Accordingly, devotion helps one to promptly perform acts of charity.³⁶⁰

Through the popular piety, Francis led the faithful to a really prayerful life. Francis gave importance to mental prayer and, according to him, a devout person had to spend at least one hour in prayer every morning or, if the time does not permit him, then in the afternoon. He was also stressing the need of short and fervent prayers. Accordingly, prayer is an important part in the life of each person.³⁶¹ His method of mental prayer is one of the best methods of Christian piety.³⁶² Every Christian has the duty to pray. Francis’s stress on the importance of the different forms of piety had a wide range of impacts in the spiritual life of the people. According to Francis, as there are different ways to heaven, there are also various media through which one can achieve the perfection and, accordingly, there are not only many saints in the Church but also there are different types of sainthood too.³⁶³ He put piety in the middle of the world. The pieties are different for different groups of people

³⁵⁷ Cf. NIGG, Vier große Heilige, 114.

³⁵⁸ PIUS XI, *Rerum Omnium Perturbationem*, 13.

³⁵⁹ LAJEUNIE, Franz von Sales, *Leben – Lehre – Werk*, 517.

³⁶⁰ Cf. KOLENCHERRY, St. Francis de Sales’ Vision of Holiness for every Person, 226.

³⁶¹ Cf. MARSOLLIER, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales* (vol.2), 480-481.

³⁶² Cf. MARSOLLIER, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales* (vol.2), 423.

³⁶³ Cf. NIGG, Vier große Heilige, 113.

depending on their life situation. In the practice of piety, people have to consider many aspects such as the society and place in which they live. For Francis, piety was something lively and he never wanted melancholic piety. In the practice of piety everyone should have his freedom.³⁶⁴ He considered the sacrament of Confession as the first step of popular piety. Due to his tremendous work in the mission, Francis was able to bring a lot people to confession. In this regard, he himself became a model to the folk. He wanted to give everyone inner freedom and tranquillity. He propagated the frequent communion among the people. Because of the tremendous influence of Francis, the popular piety went beyond the boundaries of particular parishes. Some of the synodal statutes and visitation reports of Francis showed how these pious practices went beyond the boundaries of a particular parish.³⁶⁵

3.3.1.3 The Renewed Enthusiasm for the Practice of Salesian Virtues

Together with the practice of piety, Francis gave great importance to the practicing of various virtues during his ministry in Chablais. As a man of noble birth, he had many privileges in his family as well as in the Church but, for the sake of the mission, he sacrificed all these privileges. Francis was a noble example for the simple people in the mission in the practice of virtues. Francis saw everything in the light of love and the love was the most important factor for him in the pursuit of virtues.³⁶⁶ In the mission of Chablais, Francis experienced ample opportunities to practice the virtues and there are many good examples in his life showing his ways of practising these virtues. The approach of Francis gave special interest among the people to practice the virtues. Francis invited the people to practice small virtues needed for their day to day life. Francis understood the human heart and also the failures and drawbacks of human persons. He believed in the boundless mercy of God.

Francis considered the virtues as the means to attain perfection. For him, in every action it was necessary to discern the will of God. According to Francis, a person had to be like Mary Magdalene at the feet of Jesus in the practice of the virtues. Among the virtues, Francis gave importance to patience, humility and gentleness. Accordingly, patience helps one to have better relationships with his neighbours; and humility and gentleness help one

³⁶⁴ Cf. NIGG, Vier große Heilige, 117.

³⁶⁵ Cf. FEHLEISON, Boundaries of Faith, 218.

³⁶⁶ Cf. VINCET, The Spirituality of Saint Francis de Sales, 8.

to bear witness with his neighbours.³⁶⁷ Humility is one of the important virtues in the life of Francis as well as in the Salesian spirituality. Francis was humble in his dealings with people. For him, the humility, patience and gentleness stand together and they are interrelated. He explained why these virtues are important; the humility helps one estimate his worth before God and it is necessary to be humble in the day to day life of a person. Francis identified gentleness and meekness as virtues that can come naturally to our minds. The basis of meekness is the love of God and love of neighbour.³⁶⁸ Through his ministry, Francis taught how one can conquer the natural inclinations and how one can achieve the perfection. He showed the world how to flee from sin and evil inclinations and avoid the harmful actions.³⁶⁹

3.3.2 Growth of Francis as a Vibrant Preacher and the Origin of Salesian Preaching

In the mission of Chablais, Francis had many opportunities to make use of all his capacities and abilities. Francis learned the art of preaching in his student days and, as the Provost of the Cathedral of Annecy, Francis preached to a large group of people. He understood the importance of preaching. But in the mission of Chablais, he learned the importance of preaching to a small group of people. In the initial days, there were only a few people who came to hear his preaching but he never gave up. In this way, he taught the world the importance of preaching even to a small group of people.³⁷⁰ Francis was not only an ardent missionary, but also an ardent communicator and he preached to the heart of the people. He used this preaching in Chablais for the conversion of the Calvinists and heretics and he brought an innovative method of preaching to the world. Francis developed his own style of preaching and the basis of his preaching was the word of God. He was always inspired by the scripture. His devotion and his eloquence were very evident in his preaching. He gave practical application to the word of God and the theology.³⁷¹ In his preaching, he taught the people about the foundations of the Catholic faith. Two important objects of his preaching were the glory of God and for the conversion of the souls.³⁷²

³⁶⁷ Cf. MOGET, *Relevance of St. Francis de Sales*, 113.

³⁶⁸ Cf. MOGET, *Relevance of St. Francis de Sales*, 118-120.

³⁶⁹ Cf. PIUS XI, *Rerum Omnium Perturbationem*, 16.

³⁷⁰ Cf. KOLENCHERRY, *St. Francis de Sales - The Person and his Spirit*, 29.

³⁷¹ Cf. PARAPPALLY, *Ways of Effective Preaching*, 555.

³⁷² Cf. EHRENBORG, *Franz von Sales als Vorbild und Lehrer*, 171.

In his preaching, Francis was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit and apostolic zeal.³⁷³ Therefore, it was very inspirational to the world. He presented his views systematically and challenged his opponents with solid arguments. In this way, his preaching led to the conversion of Calvinists. Francis preached slowly to the people, a style now known as Salesian preaching. This preaching has its foundation in the Chablais mission and it was influenced by the person, life and ministry of Francis. The preaching of Francis was the expression of what he had experienced in his life and, even though it appealed more to emotions than to reason.³⁷⁴ Salesian preaching is preaching to the heart of the person and it touches the person's heart. For Francis, there was no divergence between his preaching and his life. Both went hand in hand.³⁷⁵ Therefore, in the Salesian preaching the practice is an important aspect and the preaching should be very practical.

3.3.3 The Contributions of the Chablais Mission for the Growth of Francis as the Patron of Catholic Writers and Journalists

Even though Francis was an eloquent speaker in the mission, because of the opposition of Calvinists, he was unable to continue to preach. For this reason, Francis began his innovative method of writing, and it was in the form of pamphlets.³⁷⁶ During his missionary years in Chablais, Francis wrote numerous letters and pamphlets. After his death, these pamphlets were collected together and published under the title *Controversies*. Writing the pamphlets was a method he used to bring the Calvinists to the Catholic faith and, through this method, he brought the Catholic faith to the hearts of the people of Chablais.³⁷⁷ Francis wrote more than twenty thousand letters in his life dealing with a variety of themes and with these letters he touched the hearts of the people. His letters dealt with a wide range of subjects. He wrote letters to the Duke of Savoy, to the kings of France, to the papal nuncio, to episcopal friends and to the Holy Father in Rome.³⁷⁸ The three important works of Francis are *Controversies*, *Introduction to Devout Life* and the *Treatise on the Love of God*.³⁷⁹ Pope Pius XI wrote about the works of Francis: "Although at times his language appears to be somewhat strong, nevertheless, as even his opponents

³⁷³ Cf. KOLENCHERRY, St. Francis de Sales- The Person and his Spirit, 25.

³⁷⁴ Cf. PARAPPALLY, Ways of Effective Preaching, 552.

³⁷⁵ Cf. PARAPPALLY, Ways of Effective Preaching, 552.

³⁷⁶ Cf. NAZARETH, Little More about St. Francis de Sales, 13.

³⁷⁷ Cf. WINKLEHNER, St. Francis de Sales. Patron of Journalists, 3.

³⁷⁸ Cf. WINKLEHNER, St. Francis de Sales. Patron of Journalists, 3.

³⁷⁹ Cf. KOLENCHERRY, Social Communication and St. Francis de Sales, 618.

admitted, his writings always breathe a spirit of charity which was ever the controlling motive in every controversy which he engaged.”³⁸⁰

The writings of Francis had lasting impacts not only in the mission of Chablais but also in the life of the universal Church and it had brought many people to the Catholic faith. He explained the greatness of the love of God in his writings, which meant that his spirituality was accessible to a wide range of people. It introduced to the people, various methods for them to grow in the love of God. As the outcome of these writings, thousands of people were attracted to practice the Salesian virtues. The writings of Francis were always very elegant and Calvinist ministers used to warn their followers not to be misled by these writings.

Even today, Francis is known for his writings, and these attract millions of people to follow the spirituality of Francis. Through his letters, he wanted to bring out the truth of the Church and he showed the world how the truth can be defended by writings. He showed how, in difficult situations, the preaching could be replaced by writings. Francis knew very well how easily the written word could be conveyed to the hearts of the people who were reluctant to come to hear his preaching and that these writings could be preserved and reread. Through these writings Francis could express his ideas in clear words.³⁸¹

3.4 Conclusion

Even though Francis’s immediate success in Chablais was considered a victory over the Calvinists, his personal life and ministry also benefited. This mission of Chablais paid a vital role in his personal growth and its influence is present in all the later phases of the life of Francis. In the mission, Francis was not only a missionary, but he was also a great visionary, who was completely devoted to spreading the word of God and to doing everything for the advantage of the Church. The Chablais mission taught him how he had to use talents, as well as the talents of others, for the success of the mission. It was also a time of personal formations for Francis. It is the Chablais mission which formed Francis into a great personality of the Church. The missionary activities of Francis had many impacts in his personal life, and it paved the way for the personal renewal and helped the all-round formation of Francis. The mission formed Francis into a voracious writer,

³⁸⁰ PIUS XI, *Rerum Omnium Perturbationem*, 25.

³⁸¹ Cf. KOLENCHERRY, *Social Communication and St. Francis de Sales*, 620.

eloquent speaker, spiritual mystic, ardent missionary, lovable bishop and, above all, an imitable personality. Later on, it became the foundation for his sainthood, and he became a popular saint in the centuries to come.

As an inspirational missionary, Francis restored newness to the Church. Francis, at that time, used all the mediums available to him for evangelisation among the Calvinists. The life and work of Francis in the Chablais mission has been a great inspiration for all through the following centuries. It has influenced thousands of men and women to follow the spirituality of Francis and totally dedicate their life to the Church. It is an inspiration for a missionary to study and learn the background of a mission and to act according to the circumstances. This mission of Chablais shows the world how any problems and obstacles can be overcome with hard work. The spirit of Chablais continues to influence the world. Some of the attempts of Francis in the mission are accepted and appreciated in all times and centuries. Francis worked for the development of the human person and brought peace and freedom everywhere. The life and work of Francis in Chablais had a wide range of importance in the pastoral activities of the Church and it will be imitable for generations to come.

General Conclusion

This paper set forth an historical analysis of the missionary intervention of Francis in Chablais. This includes a study of Francis and his mission and the newness he brought into the Church. It was very important for him to learn the pastoral situation of the mission; especially the challenges there. Fully aware of the challenges, Francis was sowing the seed in the beginning and, in the second phase, he was harvesting the fruit which he had sown. Even though the success of the mission could be attributed to many factors, it can be said that Francis took the first step and God led his missionary activities to its success. He received reward for his dedication and hard work. Francis himself used different methods for the success of the mission. Some of these methods are elaborated in this paper. The most important of all the factors for the success of the mission, was the humble and simple approach of Francis. He established a good rapport with people from all walks of life. He was also able to influence political leaders of his time and use political pressures in realising the success of his mission. This paper brings out a realistic answer to the question of how Francis became a dynamic missionary and vibrant pastor in the mission of Chablais.

The first chapter analyses the various missionary challenges of Francis in Chablais. This analysis shows that, before venturing into mission, Francis anticipated the challenges that would hinder the mission. To show the gravity of the situation in the mission of Chablais, this paper elaborated some of those challenges. In facing these challenges, Francis suffered disappointments in that very adverse environment. Often he felt that he was left alone and fully abandoned. It was not easy for him to instruct the people, who strayed far from the Catholic teachings. He faced many different threats and attacks. It was a herculean task for him to bring these people back to the Catholic faith. There were also moments when his credibility was really tested and questioned.

As a vibrant missionary, Francis responded to these challenges very effectively. After analysing these challenges, the second chapter described various methods employed by Francis to tackle them. He used various methods to address these challenges and many of these methods were his own particular initiatives which were revolutionary to the Church of his time. His methods and initiatives are an eye-opener to any future missionaries who are venturing to take up new missions. They will teach them how they should respond to various challenges which they will face on their missionary endeavours. A missionary has

to be very practical and tactical in dealing with different challenges. In this regard, Francis was very practical in using all the materials available at his time. He was defending the Catholic Church politically and intellectually. In all his missionary endeavours, he was against all forms of violence and physical force. Instead, he used the weapons of goodness and love. He showed the world how to surmount the challenges and move forward positively without using any physical violence. In the difficult situations, he found his own ways to go forward with the mission. He was very creative in undertaking challenges and his methods were person-oriented. He brought innovation and vitality to his mission. His arguments were very solid and he brought his ideas to the people very intelligently. Above all, in all his undertakings, he had complete trust and confidence in God.

The fruits of the Chablais mission are innumerable and the third chapter investigates the impacts and influences of the Chablais mission, which can be seen in various realms of the life of the Church and in society. These impacts resulted from the work of Francis, and he is a model missionary for many generations of missionaries. The generations have admired the effectiveness Francis had and missionaries will take the Chablais mission as a role model for their own missionary work. The effects of this mission are a signpost for generations of missionaries whenever they have to address a particular missionary situation. The impact of the Chablais mission in the personal life of Francis was instrumental to the formation of the personality of Francis. The experience helped him to strive forward for the renewal of the Church and he tried to preserve the dignity of Catholicism and the priesthood in a secular world. He brought the influence of Church to all aspects of human life. He wanted everyone to have a dignified place in the society and his ministry helped to improve the dignity of a human person. Due to the ministry and teachings of Francis, even the ordinary people became aware of their own call for holiness.

Actually, the life of Francis is a perfect example for missionary activities. He was very good at establishing personal contacts with people of all walks of life and he reached into the heart of the people. Everything Francis did was done for the mission and for the glory of the Church. For him, the teachings of the Church were very important and he attempted to implement the teachings of the Church in the mission. He was trying to implement the teachings of the Council of Trent in his missionary activities. He can be known as an ecclesiastical man. So many people were attracted to the Catholic religion because of his goodness and love. He proved one depends on the providence of God's wonders. Francis, through his ministry in Chablais, was trying to reform the Church in all possible ways.

When today's world is influenced by violence and religious tensions, the mission of Francis is a vivid example of real love and human brotherhood. The study of the Chablais mission reveals what the present day Church really needs. The challenges are always there, but what is important is the method of facing these challenges. This paper concluded that the missionary dynamism and pastoral spirit of Francis is boundless and it can influence a whole generation of people. That is why, even today, the missionary and pastoral spirit of Francis is still active. This research demonstrated that the Chablais mission was very effective and successful and it can be chosen as a missionary model for any mission. Francis, with his preaching and noble and inspiring life, brought the entire region of Chablais to the Catholic faith; and, thereby, he left a lasting influence on the pastoral and missionary dynamism of the church. His passion for the mission of Christ and the means he adopted to encounter the challenges of his time, distinguished him as the dynamic missionary and apostle of Chablais.

Abbreviations

AG Ad Gentes

Https. Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure

IDL Introduction to Devout Life

LG Lumen Gentium

LLG Treatise on the Love of God

Msgr. Monsignore

SFS St. Francis de Sales

Vol. Volume

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Abstract

Mission is one of the central elements of the Catholic Church. “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you” (Mt. 28, 18-19). These were the words of Jesus commissioning his disciples for the proclamation of the Good News. Prompted by these words of Jesus over the last two thousand years, various persons have tried to fulfil their missionary assignments in various ways. In the 17th century, Francis heard this call of Christ and tried to fulfil this mission assignment through his missionary endeavours. This paper enquires into how Francis was fulfilling this assignment in the mission of Chablais. In order to study the mission initiative of Francis, the research focusses on the central question: What makes SFS a dynamic missionary and zealous pastor of Chablais and what has brought his missionary and pastoral spirit to the missionary dynamism of the Church? Through the process of this study, some further questions are also formulated to inquire into the role of Francis: What were the challenges faced by Francis and how effectively did he deal with these challenges? What were the methods and techniques used by Francis in the mission of Chablais and how was Francis exhibiting his missionary dynamism in his Chablais Mission? What were the fruits of the Chablais mission both in that particular context and in the larger context, of the Church?

Sufficient study is undertaken in this paper to find answers to all these questions. The challenges of pastoral work vary tremendously throughout the world and across the ages; all of which this paper examines in regard to Francis. As the next step, this paper enquires into methods used by Francis in order to tackle these challenges. In the larger context of Church and world, this paper examines the influences of Chablais on various levels. From the missionary dynamism and the spirit of Francis, this paper aims to understand how this missionary spirit of Francis can be a great help to the missionary dynamism of the Church. The conclusions of this research will prove relevant to missionaries in the future. The readers of this paper will learn about the challenges and the missionary tactics of the 17th century and, thereby, they can personalise something from the missionary activities of Francis. In a real missionary situation, this paper could become a guide to address today’s missionary challenges and it presents the mission-tactics of Francis as an approach to the proclamation of the Good News even in midst of the challenges of our time.

Abstrakt

Mission ist eines der zentralen Elemente der katholischen Kirche. „Darum geht zu allen Völkern, und macht alle Menschen zu meinen Jüngern; tauft sie auf den Namen des Vaters und des Sohnes und des Heiligen Geistes“ (Mt 28,19). Mit diesen Worten beauftragte Jesus seine Jünger mit der Verkündigung der Frohen Botschaft. Inspiriert von diesen Worten Jesu haben verschiedene Menschen in den letzten 2000 Jahren versucht, ihre Missionsaufträge auf unterschiedliche Weise zu erfüllen. Im 17. Jahrhundert vernahm Franz von Sales diesen Ruf Christi und versuchte, diesen Missionsauftrag durch seine missionarischen Bemühungen zu erfüllen. Dieser Beitrag untersucht, wie Franz von Sales diesen Auftrag in der Mission von Chablais erfüllt hat indem er sich auf die zentrale Frage konzentriert: Was macht Franz von Sales zu einem dynamischen Missionar und eifrigen Pfarrer von Chablais, und was hat sein missionarischer und pastoraler Geist zur missionarischen Dynamik der Kirche beigetragen? Im Verlauf dieser Studie werden auch einige weitere Fragen formuliert, um die Leistung von Franz von Sales zu erforschen: Vor welchen Herausforderungen stand Franz von Sales und wie effektiv ging er mit diesen Herausforderungen um? Welche Methoden und Techniken verwendete Franz von Sales in der Chablais-Mission und wie zeigte er seine missionarische Dynamik in seiner Chablais-Mission? Welche Früchte brachte die Chablais-Mission für die Kirche im Besonderen und auch im größeren Kontext?

In dieser Abhandlung werden ausreichend Studien durchgeführt, um Antworten auf alle diese Fragen zu finden. Die Herausforderungen der pastoralen Arbeit sind in verschiedenen Teilen der Welt und in verschiedenen Jahrhunderten unterschiedlich. Diese These untersucht sie im Hinblick auf Franz von Sales. Im nächsten Schritt werden hier die Methoden untersucht, mit denen Franz von Sales diese Herausforderungen bewältigt hat. Im größeren Kontext der Kirche und der Welt geht es um die Einflüsse der Chablais Mission auf verschiedenen Ebenen. Ausgehend von der missionarischen Dynamik und dem Geist des Franz von Sales geht es darum zu verstehen, wie dieser missionarische Geist des Franz von Sales eine große Hilfe für die missionarische Dynamik der Kirche sein kann. Die vorliegende Forschung möchte historische Erkenntnisse für Zukunft fruchtbar machen. Damit können sie eine relevante Hilfe für die Missionare in allen Zeiten sein. Die Leser dieser Arbeit können sich Wissen über die Herausforderungen und die Missionstaktiken des 17. Jahrhunderts aneignen und dadurch etwas aus den Missionsaktivitäten von Franz von Sales für ihre Arbeit und ihr Leben übernehmen. Diese

Thesis stellt die Missionstaktiken von Franz von Sales als Ansatz zur Verkündigung der Frohen Botschaft mitten in die Herausforderungen unserer Zeit. Insofern könnte sie als Leitfaden für die Bewältigung heutiger missionarischer Herausforderungen dienen.