## **Saint Francis of Sales**

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*This article is about the Roman Catholic saint. For churches named after him, see* [*Saint Francis de Sales church (disambiguation)*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Francis_de_Sales_church_(disambiguation))*. For the American actor, see* [*Francis De Sales (actor)*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_De_Sales_(actor))*.*

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| **Saint Francis de Sales** | |
| [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/0b/Franz_von_Sales.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Franz_von_Sales.jpg) *Saint Francis de Sales* | |
| **Bishop, Confessor and Doctor of the Church** | |
| **Born** | August 21, 1567(1567-08-21) [Château de Thorens](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ch%C3%A2teau_de_Thorens), [Savoy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Savoy) |
| **Died** | December 28, 1622(1622-12-28) (aged 55) [Lyon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lyon), [France](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France) |
| **Honored in** | [Roman Catholic Church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholic_Church), [Anglican Communion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglican_Communion) |
| [**Beatified**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beatification) | January 8, 1662, [Rome](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rome) by [Pope Alexander VII](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Alexander_VII) |
| [**Canonized**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canonization) | April 8, 1665, [Rome](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rome) by [Pope Alexander VII](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Alexander_VII) |
| **Major** [**shrine**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shrine) | [Annecy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annecy), [France](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France) |
| [**Feast**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calendar_of_saints) | January 24 January 29 (local communities and among [Traditional Roman Catholics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Traditionalist_Catholics)) |
| [**Attributes**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_symbology) | [Heart of Jesus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacred_Heart), [Crown of Thorns](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crown_of_Thorns) |
| [**Patronage**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patron_saint) | [Baker, Oregon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baker,_Oregon); [Cincinnati, Ohio](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cincinnati,_Ohio); Catholic press; [Columbus, Ohio](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Columbus,_Ohio); confessors; deaf people; educators; [Upington](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upington), South Africa; [Wilmington, Delaware](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilmington,_Delaware); [writers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Writers); [journalists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Journalists); the [Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institute_of_Christ_the_King_Sovereign_Priest) |

**Francis de Sales** ([French](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_language): *Saint François de Sales*) (August 21, 1567 – December 28, 1622) was [Bishop](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bishop) of Geneva and is a [Roman Catholic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholic) [saint](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint). He worked to convert Protestants back to Catholicism, and was an accomplished preacher. He is known also for his writings on the topic of spiritual direction and spiritual formation, particularly [*Introduction to the Devout Life*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Introduction_to_the_Devout_Life), along with his [*Treatise on the Love of God*](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Treatise_on_the_Love_of_God&action=edit&redlink=1). His writings on the perfections of the Heart of Mary as the model of love for God influenced [Jean Eudes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Eudes) to develop the devotion to the [Hearts of Jesus and Mary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hearts_of_Jesus_and_Mary).[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_de_Sales#cite_note-0)

**Life**

**Childhood and youth**

Francis de Sales was born August 21, 1567 in [Château de Thorens](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ch%C3%A2teau_de_Thorens) into a [Savoyard](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Savoy) noble family in what is today [Thorens-Glières](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thorens-Gli%C3%A8res), [Haute-Savoie](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haute-Savoie), France. His father was François de Boisy and his mother was Françoise de Sionnz. Because he was the first of six children, his father wanted him to attend the best schools, and he enjoyed a privileged education in the nearby towns of [La Roche-sur-Foron](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_Roche-sur-Foron) and [Annecy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annecy); his spiritual formation and academics were formed by the [Jesuits](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesuits). In 1583 he went to the [Collège de Clermont](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lyc%C3%A9e_Louis-le-Grand) in [Paris](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paris). A year later Francis was engulfed in a personal crisis when, after attending a theological discussion about [predestination](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Predestination), he became convinced that he was damned to [Hell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hell). In December 1586 his despair was so great that he was physically ill and even bedridden for a time. In January 1587, he visited the church of [Saint-Etienne des Grès](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Saint-Etienne_des_Gr%C3%A8s&action=edit&redlink=1), in southern [France](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France), with great difficulty. There his crisis ended, and he decided to dedicate his life to [God](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God). Francis came to the conclusion that whatever God had in store for him was good, because "God is love", as Scripture attests. This faithful devotion to the God of love not only expelled his doubts, but also influenced the rest of his life and his teachings. His way of teaching Catholic spirituality is often referred to as the Way of Divine Love, or the Devout Life, taken from a book he wrote of a similar name: [*Introduction to the Devout Life*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Introduction_to_the_Devout_Life)*.*

**Studies**

In 1588, Francis transferred from the [University of Paris](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Paris) to the [University of Padua](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Padua) in [Italy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy), where he studied both [law](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law) and [theology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theology). There he made up his mind about becoming a [priest](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Priest). Intelligent and handsome, de Sales went through various conversion experiences that moved his heart to serve God rather than money or the world. One incident included his sword falling to the ground while riding a horse, and crossing another sword, making the sign of [the Cross](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_cross). de Sales interpreted this, among other signs, that [Jesus Christ](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus_Christ) was calling him to a life of sacrifice and self-giving love for the Church.

**Graduation**

In 1592, he ended his studies with the title of "doctor", certified both in [law](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law) and [theology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theology). He made the pilgrimage to [Loreto](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loreto_(AN)), Italy, famous for its shrine to the [Virgin Mary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virgin_Mary), before going home. At home, his father had already secured a variety of positions for his son, one of which was a position on the Senate of [Chambéry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chamb%C3%A9ry). It was difficult for Francis's father to accept that his son had already chosen the priesthood over a military or political career.

After studying the humanities, [rhetoric](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhetoric), theology, and law, he famously refused to marry the wealthy heiress his father had chosen as his bride, preferring a clerical career. The intervention of [Claude de Granier](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Claude_de_Granier&action=edit&redlink=1), then [Bishop of Geneva](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bishop_of_Geneva), won him [ordination](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Orders) and appointment as [provost](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Provost_(religion)) of the cathedral chapter of Geneva in 1593.

**Provost and Bishop**

Since the time of the [Protestant Reformation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant_Reformation), which began in 1517, the seat of the Catholic bishops of [Geneva](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geneva), [Switzerland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Switzerland), had been located at [Annecy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annecy) in [Savoy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Savoy), France, due to [Calvinist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calvinist) control of Geneva itself. Francis, in his capacity as provost, engaged in enthusiastic campaigns of evangelism among the [Protestants](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestants) of Savoy, winning many returns to the Old Faith (i.e., Catholicism). He also traveled to [Rome](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rome) and [Paris](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paris), where he forged alliances with [Pope Clement VIII](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Clement_VIII) and the French King [Henry IV](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_IV_of_France).

In 1602, Bishop Granier died, and Francis was consecrated Bishop of Geneva. During his years as bishop, he acquired a reputation as a spellbinding preacher and something of an [ascetic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ascetic); in particular, he was known as a friend of the poor, a man of almost supernatural affability and understanding. These last qualities come through in his books, the most famous of which was *Introduction à la vie dévote* ("[Introduction to the Devout Life](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Introduction_to_the_Devout_Life)"), that - unusually for the time - is written especially for [laypeople](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laity). He also left the mystical *Traité de l' Amour de Dieu* ("[Treatise on the Love of God](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Treatise_on_the_Love_of_God&action=edit&redlink=1)") and many highly valued letters of spiritual direction. He was a notably clear and gracious stylist in [French](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_language), [Italian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_language) and [Latin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin).

Along with [Saint Jane Frances de Chantal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Jane_Frances_de_Chantal), Francis founded the women's [Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_the_Visitation_of_Holy_Mary) (Visitandines) in Annecy on 6 June 1610.

He died on 28 December 1622 in [Lyon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lyon), France, while travelling in the entourage of [Charles Emmanuel I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Emmanuel_I), [Duke](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duke) of Savoy.

**Veneration after his death**

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| **A series of articles on** [**Christian mysticism**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_mysticism) |
| [Mystic Marriage.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mystic_Marriage.jpg) |
| **Articles** [Aspects of meditation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aspects_of_Christian_meditation) • [Christian meditation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_meditation) • [Contemplative prayer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Contemplative_prayer) • [Hesychasm](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hesychasm) • [Mystical theology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mystical_theology) • [Reflection on the New Age](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Christian_reflection_on_the_New_Age)  **Early period** [Gregory of Nyssa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gregory_of_Nyssa) • [Bernard of Clairvaux](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernard_of_Clairvaux) • [Guigo II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guigo_II)  **13th and 14th centuries** [Francis of Assisi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_of_Assisi) • [Dominic de Guzmán](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Dominic) • [Bonaventure](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bonaventure) • [Catherine of Siena](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catherine_of_Siena)  **15th and 16th centuries** [Ignatius of Loyola](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ignatius_of_Loyola) • [Francisco de Osuna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francisco_de_Osuna) • [John of Avila](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_of_Avila) • [Teresa of Avila](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teresa_of_Avila) • [John of the Cross](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_of_the_Cross)  **17th and 18th centuries** **Francis de Sales** • [Pierre de Bérulle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre_de_B%C3%A9rulle)  **19th century** [Therese of Lisieux](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Therese_of_Lisieux) • [Gemma Galgani](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gemma_Galgani) • [Conchita de Armida](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concepcion_Cabrera_de_Armida)  **20th century** [Maria Valtorta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maria_Valtorta) • [Faustina Kowalska](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Faustina_Kowalska) • [Thomas Merton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Merton) |

Saint Francis de Sales was [beatified](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beatified) in 1661 by [Pope Alexander VII](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Alexander_VII), who then [canonized](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canonized) him three years later. He was declared a [Doctor of the Church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doctor_of_the_Church) by [Blessed Pius IX](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Pius_IX) in 1877.[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_de_Sales#cite_note-1)

St Francis de Sales is buried at the [basilica](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basilica) of the [Visitation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Visitation_(Christian)), [Annecy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annecy). Many [miracles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miracle) have been reported at his [shrine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shrine). The [relic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Relic) of his heart was kept at [Lyon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lyon), whence during the [French Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Revolution) it was moved to [Venice](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venice), where it is venerated today.

The Roman Catholic Church today celebrates St Francis de Sales' feast on January 24, the day of his burial in [Annecy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annecy) in the year 1624.[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_de_Sales#cite_note-2) From the year 1666, when his [feast day](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feast_day) was inserted into the [General Roman Calendar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_Roman_Calendar), until the reform of this calendar in 1969, it was observed on January 29, and this date is kept by those who celebrate the [Extraordinary form of the Roman Rite](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extraordinary_form_of_the_Roman_Rite).

**Patronages**

In 1923, [Pope Pius XI](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Pius_XI) proclaimed him a patron of writers and journalists, because he made extensive use of flyers and books both in spiritual direction and in his efforts to convert the Calvinists of the region.

St. Francis developed a sign language in order to teach a deaf man about God. Because of this, he is the patron saint of the deaf.

[](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Franz_von_Sales_Bischofswappen.jpg)

[http://bits.wikimedia.org/skins-1.17/common/images/magnify-clip.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Franz_von_Sales_Bischofswappen.jpg)

Heraldic device of Saint Francis de Sales

The [order](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_(religious)) of the [Salesians of Don Bosco](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salesians_of_Don_Bosco) (s.d.b.), founded by [St John Bosco](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giovanni_Melchior_Bosco) in 1859 (approved by the [Holy See](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_See) in 1874), is named after him, as are the [Oblates of St. Francis de Sales](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oblates_of_St._Francis_de_Sales) (o.s.f.s.), founded by [Louis Brisson](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Louis_Brisson&action=edit&redlink=1), and the [Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Missionaries_of_St._Francis_de_Sales), founded by Peter Mermier in 1830. The [Paulist Fathers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paulist_Fathers) also count him as one of their patrons.

The [Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institute_of_Christ_the_King_Sovereign_Priest), a Society of Traditional Priests who celebrate the [Latin Mass](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin_Mass) also has St. Francis De Sales as one of their three primary Patrons. The Institute promotes Salesian spirituality heavily, using the Saint's writings to instruct both their [Seminarians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seminarians) and lay faithful. As St. Francis is often depicted in art wearing blue [Choir Dress](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Choir_Dress), the approved Choir Dress for members of the Institute is also blue. One of the largest [Apostolates](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apostolates) of the Institute in the [United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) is the Oratory of St. Francis De Sales in [St. Louis, Missouri](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Louis,_Missouri).

The island [St. François](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Fran%C3%A7ois_Atoll) is named in honor of Francis de Sales.

[DeSales University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/DeSales_University), located in Center Valley, Pennsylvania, (formerly Allentown College of St. Francis de Sales), is named for St. Francis de Sales. It is a Catholic liberal arts college administered by the [Oblates of St. Francis de Sales](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oblates_of_St._Francis_de_Sales).

[](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fran%C3%A7ois_de_Sales_et_Jeanne_de_Chantal.jpg)

[http://bits.wikimedia.org/skins-1.17/common/images/magnify-clip.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fran%C3%A7ois_de_Sales_et_Jeanne_de_Chantal.jpg)

*Francis de Sales and Jane Frances de Chantal, medal 1867*

[Salesianum School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salesianum), an all boys private school in Wilmington, Delaware, which is named after him, is also run by the [Oblates of St. Francis de Sales](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oblates_of_St._Francis_de_Sales).

Also named in his honor, [Mount de Sales Academy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_de_Sales_Academy_(Georgia)) in Macon, Georgia was founded by the Sisters of Mercy in 1876.

[Saint Francis Hospital & Medical Center](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Francis_Hospital_%26_Medical_Center) in Hartford, Connecticut is also named after St Francis de Sales.

Saint Francis de Sales is recognized as an exemplary in the [Church of England](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_England), where his *memoria* is also observed on January 24, and in the [Church in Wales](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_in_Wales), when his memorial is moved to January 23, due to a conflict with [St Cadoc](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cadoc).