

*On Saint François-de-Sales' steps*



**Christian REGAT**  
**Conférencier**

*Président de l'Académie Salésienne*  
*Membre de l'Académie Florimontane*

## *On Saint François-de-Sales' steps*

Born in Thorens, secondary school in Annecy, young missionary priest in Protestant Chablais, bishop of Geneva in residence in Annecy, tireless visitor of the parishes of his vast diocese, a promoter of high-level Catholic education in Thonon, as in Annecy, where he also founded the Florimontane Academy, where he established the order of the Visitation with St Joan of Chantal and where his tomb continues to inspire pilgrimages from all over the world, St Francis de Sales has indelibly marked Haute-Savoie. Through his thought and spirituality, he marked the universal Church, a radiance recognized by his elevation to the rank of Doctors of the Church. What a remarkable experience to be able to follow him step by step in this Diocese of Annecy where so many places keep its memory particularly alive!



## ONE-DAY PROGRAM

### *At Annecy with Saint François de Sales and Sainte Jeanne de Chantal*

Annecy, whom St Francis de Sales called his dear little Nussy, is the place par excellence to discover this great bishop, the architect of a new and profound evangelization by implementing with determination and courage, but above all with much faith, hope and love, the orientations adopted by the Council of Trent. “*As man as nothing more*”, this man of action, sticking as closely as possible to the realities of daily life, developed all his apostolic action in Annecy or from Annecy, residence of the bishops of Geneva after the Protestant Reformation had forbidden them to stay in their episcopal city. It was at Annecy that he brought the Burgundian Saint Jeanne de Chantal to institute the Visitation. It was from Annecy that the Visitation radiated throughout the world to spread the sweetness and balance of the Salesian spirit. Finally, it is at Annecy that the relics of St Francis and St Joan never cease to attract many fervent pilgrims eager to enliven their faith in the light of these two great seekers of God.

#### *Basilique de la Visitation*

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At the edge of the Crêt du Maure forest, overlooking Annecy and its lake, the Basilica of the Visitation is both the convent church of the Visitation Monastery and the pilgrimage church of the tombs of St Francis of Sales and St Joan of Chantal. This imposing neo-Romano-Byzantine construction, completed at the end of the Second World War, stands out from a distance by its bell tower, where the thirty-eight bells of a carillon sing carillon.

The large mosaic behind the high altar dominates the interior, divided into three naves by rich columns of bluish grey marble. Bright stained-glass windows display on one side the life of St Francis, and on the other side the life of St Joan. The bodies of the two founders are venerated in art-deco-style gilded bronze sarcophagi. The glass frames that were offered in the 19th century by the Queen of Sardinia Marie-Christine of Bourbon-Naples and Count Paul-François de Sales are on display in the small museum of the monastery.

## *Chapelle de la Galerie*

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A humble house whose cellar had been transformed into a chapel, such is the setting more than modest where Saint Jeanne de Chantal, Charlotte de Brécharde and Jacqueline Favre, assisted by the baker Anne Jacqueline Coste, gave birth to the Visitation Order in 1610. The curtains on the walls remind us of the pinned sheets of flowers from the fields that the foundresses used to spread to transfigure the sad cellar, on festive days. Upstairs, the gallery that gave its name to the house, was partitioned into several rooms housing a small museum where moving memories adjoin with paintings of great value. In one of the two rooms where the first Visitandines lived until 1612, a meticulous embroidery, made by the Marquise de Sévigné, the granddaughter of Saint Jeanne, recalls the spiritual talks that St Francis gave to the sisters in the garden or in the small courtyard of the house.

## *Couvent Saint-Joseph*

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Adjacent to the House of the Gallery, the convent of the Sisters of Saint Joseph was built in the 19th century in the former monastery of La Petite Visitation, built by Saint Jeanne de Chantal to receive the surplus of vocations that the Great Visitation could not absorb. Its cloister is a perfect example of the setting of life designed by St François and St Jeanne for the souls of prayer that the Visitandines must be.

## *Église Saint-François-de-Sales*

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The influx of vocations forced the first sisters to leave the house of the Gallery in 1612 to found the first monastery of the Visitation: the Great Visitation or Monastery of the Holy Source, naming it as the starting point for the expansion of the order around the world. Since the Revolution, the monastery has been transformed into a hotel, restaurants, housing and various businesses. But the church, rebuilt in 1650, still evokes the sanctuary where the relics of St François and St Jeanne under the Old Regime were venerated. Its decor makes it one of the high points of baroque art in Savoy. Under the name of Saint-François-de-Sales, it is today the church of the Italian Catholic Mission of Annecy.





## *Cathédrale Saint-Pierre-aux-Liens*

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Modest chapel of the convent of the Cordeliers, this church played the role of cathedral for the bishops of Geneva refugees in Annecy because of the triumph of the Protestant Reformation in their episcopal city. Today it is the cathedral of the Diocese of Annecy created in 1822 to replace the former Diocese of Geneva. Built in late Gothic style from 1535 to 1538, it shows a façade with a clear Renaissance character, while the apse has a beautiful Piedmontese decoration dating from the end of the 18th century. It was, from 1602 to 1622, the cathedral of Saint Francis de Sales to which is dedicated an altar where a bas-relief shows him handing over the constitutions of the Visitation to the first three Visitandines.

## *Hôtels de Lambert, Bagnorea, Charmoisy et Sales*

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Facing the cathedral, of which it is contemporary, the Hotel de Lambert served as residence of Saint Francis de Sales from 1602 to 1610. It was there that he wrote, for the benefit of his cousin, Mme de Charmoisy, the letters of spiritual direction which were published under the name Introduction to Devote Life. From 1610 until his death in 1622, Saint Francis established his residence and the episcopal chancellery at the Bagnorea hotel, still owned by his friend President Favre. By 1606 they had founded the Florimontane Academy there together, and St Francis wrote his Treatise on the Love of God. The Charmoisy hotel, opening on the Thiou a water door through which one could access by boat, and on the Rue de l'Île a door with a door where the carriages penetrated, was the dwelling of Mme de Charmoisy, Author of the letters gathered in the Introduction to Devote Life. As for the Hotel de Sales, it is a beautiful construction of the end of the 17th century, built by the nephews of Saint Francis. Its façade is decorated with a balcony with beautiful ironworks and four busts representing the four seasons.



## ONE-DAY PROGRAM

# *On Saint François de Sales' steps from Thorens to Annecy*



From Thorens, where François de Sales was born, a small village nestled at the foot of the Glières plateau between the Soudine and Parmelan mountains, to his dear little Nussy, the picturesque town of Annecy, crossed by the clear waters of the Thiou at the end of the lake, where the Protestant Reformation had exiled the seat of his bishopric and where he founded the Order of the Visitation, this day allows a family and familiar approach of the holy bishop of Geneva

### *Thorens : Chapelle de Sales*

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The Château de Sales was razed on Richelieu's order in 1630 during an invasion of Savoie by France. On the site of the room where Saint Francis was born in 1567, his great-nephews, in 1672, built a commemorative chapel, equipped with a beautiful baroque altarpiece. Opposite, a cross recalls that in this place St Francis had the vision of the foundation of the Visitation Order.

### *Thorens : Château*

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Below the castle of Sales, Thorens was the castle of the lords of Compey. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century it passed to the princes of Luxembourg who sold it to the family of Sales in 1602. It is now inhabited by the family of Roussy de Sales. There are precious memories of Saint Francis, superb tapestries of Flanders, high-quality paintings and the furniture of Cavour, the architect of Italy's unification. The Prime Minister of King Victor-Emmanuel

II belonged to the family of Sales by his grandmother Philippine de Sales.

### *Thorens : Église paroissiale*

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The parish church of Thorens was originally dedicated to Saint Maurice, to whom Saint Francis de Sales was later associated. It was there, in fact, that he was baptized in 1567 and it was there that he wished to receive episcopal consecration in 1602. The church was considerably enlarged in 1901 in a beautiful Gothic Revival style. Saint Maurice and Saint Francis are evoked by a great mosaic of 1935.

### *Annecy : Basilique de la Visitation*

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### *Annecy : Église Saint-François-de-Sales*

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The Visitation was founded in 1610 at the House of the Gallery, modest home of a suburb of Annecy. The influx of vocations forced the first sisters to leave it in 1612 to found the first monastery, the Great Visitation or Monastery of the HolySource, naming it as the starting point for the expansion of the order around the world. Since the Revolution, the monastery has been transformed into a hotel, restaurants, apartments and various shops. But the church, rebuilt in 1650, still evokes the sanctuary where the relics of Saint Francis and Saint Jeanne were venerated under the Old Regime.



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## TWO-DAY PROGRAM

# *In the country of saint François de Sales Thorens, Annecy, les Allinges, Thonon*

Within two days, this program allows a good discovery of the pastoral territory in which the life of St Francis de Sales took place. He was born and baptized at the foot of the Pré-Alpes, in the small village of Thorens. His ministry as a young priest, sent on a mission among the Protestant population of Chablais, was anchored by the castle of Allinges and the city of Thonon, on the Savoyard bank of Lake Geneva. As for Annecy, who was promoted to the episcopal seat in Geneva as a substitute for the Protestant Reformation, it was the city of his residence and his cathedral, the city where he wrote his principal works, where he instituted the Florimontane Academy and founded the Order of the Visitation with St Joan of Chantal.

### Jour 1

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## *Allinges : Châteaux des Allinges*

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Amazing location as the castles of the Allinges, on a hill offering a wide panorama on Lake Geneva. The Château Vieux was the possession of the sire of Faucigny and the Château Neuf of the Count of Savoie so that they bombed each other during the wars that often pitted the two states during the Middle Ages. Little by little abandoned after the integration of Faucigny to Savoy, the Château Vieux still presents impressive ruins. In the Chablais that became Protestant, Château Neuf was at the end of the sixteenth century the only place where the celebration of the Catholic Mass was authorized. Its Romanesque chapel still exists, decorated with 11th century frescoes that are the oldest in Savoy. It was there that St Francois de Sales stayed from September 1594 to March 1595, at the beginning of his mission to reconquer the Chablais to the Catholic faith

## *Thonon : Église Saint-Hippolyte*

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The Saint-Hippolyte church of Thonon was originally that of a Benedictine priory whose still remains the beautiful Romanesque crypt. Reconstructed in the late Gothic style of the 15th century, this church became a Protestant temple during the Reformation. During his mission in Chablais, Saint Francis de Sales re-established Catholic worship there as early as Christmas 1595.

When he became bishop, he assigned him to the Barnabites whom he had brought from Italy to manage the Holy House of Thonon, a dynamic study center opposed to the Calvin Academy in Geneva. The Barnabites gave it a sumptuous stucco baroque decoration, the work of Tessin artists

## *Thonon : Basilique Saint-François-de-Sales*

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Adjoining and communicating with the church of Saint-Hippolyte, the Basilica of Saint-François-de-Sales was intended to mark the elevation of the holy bishop to the rank of doctor of the Church in 1877. Built in the Gothic Revival style of the time, it was decorated with beautiful modern stained glass windows depicting the Forty Hours of Thonon, grandiose ceremonies of abjuration of the Protestant population at the end of the mission of Saint Francis in Chablais. We can also see the last works of the painter Maurice Denis, two large marouflé canvases and a Way of the Cross dating from 1943.

## Jour 2

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### *Hôtels de Lambert, Bagnorea, Charmoisy et Sales*

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## THREE-DAY PROGRAM

# *Saint François de Sales* *Bishop of the Catholic Reformation* *Thorens, Annecy, Thonon, Genève*

This three-day pilgrimage brings a very complete knowledge of the life of St François de Sales. He was born and baptized at the foot of the Prealps, in the small village of Thorens. His ministry as a young priest, sent on a mission among the Protestant population of Chablais, was anchored by the castle of Allinges and the city of Thonon, on the Savoyard bank of Lake Geneva. Geneva was the official seat of his diocese, but since 1536 the cathedral had become a Protestant temple and the practice of Catholicism had been banished from the city under penalty of death. At the time of his mission in Chablais, however, Saint Francis went there to try to discuss with Théodore de Bèze, Calvin's successor. Today, Geneva is a high place of ecumenism by welcoming the seat of the Ecumenical Council of Churches. As for Annecy, who had been promoted to the episcopal seat to replace Geneva, it was the city of his residence and his cathedral, the city where he wrote his principal works, where he established the Florimontane Academy and where he founded the Order of the Visitation with St Jeanne de Chantal.

**Jour 1**

### *Annecy*

Basilique de la Visitation  
Chapelle de la Galerie  
Couvent Saint-joseph  
Église Saint-François-de-Sales  
Cathédrale Saint-Pierre-aux-Liens  
Hôtels de Lambert, Bagnoréa, Charmois et Sales

**Jour 2**

### *Thorens*

Chapelle de Sales  
Château  
Église paroissiale

### *Allinges*

Châteaux des Allinges

### *Thonon*

Église Saint-Hippolyte  
Basilique Saint-François-de-Sales



## *Genève : The Reformation Wall*

In the bastion park, the Reformation Wall is a magnificent monument that sums up the whole history of the Protestant Reformation. While the names of Luther and Zwingli, initiators of the movement in Germany and Switzerland, are engraved on two enormous stone blocks, the monument itself is dominated by the great statues of Farel, Calvin, and Bèze, the three outstanding figures of the Reformation in Geneva. They are accompanied by the statues of Knox for Scotland, Frédéric-Guillaume for Prussia, Guillaume I for the Netherlands, Coligny for France, Williams for the United States of America, Cromwell for England and Bocskay for Hungary.



## *Genève : Cathédrale Saint-Pierre*



Begun in 1160 by Bishop Arducius of Faucigny, the construction of Saint Peter's Cathedral was completed in 1288. In the 15th century, it was flanked by an important flamboyant Gothic chapel designed to house the tomb of the Cardinal of Brogny. Finally, in 1756, it was endowed with a neo-classical colonnade on the façade, which is surprising in this Gothic building. It has become a Protestant temple since the adoption of the Reformation by Geneva.

## *Genève : Reformation Museum and Archaeological Site of the Cathedral*

In a magnificent 18th century house, occupying the site of the cloister of the cathedral where the adoption of the Reformation was passed in 1536, The International Museum of Reformation presents the history of the Calvinist Reformation through various objects, books, manuscripts, paintings, engravings, and two remarkable audio-visual performances, using the latest techniques. The museum communicates through an underground with the archaeological excavations of the floor of the cathedral where an upgraded route allows to understand the evolution of the different cathedrals that followed each other in this place before the current cathedral

## *Genève : Ecumenical Council of Churches*

Located at the top of the district of the major international organizations of the United Nations, the seat of the Ecumenical Council of Churches testifies to the concern of the various Christian denominations to rediscover the unity of Christianity. Its chapel, designed to be adapted to Protestant as well as Catholic or Orthodox worship, is a magnificent illustration of this.