

# „A Year with Fr. Brisson“



*Celebrating the centenary of the death of the Servant of God*

## **THE REVEREND LOUIS BRISSON**

(1817-1908)

*Priest and founder of the institutes of the  
Oblates and Oblate Sisters of St. Francis de Sales*

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by

**Fr. ROBERT J. HINDLEY, O.S.F.S.**

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### **Jesus, Francis de Sales and Bishop Simon**

The bishops of the world, successors to the apostles, gathered in Council in the Vatican City, have reminded us that the Church on earth is by its very nature missionary. (Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity- Ad Gentes.)

Jesus Christ, sent by the Father, is our prime model of mission and missionary spirit. Those of us who follow take courage and strength from Him and from His example. Jesus went about doing good, showing the Father living on earth, showing the way to the Father. "... if you see me, you see the Father."

All of the baptised, according to the teaching of the church and the popes, are sent to follow Jesus in His mission to announce and to show the way to the Father.

For us Oblates, we see two other outstanding followers of Christ in the missionary spirit. Francis de Sales, and Jean Marie Simon.

Francis, only a short time ordained, offers himself from all of the priests of the diocese, to undertake the mission which no one else wanted to accept- the difficult mission to the Chablais territory. Through his zeal, his courage, his ingenuity, perseverance, and strong faith in the Father, he was successful in leading thousands back to the true faith, which they had lost.

Some two hundred and eighty years later, another imitator of Christ, son of St. Francis de Sales, newly ordained priest, answers the call of his founder and father in faith, Fr. Brisson, to "go proclaim the good news." Jean Marie Simon takes up his cross, his few

books and belongings and with four companions heads into a world to him unknown, Namaqualand in southern Africa.

In the same spirit of Francis de Sales, a spirit of courage, and faith he goes to do the will of the Father. What difficulties did he not encounter-loneliness, when abandoned by his confreres; despair, when trying to preach and to teach in a language unknown to him; again loneliness, when people left to look for greener pastures for their small flocks.

The faith and courage of Fr. Simon shine forth when he continues to hold fast to the hand of the Father through drought, followed by floods, when the rains came, and then by plagues of locusts which destroy the long awaited crops. Like Abraham of Old he continues to believe: "The Lord will provide."

The Council Fathers remind us: "missionaries, the fellow workers of God, should raise up communities of the faithful, so that walking worthy of the calling to which they have been called they might carry out the priestly, prophetic and royal offices entrusted to them by God. In this way the Christian community will become a sign of God's presence in the world. Through the eucharistic sacrifice it goes continually to the Father with Christ, carefully nourished with the word of God it bears witness to Christ, it walks in charity and is enlivened by an apostolic spirit." (Missionary Activity...)

Bishop Simon and his followers did establish these communities of the faithful, and the Lord did provide, and the people listened, and the flock did expand to forty mission stations and close to a hundred thousand people spread over a vast area covering fifteen hundred kilometres from north to south (in the USA from Northern New York to Georgia and the width of Pennsylvania).

The motto, "Tenui nec dimittam", of St. Francis de Sales is truly exemplified in the person of Bishop Simon.

Many oblates, many priests, indeed many Christians throughout the world follow in the same footsteps of Christ the missionary. May we all have that same spirit of faith, of courage and perseverance exemplified in our models, Christ Himself, St. Francis de Sales, Bishop Jean Marie Simon, to announce the good news, show to the world the way to the Father, and to nourish with the eucharistic meal.

+ May God Be Blessed +