

“WE PRAY BEST BEFORE BEAUTY” - St. Francis de Sales

Hello to My Fellow Art and Faith Sojourners,

I am delighted to tell you about our Art of the Spirit Tour for 2018. As many of you already know from experience, our travel destinations always combine the natural beauty of creation with great art and architecture from across time. They are true adventures of the spirit which are educational, inspirational, and fun. I like to think of our tours as retreats in which you are not only feeding your soul but stimulating your mind and heart in art history and the lives of the saints, We begin each morning with a slide presentation of my paintings and stories to give you some background on that day's adventures.

Our 2018 sojourn begins in the breathtaking beauty of the French Alps. Annecy is a lovely town known as the “Venice of the Alps” and is one of France's most popular resort destinations. And while it is the perfect place to stroll, relax, and enjoy the spectacular views, it is more importantly for our trip the home of St. Francis de Sales, one of the church's most beloved saints and a towering figure in Christian spirituality. Walking the streets of his hometown, we will understand why his spiritual teachings are so full of gentleness, hope, and optimism. For someone who died in 1622, he sure understood our modern hearts and minds in our search for inner peace and faith!

You can read Dave's overview for day to day details, but I do want to mention our visit to the nearby church in Assy, a small gem of modern church architecture which has work by Matisse, Chagall, Roualt and other masters of modern art. Our last tour began in the Matisse Chapel of the Rosary in Vence, which was built around the same time under the supervision of the same Dominican priest and art historian, Fr. Couturier.

From Annecy we go to Paris by high speed train across France. We love sacred spaces and holy places on Art of the Spirit tours, and so we will explore the Gothic splendors of Notre Dame and Chartres Cathedrals, and the incredible Ste. Chapelle, built by King St. Louis.

I really feel we are currently living in a new age of reform, a time filled with unrest, uncertainty, and lots of anxiety. Well, St. Francis de Sales lived in such a time, and so did the great artists and architects of the middle ages. If nothing else, I hope this trip in 2018 fills our eyes and hearts with endless wonder and the comforting reminder that right alongside our stress and fear is the beauty of the human spirit urging us forward, together. It has always been that way, and always will!

Peace and blessings,
Bro.Mickey



Villas and Vines
presents
Br. Mickey McGrath's
Art of the Spirit:
Inspirations in Annecy and Paris
Salesian Spirituality in the French Alps and the City of Light
September 24th – October 2nd, 2018

Join world-renowned artist and spiritual leader, Br. Mickey McGrath OSFS, on a 9-day discovery of Art and Faith in *Annecy*, in the French Alps, and *Paris*. Annecy is the birthplace and home of *St. Francis de Sales*, and of course Paris is one of the most artistically-inspired places on Earth. This tour has been specifically crafted, combining a pilgrimage in the “*Footsteps of St. Francis de Sales*” with the Art and Beauty of Paris, the “*City of Light.*” We explore two distinctively different locations in France, connecting with Saints and Sinners along the way, and drawing them into our experience.

With Br. Mickey, himself an Oblate of St. Francis de Sales, we discover the unique spirituality of St. Francis, who is the guiding influence in our own Br. Mickey's personal spiritual journey. Br. Mickey enhances the simple, yet profound, messages of St. Francis de Sales so beautifully through his artwork. This is the core meaning of Br. Mickey's *Journeys of Art and Faith*. On this trip, Br. Mickey shares these personal insights into his own spiritual path, with the guidance of his spiritual father, St. Francis de Sales. St. Francis' spiritual messages were intended not for priests and monks living in cloister, but for lay people, which was quite unusual at the time. These messages are still relevant today, possibly even more so, which is why this journey is necessary and will be so meaningful!

We visit destinations of *Salesian* spirituality, amazing mountainside churches, magnificent inspiring cathedrals, spectacular scenery, beautiful alpine villages, and artistic and spiritual locations in Paris. One of the highlights is a day-trip to *Chartres*, just outside Paris, and a private tour of the towering Gothic cathedral with its superb stained glass windows.

If you want to get in touch with your personal journey, and enhance or re-discover your own spirituality, then this is the pilgrimage for you. Each morning we gather to anticipate the day's new discoveries through Br. Mickey's artistic expressions. During this trip, there will also be plenty of free time for drawing, painting, photography, and contemplation, with Br. Mickey as our mentor.

Every aspect of our journey is exceptional, experiencing this striking landscape in a truly remarkable way. Our explorations include spirituality, art, Alpine villages, and Paris. Romanesque and Gothic churches will abound. While Br. Mickey leads us with his artistic and spiritual insights, we also enjoy private excursions with local guides through the charming villages and countryside. Enjoy characteristic hotels with welcoming hospitality, in the centers of both Annecy and Paris. Savor carefully selected dining experiences, along with plenty of free time to explore on your own. Stunning scenery will inspire, spiritual moments will abound, and artistic and natural beauty will preside!



Annecy

September 24th – 28th

Spend four nights in *Annecy*, capital of the *Haute-Savoie* region of France, nestled picturesquely on the shores of *Lake Annecy*. The area surrounding Annecy and Lake Annecy is internationally renowned for its beautiful harmonious landscape and for the fantastic quality of the water in the lake. After years of strict protection efforts, the water in Lake Annecy is now ranked as the purest in all of Europe. This pure, clear water flows from the lake into the canals running through the historic center of Annecy, giving it its picturesque appearance of the “*Venice of the Alps*”.

On our pilgrimage, we follow the “*Footsteps of St. Francis de Sales*” in Annecy, where the saint was born and lived the majority of his life (1567-1622). It is here in Annecy that *St. Francis de Sales* and *St. Jane Frances de Chantal* founded the *Order of the Visitation Sisters* in 1610. We visit the important sights in Francis' life, including: the *Basilica of the Visitation* and the *Golden Reliquary* within the basilica, containing the remains of both Francis de Sales and Jane Frances de Chantal; *St. Peter's Cathedral*, built in 1535, where Francis was ordained a priest and where he presided as Bishop of Geneva for 20 years; the *Church of Notre Dame de Liesse* (Our Lady of Joy), dating to the 16th century, where Francis' mother prayed, asking God to give her a son to be consecrated to Him; the *Church of St. Francis*, built in 1614, the first site of Annecy's Visitation Order; and *St. Maurice*, the oldest church in Annecy, where Francis made his First Communion, was confirmed, and where he later preached and taught quite frequently.

Enjoy a scenic cruise on Lake Annecy, contemplating the beauty of the purest lake in Europe and its stunning setting in the heart of the French Alps.

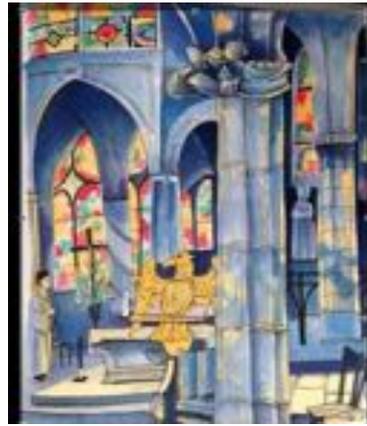
Visit the ancient *Benedictine Abbey at Talloires*, near the shores of Lake Annecy. The original Priory, built in 1031, played a pivotal role in the religious history of this area. St. Germain, the first prior of the *Abbey of Talloires*, lived here as a recluse from 1033 to 1060. The *St. Germain Church* was built here in 1780. From this majestic site, there is a sumptuous panorama over Talloires Bay and the whole of Lake Annecy.

Explore the *Chateau d'Allinges* and its Romanesque church. Listed as a French historic monument in 2011, the Château d'Allinges offers a superb panoramic view encompassing Lake Geneva, the Jura Mountains and the Alps. The *Château-Neuf Chapel* houses Savoy's oldest fresco (11th century). [St. Francis de Sales](#) stayed here in 1594 – 1595, when every day he went down the hill of *Allinges* to preach the good word in *Thonon*, bringing back the population to the [Roman Catholic church, who were influenced by nearby protestant Switzerland during the Protestant Reformation.](#)

Visit *Notre Dame de Toute Grace* (Our Lady Full of Grace) in *Assy*, just outside *Chamonix*. The church was consecrated in 1950, and considered as the key to the development of modern sacred art in the twentieth century. Facing *Mont Blanc*, the highest summit in Europe at 15,781 feet, the church is celebrated for its interior decoration where the architect commissioned some of the most famous artists of the first half of the twentieth century. Among those who contributed paintings, sculptures, tapestries, stained glass, [ceramics](#), and [mosaics](#) to the church were *Henri Matisse* and *Marc Chagall*.

Explore *Chamonix*, France's most famous ski resort and hiking destination. Located at the base of *Mont Blanc*, Europe's highest summit at 15,781 feet, *Chamonix* is a thrilling destination in all seasons. Discover the *Mer de Glace* (Sea of Ice), the largest glacier in France at 9 miles long and 1,300 feet thick. Take the rack-and-pinion *Montenvers* train from the center of *Chamonix* to the panoramic *Mer de Glace* cable car, allowing us to descend from the train station onto the glacier where we enter a man made ice grotto. The ice grotto is cut into the living glacier – a truly remarkable experience!

Our home in Annecy is the *Splendid Hotel* (3*), in the heart of the historical center and just in front of Lake Annecy, boasting the best location in the entire village. With views on either the lake or the old town, all the rooms are large and recently renovated, offering free high-speed internet connection, minibar, hair-dryers and air conditioning with individual thermostats. (www.splendidhotel.fr)



Paris

September 28th – October 2nd

The mere mention of *Paris* inspires thoughts of beauty, art, and grace. Paris – the *City of Light* – has been a beacon of culture for centuries. It stands as a symbol of all the fine things human civilization can offer. Paris has a timeless familiarity for first-time and frequent visitors, with instantly recognizable architectural icons, exquisite cuisine, chic boutiques and priceless artistic treasures.

The wrought-iron spire of the *Eiffel Tower* piercing the clouds, the broad *Arc de Triomphe* guarding Paris' most glamorous avenue, the *Champs-Élysées*, the gargoyled *Notre Dame* cathedral, lamp-lit bridges spanning the *Seine* and art nouveau cafes spilling on to wicker-chair-lined terraces are indelibly etched in the minds of anyone who's visited the city – and the imaginations of anyone who hasn't yet.

Saint Denis introduced Christianity to Paris in the 3rd century, and by the 5th century, the first churches were built in the city. As time went on, Paris became home to some of the most magnificent churches in Christendom. For the Art and Faith enthusiast, there are so many beautiful and spiritually rich experiences here that you would need to spend a few years to see them all. We are fortunate to discover several of the most important sights.

Visit the magnificent *Notre Dame Cathedral*, certainly the most well-known church in Paris and one of the most famous churches in the world. The Cathedral has survived wars and revolutions and represents an outstanding example of Gothic architecture. We also visit *La Sainte Chapelle*, famous for its extensive stained glass. This magnificent structure was finished around 1248, and was built by *King Louis IX* to house two precious items he had purchased from Emperor Baldwin II of Constantinople: a relic of the *True Cross* and *Christ's Crown of Thorns*; both of which are now kept in the *Notre Dame Cathedral*. Discover our independence and take the *Paris Metro* to the *Basilica of Sacre Coeur*, high on a hilltop in the *Montmartre* neighborhood. Begun in 1875, and finally consecrated in 1919, *Sacre Coeur* stands in utter contrast to the bohemian lifestyle surrounding it. The view over Paris from the basilica is breathtaking.

A highlight of our entire pilgrimage is a day-excursion from Paris to *Chartres*, and discovering its magnificent Cathedral. Probably the finest example of French Gothic architecture, some consider it the most beautiful cathedral in France. Most notably, the cathedral is celebrated for its many 12th and 13th-century stained-glass windows and sculptures, most of which still survive. The cathedral's spiritual intensity is heightened by the fact that no direct light enters the building; all the light is filtered through stained glass, so that the whole experience of visiting the *Chartres Cathedral* seems out of this world. The interior of the cathedral is remarkable: the nave is the widest of any cathedral in France; and in its center is a maze, the only one still intact in France, with 320 yards of winding passages, which the faithful used to follow on their knees. The *Chartres Cathedral* was consecrated in 1260 as one of the most compelling expressions of the strength and poetry of medieval Catholicism.

We are fortunate to experience all of this Art and Faith through the eyes and interpretations of our artistic and spiritual mentor, Brother Mickey!

In Paris, we enjoy 4 nights at the *Minerve Hotel* (3*), with character and charm, located in the center of the lively Latin Quarter, and within easy walking distance of *Notre Dame* and other major sights. The charming hotel, in a noble Haussman building dating from 1864 and with iron flower-filled balconies, has been renovated and decorated using natural materials, stone walls, tapestries, and exposed beams. Expect restful nights located in the center of Paris. (www.parishotelminerve.com)



This 9-day, 8-night adventure includes these magnificent highlights:

- 4 nights' stay in Annecy at the *Splendid Hotel*, in the heart of the historical center and just in front of Lake Annecy, boasting the best location in the entire village. With views on either the lake or the old town, all the rooms are large and recently renovated, offering free high-speed internet connection, minibar, hair-dryers and air conditioning with individual thermostats. (www.splendidhotel.fr)
- 4 nights' stay in Paris at the *Hotel Minerve*, with character and charm, located in the center of the lively Latin Quarter, and within easy walking distance of Notre Dame and other major sights. Expect restful nights located in the center of Paris. (www.parishotelminerve.com)
- Each morning Br. Mickey will begin with prayer and a presentation of art and stories, setting the tone for each day's discoveries.
- Private guided walking tour of Annecy, following the "*Footsteps of St. Francis de Sales*".
- Discover prominent Salesian sights in Annecy, including the *Basilica of the Visitation*, *St. Peter's Cathedral*, *Church of Notre Dame de Liesse*, *Church of St. Francis*, and the *Church of St. Maurice*.
- Scenic cruise on *Lake Annecy*, discovering the luxurious landscapes between lake and mountains.
- Visit the ancient *Benedictine Abbey of St. Germain* at Talloires, dating from 1031. From this majestic site, there is a sumptuous panorama over Talloires Bay and the whole of Lake Annecy.
- Explore *Chateau d'Allinges* and its Romanesque church, containing the oldest fresco in Savoy, dating from the 11th century. St. Francis de Sales preached against the Protestant Reformation from nearby this chateau.
- Discover *Notre Dame de Toute Grace* in Assy, just outside Chamonix. The church was consecrated in 1950, and considered as the key to the development of modern sacred art in the twentieth century. Inside are works from *Henri Matisse* and *Marc Chagall*, among others.
- Day excursion to discover the resort village of *Chamonix*, high in the French Alps at the base of Mont Blanc. Walk on the *Mer de Glace* glacier, and through the *Ice Grotto* – an amazing experience!
- High-Speed train (TGV) from Annecy, direct to Paris in 3h48m, often at speeds of over 200 mph!
- Private tour of the highlights of Paris, including the *Eiffel Tower*, *Arc de Triomphe*, and the *Champs-Élysées*.
- Visit with private guide the *Cathedral of Notre Dame*, with all its artistic and religious treasures. Ample time is allotted so there will be no rush inside the cathedral.
- Private guided visit inside *La Saint Chapelle*, famous for its magnificent stained glass.
- Day excursion to *Chartres*, discovering what some consider to be the most beautiful cathedral in France. We are privileged to have a private guided tour with the most noted scholar of Chartres alive in the world today, Mr. Malcolm Miller.
- Night Cruise on the *Seine River*, with all the monuments gloriously illuminated.
- Optional excursion by *Paris Metro* to *Sacre Coeur* and its surrounding neighborhood of Montmartre.
- Ample free time to explore Paris on your own, for shopping, museums, or enjoying the cafés.
- All private English-speaking guides.
- All private transfers.
- All activities included.
- Plenty of free time, giving you the opportunity to explore as you wish.
- Dining together is a special part of our experience; at least two meals each day, with wines, are included at carefully selected atmospheric restaurants and hidden gems.
- Intelligent Trip Design, always with a sense of journey, genuinely connecting you to the region.



Bro. Mickey O'Neill McGrath PS

Brother Mickey McGrath's

Art of the Spirit:

Inspirations in Annecy and Paris

Salesian Spirituality in the French Alps and the City of Light

September 24th – October 2nd, 2018

Name(s) _____

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Phone _____ Cell Phone _____ E-Mail _____

_____ **\$3,900 per person double occupancy**

Single Supplement is \$700

Deposit of \$500 per person is required to reserve your place.

Personal checks accepted.

Please return this form with the \$500 per person, payable to:

Villas and Vines
PO Box 131
62 Wall Street
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MasterCard and Visa accepted with a 3% processing fee added to the final payment.

Final payment is due by July 26, 2018 (60 days prior)

This tour includes all hotels, ground transportation, tour guide, activities, meals, and drinks/wines as outlined in the program.

Please note this trip begins at the GENEVA, Switzerland airport and ends at the PARIS, Charles de Gaulle airport.

Air is NOT included to Geneva and from Paris.

CANCELLATION: If canceled up to 60 days prior, there is a \$500 cancellation fee. If canceled between 60 – 30 days prior, the penalty is 50% of the total cost of the trip. The trip is non-refundable if canceled within 30 days of departure. Trip cancellation insurance is strongly recommended.

For more information and reservations, please contact:

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