

TOTUM AMORIS EST



On 28th December, in the middle of the Christmas octave, Pope Francis published a Letter. The occasion, the IV centenary of the death of Saint Francis de Sales, the 'Doctor of Divine Love'.

Born in 1567, the first of thirteen children in an aristocratic family in the Savoy region (today's southern Switzerland and France), young Francis was educated in the finest institutions of his time. His life embodied the best of the teachings and cultural achievements of two centuries.

In Paris, as a student, he experienced two deep interior crises that would have a lasting impact on his life. Fixated somehow obsessively on the idea of being for all eternity the "enemy of God", young Francis reached the lowest point of his life, unable to eat and even to sleep with any regularity.

With deep darkness in his heart, one day he stopped at the Church of Saint-Etienne-des-Grès. There, before the Black Madonna of Paris, *Notre Dame de Bonne Délivrance*, he made a prayer of abandonment to God's will: "Whatever may happen, Lord, you hold everything in your hands... I will love you here... Lord Jesus, you will always be my hope and salvation in the land of the living".

This experience, with all its anxiety and uncertainties, would remain illuminating for him and gave him a 'spiritual key' to live out his life and, as a shepherd, guide many in his pastoral ministry. The key, "**Totum Amoris Est**", "**All pertains to love**".

In his final spiritual conference, on the feast of Saint Stephen, he said: "It is love that grants perfection to our works. Take a person who suffers martyrdom for God with an ounce of love; that person merits much, since he could give nothing greater than his own life. Yet, another person who has only suffered a scratch with two ounces of love will have much more merit, because it is charity and love that give value to our works".

Mother of God, *Notre Dame de Bonne Délivrance*, cover us under your mantle. May this new year be "all pertaining to love".

In manus.

Father Ivano