

## St. Francis de Sales

On being appointed bishop of Geneva early in the seventeenth century, St. Francis de Sales found himself in a Calvinist-dominated area that no longer believed in the Christ's real presence in the Eucharist. And yet, in the course of his daily pastoral activity, more and more demonically oppressed people were being brought to him. The unavailability of the Eucharist in a Christian country was not without consequence. With his own hands the bishop gave out Holy Communion to those needing it. Spectacular expulsions and healings took place. Over four hundred people were delivered in this way.

Francis de Sale's practice was not without controversy, but this outstanding theologian and teacher of the spiritual life justified the practice with the following simple words: "Yes, many such innocent souls turn to me. I give them the Blessed Sacrament, bless them and say, 'Go in joy, for your suffering has left you!'"

It turns out that this marvelous "pastoral idea" was not the invention of the Bishop of Geneva, the spiritual father of St. Jane Frances de Chantal. St. John Cassian had recommended the practice of giving Holy Communion to people oppressed by Satan as early as 432 AD. **In 441, the Synod of Orange spoke out in favor of allowing so-called "energumenes" (i.e. the demonically oppressed) to partake of the Eucharist in order to be set free.**