Your Cross: God’s greeting to you

God’s eternal wisdom has foreseen from all eternity the Cross which he gives you from his heart as an invaluable gift. He thought about this Cross which he has given you, with the light of his omniscient eyes, thought it through carefully with divine reason, tested it with his wise justice and warmed it with his loving arms, weighed it with both his hands. So it would not be a millimeter too large or a milligram too heavy. And he has blessed it with his holy name, anointed with the balm of his grace, has filled with his consolation and then glanced once more at you your courage. Then it comes from heaven as a greeting from God as alms from his merciful love.

- Attributed to Francis De Sales

Song: A Salesian hymn or other hymn suitable for the Stations

Reflections from St. Francis

Francis writes to Madame Brulart:

Keep your heart wide open in order to accept all kinds of crosses, abandonment, mortifications out of love for him who has taken on so much for you. May his holy name be praised and his kingdom last for all ages. (DeS 6,108)

Time for Quiet Reflection

Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ in your love for us you went to your death on the Cross. Saint Francis de Sales followed you along this path. For his entire life he loved you and his fellow man. His life’s journey led to the Cross. In the spirit of St. Francis de Sales I would like to follow you and so make it possible for me to learn to love. I know: On this way of love I will encounter some crosses. In order to be able to walk with him joyfully, I will walk with today this Station with him. As step by step, I will experience your love for me which extends to the Cross. Amen.
FIRST STATION: 
JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

C. We adore you and praise you

R. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reflections from St. Francis (choose A or B)

A. Francis de Sales to Philothea

If you want to correct a fault which you have committed, so admit humbly that you deserve this reproach. If the accusation is false then defend yourself peacefully and deny your guilt. You owe this out of respect for the truth and for the edification of the neighbor. If you are further accused, although you have presented a truthful account, then do not upset yourself any further and don’t try to press your innocence. After you have fulfilled your duty to truth you must also fulfill it to humility. (Intr.3, 3)

B. Francis in a letter to Jane Francis

If you are suffering spiritually and don’t what to do to find some peace. As well as you can, look at our single source of hope, the good Lord and gaze upon his abandonment during his agony and fight with two of the most powerful weapons. The weapons in this struggle are patience and submission to the Will of God by your willingness to drink of his chalice. Turn to the weapon of prayer, even if is only with the mouth. (DeS 5,400)

Time for quiet reflection

Prayer:

Jesus, you were betrayed one of your disciples, denied by a friend, persecuted by enemies, unjustly accused, and without cause condemned to death. Lord, I confess to you, I was also accused but I also found fault with others. I was treated unjustly but I also treated others unjustly. Give what St. Francis de Sales recommends: Love for truth, courage to endure, humility, patience, fervor for prayer and a deep abiding trust in you. Amen.
**THE SECOND STATION:**
**JESUS CARRIES HIS CROSS**

C.  We adore you and praise you
R.  Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

**Reflections from St. Francis (choose A or B)**

A.  Francis de Sales writes to Jane Francis:

Be strong in the trust, which we should place in Divine Providence when it presents crosses to you, he will also give you the courage to carry them.

B.  Francis de Sales writes to Madame Brulart:

Accept deeply from your heart the crosses which the Lord himself has given on you. Do not consider whether the com from valuable or aromatic wood. They are more truly a cross when they come from common, despised and foul smelling wood.

It is strange that this always comes to mind and that I only know this melody. It is without doubt the song of the Lamb (Rev 5) a little sad but pleasing to the ear and beautiful. My Father, let it be done according to your and not mine. (DASal 6. 113)

**Time for quiet reflection**

Prayer:

Jesus, you did not seek your cross, it was sent to you, heavily laid on you. You only sought God, only that which he had predestined for you. You accepted the cross from the hand of God. Lord: I would like to choose my cross myself but it comes unforeseen and unavoidable. Let me more deeply grasp what St. Francis De Sales teaches. Every cross which comes to me comes from the hand of God. Give me the strength to bear it bravely and to recognize it as the Will of God. Amen.
THE THIRD STATION:  
JESUS FALLS FOR THE FIRST TIME

C.  We adore you and praise you  
R.  Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reflections from St. Francis (choose A or B)

A.  Francis de Sales in a letter to Madame de la Flechere:

Have patience with all but first of all with yourself and on that point, I want to say that you should not disturb yourself about your imperfections but always have the courage to confront them. I am pleased that you begin each day anew. There is no better way to perfect your spiritual life as always to begin again and never think you have done enough. (DeS 6,138)

B.  In another letter to her he writes:

Embrace the cross that has been given you. Remain in peace. Tell the Lord often that you want to be what you should be according to his will and that you want the suffering that he will give you according to his divine will. Fight your impatience, not only at those times when you are sorely tried but even when there is no occasion; practice kindness and gentleness towards everyone especially toward those who are the most bothersome. God will bless your endeavors. (DeS 6,159)

Time for quiet reflection

Prayer:

Lord, Jesus from the very beginning you did not do your will but desired to do the will of the Father. For the first time you fall under the weight of the cross. You get up to follow the will of the Father to the bitter end. Lord, I do not seek the will of the Father but on the contrary my own. Therefore I fall and suffer setbacks through the intercession of St. Francis de Sales I ask you to give the strength to always pick myself up and to desire the will of the God. Amen.
THE FOURTH STATION:  
JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER

C. We adore you and praise you

R. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reflections from St. Francis (choose A or B)

A. Francis de Sales in his sermon on Good Friday 1690:

Our dear Lady stood firm and steadfast even when her suffering was the deeper than any woman ever felt over the death of her child, because there never has been anyone who loved the Savior as much not because he was her God but because he was her faithful and beloved Son... The love of our Lady was truly strong her Love more tender, as one could say, her pain at the suffering and death of Jesus was more profound than anyone else’s...This glorious mother stood firm and steadfast, completely submissive to the will of God. (DASal 9,321)

B. From a sermon delivered on August 15, 1618

Look at Mary on Mount Calvary (John 9, 2527). She does not groan aloud. She does not say a single word: she stands at the feet of her son and for that is what she deeply desires. She is in complete equanimity of soul: Anything may happen, she seems to say, but when I am with him and possess him, I am satisfied because I want only him and seek only him. (DESal 9,280)

Time for quiet reflection

Prayer:

Jesus your Way of the Cross leads to the Way of the Cross of your mother. Your suffering penetrates her like a sword. She becomes the Mother of suffering. She holds onto the Word in which she once gave her “yes” to you. You hold onto the word with which you struggled on the Mount of Olives. Father, not my will but yours be done. And so they walk together the way of the Cross, mother and son. Lord, there are moments in my life when I willingly say: Lord, your will be done. Difficult hours in which like Mary, I say “Yes”. But there also times when that “yes” weakens. Dark hours when I want to say “no”. At those moments send me the grace to say once more “yes” as your mother did. Amen.
FIFTH STATION:  
SIMON OF CYRENE HELPS TO CARRY  
THE CROSS OF OUR LORD

C. We adore you and praise you  
R. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reflections from St. Francis (choose A or B)

A. From the Spiritual Conferences:
   
The Lord will only lay upon us a little from his cross; he lets us carry only the end  
of the crossbeam and in this way asks to be honored. Our cross which he lays  
upon our shoulders should be carried alone – which we can unfortunately not do.  
We are all too soon lost when he takes from us the long cherished joy in our  
exercises. We feel he deprives us of the joy and means to fulfill our tasks. (DESal.  
2,105)

B. From a letter to Jane de Chantal:
   
Do you want to see that I am correct when I say, “What you are missing is  
resignation”? You wish for the cross but only one of your own choosing. You want  
a common one, a physical one of this or that kind. But what is that, my dearly  
beloved daughter. But no I wish that your cross and mine may be entirely the  
Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the way it is laid upon us as well as the kind it is.  
God knows full well what he does and why. It is in our best interests, that the  
more a cross comes from God, the more we must love it. (DESal 5, 74)

Time for quiet reflection

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, whoever walks in his usual way, falls on the way of the Cross. Whoever has  
daily cross to carry carries it with Simon from Cyrene. When I go my own way, stop me  
so I may learn to go with you on your journey to the Cross. When I have crosses to  
carry than let me understand: it is your Cross that I can share out of love for you. Amen.
THE SIXTH STATION:
VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

C. We adore you and praise you

R. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reflections from St. Francis (choose A or B)

A. Francis de Sales in a letter to Jane Francis:

Have Courage, my dear daughter. Let’s walk along the narrow valleys, let us accept the cross at hand in humility and patience. What difference does it make, whether God speaks to us from thorns or from blossoms? Then go my dear daughter walk your Station even in bad weather and at night. (DESal 5, 97)

B. To Madame le Maitre:

What should I say to you when I see you in such pain? Have courage I beg you. The bridegroom, whom you have chosen, is a bundle of myrrh. Whoever loves him cannot help loving the bitterness. Those whom he has filled with his most intimate love will always be plagued with homesickness. How can we press our crucified Lord to our breast without the nails and thorns, which pierced him, piercing us? (DASal 6,318)

Time for quiet reflection

Prayer:

Jesus, your pain touches her heart. Your suffering awakens her compassion, your need moves her. Veronica holds out the cloth toward you. You leave behind an image of your face, an impression of love. Lord manifold are the impressions you leave behind for me, above all there persons in whom I can recognize your image. Whether in suffering or in joy, in need or in happiness, you gaze upon me from roses and from thorns. Like Veronica I offer my life filled confidence in you, so that you will leave behind some trace of yourself. Amen.
SEVENTH STATION:
JESUS FALLS FOR THE SECOND TIME

C. We adore you and praise you
R. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reflections from St. Francis (choose A or B)

A. Francis de Sales in a letter to Jane Francis:

Since you are on right path, my daughter, continue on it. Be patient with your inner cross. Our Savior has chosen it for you so that one day you will recognize what a better person you are because of it. Do you not see, my dear daughter, the disquiet of the day is lightened by the quiet of the night? It is a clear sign, that our soul needs nothing more than to be entirely submissive to God and to learn equanimity of soul. So it is that one may serve God whether in the middle of thorns or roses. (DASal 5,156)

B. From another letter to Jane Francis:

Let us continue further through the low valleys of the modest and small virtues. We will encounter roses and thorns, the love of the neighbor which shines forth whether in interior or exterior suffering, lilies of purity, violets of self control, and whatever else I love above all these little virtues, the goodness of the heart, the spirit of poverty and simplicity in living and these small exercises; visiting the sick, serving the poor, comforting the downcast and similar virtues; all without force in true freedom. (DESal 5, 96)

Time for quiet reflection

Prayer:

Jesus, O King crowned with thorns: a slave on the way to death. You fall, you stand up, you drag your cross behind you Lord, when my life is full of thorns and when I fall and can go no farther, lift me up. Let me blossom anew and be a rose among the thorns. Give me the virtues which were so dear to the heart of Saint Francis de Sales: a poor simple life, a pure kind heart, and a humble love of God, patience toward others and especially towards myself. Amen.
EIGHTH STATION:  
JESUS MEETS THE WEEPING WOMEN

C.  We adore you and praise you

R.  Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reflections from St. Francis *(choose A or B)*

A.  From Philothea:

   Whoever is patient does not complain and does not want to be pitied. He speaks openly about his suffering, truthfully and simply, without moaning or pitying himself or presenting his pain greater than it is. If someone sympathizes with him, he accepts it calmly. If however someone pities him on account of a suffering he does not have, then he points out the mistake. And so he remains calmly in peace and patience; he admits his suffering but does not complain about it. (Intr. 3, 3)

B.  From a letter to a religious woman:

   It is without doubt that true humility, patience and love for him, who sends our cross, demands that we accept it and without complaining about it. But remember, my very dear daughter, there is a difference between talking about our suffering and complaining about it. Yes, one can speak about it and in many situations is duty bound to do so as one is duty bound to remedy the suffering. But that should occur freely without exaggerating it in word or in complaint, because pitying yourself is not talking about your cross, but to complaining about a greater suffering than you have. Speak openly and truthfully about it without any qualms. (DESal 7,209)

Time for quiet reflection

Prayer:

Jesus, the women weep for you. People along the way complain about you. You do not complain. You are as quiet, as a lamb being led to the slaughter, you continue on the way to your cross. Lord, when I cry for you, you say; “cry for yourself”. When I begin to complain than please let me focus on you. You, who without complaint, walked your way of the cross. Amen.
NINTH STATION:
JESUS FALLS FOR THE THIRD TIME

C. We adore you and praise you
R. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reflections from St. Francis (choose A or B)

A. Francis de Sales writes to Madame von Ruans:

I consider it really unfortunate to see you troubled by so many tribulations. You would be more worthy of compassion if God did not hold tightly in his hands the resolution, which he has given you, namely to be his entirely. Because without him your soul would not only be overwhelmed but, my dear daughter, it would collapse under the so many contradictions and the weight of your suffering would have crushed you. But you are alive, my dear daughter, and continue on, persevere and accept all these troubles on yourself. Through this testing the Lord sees in you a true daughter. Remain so, my dear daughter; place your sorrows under the providence of your Savior. He will lift you up and carry with his strength. (DESal 6,241)

B. A word from St. Jane Francis:

The duration of the cross lends it its value, because there are no harder crosses than those which plague us continually. Remain faithful till death and you will receive the crown of eternal life. You love the cross: what else do you wish than to be crucified. The love of the Beloved evens everything out.

Time for quiet reflection
Prayer:

Jesus, the weight of our sins forces you to the ground for the third time. Even your most trusted disciple denies you three times. Three times you ask him, “Do you love me”? He who with great sorrow loves you, to him you give anew your trust. Lord, not just three times but many times I have denied you. Again and again I fall into sin. To you O lord, I commit my sorrow, the remains of my love. You will lift me to give me once again your trust. Amen.
THE TENTH STATION:  
JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS CLOTHES

C. We adore you and praise you
R. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reflections from St. Francis (choose A or B)

A. Francis de Sales leads Jane Francis to self renunciation.

May the Lord who has stripped you of your attachments be praised! How happy my soul is to know you are in this most desirable situation. Remain there in peace, in a total simple trust without considering what you are wearing. You must remain stripped until the Lord clothes you. Live with complete in peace, my dear mother, may you be clothed in Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Live totally for God in self abnegation from all things but above all from yourself. Jesus holds you as a slave of his holy cross, stripped of everything which does not belong to him. (DAsal 5,401)

B. Jane Francis answers her spiritual director:

Yes, I have the burning desire and, it seems to me a strong resolve, to remain in my self abnegation through the grace of my God. My soul feels completely free, filled with inexpressible and infinite consolation because it is completely in the hands of God. May he who has stripped me of self be praised! Perhaps the good Lord wants to put his hand in my heart and take away everything from me and strip from me everything. May his holy will be done. (DASal 5,291)

Time for quiet reflection

Prayer:

They rip off your clothes. You stand there naked exposed to the view of everyone. You gaze upon your father. You stand naked before HIM. Only one desire fills your, to do his will. Lord, St. Francis de Sales led St. Jane Francis to self abnegation. I want to be led by him. In union with both Saints, I pray: I want you, O Lord, to strip me of everything which doesn’t belong to you. Lord, I will not exclude anything. Strip me of myself. Amen.
THE ELEVENTH STATION:
JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

C. We adore you and praise you

R. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reflections from St. Francis (choose A or B)

A. From a letter to St. Jane Francis:

You must be unyielding and strong under the cross and even to bring yourself to the cross if God wills it. Blest are the crucified for you will be glorified. (DASal 5,305)

B. From a letter to St. Jane Francis:

The best crosses are the heaviest and those we struggle against the most in the depths of our heart. Crosses which you encounter on your way are excellent and even more so those we meet at home. To the extent that they are annoying they are better than a hair shirt using the discipline and everything else which you may have found as harsh. It is in this that the most generous of the children of the cross are revealed and those who are at home on Mount Calvary. The crosses which we choose ourselves are always more acceptable, because there is something of ourselves in them and therefore they crucify our self less. Humble yourself and accept the crosses gladly which are laid on you. (DASal 5,387)

Time for quiet reflection

Prayer:

Jesus from the wood of the crib to the wood of the cross sums up your life. You had nowhere to lay your head. No home or place in the world. You are at home on Mount Calvary. You are at home with the Father. You, the abandoned son, the sacrifice for all mankind goes home to your Father. Lord: often I am like your lost son, whom the Father abandoned to live among strangers. Far from God I arrange my life as I want. I don’t allow my will to be crucified. For that very reason I ask you: Crucify my will with the will of the Father. Lead me where St. Francis de Sales has led others to the place of crucifixion, to Mount Calvary where I may live in your love. Amen.
THE TWELFTH STATION:
JESUS IS CRUCIFIED

C. We adore you and praise you
R. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reflections from St. Francis (choose A or B)

A. From a letter of St. Francis de Sales:

To love God in good times, even little children can do that. But to love him in pain that can happen only through love filled faith. To say on Mount Tabor, “Live Jesus: even the untried Peter had the courage to do that, but to say “Live Jesus” on Mount Calvary? Only his mother and the faithful disciple did that (John: 19,26) in whose care he left her.

B. From a letter to Jane Francis:

May we always be nailed to the Cross! A hundred thousand arrows may pierce our flesh if only the burning arrow of the love of God pierces our heart first. May that arrow allow us to die his holy death, which is more valuable than a thousand lifetimes. (DASal 5,136)

Time for quiet reflection

Prayer:

Jesus you return your life to the Father. You lie in his hands. You die in his arms. Your cry on the cross moves his heart. Lord, your death touches our hearts. I place my life in your hands. Whether I am on Tabor or on Calvary, in light or in darkness, let me pray with St. Francis de Sales. “Live Jesus!” Amen.
**The Thirteenth Station:**

**Jesus is taken down from the cross and placed in his mother’s hands**

C. We adore you and praise you

R. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

**Reflections from St. Francis (choose A or B)**

A. Francis de Sales to Jane Francis:

With deep emotion I behold the Savior of our souls who entered this life naked from his mother’s womb, who died naked on the Cross and lies naked in his mother’s arms and is about to be buried. I stand in wonderment at the most glorious mother who was stripped of her motherhood and is again stripped and still is able to say: “I was stripped of my greatest treasure as my son took shape in me and I am stripped again as he lies dead in my arms. The Lord gave him to me; the Lord takes him from me. May the name of the Lord be praised. (DES 5, 292)

B. In the treatise on the Love of God, St. Francis de Sales writes:

There stands the glorious mother at the foot of the Cross of her son. (John 19, 25) What are you looking for mother of life on Mount Calvary, in this place of death? She may have answered; I am looking for my child, who is the life of my soul. But why are you looking for him? Is it to be with him? But he is at the agony of death. (Psalms 17, 5: 114, 3) I am not looking for joy but only for him. My love filled heart drives me to seek union with him who is my beloved child, my deeply beloved one. (Treatise 7, 3)

**Time for quiet reflection**

**Prayer:**

Jesus, your mother conceived you, gave you life. She loved you and suffered for you and now has accompanied you are way to your death. Now she conceives you anew. God gave you to her and has taken him from you. With empty hands she utters her “Yes” to the will of the Father. Lord, naked I came into the world and naked I will return to you. I received life from you and now I give it back to you. Don’t let me stand empty handed before you when you take my life into your hands. Amen.
THE FOURTEENTH STATION:
JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

C. We adore you and praise you
R. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reflections from St. Francis (choose A or B)

A. From a letter of the Saint to religious sister:

   My beloved daughter, you are not the bride of the glorious Christ but rather the bride of the crucified Jesus Christ. For this reason the ring, the necklace which he gives you and which he wants to adorn you are the crosses, nails and thorns. His marriage banquet consists of gall, hyssop and vinegar. (DES 7, 47)

B. From a letter of the Saint to religious sister:

   May God be praised for this test which divine providence has laid upon you in this sickness so he can heal you with his grace. Because, as you know, you will never become the bride of the glorified Christ if you have not been first of all the bride of the crucified Christ. You will never share in his triumphant glory if you have not felt the suffering love at the foot of the Cross. For this reason let us ask the Lord God to always be your strength and courage in suffering and also your modesty, your gentleness and humility in his consolation. (DES 7, 112)

Time for quiet reflection

Prayer:

Jesus, now your living body has died. On the evening before you gave your disciples bread and said to them: “this is my Body which will be given up for you.” Lord, when I receive you in the bread, I say “the body of Christ.” When I live in you, you are the head and I am the body. If I let you die in me, then in the midst of life I am dead. With St. Francis de Sales I trust you will lead me through sin and death into your new life. Amen.
THE STATIONS IN MY LIFE

C. We adore you and praise you

R. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reflections from St. Francis (choose A or B)

A. From a letter to Jane Francis:

Let us put our happiness in the hand of the crucified Jesus. Let us walk the rest of this thorn filled path which leads to heaven in peace and patience. We must make use of all anxiety, all our sufferings, all unpleasantness, all irritation, and all our woes for the sake of his divine live. They are the means to progress in the sacred service of his divine majesty.

B. From a letter to a married woman:

My God, my dear daughter, how consoling it is to see Lord on the Cross crowned with thorns, but to see him crowned with glory in Heaven. That strengthens us to accept contradictions; we well know it is through the crown of thorns that the crown of glory will be achieved. Keep yourself always gently nestled in the Lord. Be united with him for then no pain will befall you which cannot be changed into good. (DESal. 6,191)

Time for quiet reflection

Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ I have made the Stations of the Cross in the spirit of St. Francis de Sales. It is in his spirit that I would like to continue to live which he lived before me; a spirit of humility, gentleness, kindness, patience for my fellow man and an abiding love for God. Every day I will begin anew in the words, which came from his innermost spirit. “Live Jesus!” Amen.