Our loving God does not seek to weigh us down with suffering, but living on planet earth inevitably means that suffering comes our way. Instead of wasting our suffering, St. Francis de Sales encourages us to unite it with the redemptive suffering of Jesus, who calls us to take up our cross and follow Him. St. Francis even wants us to see our cross as a blessing coming from God, because carrying it joins us to Jesus.

So we faithfully carry our crosses, big or small. Sometimes the smaller burdens, those daily annoyances, are tougher to offer up since they seem so trivial. But St. Francis says, “The merit of the cross does not consist in its heaviness, but the manner in which we carry it.” So the key is to be attentive and to carry even the “cross of straw” carefully with love and devotion. Heavy crosses, too, come our way, but St. Francis believes that no cross will be too burdensome to carry, since God is all merciful.

These meditations come from the writings of St. Francis de Sales. An outstanding spiritual guide, St. Francis wants us to appreciate the intense personal sacrifice of the all-loving Jesus, who suffered and died to save us. These meditations remind Christians that following Jesus is by way of the cross. Carrying our cross in daily life, we are faced with practical opportunities to join our experiences with Jesus and to offer up our sufferings and inconveniences with His.

I pray that you will find this version of the Way of the Cross helpful as you faithfully carry your own cross. As St. Francis said, “All Christians who aspire to Heaven must take up the Lord’s cross and follow Him.”

Father Bill McEvoy

**Hymn • Sign of the Cross**

**Leader:** The everlasting God has in His wisdom foreseen from eternity the cross that He now presents to you as a gift from His inmost heart.

This cross He now sends you He has considered with His all-knowing eyes, understood with His divine mind, tested with His wise justice, warmed with loving arms and weighed with His own hands to see that it be not one inch too large and not one ounce too heavy for you.

He has blessed it with His holy Name, anointed it with His consolation, taken one last glance at you and your courage, and then sent it to you from heaven, a special greeting from God to you, an alms of the all-merciful love of God.

**All:** Everlasting God, You sent Your Son to show us the way of love.

Open my mind and heart as I spend these next moments meditating and praying on the Way of the Cross.

I take up my cross today and every day, and strive to Live Jesus, who reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.
FIRST STATION
Jesus is Condemned to Death

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. (Genuflect)

ALL: Because by Your holy Cross You have redeemed the world. (Stand)

From all eternity, our Creator was determined to create, preserve, govern, redeem, save, and glorify each one of us. Oh, Theotimus,* Our Savior knew us all by name. When Jesus was crucified, He offered His tears, His prayers, and the blood of His life for every single one of us. For you, personally, He breathed these loving thoughts: “My eternal Father, I accept within Myself all of the sins of poor Theotimus. I experience the torments of death that he might be freed from them, that he may not perish. Let Me die that he might live. Let Me be crucified that he may be glorified.”

Pause for silent reflection

ALL: LORD, it was my infirmities that You bore, my sufferings You endured. Help me comprehend the immense depth of Your personal love for me and for every person. Redeemed at such a great price, may I follow You wherever You lead. Amen.

Now the Cross as Jesus bore it, Has become for us who share it, The jeweled Cross of Victory.

* Theotimus is the generic name St. Francis de Sales used for all of us who seek to know more about God’s love. Theotimus is you.

SECOND STATION
Jesus Takes up His Cross

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. (Genuflect)

ALL: Because by Your holy Cross You have redeemed the world. (Stand)

To take up our cross and follow Jesus means nothing other than receiving and accepting all the troubles, contradictions, afflictions and humiliations that come our way in this life. We should accept them with complete submission and resignation. We ought not select our own crosses, but we should accept and carry those that are offered to us. In this way we imitate our Savior, Who did not choose His own cross, but humbly took upon Himself the one prepared for Him.

Pause for silent reflection

ALL: LORD, I embrace my own cross for love of You, as You did for love of me. I accept my cross, since it is God’s will. Grant me the strength to bear it with courage. Walking in Your footsteps, I will strive to live as You lived. My one purpose and goal is to do Your will. Amen.

Weakened, prodded, cursed, and fallen, His whole Body bruised and swollen, Jesus tripped and lay in pain.

THIRD STATION
Jesus Falls the First Time

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. (Genuflect)

ALL: Because by Your holy Cross You have redeemed the world. (Stand)
Here we are, fallen into that ditch we so firmly resolved to avoid. Let us get up again and leave it forever. Let us call upon God’s mercy and hope that from now on we will be more firm and steady. Let us start out again on the path of humility. Let us have courage and from this day be on our guard. God will help us, and we shall do better. Let us be patient with everyone, but above all be patient with ourselves. May we not be disheartened by our imperfections, but always rise up with fresh courage.

Pause for silent reflection

ALL:  
**LORD,**
You have taken upon Yourself the weight of my sins.
Help me to persevere, step by step.
When I fall, help me to rise with fresh courage and continue on the road that leads to You.
Amen.

*Jesus met his grieving Mother,*
*She who made the Lord our Brother;*
*Now the sword her heart has pierced.*

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**FOURTH STATION**

**Jesus Meets His Mother**

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. (Genuflect)

ALL:  
**Because by Your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.** (Stand)

Mary was more perfectly obedient to the word of God than any other creature. She never held anything back. Those who give all hold nothing back. Mary gave Jesus everything. Her heart was fastened, joined, and united to her Son in a perfect union. Her heart was crucified with the same nails that crucified our Lord's body. The same thorns that pierced His head pierced her soul. Mary gave Jesus her heart. And what does God ask of us? Listen, I beg you, to this sacred Savior of our souls: ‘Give me your heart.’ He keeps repeating this to each one of us. ‘Give me your heart.’

Pause for silent reflection

ALL:  
**LORD,**
help me to appreciate Your Mother's desire for union with You.
She shared all Your pain, anguish and suffering.
I run to her now, casting myself into her arms with perfect confidence.
Like Mary, may my love be without measure. Amen.

Simon stopped in hesitation, Not foreseeing his proud station, Called to bear the Cross of Christ.

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**FIFTH STATION**

**Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross**

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. (Genuflect)

ALL:  
**Because by Your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.** (Stand)

Look at the Passion. You will find our Lord unable to carry the cross since He was overwhelmed with suffering. So they had a certain man, Simon, help him. Simon carries the cross on his shoulders behind Jesus. All Christians who aspire to Heaven must take up the Lord’s cross and follow Him. So be ready to carry all the crosses you will be asked to bear, especially the small ones. Many people are willing to suffer for the Lord, provided that they are not inconvenienced.

Pause for silent reflection
**ALL:** LORD,
Simon was given a share in carrying
Your Cross.

May I help bear the burdens others carry,
knowing that whatever I do for one of Your
least ones,
I do for You. Amen.

*Brave but trembling came the woman,*
*None but she would flaunt the Roman,*
*Moved by love beyond her fear.*

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**SIXTH STATION**
**Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus**

**Leader:** We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.
(Genuflect)

**ALL:** Because by Your holy Cross You have
redeemed the world. (Stand)

Everyone knows this: that he is to love his neigh-
bor as himself. God has imprinted this truth on
the bottom of our hearts, creating us in the image
and likeness of each other. To love our neighbor is
to love God. When we see a neighbor who is cre-
ated in God’s image and likeness, let us say, “That
person resembles God.” Therefore, bearing God’s
image and likeness in ourselves, all of us bear the
image of each other. Together we form the image
of one portrait, that of God.

Pause for silent reflection

**ALL:** LORD,
I see Your face in the face of others.

May others see You reflected in my face.

Let me comfort You in my hurting
brothers and sisters
with the fabric of mercy. Amen.

*Jesus fell again in weakness,*
*Stumbling as we do, to lead us*
*Through our sorrow and our pain.*

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**SEVENTH STATION**
**Jesus Falls the Second Time**

**Leader:** We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.
(Genuflect)

**ALL:** Because by Your holy Cross You have
redeemed the world. (Stand)

During a time of illness, turn your distress, pain,
and weakness over to our Lord. Make sickness it-
self a prayer. Ask if your sickness can be of service
to Him. Ask if your suffering can be united with
His. Follow your doctor’s instructions, take your
medicine, and accept any indignities for the love of
God.

Pause for silent reflection

**ALL:** LORD,
when illness knocks me down,
help me unite my pain with Yours.

From my sickbed, my altar of sacrifice,
may I join my sufferings
to the sufferings You bore for me. Amen.

*May our sympathy for Jesus*
*Turn to those who here now need us,*
*May we see Christ bruised in them.*

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**EIGHTH STATION**
**Jesus Speaks to the Women of Jerusalem**

**Leader:** We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.
(Genuflect)

**ALL:** Because by Your holy Cross You have
redeemed the world. (Stand)

The truly patient person neither complains nor
seeks pity. If that person must speak of his suf-
f erings, he will use a normal tone of voice and not
exaggerate by saying his pain is greater than what it
is. If others express pity for something he does not
suffer, he will not accept it. And so he remains
calmly in peace and patience; he admits his suffer- 
ing but does not complain about it. Complain as little 
as possible about the wrongs you suffer. Self-love always feels that injuries are worse than they really are.

*Pause for silent reflection*

**ALL:** LORD,
bruised and beaten,
You deserved the heartfelt sympathy of others,
and yet You focused Your heart on them.

Help me not to dwell on my own sufferings, 
but to be compassionate toward others.

May my words never be self-serving, 
but seek to lift others up. Amen.

*Prostrate on the dust He crumbled, 
Flogged in Body He resembled 
All our brothers poor and scorned.*

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**NINTH STATION**

Jesus Falls a Third Time

*Leader:* We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. *(Genuflect)*

**ALL:** Because by Your holy Cross You have redeemed the world. *(Stand)*

Love the poor. Visit them frequently, and welcome them as guests at your home. Enjoy conversations with them. Sit beside them in church. Walk beside them on the street. Speak with them as their friend. Make yourself their servant. Take the trouble to visit hospitals to comfort the sick, and to show them compassion. Go to their home and wait on them when they are sick in bed. Wait on them with your own hands. Prepare their food for them at your own expense. Do their laundry. Pray for the sick even as you give them whatever help you can. Such service is more glorious than working for a king.

*Pause for silent reflection*

**ALL:** LORD,
You were stripped of everything, 
and You emptied Yourself for my sake.

Strip from me everything which does not belong to You.

May I put on Christ and be clothed with heartfelt mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Amen.
Pierced the hands that blessed and cured us,
Pierced the feet that walked to free us,
Walked the hill of Calvary.

ELEVENTH STATION
Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.
(Genuflect)

ALL: Because by Your holy Cross You have redeemed the world. (Stand)

One of the greatest proofs of love that Jesus shown on the cross was putting up with the imperfections of His neighbor. There He showed that His heart loves us tenderly and watches over us kindly. He even showed His love for those who put Him to death. In those awful moments, the Savior expressed thoughts of love even for His executioners, pardoning them in the very act of sinning! He gave them the benefit of the doubt, arguing they were ignorant. “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” How petty minded we are when we cannot bring ourselves to forget some injury received, even after a long time! Whoever sincerely pardons another calls down abundant blessings and perfectly imitates Christ.

Pause for silent reflection

ALL: LORD,
help me to forgive as You forgive.
May Your supreme act of love move me to let go of the hurts and resentments I have built up.
Lead me to pray for those who have sinned against me. Amen.

Life eternal, death defiant,
Bowed his head — the world was silent,
Through His death came life anew.

TWELFTH STATION
Jesus Dies upon the Cross

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.
(Genuflect)

ALL: Because by Your holy Cross You have redeemed the world. (Stand)

What powerful love! Jesus Christ died for us. By His death He has given us life. We only live because He died. He died for us. Our life, then, is no longer ours. It belongs to Christ who purchased it for us by His death. No longer can we live for ourselves. We live for Him. We should consecrate all the moments of our life to the divine love of our Savior’s death, bringing home to His glory everything we have, all our actions, all our thoughts, and all our affections. We die to all other loves in order to live in Jesus’ love. Savior of our souls, may we sing forever, Live Jesus, whom I love. I love Jesus, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

Pause for silent reflection

ALL: LORD,
I love Your precious cross.
I look upon it with eyes of love.
You died for love of me,
so I am prepared to die for love of You.
Even if I cannot die for love of You,
I can at least live for You alone.
Oh Jesus, Your death upon the tree shows all Your boundless love for me.
Amen.

Stunned and stricken, Mary, Mother
In your arms was placed our Brother,
“Full of grace” now filled with grief.
**THIRTEENTH STATION**

*Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross*

**Leader:** We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.  
(Genuflect)

**ALL:** Because by Your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.  
(Stand)

There were various lovers present at the death of Jesus. Those having great love had great sorrow. But His Mother, who loved Him more than all others, was pierced through and through by the sword of sorrow. We behold the Savior of our souls who entered 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. We stand in awe at this most loving Mother, whose Son is the life of her life. She says, “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.”

*Pause for silent reflection*

**ALL:** LORD,  
with deep anguish Your Mother held Your lifeless body in her arms,  
and she once again said “Yes” to God’s will.  
With Mary, I faithfully seek to be united with You,  
the life of my life. Amen.

*Jesus, Lord, your gift accepted,  
In three days You resurrected,  
You did first what we shall do.*

**FOURTEENTH STATION**

*Jesus is Laid in the Tomb*

**Leader:** We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.  
(Genuflect)

**ALL:** Because by Your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.  
(Stand)

The passion and death of our Lord is the sweetest and most powerful motivating force that can touch our hearts. So we must make the right choice. Choose eternal love or eternal death. There is no other choice. All of us will die on a day we do not know. How happy we will be if we die with our dear Savior in our hearts!

Think of the unpredictability of the time of your own death. You don’t know whether it will be summer or winter, day or night. Will it come suddenly or with time to prepare? Will it result from sickness or accident? You know nothing about what will kill you or when it will happen. All you know is that you will die. Think about where your soul will go after leaving your body. Which path will it take? It will travel the same road it started to travel in this world.

*Pause for silent reflection*

**ALL:** LORD,  
the road I travel in this world is the way of the cross.  
Grant me perseverance so I will never give up.  
Strengthen me to withstand the temptation to selfishness and sin.  
Inspire me to have greater love for all, and to be generous with what I have.  
May the cross I carry unite me with Your loving heart, and give me the joy of living with You forever in heaven. Amen.

*Jesus, Risen, be our lover  
In Your food and in our brother.  
Lead us home to heaven with You.*
CONCLUSION

ALL: O MY GOD,
I thank you and I praise you
for accomplishing Your holy and loving will
without any regard for my own.

With my whole heart,
in spite of my heart,
I receive this cross I feared so much!

It is the cross of Your choice,
the cross of Your love.

I venerate it;
nothing could make me wish it had
not come,
because You willed it.

I keep it with gratitude and with joy,
as I do everything that comes from
Your hand;

I shall strive to carry it without letting
it drag,
with all the respect
and all the affection Your works deserve.

Amen.

Blessing • Hymn

I want to inscribe
Live Jesus!
on your heart.

With Jesus living in your
heart, He will also live in
your behavior and comments.

You will be able to repeat
Saint Paul’s words, “I have
been crucified with Christ and
I no longer live, but Christ
lives in me”.

—Saint Francis de Sales

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