

## THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

*based on the writings of St. Francis de Sales*

### INTRODUCTION

*from the Introduction to the Devout Life, 2:11*

Leader:

Philothea, I especially counsel you to practice mental prayer, the prayer of the heart, and particularly that which centers on the life and passion of our Lord. By turning your eyes on him in meditation, your whole soul will be filled with him. You will learn his ways and form your actions after the pattern of his. He is “the light of the world” and therefore it is in him and by him and for him that we must be instructed and enlightened.

All:

Lord Jesus, by your cross and resurrection you have set us free. Help us, that through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we might be filled with your light and show to all, through our words and deeds, that you live and continue to walk the face of the earth in and through us. Amen.

### FIRST STATION

*JESUS is condemned to death*

V. We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

R. Because by Your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.

*L:* (from the Treatise on the Love of God, 12:12)

Behold Jesus our High Priest. Consider how he bore us upon his shoulders, as he took upon himself the task of redeeming us by his death, “even to death upon the cross.” O Theotimus, the Savior’s soul knew us all by name. Above all, on the day of his passion when he offered his tears, his prayers, his blood and his life for all men, he sent up for you in particular such thoughts of love as these: “My eternal Father, I take upon myself and charge against myself all the sins of poor Theotimus, to undergo torment and death so that he may be freed from them and may not perish but live. Let me die, provided that he may live. Let me be crucified, provided that he may be glorified.

*A:* God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life.

### SECOND STATION

*JESUS takes up his Cross*

V. We adore You, O Christ...

*L:* “God in his divine wisdom has from all eternity beheld the cross he bestows upon you---his precious gift from his heart. He contemplated this

cross with his all-knowing eye before bestowing it upon you. He pondered over it with his divine mind; he examined it with his all-wise justice; with his loving mercy he warmed it through and through; and with both his hands he weighed it to determine if it be one ounce too heavy for you. He blessed it with his all-holy name; with his grace he anointed it and with his consolation he perfumed it through and through; and then once more he considered you and your courage. Finally, it comes from heaven as a special message of God to you, alms of the all-merciful love of God for you.

*A:* It was our infirmities that he bore, our sufferings that he endured.

### THIRD STATION

*JESUS falls for the first time*

V. We adore You, O Christ...

*L:* (from the Introduction to the Devout Life, 3:9)

Alas, my poor heart, here we are fallen into the pit we were so firmly resolved to avoid! Well, we must get up and again leave it forever. We must call on God’s mercy and hope that it will help us to be steadier in the days to come. Let us start out again on the way of humility. Let us be of good heart and from this day be more on guard. God will help us; we will do better.

*A:* God, in Christ, was reconciling the world to himself and he has entrusted the message of reconciliation to us.

### FOURTH STATION

*JESUS meets his Mother*

V. We adore You, O Christ...

*L:* (from the Treatise on the Love of God, 7:3)

“Ah! Mother of Life itself, what do you seek?” She answers, “I seek my child, who is the life of my life.” “But why do you seek him?” “To be close to him.” “But now he is among the sorrows of death.” “Ah, it is not joy that I seek, it is himself. My heart, full of love, makes me seek always to be united to that loving child, my dear and loved one.”

*A:* You will weep and mourn while the world rejoices; but your grief will be turned to joy.

### FIFTH STATION

*Simon of Cyrene is compelled to help JESUS*

V. We adore You, O Christ...

*L:* (from the Introduction to the Devout Life, 3:35)

Philothea, you must be ready to suffer many great afflictions for our Lord, even martyrdom itself. Resolve to give him whatever you hold dearest if it pleases him to take it. Prepare your heart for such sacrifices. However, as

long as divine Providence does not send you such great, piercing afflictions, bear patiently the slight injuries, the little inconveniences, the inconsequential losses that daily come to you. By means of such trifles as these, borne with love and affection, you will completely win his heart and make it your own. All such little trials, when accepted and embraced with love, are highly pleasing to God's mercy. Since such opportunities present themselves from moment to moment, it will be a great means of storing up vast spiritual riches if only you use them well.

**A:** If anyone would serve me, let him follow me; where I am, there my servant will be.

### SIXTH STATION

#### *Veronica hands her napkin to JESUS*

V. We adore You, O Christ...

**L:** (from the Introduction to the Devout Life, 3:35)

Great opportunities to serve God rarely present themselves but little ones are frequent. Whoever will be "faithful over a few things" will be placed "over many" says the Savior. "Do all things in the name of God," and you will do all things well. Provided you know how to fulfill your duties properly, then "whether you eat or drink," whether you sleep or take recreation, you will profit greatly in God's sight by doing all these things because God wishes you to do them.

**A:** As often as you did it for one of my least brothers and sisters, you did it for me.

### SEVENTH STATION

#### *JESUS falls the second time beneath the cross*

V. We adore You, O Christ...

**L:** (from the Treatise on the Love of God, 9:2)

Considered in themselves, trials certainly cannot be loved, but looked at in their origin, that is, in God's providence and ordaining will, they are worthy of unlimited love. A truly loving heart loves God's good pleasure not only in consolations but also in afflictions, but it loves most of all in the cross, in pain, and labor, because love's principle power is to enable the lover to suffer for the beloved object.

**A:** It was thus that He humbled himself, obediently accepting even death, death on a cross.

### EIGHTH STATION

#### *JESUS speaks to the wailing women*

V. We adore You, O Christ...

**L:** (from the Treatise on the Love of God, 8:4)

A hundred times a day we should turn our gaze upon God's loving will, make our own will melt into it, and devoutly cry out "O God of infinite sweetness, how amiable is your will and how desirable are your favors. You have created us for eternal life, and your maternal bosom, with its sacred breast swelling with incomparable love, abounds in the milk of mercy, whether to pardon penitents or to make perfect the just. Why do we not fasten our wills to yours, like the children to their mother's breasts, to draw out the milk of your eternal blessings?"

**A:** I give you a new commandment: love one another.

### NINTH STATION

#### *JESUS falls the third time beneath the cross*

V. We adore You, O Christ...

**L:** (from the Introduction to the Devout Life, 4:1)

Let us give up this blind world, Philothea. Let it cry out at us as long as it pleases, like a cat that cries out to frighten birds in the daytime. Let us be firm in our purposes and unswerving in our resolutions. Perseverance will prove whether we have sincerely sacrificed ourselves to God and dedicated ourselves to a devout life. We are crucified to the world and the world must be crucified to us. The world holds us to be fools; let us hold it to be mad.

**A:** Whoever wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.

### TENTH STATION

#### *JESUS is stripped of his garments*

V. We adore You, O Christ...

**L:** (from the Treatise on the Love of God, 9:16)

We must strip ourselves of all affections, both little and great, and make a frequent examination of our hearts to see if it is truly ready to divest itself of all garments. Then at the proper time, we must take up again the affections suitable to the service of charity, so that we may die naked upon the cross with our divine Savior and afterwards rise again with him in the new man. "Love is as strong as death" to enable us to forsake all things. It is magnificent as the resurrection to adorn us with glory and honor.

**A:** Though he was harshly treated, he submitted and opened not his mouth.

### ELEVENTH STATION

#### *JESUS is nailed to the cross*

V. We adore You, O Christ...

**L:** (from the Treatise on the Love of God, 12:10)

Ah, Lord Jesus, when shall it be that having sacrificed to you all that we have, we shall immolate to you all that we are? When shall we offer to you

as a holocaust our own free will, the only child of our spirit? When shall we bind it and lay it upon the funeral pyre that is your cross, your thorns and your lance, so that like a little lamb it may be a victim pleasing to your good pleasure, to die and to be consumed in the fire and by the sword of your holy love? O free will of my heart, how good a thing it will be for you to be bound and laid upon the cross of your divine Savior! How desirable a thing will it be for you to die to yourself so as to burn forever as a holocaust to the Lord!

**A:** God has loved us and has sent his Son as an offering for our sins.

### **TWELFTH STATION**

#### ***JESUS dies on the cross***

V. We adore You, O Christ...

**L:** (from the Treatise on the Love of God, 12:13)

Theotimus, Mount Calvary is the mount of lovers. All love that does not take its origin from the Savior's passion is foolish and perilous. Unhappy is love without the Savior's death. Love and death are so mingled in the Savior's passion that we cannot have one in our hearts without the other. Upon Calvary, we cannot have life without love, or love without the Redeemer's death.

**A:** Live Jesus, whom I love.

### **THIRTEENTH STATION**

#### ***JESUS is taken down from the cross***

V. We adore You, O Christ...

**L:** (from the Treatise on the Love of God, 7:13)

Various sacred lovers were present at the death of the Savior. All those who were filled with loving passion for their Savior were in love with his passion and sorrow. But his sweet Mother, who loved him more than all the others, was more than all the others, pierced through and through by the sword of sorrow. Her Son's sorrow at that time was a piercing sword that passed through the Mother's heart, for that Mother's heart was fastened, joined, and united to her Son in so perfect a union that nothing could wound the one without inflicting the keenest torture upon the other. When her maternal bosom was thus wounded with love, Mary not only sought no cure but loved that wound more than any cure and dearly guarded the shafts of sorrow she had received because of the love that had sped them into her heart. Continually she desired to die for them, since her Son died for them. O death, living by love! O love, dying of life!

**A:** The measure of our love is to love without measure.

### **FOURTEENTH STATION**

#### ***Jesus is laid in the tomb***

V. We adore You, O Christ...

**L:** (from the Treatise on the Love of God, 12:13)

And now at last as our conclusion, the death and passion of our Lord is the sweetest and the most compelling motive that can animate our hearts in this mortal life. The children of the cross glory in this, their wondrous paradox which the world does not understand: out of death, which devours all things, has come the food of our consolation, and out of death, strong above all things, has issued the all-sweet honey of our love. O Jesus my Savior, how worthy of love is your death, for it is the supreme effect of your love.

**A:** With your blood you purchased for God men of every race and tongue, of every people and nation.

#### **CONCLUDING PRAYER**

**L:** Almighty God, loving Father, help us through the Stations, to understand and to appreciate what Jesus did for us. Through a constant memory of His Passion, may we let live and reign in us the love of Him who died for love if us. May that divine love so change us that, through us, Jesus Christ may be seen once more walking the face of the earth. We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

**A:** Amen.