

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

Relevance of the Man and His Message On his 450th. Birth Anniversary

In the light of the

Call of XX General Chapter: “MSFS, Wake up to the Basics”

PRELIMINARIES : The proposed Triduum on the occasion of the 450 birth anniversary of St. Francis de Sales draws from the Salesian Legacy – his life witness and his spirit and spirituality – that we have inherited as MSFS, the first Congregation of Men under his Patronage.

We draw inspiration from the following salient features of his Legacy :

1. Francis de Sales through his life example offers witness to his struggle to discern, the joy experienced in the discovery of, and the fulfillment found in his devoted commitment to the Will of God as manifested in the circumstances of his life.

2. The XXVI volumes of his Works, offers us a glimpse of the historically bounded person rooted in the civil and ecclesial reality of his times, of the Gospel values and spiritual wisdom that inspired and found integration in his personal real-life experience, influenced by and responding to the collective and cumulative consciousness of the given society of his time.

3. Our quest to “return to the Basics” bequeathed to us as legacy of St. Francis de Sales requires that we discover ways and means to existentially re-appropriate its spirit and spirituality, and

radiate it in who we are and what we are called to be as MSFS. It means that, we our quest to live and propagate MSFSness through “Study of St. Francis de Sales, Imitation of his virtues, and, applying his method of guiding people in gentleness”.

Accordingly, the Theme chosen as inspiration for our reflection, prayer and application are based on the salient traits of Salesianism (Spirit and Spirituality of St. Francis de Sales), namely, it is :

Personal : LIVE J E S U S - “that I may Love Jesus living and reigning forever”

Relational : LOVE J E S U S - “Love God in everything and everything in God”

Contextual : GIVE J E S U S - “He took me to Himself .. and gave me to His people”

It is proposed that we base, as SFS did, our Meditation on Biblical Revelation : an aspect of the person of Christ / mystery of Salvation / message of the Gospel.

This may be followed up with its application reflected in the life of Mother Mary / St. Francis de Sales / Fr. Peter Mermier

The Recollection will find lasting fruit when the “*Good Movements of the Will*” find expression in “*Deliberate Decisions*” that are precise and particular – at personal and community levels – aimed at correction of course and improvement. (cf. IDL, part II, ch.6, pg. 95)

DAY ONE :

L I V E + J E S U S

(I N S U R R E N D E R)

All love that takes not its beginning from Our Saviour's Passion is frivolous and dangerous.
Upon Calvary one cannot have life without love, nor love without the death of Our Redeemer.
... During this mortal life we must choose eternal love or eternal death, there is no middle choice. ...
To love or to die! To die and to love! To die to all other love in order to live to Jesus's love,
Live Jesus ! I love Jesus. Live Jesus whom I love! I love Jesus, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

Personal Sanctification :

Conversion – Open to Life : “I shall arise and go to my Father, ...” (Lk. 15/11-32)

Purposefulness – Making the right choices : led by the Spirit (Rom. 12:2)

Harmonization : Contemplation with Action : Jesus with Martha and Mary (Lk.10:38-42)

Inspiration :

OT : Ezekiel was commanded to eat the Word 13: 1-3; Isaiah purified and sent : Is. 6:6

NT : Hidden treasure, the pearl of great price acquired thru sacrifice (Mt 13: 44-46)

Cannot serve **two** Masters (Mt. 6:24); ‘I live now, not I, but Christ in me’ (Gal. 2:20); (2 Cor 5:15)

SFS : IMAGE : The babbling of babes turn to intelligible **speech** as they voice in imitation the words voiced by their mothers / **Ladder** : is an instrument of liberation, in as much as it is used to **climb** to reach the heights, or it becomes a burden if it is aimlessly carried around.

INVITATION : I strongly recommend to you *prayer of the mind and of the heart*, based on the life and passion of our Lord : by contemplating Him in meditation, your being will be filled with him, you will learn his *attitudes* and model your actions on his. [III, 70 IDL part II, ch.1]

PMM : IMAGE : “Not in speech but in the power of God. He is the expert in the love of God, who loves really, efficaciously, strongly. To what purpose does it serve a farmer to speak much of agriculture, if he

himself leaves his fields, his vineyards and his farm uncultivated ? Such is my distress." [Personal Notes, 10-05-1853]

INVITATION : "The spiritual exercises and especially the examen of conscience and meditation, are really our two eyes, two arms, two feet. They are like the compass of our external operations; they are the family sanctuary where God speaks to the heart the secret language which is not heard elsewhere. "It is there that the heart feels the effects of the promise which Our Lord makes in these words of the Prophet : "I will lead the soul to the secret place and there speak to her heart". [let to Sr. Jeanne GRANDCHAMP, 29-12-1857]

Pope Francis : "When we stand before Jesus crucified ... we realize once more that he wants to make use of us to draw closer to his beloved people. He takes us from the midst of his people and he sends us to his people; without this sense of belonging we cannot understand our deepest identity." [*Evangelii Gaudium*, # 268]

"Each of us are very dear to God, who loves us, chooses us and calls us to serve. ... We would do well each day to pray trustingly for this, asking to be healed by Jesus to grow more like him who 'no longer calls us servants but friends'." [Homily at Jubilee of Deacons, 29 May 2016]

"Whenever we feel weighed down by pastoral work, ... Let us never forget that a key to a fruitful priestly ministry lies in how we rest and in how we look at the way the Lord deals with our weariness. ... We too are sheep; we need the help of the Shepherd." [Homily at Chrism Mass, April 2, 2015]

"Contemplate two hearts : the heart of the Good Shepherd and our own heart as priest. ... There I know I am welcomed and understood as I am, there, with all my sins and limitations, I know the certainty that I am chosen and loved. Contemplating that heart, I renew my first love; the memory of that time when the Lord touched my soul and called me to follow him; the memory of the joy of having cast the nets of our life upon the sea of His Word." [Homily at the Mass of the Sacred Heart, June 3, 2016]

Illustrations :

JESUS : Prayer at Gethsemane : "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." (Mt. 26:39)

On the Cross : "Father, into your hands I commend my Spirit." (Lk. 23:46)

Priestly Prayer of Jesus : "All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one." (Jn. 17: 10-11)

MARY : "Mary said, "I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word". (Lk. 1:38);

Mary and Joseph seeking their lost son " ... they did not understand what He said to them. ... His mother kept all these things in her heart. " (Lk.2:48-52);

By the Cross of Jesus stood His Mother Mary, ... (Jn. 19:25)

SFS : TESTIMONY : I am going to work on the TLG and shall try to imprint as much on my heart as I shall write on paper [XIV, 247, let. 572 to Chantal, 5/2/1610] Blessed be God who has granted me two

days of leisure that I may devote to special prayer. Indeed, He has showered an abundance of blessings on me : He has filled my spirit with much brightness and my heart with such an abundance of love that I may continue writing about His divine Love. I do not know which words to use to express His inspiration. May the good Lord assist me in giving birth to what he has conceived in me. [XV, 330, let. 844 to Chantal, 1612-1613]

Lajeunie, recounts the following incident during Francis de Sales' Chablais : One day while praying before the altar of Saint Anthony of Padua, he heard an inner voice tell him 'You desire as I did to be a martyr; but you will not become one; *you yourself must become the instrument of your martyrdom*. You yourself must become the instrument of your martyrdom ... in other words, No one is going to *take* your life, but you yourself will be called upon to *give* it, freely and wholeheartedly ! From then on Francis was determined, that if God was not going to grant him a martyr's crown, he would at least seek each day to give himself totally over to the service of Christ on behalf of the Church and miss no opportunity to prove his love of God and neighbor. After having learned this valuable lesson, he would warn others : No better martyrdom should be sought than sincere mortification of self, in other words putting God's will before our own. This became one of his principles of spiritual devotion, one of the secrets of his asceticism and his apostolate. Faced with the toughness of the impenetrable masses to convert, he resolved to resort to spiritual weaponry: Prayer, Alms, Fasting : the three strands that make the rope too strong to be broken by the enemy. (Lajeunie I. p.197)

PMM : TESTIMONY : *At the age of 63, Fr. Mermier reflects over his life, his apostolate, his foundations: in all humility he reproaches himself for not having loved enough* : "Arriving as I do at an advanced age and getting worn out, I would like to share with you the feeling of a profound regret that I have for not having loved my God and even of not having spoken enough of divine love. On the other hand what could I have said about this divine knowledge?" "The love of God is a practical knowledge which we acquire and which we cannot preach effectively except through our works. "Only he can be said to be learned in God's Love, who knows to love truly, effectively and forcefully. What good is it for a farmer to talk a lot about agriculture if he were to leave his fields uncultivated ? "That is what distresses me the most." [cf. Personal Notes, CAYERS]

"God who is almighty, who has need of no one, does not ask us to perform miracles it's not in our power to do so, he wants certain works or at least our good-will; may he deign to give it to us, this good-will which is the source of interior peace and which prepares the soul to receive the communications of its God who disposes it for even greater sacrifices: **how great a soul is when it wills only what God wills, when he wills, where he wills, with regard to whom he wills...** This is the kingdom of the soul. The Kingdom of God is among you. God wants to give it to us, this good-will and Jesus Christ has brought it to us. As **Saint Francis de Sales has brought it out in the blazing light of day** in his writings and his deeds. May he obtain for us this grace which he possessed to such a great degree of perfection. [let to Fr.CHEMINAL,from Rome, 05-01-1843]

Deliberate Decision : In the face of SIN that is not a particular or single acts, but a *gradual process caused* by the slackening of Charity (TLG, Bk. IV, ch.2), take some steps (at the individual and community levels) to **re-kindle** the fire of Love : Prayer, fasting and Alms.

DAY TWO :

LIVE + JESUS
(IN COMMUNION)

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock;
if any one hears my voice and opens the door,
I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.” [Rev. 3:20]

Personal Sanctification :

Assimilation into Christ : “Learn from Me, I am meek and humble of heart.” (Mt. 11:29);

Inspiration :

OT : The word of the Lord came to me : “Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who are now prophesying. Say to those who prophesy out of their own imagination: ‘Hear the word of the Lord! This is what the Sovereign Lord says : Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing! [Ezek. 13:1-3]

“Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.” Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.” Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”. [Isaiah 6:5-8]

NT : “If **you** remain in me and I in **you**, **you** will bear much fruit; apart from me **you can do** nothing” [Jn. 15:5]

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:5-8)

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (2 Cor. 3:17-18)

SFS : Instead of considering the condition of the path you are traversing, concentrate rather, on the Hand that is guiding you. Fix your gaze on Him who is leading you to the land of bliss. It does not matter is he takes you across green fields or desert lands, as long as He is with you and you hold on to Him. Brace yourself against the inconvenience you may feel and disregard the false comfort circumstances may offer. Relish the company of the Beloved and do not let go of his His loving hands. [XIII, 4-11 let. 273, to Chantal, 18/2/05]

Everything in the world has two faces, because everything has two principles. The first is God, the first cause of everything that exists. The second is the nothingness from which everything has been drawn. Thus, since God is the first principle of every being, there is nothing that does not contain something beautiful and lovable in it. At the same time since every created being is drawn out of nothingness, it also contains some imperfection. ... though the serpent is a wicked reptile and seems to be good nor nothing but evil, yet it is not so evil that Holy Scripture cannot use it also to symbolize good to us, for Our Lord Himself said : Be wise as serpents [Mt. 10/16] But in other places the Bible compares iniquity to a serpent's venom [Ps. 139(140)/4; Rom. 3/13] and the sinner to its tail [Apoc. 12/4; Prov. 23/32] ... is absolutely nothing wrong when one recounts the faults and sins of the saints while speaking of their virtues. On the contrary, those who write their history do a great disservice to everyone when they conceal their faults under the pretext of better honouring them, or in not recounting the often sinful beginning of their lives for fear that this would diminish or weaken the esteem one has for their later sanctity. In this they do an injustice to these beloved ones and to all posterity. ... Wasps are nasty little insects that fly among the flowers not to extract honey, but poison, from them. Although they cull honey, it is only to convert it into bitterness. Some Christians take after wasps. They fly among the flowers, that is the works and actions of their neighbours, not to gather the honey of holy edification from a consideration of their virtues, but to extract poison by taking note of their faults and imperfections. [X, Serm. 64, p. 342 – 359]

PMM : "How are we then to seek and attach ourselves to God? We have to seek him and be united to him with all our strength :

By the **union of understanding, with** a knowledge that is true, exact, entire and perfect - a knowledge that has to be like a living image of the nature and perfections of God, ... All of us, with unveiled faces, beholding his glory are being transformed into his image from one degree of glory to another, by the Lord who is Spirit.

"By the **union of the will** which precedes knowledge and which is made through an effort of faith, which embraces the goodness which it has experienced, the lover taking delight in it and desiring to delight to the fullest possible measure. That is the fulfilment of the great Commandment: You will love... from there, the affections...

"By the **union of imitation and conformity** to the divine will : it is the likeness, having but one will in all things, be it in adversity or in prosperity. "What union! what knowledge! what happiness! whoever has found it, cries out with the spouse : I have found the one who loves my soul and I will not let him go." [letter to Fr.Jean THEVENET, 25-07-1852]

"It is then uprightness, purity of intention, fidelity in all our works that the Lord asks of us: not so much to do more but to do much better. Before the Supreme Judge, it is a question of the quality of work and not of weight. The world looks for sensation - for glory which comes from men. The true disciple of Jesus Christ should seek to be ignored, to hide away from the eyes of men ... as for you, get inside your room." (Mt.6,6). [let to Fr. François DECOMPOIX, 17-04-1855]

Pope Francis : “Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.” [Evangelii Gaudium. # 08] “... every Christian ought to grow in awareness that he himself is continually in need of being evangelized” [Evangelii Gaudium. # 164] “The JOY of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. ... With Christ, joy is constantly born anew. ... I wish to encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization marked by this joy.” ... Unfortunately, “There are Christians whose lives seem like Lent without Easter.” [Evangelii Gaudium. # 1 ... 6]

“There are three significant features of or **priestly JOY**. It is a joy which anoints. It is a joy that is imperishable, and it is a missionary joy, which spreads and attracts. ...

- A joy which anoints us, in a word, it has penetrated deep within our hearts; it has shaped them and strengthened them sacramentally ... We are anointed down to our very bones, and our joy which wells up from deep within, is the echo of this anointing.

- An imperishable joy ... which the Lord has promised ‘no one can take from us’ (Jn. 16:22)

- A missionary joy : priestly joy is deeply bound up with God’s holy and faithful people – for baptizing and confirming them, healing and sanctifying them, blessing, comforting and evangelizing them.” (Chrism Mass Homily, April 17, 2014)

“We are all missionary disciples – agents of evangelization.” [Evangelii Gaudium. # 119] “Let the world of our time, which is searching, sometimes with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the good news not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervor, who have first received the *joy of the Christ*.” [Evangelii Gaudium. # 10; Evangelii Nuntiandi, # 75]

Illustrations :

Jesus : Jesus’ appreciation of the attitudes of ... Mary Magdalene, the Centurion, the Man possessed, Zachaeus, Bartimaeus, ...

Mary : At Cana, in Galilee : “Do whatever He tells you” [John 2:5]

“Blessed those who hear the Word of God and keep it” [Lk. 11:28]

“They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.” [Acts 1:14]

SFS : Reminiscences of SFS, cf. CAMUS, Jean Pierre, Bishop of Belley “The Spirit of St. Francois de Sales”, Edited and newly translated and with an introduction by C.F. KELLEY, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1952]

“The want of a well-balanced mind, very common among men, leads them to judge that of which they know nothing, and not to judge those things about which they do know. Now what is this that a man knows nothing about? Indeed, it is the heart, the secret thoughts of his neighbor. Still, see how anxious he is to dip the fingers of his curiosity into the covered dish reserved for the great Master. And what is it that a man knows best of all, or at least ought to know? Well, it is certainly his own heart, his own hidden thoughts.

However, he is afraid to enter into himself. He is afraid to stand in his own presence. ... We are so rash in our judgements that we are inevitably seizing the firebrand by the burning end. In other words, we actually condemn ourselves while in the very act of criticizing others. [p.24]

Friendship expressed in empty words is worth nothing. The Lord was not satisfied in merely telling us that he loved us : He proved his love, in life and death. [VI, 64, Conf. 4, On Cordiality or Tender love for others]

Gently and imperceptibly are we influenced by the example of those whom we love. In friendship, however, there is no choice – one either imitates or part company. ... A woman choosing a perfume in a boutique, not only enjoys the scent she carries, but also shares with those around her the fragrance of her perfume. So does one not only take pleasure in what we love, but also assume its character. Indeed, gratification opens the heart, just as dejection closes it. [V, 60, TLG Bk. VIII, ch. 1]

PMM : "Man proposes but God disposes; our lives are in his hands; he is a good Father, we couldn't be better off anywhere else except in the arms of his divine Will. I say then: May the most high and the most loving will of God be done." [Let to the Community at La Feuillette, 29-01-1843]

"Our religion is divine. ... it is the work of God, it is his blessing. "From man's side, what is great, worthy and consequently perfect, is adoration, this entire and absolute submission to the supreme Will of God, this universal conformity of our thoughts, our feelings and our actions to the commands, dispositions of the divine Providence, to his good pleasure.

"Strive to Benefit from this new and terrible trial which this divine Providence sends you. "Don't waste your time trying to scrutinise God's impenetrable designs. Adore and kiss several times a day God's fatherly hand which strikes you, it is infallibly for your greater good. "The great St. Paul assures us this when he says that everything works for the good of those who love God. And St. Augustine adds to this inspired message : everything – even evils, even sins like those of Magdalen, of St. Peter, when one profits from them, as they did, to become more humble and more penitent. [let to Sister Jeanne BELLEVILLE, 27-08-1857]

Deliberate Decision :

Personal

Community

DAY THREE :

**LIVE + JESUS
(IN BENEVOLENCE)**

“As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved,
clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.
Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other;
just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.
Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”
(Col. 3:12-14)

Inspiration :

OT : “...prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says : My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you, my people, will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken, and I have done it, declares the Lord.’ [Ezek 37:12-14]

NT : “For God did not send his Son into the world, to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.” [Jn 3:16]

“The Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost.” [Lk. 19:10]

“What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.” [I Cor. 2:12-13]

SFS : The daughters of the Visitation have very few rules concerning external behaviour, few exterior mortifications, few ceremonies, and a short community prayer. Therefore apply yourselves willingly and with much love to these few obligations. Your exterior action needs to be brightened by your interior disposition, and, the interior strengthened by the exterior; just as fire produces ashes and ashes protect the fire. [VI, 13, Conf. 1, Obligations of the Constitutions, SC I, p.162]

The architect who designs a house first considers who will dwell therein; he will then proceed to make an estimate of the costs for building and for bringing down the old structure. The one who desires to enter religious life, should likewise, have the courage to renounce our old self and to allow God to crucify us so as to re-build us into a living temple of His majesty.[I Cor. 3/16-17] [VI, 372-373, Conf. 23, Why we become Religious, SC II, p. 38-39 *passim*]

“It is always a work of love to join others and take part in their good works. And even though it may be possible to use equally profitable devotions by yourself in private — and perhaps you may like doing so best — nevertheless God is more glorified when we unite with our brethren and neighbors and join our offerings to theirs”. (IDL, Part II, Chap. XV, p. 101)

PMM : The fruit and success of Missionary ministry depend almost entirely on prayer and good example. [Advice to teachers, Personal Notes, 07-08-1856]

“Remember this sentence : *Non Quam Multum, sed Quam Bene* – Not Quantity, but Quality. We don't have to do a lot, but to do well whatever we do. Our days must be full - how ? By doing everything for God, seeking only his glory and our neighbour's salvation” [to Fr. Francis Decompoix, India, 1855, (Duval, Mermier, p. 113-114)]

“It was Monsieur le Superieur (Fr. Mermier) who preached the opening of the Mission. His name is blessed a thousand times in Arbusigny. What memories it recalls, what reflections it brings to birth ! It is pronounced with respect, with delight ! ... What a prodigious talent he had for bringing the highest truths down to the level of the simplest minds ! On his lips especially God's Word became that two edged sword of which St. Paul speaks. ” ... *After narrating the touching sermons delivered on the concluding day (on the last things) and the blessing and erection of the Cross as a Memento of the Mission, the Seminarist concludes* : “Thanks be to this man of the Cross ! Thanks be to his venerable and worthy colleagues – ever so powerful in works and words.” [FROM a little book : “An Account of the Mission at Arbusigny, in May and June 1840”, written by P. VACHOUX, Seminarian], (Duval, Mermier, p. 161, 164)]

Pope Francis : “What is essential is that the preacher be certain that God loves him, that Jesus Christ has saved him and that his love always has the last word.” ... “*Positive Preaching* always offers hope, points to the future, does not leave us trapped in negativity.” [Evangelii Gaudium. # 151, 159]

To newly ordained priests – “May your homilies not be boring; may your homilies touch the heart of the people because they come from your heart, because what you are telling them is what you carry in your heart. It is in this way that the Word of God is passed on, and thus your teaching will be joy and support to Christ’s faithful; the fragrance of your lives will be your testimony.” [Ordination homily of nineteen new priests, April 26, 2015]

“Our people like to hear the Gospel preached with ‘unction’, they like it when the Gospel we preach touches their daily lives..., when it brings light to moments of extreme darkness ... People thank us because they feel we have prayed over the realities of their everyday lives, their troubles, their joys, their burdens, and their hopes.” [Chrism Mass Homily, March 28, 2013]

Illustrations :

Christ : Peter said : You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. ... He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. (Acts 10:36-42)

Mary : Mary visit Elizabeth : Lk. 1:39-56

SFS : “He was not only clothed with the Lord Jesus Christ, but was even filled by Him” - Testimony of St. Vincent de Paul “ [quoted in Camus, p.32]

“Surrender to the Will of God is the cream of charity, the odour of humility, the flower of patience and the fruit of perseverance. ... Self-abandonment of the soul into God’s hands is simply a stripping off and casting away of our own will in order to offer it to God, for it would be little use to renounce self unless we are perfectly united to His goodness. [Camus, “Spirit of SFS”, p. 101]

“The crosses that we shape for ourselves are always lighter than the ones laid upon us. An ounce of endurance is more profitable than many pound of active work which may spring from our own will. [Camus, p.108] Carrying the Lord’s Cross is certainly as worthwhile as meditation; in fact, it is better to hang on the Cross with Him than look up at Him from a distance. I am sure your heart ascends to Him from your bed many times during the day. Obey your physicians, and should they advise against certain practices, such as fasting, meditation, the saying of offices, or anything except ejaculatory prayer, I beg you, by the love you have for me, to be very obedient – it is the will of God for you. Then, when you are well and strong, you can again take up your practices. [Camus, p.110]

PMM : Pray for me and obtain for me that God may open my ears and loosen my tongue so that I may make Him known and loved; [Let. Mother Echernier, 10-09-1847]

"If I appear to ask for something better, it is mainly because of my work. "It will be as it pleases God" but finally, from this time and always I remain small and miserable, repeating in spirit and in the heart: it is good to have been humiliated." [Personal Notes, 23-07-1859] ... "I hope that it will be thus for the greater glory of God, for my improvement for the past and future and if it please Jesus, Mary and Saint Francis de Sales." [Personal Notes, 18-08-1859]

"Allow me to tell you how happy I am to see here your very worthy leader, your venerable and holy superior, this man of faith who had founded, directed and sustained your dear Congregation in such a flourishing state from its very start. He allowed the Spirit and Breath of God to have dominion over everything and everywhere; Who by him has done such great things. How happy am to see that Divine Providence has left him as it were to outlive himself in order to be for each one of you a living model of all priestly virtues; to survive like a brilliant torch to guide you in the exalted paths of evangelical perfection; to survive finally by miracle, in order to make him enjoy at the end of a full saintly life, the progress of his children in Jesus Christ and to find in his charitable works an anticipated recompense of his indefatigable endeavours which have prepared for him such a rich crown in heaven ! Thank the good God, my dear Fathers, for such a grace, just as I myself thank him for such a consolation". [Eulogy of Fr. Mermier, pronounced by Bishop Magnin of Annecy at La Feuillette after the religious profession of 4 msfs, 08 Sept. 1862 ?] Jean REY, p. 101

Deliberate Decision : Personal / Community