

July 29, 2023



Daily Reflections

JOURNEYING THROUGH CHALLENGING TIMES

Image by Christine Sponchia from Pixabay

A PILGRIM'S DISPATCH: SACRED UNDERPINNINGS

By Julie Mussché

A Quote from St. Francis de Sales

"The pilgrims who spend all of their time counting their steps will make little progress."

Reflection

Our last official pilgrimage day took us to Annecy, the birthplace of St. Bernard and St. Francis de Sales. Our pilgrim tribe left from Lyon-Part-Dieu station, venturing by train to the alpine city. Our hotel was by the train station, so the stroll to the station was short and exciting. One might not anticipate a Westfield Mall at such a location, but it is the largest of such in Europe. Quite amazing, actually: there are people everywhere, coming and going, shopping, dining, a real beehive of activity. Entering and exiting the complex, we encountered a number of people with a variety of needs -- hunger and being unhoused, for example. I could just imagine Mother St. John Fontbonne

reaching out to serve the dear neighbor.

Prepared with rations for the journey, our group settled in for the almost two-hour journey northeast toward the Alps. The train gradually gained elevation as the environs transformed into something more pastoral. Off in the distance, one could glimpse the hazy blue outline of mountains.

Our concentration for the day was St. Francis de Sales. Francis was the Bishop of Geneva, although he was in Annecy as Geneva was a Calvinist city. Another complexity of the time, Protestant and Catholic municipalities. However, Francis was able to navigate these differences and gained a reputation as a mediator of disputes and as a person who was able to gently unify opposing peoples. Saints Francis de Sales and Jane Frances de Chantal founded the Order of the Visitation in the early 1600s.

The spirituality of St. Francis greatly influenced his contemporaries and those that followed, including Father Jean-Pierre Medaille, S.J., and, consequently, the Sisters of St. Joseph for whom St. Francis de Sales is a patron. Hallmarks of his spirituality were evident in his writings and preaching: a God who loves rather than punishes; humility; patience; generosity; gentility, kindness, devotion as love made visible; discernment; unity and serenity.

We visited the Annecy Cathedral, Saint-Pierre of Annecy, where St. Francis served and preached. Our group made its way through town toward Lake Annecy and spent some time wandering through a beautiful green space. The beauty, serenity and simplicity of the town and place seemed to reflect that of St. Francis. With grateful hearts, our pilgrim community ended our holy quest and were gifted with a shell medallion as a remembrance and an honoring of the completion of this part of our pilgrim's journey. Of course, the journey goes on.



St. Francis de Sales in the Annecy Cathedral
Photo by Julie Mussch é

For Pondering

You're invited to spend some time reflecting on the following from St. Francis de Sales. If a particular quote captures your attention, please journey with it.

- “Nothing is so strong as gentleness, nothing so gentle as real strength.”
- “Have patience with all things, but, first of all with yourself.”
- “Do not wish to be anything but what you are, and try to be that perfectly.”
- “To live according to the spirit is to love according to the spirit.”
- “The measure of love is to love without measure.”

- “The same everlasting Father who cares for you today will care for you tomorrow and every day. Either he will shield you from suffering or give you unfailing strength to bear it. Be at peace then and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginings.”

A Quick Note

Joy-filled blessings to all of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange 2023 Jubilarians!

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