

# WORDS OF CONSOLATION FOR THE SICK AND AFFLICTED

## Value of Sufferings

SUFFERINGS borne with resignation to God's holy will are a sign of predestination. Sick persons, on the contrary, who do not suffer with patience and resignation to the will of God are to be pitied, for they do not realize the priceless treasures which God desires to bestow on them. St. Peter of Alcantara once visited a sick person who for a long time had endured a most painful illness with admirable patience. The saint, while sitting at the sufferer's bedside, was rapt in ecstasy. Upon regaining consciousness, he turned to the sick man and exclaimed, "Oh, happy patient, God has shown and revealed to me how great a glory you have merited by your illness. You have merited more than others can gain by prayer, fasting, vigils, scourging, and other penitential exercises.

St. John the Evangelist saw a multitude of the blessed wearing white garments and bearing palms in their hands. The palm is the symbol of martyrdom. Though all cannot win the martyr's palm, yet those who suffer sickness can, with God's grace, acquire the palm of patience, which is of inestimable value. St. Francis de Sales looked with a kind of veneration on those who were suffering. Once he said to a sick person, "When I see you depressed by illness, I feel a special reverence for you, because I consider you a creature whom God visits, and who is His special bride adorned with His garment."

Our Lord revealed to St. Gertrude that, as the ring is a sign of espousals, so tribulations are a sign of predestination. On another occasion Our Lord told her that whenever He sees a soul in affliction, He feels drawn to her, as it is His delight to remain with the sick and suffering. According to the words of St. Paul, sufferings and sickness are always a proof of God's love: "Whom the Lord loveth, He chastiseth." (Heb. xii, 6.)

St. Teresa, after having made a long, wearisome journey, arrived at one of her convents greatly fatigued. Here, where she had hoped to spend a few days of rest, she broke her ankle. This was a severe trial for her, and at first she found it difficult to practise resignation to the holy will of God. Our Lord then appeared to her and said: "Thus do I treat My friends." "Ah, dear Lord, I am not surprised you have so few," replied St. Teresa. The saint afterwards wrote to one of her religious: "I have become convinced that God often treats His friends in this manner; that it is with sufferings He repays their services." So enlightened was this great saint with regard to the merit of sufferings that she chose for her watchword: "To suffer or to die."

We may not see what good is hidden in our sickness; but God knows what is best for our salvation. Sufferings borne patiently bring health to the soul, and what is better for us than this? Sickness of the body makes satisfaction for our sins, urges us to seek God and prevents us from committing sin.

How much easier it is to lead a devout life and to avoid sin when one is ill! Let us accept illness patiently from the hands of God, with submission to His all-holy designs. This will be of greater benefit to us than if, by our own choice, we were to enjoy health and perform ever so many good works.

A saint has said, "Were we to remain on our knees a hundred years and continuously implore God for sufferings, we would, nevertheless, be unworthy to receive sufferings and crosses. The way of the cross is the royal road to heaven; suffering is the gate to our heavenly home. Earthly pains are the roots from which spring the flowers of heavenly joys.

-Among the highest honours of this world there is none more coveted than the emperor's crown; yet, to suffer patiently is more glorious than to hold dominion over empires and nations. All who suffer and endure affliction in a Christian spirit are great kings indeed. "Were God to give me the power to raise the dead to life, it would not be as great a grace as if He were to send me trials and sufferings." Strong words of a great and holy teacher

As the blacksmith casts the iron into the fire and then hammers it in order to bend and shape it as he wishes, so in a similar manner does God cast into the furnace of tribulation the souls whom He wishes to save and sanctify. By the strokes of suffering He shapes them as He desires.

Nearly all the saints were called upon to endure severe illness at some time during their lives. Numberless souls would now be in the depths of hell had not God sent them sickness and trials. Many a sick person must confess: Had I not been stricken by this illness, or by that suffering, I would have been lost. Therefore, dear sick friend, leave yourself in the hands of God. Do not complain, for God wishes to save your soul- Be patient, be resigned to His holy will, thank Him for your sufferings, and if you find it difficult to do this, pray, raise your eyes heavenward and be consoled by the thought: short are my sufferings, eternal my joys.

### **The Best Book for the Sick**

Saints are often represented holding a Crucifix and gazing lovingly upon the Sacred Image. By this, Holy Church desires to show her children how much the saints have learned from their Crucified Saviour. The bitter Passion of Our Lord is truly a school of every virtue. Many of the saints declared that at the feet of the Crucified they acquired more knowledge and derived greater treasures of wisdom than they could have from all the books in the world.

St. Alphonsus relates that a certain saint once asked Our Lord whether he ought to learn to read. Our Lord replied: "I am thy book, read in Me." Christ is the "book" which St John says is "written within and without": without we behold the Wounds of our Divine Saviour, and within we behold the flames of His infinite love for us, for each individual soul. This love Our Lord revealed to St. Gertrude, saying: "As often as anyone looks devoutly upon the image of the Crucified, let him believe that I address him thus: 'Behold how, for the love of thee, I hang on the Cross—naked, despised, My whole Body wounded, all My limbs distended. And still My Heart is enkindled with such glowing love for thee, that if it would be beneficial for thy salvation, and thou couldst not be saved in any other way, I would, even at this moment, suffer for thee alone all that I suffered for the whole world.'"

Johanna of the Cross, who continually suffered from headaches, was once favoured by a vision of the Blessed Virgin, who appeared to her in heavenly splendour and presented her with a precious little book. It was small but heavy, bound in gold and adorned with pearls. "In this book," said Our Lady, "thou must read diligently all the days of thy life; study it faithfully day and night, without ceasing. Never wilt thou be able to finish reading it; it is written by my Son." The apparition vanished. On opening the wonderful book, Johanna found therein only one leaf, upon which was a picture of Jesus hanging on the Cross. "O my Divine Saviour," she exclaimed in an outburst of fervour, "yes, I will suffer, suffer with Thee and die for Thee". From that time her illness became permanent; never again was she freed from pain and suffering.

Dear suffering friend, do you likewise take this "book" and read it attentively. Clasp the image of your Crucified Saviour in your hands and gaze upon it frequently. It will strengthen, console, sanctify, and cleanse you. To St. Gertrude it was revealed that whenever anyone looks devoutly at a Crucifix, God looks upon that soul with complacency and mercy, and each time enriches her with graces. Dear sufferer, unite your pains with the sufferings of Christ; if you have wounds, think of the Wounds of Jesus; if you suffer fever and thirst, think of the burning thirst of your Saviour on the Cross; if you are in anguish and depression of spirit, think of the dereliction of Jesus in His last agony.

Our own sufferings, however bitter or intense, have little value in themselves, for without Jesus we can do nothing; but when we unite them with the sufferings of our Redeemer, we thereby participate in the merits of His Passion, and thus sanctified our sufferings become pleasing to God and worthy of an infinitely great reward. Be firmly convinced that every grateful remembrance of the Passion of Christ in our sufferings is of incomparable value.

### **Conformity to the Will of God**

In bodily sufferings we should bow to the will of God. He sends us this or that malady; He sends it at this or that time; He allows it to continue for such and such a period; He connects it with this or that circumstance. In all these trials we should submit perfectly to the Divine ordinance. We should wish for no change, but at the same time not neglect proper means for recovery, since God Himself wills that we should make use of remedies. But if they do not effect a cure, let us unite ourselves with the will of God, and this will benefit us far more than health. Say, "O Lord, I desire neither sickness nor health; I desire only what Thou dost will."

Our virtue is more perfect if we do not complain of our pains. There are many who, when they suffer some slight pain or inconvenience, wish the whole world to pity and compassionate them. But if our infirmities press heavily upon us, it is not a fault to speak of them to those charged with our care, and to beseech God to deliver us from them. Even Our Lord made known His sufferings to His disciples at the approach of His Passion: “My soul is sorrowful even unto death.” (Matt- xxvi., 38.) And He asked His Father to liberate Him: “My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me.” (Matt. xxvi., 39.) Our Lord Himself teaches us what we must do after praying for relief—that is, we must resign ourselves and immediately add, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.”

When we are attacked by illness it is best to desire neither sickness nor health, but to abandon ourselves to the will of God, that He may dispose of us as He pleases. Yet, we may ask for health with resignation, and on condition that it will further our salvation. Our prayer, however, is sinful if we try to force our will upon God, unaccompanied by resignation. Another fault into which many fall is that they imagine they could bear other trials better than the one God sends them. To St. Gertrude Our Lord spoke very severely of a person who failed in this regard. From our Saviour’s words, Gertrude understood that the most dangerous kind of impatience is that in which persons imagine they would be patient under other trials than those sent by God.

### **Suffering, a Test of Virtue**

Suffering is the touchstone by which the spirit is tried, for in it the virtue one possesses is ascertained. If a sick person does not lose his tranquillity, if he does not complain and is not over-anxious about his condition; if he preserves peace of mind and is resigned to the will of God, it is a sign that he is well-grounded in virtue.

St. Bonaventure relates that at a time when St. Francis of Assisi was suffering from a painful illness, a simple-minded Brother said to him, “Father, ask God to treat you with a little more tenderness, for His hand seems to weigh heavily upon you.”

St. Francis answered, “Brother, your simplicity makes you speak thus; otherwise I would never permit you to come into my presence again!” Then the saint, kneeling and kissing the floor, exclaimed, “My God! I thank Thee for these pains, and I beseech Thee to increase them if it be pleasing to Thee; for I desire nothing but to do Thy will.”

St. Ephraim expresses the same sentiments when he says, “Uncivilized men know how much their beasts of burden are able to carry, and they do not overtax them. The potter knows how long his clay must remain in the oven before it is fit for use. Would it not, then, be folly to say that God, infinitely loving and infinitely wise, lays too heavy a load upon us, and tries us too long in the fire of tribulation? Oh, let us resign the care of ourselves to Him! Our body will not be baked longer or harder than is good for us!”

### **Confidence in God’s Mercy**

Our Lord once said to St. Gertrude: “That unshaken confidence which anyone places in Me, with the firm conviction that I can and will faithfully assist him in all things, penetrates My Heart and does such violence to My love that I cannot possibly leave such a one without aid.”

Those who are ill ought, above all, to maintain an unshaken confidence in God. The motive for confidence is the same for the just as for the sinner—the infinite mercy of God. God is infinitely honoured by confidence. “Nothing gives brighter lustre to God’s omnipotence,” says St. Bernard, “than the aid He bestows on those who place their trust in Him.” This is because the unswerving, unfaltering confidence of His creatures affords most excellent homage to God’s greatness. The most precious and wonderful graces are attached to this perfect reliance upon God. It was to her unlimited confidence that St. Gertrude ascribed the exceptional graces she received. A holy person, who at the hour of death had sublime revelations concerning the mercy of God, exclaimed, “Ah, that I could once more be well, in order to live by confidence alone.”

Our Saviour once revealed to St. Catherine of Siena: “Sinners who despair of My mercy at the end of their lives offend Me more grievously and displease Me more by this sin than by all the other crimes they ever committed. For, anyone who

despairs directly despises My mercy and believes that his guilt surpasses My- goodness and love.” And to St. Mechtilde He said : “No one is so great a sinner but that, if he truly repents, I will immediately forgive his sins, and I will incline My Heart to him with as much tenderness and sweetness as though he had never committed sin.”

### **The Great Secret of Dying Well**

Our fear of death can be greatly mitigated when we realize what we attain by accepting death with perfect resignation to the will of God. For the dying, this holy resignation is so great and so special a grace that the saints considered it a sure sign of predestination, the offering of one’s life being the greatest and most difficult sacrifice man can bring.

Death is the punishment of sin. Now, if man accepts this punishment willingly, he renders God inexpressible honour, love and satisfaction. Venerable Blossius assures us that if anyone, when dying, makes an act of perfect resignation to the will of God, not only will he be preserved from hell, but even from purgatory; because this act of perfect resignation is an act of perfect love and the love of God is the greatest of all virtues. God is love, and we have been created by Him for true, eternal love. Sin is an offence against this love, and for this reason, grievous sin deserves everlasting death.

Through the hatred of the evil spirit, sin came into the world, and through sin, death. In consequence of original sin, all mankind are subject to death, and many deserve it a thousand-fold on account of their thousand-fold mortal sins. But in spite of this, death is not a misfortune; if we die in the love of God, it is rather the entrance to the enjoyment of celestial happiness, to the never-ending bliss of heaven. Everyone must die, but the death of the Son of God has made it possible to render our last struggle meritorious.

Louis XIII, King of France, was attended on his deathbed by St. Francis of Paula. The dying monarch asked which was the best manner of preparing oneself to die well. The saint replied: “The best manner of preparing yourself for death is the way Jesus Christ Himself prepared, which was complete submission to the will of His Heavenly Father: ‘Not My will, but Thine be done.’”

St. Francis de Sales encourages the dying to perfect resignation, saying that even though they had been great sinners, heaven is assured to those who depart this life with perfect submission to the will of God. Holy Church emphasizes the importance of this resignation on the part of the dying by the fact that, to gain the plenary indulgence attached to the Papal Blessing at the hour of death, she definitely expresses, as a principal condition, resignation and a willing acceptance of death from the hand of God. We should remember this when attending our relatives or friends in their last illness. By exciting in them the proper disposition to endure their agony in holy resignation, we render them an invaluable service.

Dear Christian, you who are ill, pray often and fervently for the grace of perfect resignation to the will of God. By a decree issued on March 9, 1904, Pope Pius X. granted to all the faithful a plenary indulgence for the hour of death if, on any day of choice, after having received the sacraments of penance and Holy Eucharist, they recite with sentiments of true love of God the following prayer:

“O Lord, my God, even now I accept from Thy hand, willingly and with submission, the kind of death it may please Thee to send me, with all its sorrows, pains, and anguish.”

Be not satisfied to recite this beautiful prayer but once; on the contrary, pray it often and fervently, with your whole heart; it is a means of dying in the friendship of God.

### **The Sacred Heart, a Source of Consolation**

One of the most pleasing and grace-abounding devotions for the sick is veneration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Our Lord promised special favours to those who venerate His Divine Heart. How touching are His words to St. Margaret Mary: “Announce it and let it be proclaimed to the whole world that I set *no measure or limit* to My gifts of grace for those who *seek them in My Divine Heart*.” This Heart is a superabundant storehouse of every gift of salvation. There is no grace so great but that we can obtain it from the Heart of Jesus.

The Divine Heart of Jesus is ever ready to expiate our guilt, no matter how dreadful it may be. Streams of grace flow from this Adorable Heart to sinners who implore pardon with humility and confidence. The joy of Our Lord at the

repentance of a sinner is so great that, as He said to Blessed Angela of Foligno, He *often gives to contrite sinners graces which He does not always bestow on the innocent*. The Sacred Heart of Jesus reconciles Divine Justice and pays the penalty of our sins and negligences.

No human soul is so disconsolate and abandoned but that the Heart of Jesus *can fully comfort* and rejoice it. There is no misfortune so great and hopeless, no night so dark, but that this Heart can change the dreaded events and direct all for the best. Whatever is oppressive to a painfully tried and anguished soul, let her confide it to the compassionate Heart of Jesus. How many, whose illness had seemed hopeless, were cured through this devotion! How many others have obtained strength to suffer patiently, or the grace of a happy death!

Dear sick friend, flee with confidence to the Heart of Jesus in all your bodily sufferings, as well as in spiritual anguish concerning your salvation. Make a novena and cry without ceasing, “O Heart of Jesus, full of consolation and grace, have mercy on me, come to my aid !” “A *person who prays* will certainly be *saved*,” declared St. Alphonsus, but one who does *not pray* will certainly be *lost*. Prayer is the key to God’s treasures of grace.” But in regard to God’s granting our prayer, let us not forget the assertion of the servant of God, Anna Catherine Emmerich: “It is *confidence* that has the miraculous effect in prayer.”

### **Mary, Our Most Tender Mother**

Happy the soul who knows, loves and venerates Mary. She is the dispensatrix of the graces and mercies of God. *Who can count the sick and suffering who have been restored to health by her powerful intercession!* You, too, dear sufferer, may petition Mary for health, and if it be for your eternal welfare she will obtain this favour from her Divine Son. Mary’s power and goodness are inexpressibly great; no one in distress invokes her in vain, as we are assured by the “Memorare” of St. Bernard: “Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection.... was left unaided.”

Mary is the haven of refuge for the afflicted and oppressed. She has become “all to all,” as St. Bernard says, and “her merciful heart is open to all, that they may find help in every need: the sick, health; the afflicted, consolation; sinners, forgiveness; the just, grace. *She shows mercy to all*. With clemency and benignity, she comes to the aid of each one in his need.” St. Peter Damian exclaims: “O beloved one, interceding for us because thou hast so loving a heart, thou canst not look upon our misery without being moved to compassion.

We should love and venerate Mary especially, because, according to the doctrine of saints, *devotion to the Blessed Virgin is a certain sign of predestination*. “Mary,” says St. Alphonsus. “preserves her clients from hell.” The Heavenly Mother herself once said to Mary of Agreda, “I have snatched numberless souls from the infernal dragon because they still preserved some devotion to me.” Yes, there have been sinners who had already sold their souls to the devil, with whom they had formed a compact, and who on account of their horrible crimes, were about to abandon themselves to utter despair; yet they drew back from the yawning abyss because they still hoped in Mary; nor was their confidence confounded.

The evil spirit is irritated by nothing so much as when a soul loves and venerates Mary. Such souls he considers lost to himself. Once when speaking through a possessed person, the demon cried out, in reference to the holy scapular, “O garment, how many souls hast thou already snatched from me !” To those who have *faithfully worn the scapular*, this sacred garment of the Heavenly Mother has always proved a *source of great consolation at the hour of death*.

There is nothing to which we must cling more firmly than to confidence in Mary’s aid. We ought to imitate a saintly Bishop of the last century, who, when subjected to trying persecutions, said: “When the waves close over the vessel and the water reaches up to my neck, I will cry out: ‘*O Mary, help!*’ And when I have already sunk to the depths of the sea and the rocking billows carry me up once more for a last breath of air, with this last breath I will still cry out: ‘*O Mary, ever help!*’” We may be certain our Blessed Mother does not remain insensible to such cries and petitions; she saves, she rescues, she dispenses graces with the tenderest motherly love.

### **Mary, Patroness of the Dying**

The Catholic Church has always considered Mary a special patroness of the dying. St. Alphonsus writes, "On the day that Mary had the privilege, as well as the grief, of being present at the death of her Son, she obtained from God the grace to be present at the death of all who are predestined to life eternal." To the virgin, Eustochia, St. Jerome wrote that Mary not only assists her beloved servants in death, but *comes to meet them on their way to eternity*, to encourage them and conduct them to the judgement-seat of God.

Dear friend, let these encouraging words of the saints inspire you with confidence in the Mother of God. Often invoke the Blessed Virgin and ask for her intercession, that she may assist you in your last agony, take you under her protection, and accompany you to the tribunal of her Son, there to intercede for you. If you wish for a happy hour of death, invoke Mary till your last breath. Anyone who calls upon our Heavenly Mother in death will not be lost. It is related that a religious who felt anxious about her father's salvation, received this consoling assurance from St. Alphonsus: "Why do you fear for your father? When dying he devoutly invoked the name of Mary. Anyone who dies while pronouncing this blessed name will not be lost." Love the Blessed Virgin, venerate her, and in your sufferings often think of Mary, the Mother of Sorrows.

### **St. Joseph, a Powerful Intercessor**

Among all the saints, St. Joseph is an especially powerful advocate for mankind in trial and affliction, in illness and suffering.

"I am of the opinion," says St. Isidore, "that among the intercessors with God, the most powerful after the Blessed Virgin is St. Joseph." The seraphic St. Teresa exclaims enthusiastically: "His intercession has a miraculous power for all who invoke him with confidence. Would that I were a priest, that I might traverse the whole world and beg Christians to venerate St. Joseph more. Whatever I have asked through his intercession I have received."

The learned John Gerson says, "What confidence may we not place in St. Joseph! What power there is in his intercession He is the virginal spouse of Mary and the foster father of Jesus. Whether he pleads with the authority of a husband or a father, his word is considered a command."

Next to the Blessed Virgin, the Catholic Church considers St. Joseph the foremost patron of the dying. St. Alphonsus mentions three reasons for this:

First, Jesus loved and honoured him as His foster father; wherefore his intercession is much more powerful than that of any other saint.

Secondly, he obtained special power over the evil spirits that assail us at the hour of death. This power was given to St. Joseph for having rescued the Divine Child from the persecutions of Herod.

Thirdly, by the assistance which Jesus and Mary rendered to St. Joseph in his last hour, he procured the right to obtain a holy and peaceful death for his faithful clients. Whoever, then, invokes St. Joseph at the hour of death will obtain not only his aid, but the assistance of Jesus and Mary as well.

Dear Christian soul, weighed down by sickness and suffering, make it a practice to venerate the holy foster father; St. Joseph, that, having honoured him in life, you may enjoy his consolation and assistance when death approaches.

### **The Holy Sacraments**

Sick persons derive the greatest consolation from the sacraments, the very fountains of grace and consolation. Those who are seriously ill should immediately ask for the priest and not permit themselves to be deceived by vain promises of recovery. What a responsibility when, from motives of false love, relatives fail to tell those who are seriously ill of their true condition, and refrain from admonishing them to prepare for death. How many souls are lost in this manner, through false love and misdirected compassion

What should be done when one of the family is dangerously ill? At the beginning of a serious illness the patient should purify his conscience by a good confession in order to be able to endure the sufferings in as meritorious a manner as

possible. The sacraments cleanse, strengthen and pacify the soul. After his confession, a great sinner exclaimed, "I am now as happy as a saint in heaven." Another declared, "I experienced such joy when the priest gave me absolution that I felt heaven was open to me." For many a sick person it would be advisable, even necessary, to make a contrite general confession. One should also be sorry for those sins which he has lightly disregarded, and pray in the words of Holy Scripture, "From my secret sins cleanse me, O Lord": from those carelessly committed, of which I have so often been guilty in my lukewarm life without ever giving them a serious thought. Sick persons should frequently make acts of perfect contrition.

After the soul has been purified from sin by the Sacrament of Penance, how many graces will not Our Lord bestow in Holy Communion! Read the lives of the saints who were confined to a bed of pain the greater part of their lives. What was their one, their only consolation? Holy Communion. It was this heavenly Food that strengthened them to endure joyfully the greatest pains.

St. Lidwina injured herself while skating when only fifteen years old. A complication of diseases resulted, and she suffered intensely. During the first few years of suffering her naturally impetuous nature rebelled. Then she began to meditate on the Passion of Our Saviour, and soon obtained patience to bear her pains not only willingly but joyfully. She endured untold sufferings for thirty-eight years, during the last thirty of which she was never able to leave her bed. During this long martyrdom, Holy Communion was her great consolation. For the last nineteen years of her life she subsisted only on the Bread of Angels.

Those who are seriously ill should also have a great desire to receive Extreme Unction. This sacrament is efficacious in blotting out every stain of sin; it strengthens the patient against the assaults of the evil spirit, and even restores him to health if God sees best. Many who were seriously ill recovered after they had received Extreme Unction, as has been attested by physicians. The sick should be animated by a sincere will to do all in their power to receive the sacraments worthily; then God will be satisfied and will reward them with His holy peace.

The blessing of the priest is also efficacious for souls. Ask the priest for his blessing; it frequently mitigates sufferings of the body, for anyone who is blessed by the priest is blessed by God.

### **Hidden Treasures**

God once permitted the servant of God, Mary Quiro, to behold in a vision the great value of indulgences. He showed her a large table in a public place upon which were heaped a great many pieces of gold and silver, countless diamonds and other priceless jewels. "These treasures are free," said Our Lord; "everybody may take as many of them as he wishes or needs." During an ecstasy, St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi saw a religious who, after fifteen hours of purgatory, attained to a degree of glory in heaven surpassing that of all the other religious. "O happy soul!" exclaimed the saint, "you knew how to make use of the hidden treasures!" St. Alphonsus says that in order to become a saint nothing more is required than to gain all the indulgences possible in the best possible manner. To do this it is necessary to be in the state of grace, and for plenary indulgences, to detest sin with our whole heart, and to receive Holy Communion.

St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi likewise saw souls in purgatory who had to suffer greatly because they had not esteemed and utilized the great treasures of indulgences. Father Faber mentions eight advantages in gaining indulgences. If we consider that even the least venial sin entails some punishment, how can we calculate the amount of punishment we incur day after day, even though we commit only venial sins? In this life we care every little to perform works of penance to cancel this debt. In consequence, what punishments await us in purgatory! Must we not marvel at the God of justice, that in His mercy He desists from His claims and instead of demanding severe works of penance, gives us the treasures of partial and plenary indulgences, as the quickest and easiest means of making atonement

Even though a sinner had committed the most atrocious crimes and deserved the eternal torments of hell, yet, by going to Confession and Holy Communion, and by perfectly gaining a plenary indulgence, he would free himself entirely from all punishment, and, in the eyes of God, he would be as pure as though he had just been baptized. Should he die in this state he would go directly to heaven like the martyrs who shed their blood for Christ. Does not this doctrine of Holy

Church regarding God's mercy fill us with joy and consolation

We also have the privilege of applying many, in fact, nearly all, indulgences to the souls in purgatory. Thereby their sufferings are shortened, and, as we know, in special cases they immediately cease.

Dear sick Christian, avail yourself of these marvellous treasures. If you are invested with the scapular of the Immaculate Conception you can, provided you are in the state of grace, gain many indulgences daily by praying the "Our Father," "Hail Mary," and "Glory be to the Father," six times in honour of the Most Blessed Trinity and the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, according to the intention of the Holy Father. Numberless indulgences can also be gained by praying the Rosary; and how easily a sick person can pray the Stations, a further means for gaining numerous indulgences.

*(The sick, or those who are in any other way prevented from visiting the Stations of the Cross where they are canonically erected, may gain the indulgences by saying, with at least contrite heart and devotion, the "Our Father," "Hail Mary," and "Glory be to the Father" twenty times, holding in their hands the while a Crucifix enriched with the indulgences of the Stations, If they are unable to hold the Crucifix in their hands, it will suffice if it is worn on their person, Persons too ill to pray the twenty "Our Fathers," etc., may gain the indulgences by kissing or gazing on a Crucifix indulgenced as above, at the same time making an aspiration in honour of the Passion of Our Lord. Those unable even to make an aspiration may gain the indulgences by merely gazing at or kissing the Crucifix.)*

### **In Temptations**

When temptations assail the sufferer on his bed of pain he should have recourse to the Holy Name of Jesus, to the Blessed Virgin, and to the devout use of holy water. St. Vincent Ferrer gives this advice: "In temptations, often say devoutly, O Jesus, help me!" and the temptation will vanish.

"If we battle against Satan in the Name of Jesus, then, Jesus battles with us, for us and in us. The enemies take flight as soon as they hear the Holy Name."—St. Justin, Martyr.

On her deathbed, St. Mechtilde experienced how sweet a consolation there is in the Holy Name of Jesus. When her sufferings and temptations were intense, she would cry out, "O good Jesus! O most loving Jesus!" and instantly all pain and temptations ceased.

St. Camillus admonished his brethren in religion to remind the dying frequently to invoke the holy Names of Jesus and Mary. He himself pronounced these Names with such tender devotion that all who heard him were inflamed with ardent love. The sweet Names of Jesus and Mary were the last he uttered in his agony.

Regarding the power of the name of Mary, St. Albert the Great writes: "If you are enveloped in darkness and do not find the way of salvation, raise your eyes to her who can enlighten you, invoke the Mother of God and pronounce her beautiful name."

"Blessed is he," says St. Bonaventure, "who loves thy name, O holy Mother of God! Thy name is most wonderful and glorious."

The devout use of holy water in time of temptation is recommended to all, but especially to those who are sick. Experience teaches that by the pious use of holy water, the evil spirit is often put to flight. The bed of the sick and the dying should be frequently sprinkled with holy water, and at the same time an aspiration said, such as, "My Jesus, mercy!" or "O Jesus, protect him!"

### **Consolations of Purgatory**

In the opinion of St. Francis de Sales the thought of purgatory is far more suited to inspire us with consolation than with terror. He censures those who dwell only on the pain and torment suffered there without remembering the perfect love the poor souls have for God and their union with His holy will. They are perfectly resigned to the Divine will, or, rather, their will is so entirely transformed into that of God that they desire nothing except what God wills and what is pleasing to Him.

St. Thomas Aquinas declares: “Although the pains of purgatory are great, and the least suffering there is more excruciating than the greatest here on earth, nevertheless, the poor souls, though burning with an insatiable longing for the vision of God and for heaven, suffer with patience and resignation.”

With childlike confidence in Divine mercy, abandon yourself entirely to the goodness of God, and desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ. Accept, in advance, with sentiments of contrition, all the suffering and punishment that God must inflict on you in this world or in purgatory. This submission will be very meritorious for you and will mitigate your punishment.

### **Apostolate of the Sick**

Many persons are of the opinion that souls can be won for God only through active service; but we know from examples of the saints that a hidden life in the sickroom offers many opportunities to spread the kingdom of God. There were great saints who were afflicted with illness their whole lifetime and unable to labour, but who nevertheless were instrumental in saving numberless souls. Sick persons who suffer with patience and resignation to God’s holy will, not only obtain for themselves a special glory in heaven, but, through the abundant graces they merit, they are the means of saving many souls.

To St. Mechtilde Our Lord revealed the secret of rendering her sufferings meritorious. On one occasion when she was suffering intensely, He said to her: “Place all thy pains in My Heart and I will make them so perfect and so fruitful that they will obtain honour for the blessed in heaven, merit for the just, forgiveness for sinners and refreshment for the souls in purgatory.”

A poor, sick woman once said to the priest who was attending her, “What worries me most is the thought that I am no longer able to do anything for others.” The priest consoled her by explaining how, though physically disabled, she could still assist many. “In our monastery,” he said, “there are a number of aged Fathers who have become feeble and can do nothing but suffer and pray. Several of them can say only a few prayers, but they are resigned to the holy will of God. My good woman, these are the men who benefit our Order most. They are the heads that reign, the hearts that give life and motion to the good work. We younger ones who labour actively are merely the arms that execute. Some of us may be inclined to think that honour and preference should be ours, but how helpless we would be if these venerable, infirm members of our Order did not sustain us by their prayers and by offering their sufferings to God! In a similar way you can be of greater benefit to others by drawing down God’s blessing through your sufferings than by any exterior work.” The poor woman was comforted by these words and replied joyfully, “Then I shall cheerfully suffer as much and as long as God wills.”

Though you, dear invalid, may be unable to go beyond the precincts of your home, or even leave your bed, you can be a messenger of the Gospel of peace by offering your sufferings and your prayers for missionaries toiling in heathen lands. You can bring the light of faith to those who are still in the darkness of paganism by a generous offering of your pains for their conversions. You can obtain the conversion of sinners, and especially of hardened sinners, at the hour of death. You can obtain the grace of perseverance for the just, and relief and release for the suffering souls in purgatory. Read the consoling words which a zealous missionary of our own days addressed to sufferers in a series of articles entitled “Why Must I Suffer?”

“God may have found you worthy of the noble vocation of making your life an atonement for the countless sins committed against Him the world over by His ungrateful children.” After enumerating various classes of sinners, he continues: “Now if God consulted only the claims of His infinite justice, it would go hard with these unfortunate sinners. But His equally infinite mercy makes Him devise ways and means of turning away from them their well-merited punishment. Two great means there are that the Divine Mercy has provided for this purpose: the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the voluntary expiation made to Him by devoted souls.”

“We find scattered throughout the world many select souls that have followed the inspiration of grace and made themselves willing victims of expiatory suffering for the love of God. . . -With their Divine Saviour, these heroic souls are

nailed to the Cross and in union with Him they endure agonies of a veritable crucifixion which knows no respite or relief. But, far from losing patience or giving way to murmuring, they are even very joyful—a condition which is a mystery to those who know nothing of the marvellous power of Divine grace.”

“God may have given you the vocation of procuring the grace of conversion for sinners, especially for those who are in their last agony and in danger of dying in their sins. Nearly one hundred thousand souls pass into eternity every twenty-four hours. How many of these are saved and how many are lost, we have no means of knowing; but this much we can take for certain, that of those who are saved, very many owe their salvation to the grace of conversion procured for them in the hour of death by the prayers and sufferings of the friends of God on earth.....

“God may have given you the vocation of taking an active and necessary part in the promotion of the welfare of His Church. Perhaps you are to help procure for her those special graces she needs continually in order to fulfil her mission of saving immortal souls. Just as in His infinite wisdom God saw fit that the great work of man’s Redemption should be accomplished through the excessive sufferings which Jesus Christ endured in His Passion and His Death on the Cross, so also He sees fit that the work of saving souls, which is nothing but the Redemption continued in the world to the end of time, shall be accomplished to a great extent through painful suffering. For this purpose, God selects certain souls that are especially dear to Him, and gives them the vocation of procuring for His Church, by the intercession of pain, whatever special graces she needs at different times and in different places. The lives of the saints are full of examples of heroic souls who offered themselves to God to suffer for the good of the Church. So, too, there are many souls living in the world today who make it their life’s work to suffer for this same intention. Priests and missionaries find in them most helpful allies in their efforts to save souls. While they are preaching, hearing confessions, assisting the dying, and doing other apostolic work, these generous sufferers are obtaining for them. those powerful graces without which their labours would often be fruitless.

“In this way these souls, hidden away from the gaze of the world, are doing a wonderful work of love and zeal. Somewhere in the wide world, the effects of their intercession make themselves felt. . . . It is only on the day of judgement that it will be known how much of their success priests and missionaries owe to such intercessory suffering.”

Another consoling reason for suffering advanced by the same writer is this “If you are weighed down by crosses, though you have long tried to lead a life of piety and virtue, and therefore imagine that you ought to be entirely free from such trials, remember that the Heavenly Artist is at work, transforming you by slow degrees into a perfect image of Jesus Christ.”

Dear sufferer who reads these pages, whether your sickness or your affliction be of short or long duration, do not these words strike joy into your heart that God has deemed you worthy to share in the glorious work of redeeming souls? Follow, then, the advice Our Lord gave to St. Mechtilde place your sufferings for the salvation of others in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Be liberal in distributing the alms of your prayers. Pray much for others while confined to your bed of pain, and you will be an apostle, a saviour of many souls. When you are no longer able to pray, remain calm, bear your pains and helplessness with a good intention, and simply say, “Heavenly Father, Thy holy will be done; I offer Thee all my sufferings in union with the sufferings of Thy Divine Son.”

## **PRAYERS**

### **MASS DEVOTION FOR THE SICK**

By Ven. Martin v. Cochem

Sick persons unable to attend Holy Mass will draw great benefit and consolation from the practice of assisting in spirit at a Holy Mass being offered somewhere in the world at every hour of the day and night. The following prayers may be used either for this purpose or in actual assistance at Holy Mass.

### **From the Beginning to the Offertory**

O my God, when I reflect upon my past life, I am filled with fear and dread, for I have often offended Thee, O most just Heavenly Father, by committing many and grievous sins! I have accumulated a debt of guilt which I shall never be able to pay, even though I should perform the severest works of penance. Nevertheless, I will not grow faint-hearted; I will take refuge to the superabundant satisfaction of my Saviour.

I have sinned much, but still more has He paid. I have sinned grievously, but far more satisfaction has Thy well-beloved Son rendered to Thy justice. Therefore, I rely on the merits of Thy Son, Jesus, and hope to obtain mercy through Him.

Grant, O my God, that His bitter Passion may redound to my salvation. Permit not His exceedingly great sufferings to be lost on my soul. Let His bitter tears and His Precious Blood wash away my stains of sin. Let His ignominious death preserve me from eternal death. Accept His cruel torments in expiation of my grievous sins. Even one drop of His Precious Blood can render a greater atonement than the debt incurred by all the sins of the world. What, then, must be the value of all the drops of my Redeemer's Sacred Blood! In this Holy Mass I offer Thee, as atonement for my sins, the merits of Thy Divine Son, with all His sufferings endured in His agony, in His dereliction on the Cross, and in the effusion of His Precious Blood, I confidently trust that Thou wilt accept this my oblation, and in consideration of it, wilt pardon my sins and mercifully remit the remaining punishment due to them. Amen.

### **At the Offertory**

O Most Blessed Trinity, in union with that love with which Our Lord Jesus Christ offered Himself on the Cross, I offer Thee this and all the Masses which are today being celebrated throughout the world. At the same time I offer Thee my afflicted body and my anguished soul, my cares and my temporal affairs to which illness prevents me from attending.

I offer Thee my thoughts, words and deeds, which I place on Thy holy altar, and unite them with the Adorable Sacrifice of the Mass, so that the blessings and prayers of the priest may be spoken also over my oblation.

I know of nothing better to give Thee than my heart, O Lord! I present it to Thee and offer it to Thee on Thy holy altar. All my trials, especially the bitterness of my illness, I place in this chalice of Thy Precious Blood, and offer it to Thee in union with the bitter chalice which Our Saviour drank for our salvation on Mount Olivet. Graciously accept my offering, I beseech Thee, and bless it with Thy paternal hand. Amen.

### **Before the Consecration**

O my Jesus, by the three hours of most tortuous agony which preceded Thy death on the Cross, grant me the grace to bear with resignation and in love for Thee all the sufferings that shall accompany my death.

O my Jesus, by the bitter pain Thou didst experience when Thy Soul separated itself from Thy most adorable Body, grant that at the moment of my death I may yield up my spirit while offering Thee my sufferings with an act of perfect love, and that I may then behold Thee face to face in heaven, and love Thee forever with all my heart.

O holy Virgin Mary, my Mother, by the sword of sorrow that pierced thy heart when thou didst behold thy well-beloved Son bow His head and die, assist me, I beseech Thee, at my last hour, that in heaven I may eternally praise thee for all the benefits Thou wilt have obtained for me from God. Amen.

### **At the Elevation**

Gaze upon the Sacred Host and say: My Lord and my God!

O Jesus, my God, I adore Thee present in the Sacred Host.

While looking at the chalice, think of Our Saviour on the Cross, His Blood flowing from His Sacred Wounds, and say:

Hail, Precious Blood, flowing from the Wounds of my Crucified Saviour and washing away the sins of the world! Oh, cleanse, sanctify, and keep my soul, that nothing may ever separate me from Thee in life and in death.

O Eternal Father, I offer Thee the Precious Blood of Jesus, in satisfaction for my sins, and for the wants of Holy Church.

### **From the Elevation to Communion**

Petition for a happy death through the seven last words of Our Saviour on the Cross.

O Lord Jesus Christ, I thank Thee for the seven words of consolation which Thou didst pronounce on the Cross. By the love and suffering with which Thou didst utter them, I beseech Thee to let my soul experience their effects in life and in death.

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. O Jesus, by the love with which Thou didst pray for Thy enemies, I beseech Thee to forgive all my offences against Thee.

This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise. Dearest Saviour, by the love with which Thou didst pray for Thy enemies, I beseech Thee to receive me after life into heaven.

Woman, behold thy son. . . . Son, behold Thy Mother. O compassionate Redeemer, by the love with which Thou didst commend Thy Blessed Mother to St. John, I beseech Thee to commend me faithfully to Mary, Thy holy Mother.

My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me! O agonising Jesus, by the sorrow with which Thou didst pitifully complain of Thy abandonment by Thy Heavenly Father, I beseech Thee to forsake me not in my last struggle.

I thirst! Suffering Saviour, by the burning thirst Thou didst endure on the Cross, I beseech Thee to expel from my heart all evil desires.

It is consummated! Merciful Jesus, by the consummation of the Redemption of mankind—oh, I beseech Thee, let it not be in vain for me!

Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit. O my dying Redeemer, by the ardent prayer with which Thou didst yield Thy spirit into the hands of Thy Father—oh, I beseech Thee, let me earnestly commend my soul to Thee at its departure from this life! Amen.

### **Spiritual Communion**

My Jesus, I believe that Thou art present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love Thee above all things, and I desire to possess Thee within my soul. Since I cannot now receive Thee sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart.

I embrace Thee as being already there. I unite myself wholly to Thee. Never permit me to be separated from Thee. O Jesus, my highest Good and my sweetest Love, wound and inflame my heart that it may burn with love for Thee. Amen.

### **A Blessing**

O Lord Jesus! be with me, to defend me; be with me, to refresh me; be near me, to watch over me; be before me, to guide me; be over me, to protect me. May the Holy Spirit descend and remain with me! May God the Father, Who created me, bless me! May God the Son, Who redeemed me, bless me! May God the Holy Ghost, Who sanctified me, bless me!

Mary, Queen of angels, with all the holy spirits, pray for me. Amen.

### **Spiritual Visits to the Most Blessed Sacrament**

All those who hindered by sickness or some other just cause, in spirit visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and with at least contrite heart say five “Our Fathers,” “Hail Marys” and “Glorias,” adding a sixth for the intentions of the Pope, may gain an indulgence of five years each time; plenary once a week under the usual conditions, if they make such a devout visit daily throughout the week, provided they are still under the same lawful impediment.

### **SEND YOUR ANGEL TO HOLY MASS**

O holy Angel at my side,  
Go to the church for me,  
Kneel in my place at Holy Mass.  
Where I desire to be.

At Offertory, in my stead,  
Take all I am and own,  
And place it as a sacrifice  
Upon the altar throne.  
At holy Consecration's bell,  
Adore with seraph's love  
My Jesus hidden in the Host,  
Come down from heav'n above.  
Then pray for those I dearly Love,  
And those who cause me grief,  
That Jesus' Blood may cleanse all hearts  
And suffering souls relieve.  
And when the priest Communion takes,  
Oh, bring my Lord to me,  
That His sweet Heart may rest on mine  
And I His temple be.  
Pray that this Sacrifice Divine  
May mankind's sins efface;  
Then bring me Jesus' blessing home—  
The pledge of every grace.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

#### PRAYERS BEFORE HOLY COMMUNION

O my God, give me the grace to receive Thee worthily. Mary, my dearest Mother, pray to Jesus for me. My dear guardian angel, accompany me to the Holy Table.

*Act of Faith.* O my God, with all my heart I believe that in the Holy Eucharist Thou givest me the Sacred Body of Jesus Christ as a nourishment for my soul and as a pledge of future glory.

*Act of Humility.* Heavenly Father, see before Thee an ungrateful child; I am not worthy to receive Thy beloved Son Jesus, because of my many sins. Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof; say only the word and my soul shall be healed.

*Act of Contrition.* My Jesus, I have displeased Thee by my sins, but now I am sorry for them because I have offended Thee Who art worthy of all my love. With Thy grace, I will never sin again. Dear Jesus, have pity on me and forgive me my sins.

*Act of Adoration.* O Jesus, truly present in the Most Holy Eucharist, I most humbly adore Thee. Jesus, my God, I worship Thee here present in the Sacrament of Thy Love.

*Act of Love and Desire.* Sweet Jesus, I love Thee and with all my heart I desire to receive Thee. O come into my heart! Give me Thy own Flesh and Blood, Thy Soul and Divinity; make me one with Thee, that I may remain forever united to Thee.

#### PRAYERS AFTER HOLY COMMUNION

*Act of Love and Welcome.* Sweet Jesus, I love Thee. Welcome to my heart; take up Thy abode within me. Thou knowest that I love Thee and desire to love Thee ever more. Inflammé my heart more and more with Thy holy love.

*Act of Faith and Adoration.* O Jesus, I believe that Thou art present within me. I adore Thee as my God and Redeemer. O Jesus, take possession of my heart.

*Act of Humility.* O Jesus, Thou didst come to me who am but dust and ashes. Thou dost unite my poor heart with Thy

Sacred Heart, to make me one with Thee. Lord, I am not worthy of such love and condescension.

*Act of Thanksgiving.* My good Jesus, with all my heart I thank Thee for coming into my heart. I thank Thee for Thy bitter Passion and Death. Grant that Holy Communion may be for me the pledge of future glory. Then shall I forever sing Thy mercies and Thy praises.

*Act of Oblation.* O Jesus, Thou hast given Thyself entirely to me; accept the poor offering I make Thee in return—I give Thee my body, with all its senses; my soul, with all its faculties; my heart, with all its affections. O Jesus, help me to lead a holy life and to die a happy death. Grant that I may receive Thee before I die. Let my dying words be, “Jesus, Mary, Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul.”

O Lord, my God, even now I accept from Thy hand, willingly and with submission, the kind of death it may please Thee to send me, with all its sorrows, pains and anguish.

### **ACTS OF LOVE FOR GOD**

By Ven. Martin v. Cochem

O my good God! Thou knowest how much my heart desires to love Thee, and to cling to Thee alone.

O my sweetest Love, grant that I may love Thee ever more, and that I may always think of Thee.

O my God, how I love Thee! I love Thee from my inmost heart, with all the powers of my soul.

O my most lovable Father, words cannot express how dear Thou art to me! I love Thee more than anything else in this world; yes, more than my own life. I will gladly give my life for Thee, to honour and to please Thee.

Would to God that this my sickness would redound to Thy greater honour and the salvation of my poor soul!

### **RESIGNATION TO THE WILL OF GOD**

By Ven. Martin v. Cochem

O my God, with all my heart I resign myself to Thy Divine will. Deal with me according to Thy good pleasure.

As my beloved Redeemer in the Garden of Olives resigned Himself to Thy paternal will, so do I resign myself to Thy paternal will.

Graciously accept my pain, and let my sickness redound to Thy honour.

Good Jesus, I unite all my sufferings with Thy sufferings, and my sickness with Thy bitter Passion.

I accept this my sickness from Thy Divine hand, and will bear it gladly out of love for Thee.

As Thou didst accept all Thy sufferings from the hand of Thy Father, so also do I accept all my pains from Thy hand.

With the patience with which Thou didst endure Thy sufferings, I desire to bear my sickness; and with the love with which Thou didst offer all Thy pains to God, so do I desire to offer all my pains to the Heavenly Father.

### **Voluntary Acceptance of Death**

O my God, I wish to die, not because I must die, but because it is Thy will. If the choice were left to me to die or to live, but I knew that Thou wouldst prefer I should die, I would choose to die because it would be more pleasing to Thee. I voluntarily offer Thee my life as a sacrifice; graciously accept this oblation in satisfaction for my sins. And that this offering may be the more pleasing to Thee, I unite it with the infinitely precious death of Thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ, and with all the Holy Masses which are being offered to Thee throughout Christendom.

### **DESIRE FOR HEAVEN**

By St. Alphonsus

The sick should often make acts of desire for the possession of heaven and to see God face to face. Souls who have little desire for heaven during life must endure a special pain in purgatory, called the pain of desire. This life is a prison, a place of banishment, where we cannot see God. Hence David prayed: “Bring my soul out of prison” (Ps. cvli., 8); and St Augustine sighs: “Lord, let me die, that I may see Thee.” Pray, therefore:

“As the heart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God. My soul hath thirsted after the strong, living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God?” (Ps. xli., 2, 3.)

I desire heaven that I may love Thee, O God, eternally and with all my strength.

Ah, when shall I be able to say: My God, now I can no more lose Thee!

When, O my God, shall I see Thy infinite beauty and love Thee with seraphic love?

In heaven I shall always love Thee, and Thou wilt always love me; there we shall love each other eternally, O my God, my love, my all.

My Jesus, when shall I kiss those Wounds which Thou didst receive for me?

O Mary, my Mother, who hast shown me so much love and wast ever ready to assist me, when shall I behold thee and kneel at thy feet?

Turn, then, my sweet Advocate, thy merciful eyes upon me, and show me after this exile, Jesus, the blessed Fruit of thy womb.

### **Oh, Let Me Behold Thy Face!**

O Triune God! O infinite Beauty! My heart burns with desire to behold Thee; and if my heart does not glow sufficiently with this desire, then give me, I implore Thee, a greater ardour of love for Thee; give me a more vehement desire for the vision of Thy countenance, which is eternal beauty. I entreat Thee, give me so ardent a desire to behold Thy Face that this my longing may cancel the whole indebtedness of the temporal punishment due to my sins. Yes, Eternal Father, give me this great desire to behold Thy Face; I ask it of Thee through the infinite merits of Thy Son, Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

### **EJACULATIONS**

By Ven. Martin v. Cochem

Jesus, Mary! Jesus, have mercy on me! Jesus, pardon my sins!

O Jesus, for the sake of Thy bitter Passion, have mercy on me; and for the sake of Thy cruel death, grant me a happy death.

Jesus, for Thee I live! for Thee I die! Jesus, Thine I am in life and in death!

Jesus, I believe in Thee. Jesus, I hope in Thee. Jesus, I love Thee with my whole heart.

Into Thy hands I commend my spirit. To Thy bitter death I unite my bitter death.

O Jesus, forsake me not! O Jesus, reject me not! O Jesus, condemn me not, for Thou hast redeemed me amid such agonising pains.

O Heavenly Father, I am the poor creature whom Thou hast created for Thy honour! O Christ Jesus, I am the poor creature whom Thou hast redeemed by Thy Passion! O Holy Ghost, I am the poor creature whom Thou hast sanctified by Thy grace! Oh then do not permit this soul of priceless worth to fall into the possession of the evil one.

I hope in Thy goodness, O merciful Father! I trust in Thy bitter Passion, O Christ Jesus ! I hope in Thy mercy, O Holy Ghost!

I believe all that the Catholic Church teaches, and in this faith I will live and die.

I firmly hope to obtain eternal salvation by Thy grace and my co-operation, and in this hope I will live and die.

I love Thee, O God, with my whole heart, and in this love I will live and die.

I am sorry for all my sins from my inmost heart, and in this sorrow I will live and die.

I hide myself in the Wounds of Jesus, and in these Wounds I will live and die.

Jesus, by Thy roseate Blood, forsake me not in my last hour! Through Thy bitter death, I beseech Thee, grant me a happy death. O Jesus, into Thy sweetest Heart receive all my anguish and all my pains.

Holy Mary, assist me! Holy Mary, forsake me not. Holy Mary, pray for me!

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for me, poor sinner, now and at the hour of my death.

On account of the cruel sufferings of thy Son, assist me in my sufferings, and for the sake of His most cruel death, obtain for me a happy death.

Into Thy hands I commend my spirit; to Thy maternal Heart I commend my parting soul.

### **Act of Contrition**

I repent of my sins and am grieved because I have thereby deserved hell and lost heaven, but, above all, because I have displeased Thee, Who art infinite goodness. Yes, I love Thee, O Sovereign Good, and because I love Thee I repent of all my offences against Thee. I have turned my back upon Thee; I have been wanting in respect towards Thee; I have despised Thy grace, Thy friendship; in a word, O Lord, I have wilfully lost Thee. Ah, for the love of Jesus Christ, forgive me all my sins; I repent of them with my whole heart; I hate and detest them; I abhor them more than all evils, and I repent not only of my mortal but also of my venial sins, which likewise displease Thee. I purpose for the future, with the help of Thy grace, never more wilfully to offend Thee. Yes, my God, I will rather die than sin again.

## **PRAYERS FOR A HAPPY DEATH**

### **Litany for a Happy Death**

O Lord Jesus, God of goodness, and Father of mercies, I draw nigh to Thee with a contrite and humble heart; to Thee I recommend the last hour of my life, and that judgement which awaits me afterwards.

When my feet, benumbed with death, shall admonish me that my course in this life is drawing to an end, *Merciful Jesus, have mercy on me.*

When my hands, cold and trembling, shall no longer be able to clasp the Crucifix, and shall let it fall against my will on my bed of suffering, *Merciful Jesus, have mercy on me.*

When my eyes, dim and troubled at the approach of death, shall fix themselves on Thee, my last and only support, *Merciful Jesus, have mercy on me.*

When my lips, cold and trembling, pronounce for the last time Thy Adorable Name, *Merciful Jesus, have mercy on me.*

When my face, pale and livid, shall inspire the beholders with pity and dismay; when my hair, bathed in the sweat of death, and stiffening on my head, shall forbode my approaching end, *Merciful Jesus, have mercy on me.*

When my ears, soon to be forever shut to the discourse of men, shall be open to that irrevocable decree which is to fix my doom for all eternity, *Merciful Jesus, have mercy on me.*

When my imagination, agitated by dreadful spectres, shall be sunk in an abyss of anguish; when my soul, affrighted with the sight of my iniquities and the terrors of Thy judgements, shall have to fight against the angels of darkness, who will endeavour to conceal Thy mercies from my eyes and plunge me into despair, *Merciful Jesus, have mercy on me.*

When my poor heart, oppressed with suffering and exhausted by its continual struggles with the enemies of its salvation shall feel the pangs of death, *Merciful Jesus, have mercy on me.*

When the last tear, the forerunner of my dissolution, shall drop from my eyes, receive it as a sacrifice of expiation for my sins; grant that I may expire the victim of penance; and then, in that dreadful moment, *Merciful Jesus, have mercy on me.*

When my friends and relations, encircling my bed, shall be moved with compassion for me and invoke Thy clemency in my behalf, *Merciful Jesus, have mercy on me.*

When I shall have lost the use of my senses, when the world shall have vanished from my sight, when I shall groan with anguish in my last agony and the pangs of death, *Merciful Jesus, have mercy on me.*

When my last sighs shall force my soul to issue from my body accept them as born of a loving impatience to come to Thee, *Merciful Jesus, have mercy on me.*

When my soul, trembling on my lips, shall bid adieu to the world, and leave my body lifeless, pale and cold, receive this separation as a homage which I willingly pay to Thy Divine Majesty, and in that last moment of my mortal life, *Merciful Jesus, have mercy on me.*

When at length my soul, admitted to Thy presence, shall first behold the immortal splendour of Thy Majesty, reject it not, but receive me into the loving embrace of Thy mercy, where I may forever sing Thy praises, *Merciful Jesus, have mercy on me.*

#### LET US PRAY

O God, Who doomed all men to die, but hast concealed from them the hour of their death, grant that I may pass my days in the practice of holiness and justice, and that I may be made worthy to quit this world in the embrace of Thy love, through the merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

#### PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN

##### Revealed to St. Mechtilde

Say a “Hail Mary” before each invocation.

O Mary, my dear Mistress! as God the Father, in His omnipotence, has endowed thee with the greatest power, I pray thee to assist me at the hour of my death, and to drive far away all the power of the wicked spirit. Amen.

O Mary, my dear Mistress, as the Son of God in His Divine wisdom has filled thee with heavenly light, I pray thee to enlighten my soul at the hour of death with the light of Faith, and to strengthen me that no error or ignorance may mislead me or plunge me into eternal perdition. Amen.

O Mary, my dear Mistress! as the Holy Ghost has poured into thee the plenitude of His love, I pray thee to infuse into my heart the sweetness of Divine charity at the hour of my death, to take away all anguish and bitterness, and to comfort me with heavenly consolations. Amen.

#### PRAYER TO ST. JOSEPH

O Blessed Joseph, patron of the dying! Thine was the great privilege of expiring in the arms of Jesus and Mary. With child-like confidence I beseech thee, come to my aid at the hour of my death. Obtain for me perfect contrition for my sins and a firm confidence in God’s mercy, that I may trustfully await the moment of death, and breathe forth my soul into the hands of my Father and Creator, while invoking the Holy Names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. This grace obtain for me through Jesus Christ, thy Divine foster Son, Who with the Father and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth, world without end. Amen.

Jesus, Mary and good St. Joseph, pray for us now and in the agony of death.

#### GOOD INTENTION

Our Lord promised St. Gertrude that as often as a sick person says this prayer with devout heart, he will receive a notable increase of merit

O most sweet Lord Jesus Christ, in union with that surpassing love in which Thou didst endure all the Wounds of Thy most Sacred Body, I beseech Thee to sustain my patience, and overrule, for Thy greater honour and glory, all these moments of my suffering, in conformity to Thy Divine decree which Thou hast ordained from all eternity for my everlasting salvation. Amen.

Nihil Obstat:

EDWARD FENNESSY,  
Diocesan Censor

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