

¡Adorada sea la Santa Faz de Nuestro Señor Jesucristo!
**IGLESIA CRISTIANA PALMARIANA
 DE LOS CARMELITAS DE LA SANTA FAZ**

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One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic and Palmarian Church

SEVENTEENTH APOSTOLIC LETTER



**Preparation for death.
 Calling for the 16th of July 2020**

We, Peter III, Sovereign Pontiff, Vicar of Christ, Successor of Saint Peter, Servant of the servants of God, Patriarch of Palmar de Troya, *de Glória Ecclesiæ*, Herald of the Lord God of Hosts, Good Shepherd of souls, Aflame with the Zeal of Elias and Defender of the Rights of God and Church.

You already know that we are in the Last Times, that we are in Apocalyptic Times, that the last trumpets are sounding, that the last seals and last cups of Divine Wrath are near at hand. Dreadful illnesses and nuclear war are on the way, and will cause the death of a great part of mankind. We have to prepare ourselves firstly and principally for our own death, but we also have to prepare for the death of the rest, as we Palmarians are the only ones who can efficaciously help others to obtain eternal salvation, won by prayer and penance and above all by Holy Masses. The greatest act of charity to neighbour is to win his eternal salvation. Students prepare for their exams, for their careers depend on them, and we have to prepare ourselves for death and judgement, for then shall we be examined in love, and on that depends our eternity. In this letter we shall see how to prepare ourselves for death.

Portrait of a man who has just died: Consider that you are earth and unto earth you must return. The day will come on which you will have to die, and rot in a grave or a niche, where you will be covered with worms. The same fate awaits us all, nobles or commoners, rulers or subjects. Scarcely has he breathed his last when his soul leaves the body and passes on to eternity, and the body will then be reduced to dust. "Dust you are and unto dust you will return" (Genesis).

Imagine yourself in the presence of someone who has just expired. Look at that corpse, still stretched out on his deathbed; the head bent forward over the chest; hair tangled, still bathed in the sweat of death; eyes sunken, cheeks disfigured; face ashen; lips and tongue a leaden grey; body rigid and weighty. Tremble and turn pale on seeing him! How many have changed their lives and abandoned the world on contemplating a dead relative or friend!

Yet the corpse inspires yet greater horror when it begins to decompose. Not one day has passed since the youth died, and an intolerable stench is already noted. The windows must be opened and scent spread around, and arrangements made for the deceased to be taken away quickly to the church or cemetery, and buried at once, to prevent the whole house from infestation. And if the body was a noble's or a magnate's, that counts for nothing but perhaps to reek the more.

See how that arrogant, that dissolute fellow ended up! A short while ago he was the idol of society; and now the sight of him inspires horror and dread. His relatives rush to get him out of the house, and pay bearers to take him away sealed into his coffin, and bury him. A short while ago they praised his talent, refinement, courtesy and grace; but shortly after death not even his memory remains.

On hearing the news of his death, some just say that he was an honest man; others that he left a great inheritance to his family. Some are saddened, for the life of the departed benefited them; others are pleased, because his death may be of use to them.

In short, presently no one speaks of him any more, and even his closest relatives want people to avoid speaking further of him, so as not to renew the pain. In visits of condolence other matters are spoken of; and if

anyone dares to mention the deceased, some relative will be sure to say: “Please don’t mention his name to me any more!”

Remember the way you behaved at the death of your relatives and friends; so will they behave at yours. The living enter the scenario of the world to represent, take up the role, gather up the goods and occupy the posts of those who die; but appreciation for and memory of them last little or nothing. At first relatives feel sorrow for a few days, but are presently consoled by the inheritance they receive, and very soon appear as though the death gladdens them. In that same house where you breathed your last, and where Jesus Christ will have judged you, soon dinners, parties and games will be held just as before. And your soul, where will it then be?

Give a thousand thanks to Jesus your Redeemer, for not willing your death when you were dead to Grace. How many years ago did you perhaps deserve to be in Hell! If you had died that day, that night, what would have become of you for all eternity? Accept your death in satisfaction for your sins, and accept it just as God pleases to send it to you. Enough now of offending Him. Do not dare to spend the rest of your life in affronting



Jesus; try to spend it solely in forever weeping the offences you have given Him, and in loving Him with all your heart. God is worthy of an infinite love!

From now on, accept from the Lord’s hand whatever kind of death He wills to send you, with all its bitterness, grief and pain.

God, by condemning us to death, has concealed from us the time and moment; we must thus live in holiness all the days of our life so as to merit a happy death, ablaze with His divine love.

We should always ask for the grace of perseverance and love for God, as these are the two most necessary graces for winning eternal salvation. The grace of divine love, says Saint Francis de Sales, is that grace which contains in itself all other graces, for the virtue of charity towards God bears with it all the virtues. Whoever loves God is humble, chaste, obedient, mortified; in a word, he possesses all the virtues. So Saint Augustine said: “Love God and do as you will”. For whoever loves God avoids all that could displease Him, and tries but to please the Lord in everything.

The other grace, that of perseverance, is the one which wins us eternal salvation. Saint Bernard says that Heaven is promised to those who begin to live in holiness; but is only given to those who persevere to the end. But this perseverance, as the Holy Fathers teach, is only given to those who ask for it. Hence Saint Thomas Aquinas affirms that to enter glory requires continuous prayer, as Our Saviour told us beforehand: it is necessary ever to pray and never to lose heart. Thus many sinners, though forgiven, do not persevere in God’s grace, since after obtaining forgiveness, they forget to ask God for perseverance, above all in times of temptation, and miserably fall away. And though the gift of perseverance is entirely gratuitous and unable to be merited by our deeds, nevertheless we can obtain it infallibly by way of prayer, as Saint Augustine says.

“The better to see what you are, Christian”, says Saint John Chrysostom, “go to a tomb, look at the dust, the ashes and the worms, and weep.” Observe how that corpse is turning livid, and then black. And then a kind of whitish and repulsive fuzz covers the whole body, from which a putrid, viscous and foul smelling matter oozes out and falls to the ground.

In that rot a mass of worms appear, which feed on the flesh itself, accompanied at times by rats to devour that body, some running over it, others finding their way into the mouth and innards. The cheeks, lips and hair fall away, the chest is laid bare of flesh, and then the arms and legs.

Hardly have the worms consumed the deceased’s flesh when they devour each other, and of the whole body nothing finally remains but a fetid skeleton, which in time falls apart, the bones separating, the head detached from the trunk. It becomes just particles blown away by the wind. That is man: a little dust borne off by the wind.

Where then is that gentleman who was the heart and soul of the conversation? Enter his home; he is no longer there. Go up to his bed; another rests there. Look for his suits, his valuables; others have taken them and shared them all out. If you want to see him, take a look at that grave, where he has turned into putrefaction and bare bones. O my God! That body fed on such delightful delicacies, dressed in such good taste, wined and dined by so many servants, has he come to this?

How well you understood the truth, O blessed Saints!, who for love of God, sole object of your love in the world, were able to mortify your bodies, and your bones are now venerated and kept in golden caskets as precious relics. And your all-beautiful souls enjoy God, awaiting the last day to unite to your glorious bodies, which will be companions sharing in your endless happiness, as they were in the crosses of this life. Such is

true love for the mortal body; to make it suffer hardships here below so as later to be happy forever, and deny it every pleasure that could make it eternally wretched.

Your body, by which you have offended God, will be reduced to this: to worms and rot! But be not dismayed; rather be glad that your flesh, which led you to lose your God, the supreme good, is thus to rot and be consumed. What should sadden you is to have caused so much pain to God by going after such wretched pleasures. Do not wait for the hour of your death to love Him. From now on embrace Him and clasp Him to your heart, and promise never to abandon Him.

In this portrait of death, recognize yourself, and realize that one day you will become the same: remember that you are dust and will become dust again. Think that within a few years, perhaps in a few months or days, you will be nothing but worms and rotteness. With that thought Job became a great saint.

Everything has to end. And if at death you lose your soul, everything is lost to you. "Consider yourself already dead", says Saint Lawrence Justinian, "for you know that you have perforce to die." If you were already dead, what would you want to have done? Well, now that you are alive, think that one day you will be dead.

Saint Bonaventure says that the helmsman, to steer the ship, stands right at the back. Likewise man, to lead a good and holy life, should always imagine himself at the hour of death. Thus Saint Bernard exclaims: "Look at the sins of your youth, and blush; look at those of middle age, and weep; look at the latest disorders of your life, and shudder." And remedy them at once.

When Saint Camillus de Lellis went up to a tomb, he would say to himself: "If the dead were to live again, what would they not do for eternal life? And I, who have time, what do I do for my soul?" The Saint said this out of humility; but you, my brother, may perhaps rightly fear to be that sterile fig tree of which the Lord said: "For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree and found none."

You, who are in the world for more than three years, what fruits have you given? Consider, says Saint Bernard, the Lord does not look just for flowers, but for fruits; that is, He is not content with just good resolutions and desires, but demands holy deeds. Know then how to make use of this time which God, in His mercy, grants you, and do not wait to do good until it is too late, until the solemn moment when you are told: "Now! The moment has come to leave this world." Soon! What's done is done!

Perhaps you are like that fig tree which for many years deserved to have heard these words from God: "Cut it down then; why should it encumber the ground?" For all the years you have been in the world, you have given him no fruits, rather the thistles and thorns of your sins. Yet the Lord does not want you to lose hope. If in the past you fled from God, now appreciate His friendship more than all the kingdoms of the world.

All ends with death: "The end comes; here it is." Only those who enjoy the goods of this world, honours, pleasures and wealth, do the worldly call happy. But death puts an end to this earthly wellbeing. "And I ask you, of what stuff is your life? Is it not perhaps like water vapour that appears for a short while and then disappears?" (Saint James).



The vapours that come from the earth rise up in the air, and if burnished by the rays of the sun, may form a colourful display; but how long does its brilliance last? A gust of wind and it all disappears. That celebrity, today so admired, or so feared, tomorrow, when dead, will be despised. At death we have to leave all.

The brother of the great Servant of God Saint Thomas Hemerken à Kempis gloried in having built a beautiful house. One of his friends told him there was a serious mistake. "What is it?" the other asked. "The mistake, replied the friend, is the door you have made in it." "What! said the house owner, the door is a defect?" "Yes," replied the other, "because by that door you will have to go out when you are dead, and leave your house and everything you have."

Death, in a word, strips man of all the goods of this world. What a spectacle to see a sovereign thrown out of his own palace, never to return, and consider that others will take possession of the dead man's furniture, treasures and other goods!

The servants leave him in the grave with a suit that scarcely covers the body. There is no one to attend to him or flatter him, or perhaps to respect his last will.

Saladin, who conquered many Asian kingdoms, disposed that, on dying, when his body was to be taken out to burial, a soldier was to precede him bearing a lance on which the deceased's inner tunic was to be hung, and was to cry out: "See here all that Saladin takes with him to the grave."

Once placed in the grave, the sovereign's corpse's flesh falls away, and his mortal remains give no sign to distinguish him from others. "Gaze at the tombs", says Saint Basil, "and you will be unable to tell who was the servant and who the lord."

In the presence of Alexander the Great, Diogenes was one day looking for something very carefully among different human bones. “What are you looking for?” asked Alexander curiously. “I am looking for the cranium of King Philip, your father, and I cannot tell it from the rest. Show it to me, if you can.”

Men are born unequal into the world, but death equals them, says Seneca. And Horace said that death levels sceptres and spades. In a word, when death comes, the end comes, everything finishes, is left behind, and we take nothing with us to the grave of all the things in the world.

Now that the Lord gives you light to know that everything the world esteems is smoke and folly, implore Him for the strength to give it up before death snatches it away. Though you may have forgotten God, He has not forgotten you, and now gives you to understand that He even wants to forget your offences, provided you detest them. Detest them and hate them more than all evil, so that our Redeemer forget the grief with which you have overwhelmed Him. From now on, prefer to lose all, life included, rather than lose His Grace.



Saint Philip II the Great, king of Spain, at the point of death, called his son, and raising the royal blanket covering him, showed him his chest, already gnawed by worms, and told him: “Look, prince, how death comes and all the grandeurs of this world end.” Theodore said well that “death fears neither wealth, nor guards, nor the purple;” and thus from vassals as from sovereigns, “rot is born and putrefaction flows.” So that whoever dies, though a prince, takes nothing with him to the tomb. All his glory ends on his deathbed.

Saint Anthony tells that when reprobate Alexander the Great died, a philosopher exclaimed: “He who trampled the earth underfoot is today pressed down by the earth. Yesterday the whole earth was not wide enough for him; today, with seven spans, he has enough. Yesterday he guided countless armies about the world; today a few gravediggers bear him away to be buried.”

But before all let us hear what God tells us: “Of what is man conceited, he who is nothing but dust and ashes?” (Ecclesiasticus). Why spend your years and your thoughts on acquiring greatness in this world? Death will come and all that greatness and all your plans will end.

How much better was the death of Saint Peter the Hermit, who lived sixty years in a grotto, to that of Nero, emperor of Rome! How much better the death of Saint Felix, Capuchin brother, than that of Henry VIII, who lived in royal splendour, an enemy of God!

But it is vital to observe the Saints who, to attain a like death, abandoned everything: country, delights, and all the hopes the world offered them, and embraced a poor and despised life. They buried themselves alive on earth so as not to be buried in Hell at death. But how can the worldly hope for a happy death living as they do amid sin, earthly pleasures and dangerous occasions?

Reason teaches us that death is the time for just vengeance on the sinner, since at the hour of death the worldly man feels weak in spirit, in darkness, and hard of heart for the evil he has done. Temptations will then be stronger, and whoever in life was used to yielding and letting himself be overcome, how will he resist at that critical moment? He would need an extraordinary, powerful divine grace to have a change of heart. But is God obliged to give him that? Will he perhaps have merited it by the disorderly life he led? Yet now it is a question of eternal disgrace or happiness.

How is it possible that, thinking of this, whoever believes in the truths of Faith does not leave everything to give himself up entirely to God, who will judge us according to our deeds?

In what a miserable state was your soul when stripped of God’s Grace! God loathed it, and you wanted His loathing! You were already condemned to Hell, only the execution of the sentence was wanting. The God of Mercy approached you, inviting you to forgiveness. But who will assure you now that He has forgiven you? Will you have to live with this fear until He comes to judge you? If you feel sincere sorrow for having offended Him, with the firm desire of loving Him, and you follow His Passion with love, you have reason to hope that you are in the Grace of our Redeemer, Saint Alphonsus Mary de Liguori assures. Make up your mind to lose everything rather than lose His grace and love. God wants the heart that seeks Him to feel joy. Detest the offences you have given to the Lord; ask Him to inspire you with confidence and valour. He will no longer reproach your ingratitude, if you yourself recognize and detest it, for the Lord said: “I do not desire the death of the sinner, rather that he be converted and live.”

The happiness of the present life is like a dream of someone who then awakens, for the goods of this world seem great; but are nothing in themselves, and last but a while, like the dream, which soon vanishes.

The idea that everything ends at death inspired Saint Francis Borgia to resolve to give himself up completely to God. They had charged him to accompany the remains of Empress Elizabeth to Granada, and when they opened the coffin, such a horrible sight met their eyes and such a stench was perceived that all those

accompanying her fled. But Saint Francis, enlightened from above, stayed on to contemplate the vanity of this world in that cadaver, considering how she could be his empress Elizabeth, before whom so many great personages had reverently bent the knee. He asked himself what had become of such great majesty and beauty. He then said to himself: "In this the grandeur and crowns of the world end up! Never again shall I serve a master who can die." And from that moment he consecrated himself entirely to the love of the Crucified, and made a vow to enter Religion if his wife were to die before him; and effectively, when he lost her, he entered the Company of Jesus.

Rightly, a disillusioned man wrote on a human skull: "Everything appears vile to whoever thinks on this." Whoever meditates on death cannot love this earth. Why are there so many unhappy lovers of this world?



Because they do not meditate on death.

Miserable children of Adam! Why do you not purge earthly affections from your hearts, in which you love vanity and falsehood? What happened to your forebears will happen to you as well; they lived in your same palace, rested in your bed; they are no longer there, and the same will happen to you; give yourself up to God, then, before death arrives. Do not put off till tomorrow what you can do today; for today passes by without turning back; and in the morning death can come to you, and will let you do nothing.

Without delay rid yourself of all that keeps you or may keep you from God. Let us soon leave behind our attachment to the goods of this earth, before death forcibly snatches them from us. Blessed are those who at death are already dead to earthly affects! They have no fear of death; rather they desire it and embrace it with joy, for instead of separating them from the goods they love, it unites them to the Supreme Good, the only one worthy of love, who will make them forever happy.

If you did not love God before nor cared whether He loved you, love Him now with all your soul, and let your deepest regret be that of having displeased His infinite goodness. May this pain torment you; sweet torment which leads you to hope that you have been forgiven! Better to die a thousand times rather than offend our sweet Saviour! It is preferable that the Lord send us the most dolorous death there can be rather than lose His Grace again.

Saint Teresa of Jesus of Los Andes wrote: "Your daughter suffers with you at Uncle Andrew's death so bitter. I assure you that it made a dreadful impression on me. How death comes by surprise, when not thinking that an eternity follows! Yet papá, let us not mistrust God's mercy which is infinite. One single sigh of his heart is enough for his sins to be forgiven, though to our sight and judgement the opposite appears. Let us trust in God, but also never abuse His infinite love. Hence the best thing is to live in peace with Our Lord, so that if death comes of a sudden it may neither surprise nor terrorize us. What an immense difference exists in the way we think of the death of a Christian, and of one who is not, who only finds emptiness, nothingness, the cold of the tomb. The Christian finds the end of his exile, of his sufferings; the beginning of his eternal joys. In a word he finds His God, who is his Father, who has watched over him at each step he has taken along the path of good and of dolour. There is his Father with arms outstretched to receive him and give him his crown. What peace this gives us in a moment so dreadful as the destruction of our being... How many times I think of what death means to those who live in the world. That moment in which everything concludes seems terrible to them. And for a Carmelite, death has nothing frightening. She is going to live the true life. She is going to fall into the arms of the One she loved on earth above all things. She is going to plunge into eternal love. I would wish to infuse into your soul love for the eternal, for what does not pass away. It is necessary to love always thinking that an eternity awaits us. What does it matter then to suffer and sacrifice ourselves for eighty years, when we thus merit eternal joy?"

Shortness of life: What is our life? It is like a little vapour which the air wafts away and at once ends. We all know that we have to die. But many are deceived, imagining death far away as though it were never to arrive? But human life is so short; for man, living briefly, buds like a flower, and withers. The Lord commands Isaias to announce that same truth; He tells him: "Who are you, to be afraid of mortal man, who is to wither like hay?" Truly the life of man is like that of this plant. Death comes, the hay withers, life ends, and the flower of greatness and earthly goods falls and withers.

Death runs speedily towards us, and at all times we race towards it. 'All this time I am writing,' says Saint Jerome, 'is taken from my life.' We all die, and we slip like water over the earth, which doesn't turn back: see how that stream runs towards the sea; its running waters will not turn back. Thus do your days pass and you approach death. Pleasures, recreation, luxuries, congratulations, praise, all passes on. And what is left to us? "My days are shortening and only the sepulchre awaits me" (Job). We will be buried in the grave, and there we will have to rot, stripped of everything.

In the trauma of death, the memory of the delights we enjoyed in life and the honours acquired will only serve to increase our pain and our uncertainty of attaining eternal salvation. In a while, the unhappy worldly will say: My house, my gardens, that precious furniture, those pictures, those suits, will no longer be for me! 'Only the sepulchre awaits me'.

Ah! Whoever loved the world's goods passionately then looks at them with deep pain! But that pain serves only to increase the danger to his salvation. For experience shows us that such people, attached to the world, not even on their deathbed wish to hear speak of anything other than their illness, of doctors to consult, of medicines which can relieve them.

And hardly do they hear their soul spoken of, they at once become sorrowful and ask to be left to rest, for their head aches and does not allow them a conversation. If perhaps they want to reply, they become confused and know not what to say. And often, if the Confessor gives absolution, it is not because he sees them well disposed, but because there is no time to lose. Thus do those who think but little of death usually die.

What a shame it would be to appear before the presence of the Lord God of Infinite Majesty after having injured His honour so many times, preferring a miserable pleasure, an outburst of rage, a little mud, a caprice, a light smoke, to His Grace! What remains to you after so much offence but anguish, remorse of conscience and demerits for Hell? "I am no longer worthy to be called your son." Though you do not merit the Grace to be called His son, Christ has died to save you. We are unworthy to love Him; but He, who merits so much love, does not despise a contrite heart.

At any moment our life can end. Including while still developing, it is sometimes cut short.

Oh, how many who are weaving the fabric of their lives, ordering and pursuing with foresight their worldly plans, are surprised by death, and it all falls to pieces! At the pallid glow of the failing light, the things of this world grow dim and disappear: applause, pleasures, grandeur and finery.

The great secret of death! She knows how to show us what the world's lovers do not see. The most enviable fortunes, the highest offices, the magnificent triumphs, lose all their splendour when seen from the deathbed. The idea of a certain false happiness which we had forged is then turned into disdain for our own madness. The black shadow of death covers and obscures even royal figures.

Right now the passions present us with the goods of the world very differently to what they are. But death discovers and shows them as they are: smoke, mud, vanity and misery.

Oh, God! What do wealth, dominions and kingdoms count when we are to have no more than a wooden coffin and a shroud that scarcely covers the body?

What do honours matter, if they but give us a funeral cortège or pompous exequies which, if the soul is lost, are an utter waste?

What does bodily beauty count for, if nothing but worms, frightful rot and then a little filthy dust are left?

When that wealthy man, that statesman, that captain dies and is spoken of everywhere, let it be a lesson to us; but if he has lived a bad life, he will then be censured by the people as an example of the world's vanity and of divine justice, and as a warning to many. And in the tomb he will be mixed up with other corpses of the poor. The great and the lowly are there.

What does bodily elegance matter, if later no more than a heap of worms is left? What matters the authority he had, if his remains rot in the tomb, and his soul is cast into the flames of Hell? Oh, what grief to become the object of these reflections, and not to have made them to their own benefit!

Let us be convinced, therefore, that to put right problems of conscience the hour of death if not the right time, but in life. So let us hurry to put into practice at once what unable to do then. All passes away and ends soon. Let us make sure that everything avails us to conquer eternal life.

Well do we know that by sinning we lose God's grace, and we wanted to lose it. What should you do to recover it? Repent with all you heart for your sins, desire death for having committed them, and hope for divine forgiveness.

For the brief and miserable delights of this briefest life, what great madness to risk an unhappy death and by it begin an unhappy eternity! Oh, how great the worth of that supreme instant, that last sigh, that last scene! It is worth an eternity of happiness or of torment. It is worth a life forever happy or forever wretched.

Let us consider that Jesus Christ wanted to die with such bitterness and shame so that we might die a happy death. To this end He so often gives us His callings, His lights, His reprimands and threats, so that we may make every effort to conclude our last minutes in the grace and friendship of God.

Even a gentile, Antisthenes, when asked what was the greatest fortune there was in this world, replied that it was a good death. What then would a Christian say, whom the light of Faith teaches that at death we start out on one of two ways: that of eternal suffering or that of eternal joy?

If in a bag there were two tickets, one headed "Hell" and the other "Glory", and you had to draw one of them out at random to go irremediably to where it said, what care would you take to draw out the one to take you to

Heaven! Those unhappy souls condemned to gamble with their lives, how they would tremble on throwing the dice to decide between life or death! With what fright would you see yourself close to that solemn point at which you would say to yourself: "On this moment depends everlasting life or everlasting death! Now is the time to decide if I will be forever blessed or forever unhappy."

Saint Bernardine of Siena tells of a certain prince who, at the point of death, overcome by fear, said: "I who possess so many lands and palaces in this world, if I die tonight, do not know in which mansion I will go to dwell!"



If you believe that you have to die, that there is an eternity, that we only die once, and that by making a mistake then, the error is forever irreparable without hope of any remedy, how is it that you do not decide, from the moment you read this, to do whatever you can to be assured of a good death?

Saint Andrew Avelino trembled on saying: "Who knows the fate reserved to me in the other life, whether I save myself or damn myself?" Saint Louis Beltran so trembled that for many nights he was unable to fall asleep, overwhelmed by the thought telling him: "Who knows if you will damn yourself?"

And you, guilty of so many sins, have you no fear? Do not delay, put things right; make the resolution to give yourself completely to God, and begin, even now, a life that may not cause you affliction, rather consolation at the hour of death. Dedicate yourself to prayer; frequent the Sacraments; keep away from dangerous occasions; and even abandon the world, if necessary, to assure your salvation; understanding that when dealing with this, never can you be confident.

What gratitude we owe to our beloved Saviour! How has He been able to lavish so many graces on a traitor so thankless to Him? He created us, and on creating us already saw how many offences we were to commit. He redeemed us, dying for us, and already then perceived all the ingratitude we were to heap upon Him. Then, in our lives in the world, many of us went far from Him, like dead men, like unclean animals, and Jesus, by His grace, has brought us back to life. We were blind, and He has given light to our eyes. We had lost Him, and He made us find Him again. We were His enemies, and He gave us His friendship.

Certainty of death: "For men it is established that they die once only, and then judgement" (Hebrews). Sentence of death has been decreed for all humankind: "By the sweat of your brow will you eat your bread, until you return to the earth from which you were taken: because dust you are and unto dust you will return" (Genesis). Man has to die. Saint Augustine said: "Death alone is certain; all the other goods and evils are uncertain." "Ponder frequently that death already existed before you, and that it will continue to befall men after you depart from this life, since it is a sentence passed by God on all mortals as chastisement for sin" (Ecclesiasticus).

There is no way of knowing whether that child just born will be rich or poor, if he will have good or bad health, if he will die young or old. It is all uncertain, but there is no doubt that he is to die. Magnates and kings will also be mown down by the scythe of death, whose power none can resist. It is possible to resist fire, water, iron, the power of princes, but not death.

Vincent of Beauvais tells that a king of France, finding himself at the end of his life, cried out: "With all my power I cannot make death wait a single hour for me." When this trauma arrives, not for a moment can we hold it back.

After the sin of Adam and Eve, God decreed that both them, as all fallen mankind, be deprived of the privileges of Earthly Paradise and be subject to death, until the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom. In May 1970, the Most Holy Virgin Mary said in Palmar: "My children: keep watch, the day of Judgement is nigh; but beforehand He will show Himself full of mercy as the Good God He is. I do not tell you either the day or the hour, for they are not mine to reveal, until the Heavenly Father decides. Once the Lord has arrived, everything will be different. There will be peace, as sin will be swept away; therefore, there will be no sickness, nor suffering; and death and decay will be abolished, as there will be a glorious transit from one life to the other. The People of God will never again have any temptation to sin, as Satan will be buried in Hell for ages without end. Well then, My children, to attain this happiness, prayer and penance are needed; and the purification of the world by fire is required, which the Heavenly Father will send to put an end to the perverse; but those who take shelter beneath My Mantle will be unharmed. I will be the sure refuge to shelter My children."

During the three days preceding Christ's Second Coming, God will chastise mankind terribly. The Universe will be purified, and all evil men will die, though many, by the chastisement, will repent and attain eternal salvation, while antichrist and his infernal hosts will draw down to Hell those who die in final impenitence.

God will preserve the majority of His elect from death; but part of them will die, to save many sinners by the sacrifice of their lives. Those who survive will be confirmed in Grace, and will enter the Messianic Kingdom of absolute peace on the renewed Earth.

But meanwhile, though you live as many years as you wish, a day has to come, and on that day an hour, which will be the last for you. As much for me, who am writing, as for you, who are reading, the day and time at which neither I can write, nor you read further is decreed.



Who is the man who will live and not see death? The sentence is given. Seldom has there been a man so foolish as to forge the illusion that he was to live forever on earth, for including those of the Messianic Kingdom are there only in passing, because without knowing death they will pass on to Heaven following a gentle dormition.

What occurred to your forebears will happen to you as well. Of all those who lived in your country at the start of the previous century, not a single one is alive. Statesmen and monarchs too left this world. Nothing remains of them other than a marble tomb and a pompous inscription, as a lesson for us today, making it clear that only a little dust behind those

slabs remains of the great ones of this world.

Saint Bernard asks: “Tell me, where are the lovers of this world?” And replies: “Nothing remains of them but ashes and worms.” It is essential then that we seek, not the fortune that perishes, but one that has no end, for our souls are immortal. What is the use of being happy on earth (though true happiness cannot exist in a soul living apart from God), if afterwards you are to be eternally unhappy? You have already prepared a home to your liking. Think that you will soon leave it to be consumed in the tomb. You have perhaps gained a post which raises you above the rest of men. But death will arrive and level you down to the basest churls in the world.

Unhappy you, if for so many years you have solely thought of offending God! Those years passed; maybe your death is now close, and you feel nothing within but remorse and dolour. Ah! If you had always served the Lord! How mad you were all those years you have lived. Instead of gathering merits for the other life, to have piled up debts with divine justice! Perhaps your death is not far away, and it is well to prepare yourself for that decisive moment: your eternal bliss or woe. The Lord wants you to employ these remaining years or days in loving Him: do so. If now, at least, your life does not change, how will you be able to hope for forgiveness and win glory at death? Make the firm resolve then truly to dedicate yourself to serving Him from now on. Commend yourself to Mary, our Mother, Refuge and Hope, and give Her your soul.

It is certain that we are all condemned to die. We are all born, says Saint Cyprian, with the rope about our necks; and each step we take, is another one closer to death.

Saint Alphonsus Mary developed this thought: Just as you are written into the baptismal register, so one day you will be written into the book of the deceased. Just as you sometimes mention your ancestors saying: “My father, my brother, of happy memory, or, may he rest in peace”, the same will your descendants say of you. Just as you have often heard the bells tolling for others, so the rest will hear them tolling for you.

What would you say of someone who, condemned to death went out to execution mockingly, laughing, looking about on every side, thinking of shows, celebrations and entertainments? And you, are you too not on your way to death? And where do your thoughts turn? Meditate on those tombs of your relatives and friends, whose sentence has already been carried out.

What terror must the condemned convict feel when he sees his companions hanging from the gibbet already dead! Look at those cadavers; each says: “Yesterday, me; today, you.” The portraits of those who were your relatives, repeat the same, as do the books, homes, beds and clothing you have inherited.

What utter folly not to think of settling our soul’s accounts and not employing the means necessary to die a good death, knowing that we have to die, that after death an eternity of bliss or woe awaits us, and that on this depends our forever being happy or forever wretched.

We feel compassion for those who die a sudden death without preparation; and yet we ourselves take no steps to prepare, though the same could happen to us. Sooner or later, forewarned or unawares, thinking of it or not, we have to die, and at every hour and at all times we are nearer our gibbet, namely the last illness which will send us packing out of this world.

Each century new inhabitants dwell in houses, plazas and cities. The previous ones are in the tomb. And just as the days of their life ended for them, so will the time come when neither you, nor I, nor anyone now alive will be living in this world. We will all be in eternity, which for us will be either an everlasting day of joy, or an

eternal night of pain. There is no middle way. It is quite certain and our Faith tells us that, at the end, one or other destiny will be ours.

Who would dare to present himself before our dear Redeemer, if he did not see Him lacerated, mocked and dead for us upon the Cross? Great is our ingratitude, but even greater His mercy. Very great are our sins, but greater still His merits. We deserve Hell scarcely having committed our first mortal sin. We have offended God again and again a thousand times. And He has not only preserved our life, but with supreme piety and love has offered us forgiveness and peace. How can we fear that He will hurl us from His presence now, if we truly love Him and desire nothing more than His grace? Yes. Let us love Our Lord with all our hearts, and let our one longing be to love Him. Let us adore Him and be sorry for having offended Him, not so much for the Hell we deserved as for having despised Him, our God, who loves us so.

Death is certain. How then, O God, can so many Christians who know it, believe it, and see it, live so forgetful of death as if they never had to die? If after this life there were neither glory nor hell, could they think less of death than they do now? Hence the bad lives they lead.

If you want to live well, make sure to live the rest of your days with the thought of death. Oh, how rightly they judge and conduct themselves who judge and are guided by the idea that they must die!

The remembrance of death, says Saint Lawrence Justinian, makes us lose attachment to all earthly things. All the goods of this world are encompassed in sensual pleasures, riches and honours, as Apostle Saint John explains. But whoever considers that shortly he will become dust and be food for worms below ground, feels scorn for all those goods. And truly, the Saints, thinking of death, despised earthly goods. That is why Saint Charles Borromeo always kept a human skull on his table to contemplate often. Cardinal Baronius had these two words engraved on his ring: "Memento mori: Remember you must die". Venerable Peter Ancina, Bishop of Saluzzo, had written on a skull: "As you are, I was; as I am, you too will be."

A holy hermit, asked at the hour of death why he appeared so cheerful, replied: "I have fixed my eyes so often on death that now, when it is close, I see nothing new."

What madness it would be for a traveller to try to make a show of grandeur and luxury in the places he was passing through, and not give a thought to being later reduced to living miserably in his own home the rest of his life! And is he not a lunatic who tries to be happy in this world, where he has to stay for a few days, and expose himself to be wretched in the other, where he will live eternally?

Whoever has borrowed something feels little attachment to it, because he knows that shortly he has to return it. The goods of this earth are lent to us, and it is great folly to love them, given that soon we have to leave them.

Death strips us of everything. All our properties and wealth end with our last breath, with the funeral, with the journey to the grave. You will soon cede the house you built to others, and the tomb will be your body's abode till the day of judgement, in which it will pass on to Heaven or Hell, wherever your soul has already gone.



All, then, has to end for you at the hour of death. Nothing will remain to you but the little you have done for love of God. What are you waiting for? That death come and find you so miserable and charged with faults as you are now? If in this instant you die, examine yourself to see if you will die in anguished distress and deeply unhappy with your past life. Don't die like that. From now on decide to begin, to leave the mire of tepidity. Thank God for having given you time to love Him and weep over your faults.

Uncertainty of the hour of death: "Be on the alert, then: for at the hour you least expect the Son of Man will come." It is quite certain that we all have to die, but we know not when. Nothing is more certain than death, yet nothing more uncertain than the hour of death. The year, the month, the hour and the instant at which you will have to leave this world and enter eternity are decided; but we do not know. Our Lord Jesus Christ, so that we may be always well prepared, tells us that death will come stealthily like a thief in the night. At other times He exhorts us to be always on the watch, for at the moment we least expect He Himself will come to judge us.

Saint Gregory I said that God conceals the hour of death from us for our own good, with the aim that we may be always prepared to die. And given that death can take us at any time and place, it is necessary, says Saint Bernard, that if we want to die well and be saved, then we must expect it at every time and place.

Saint Alphonsus Mary de Liguori says that no one is unaware that he has to die, but the evil is that many see death so far away that they lose sight of it. Even the most decrepit elderly and the sickest forge the illusion that they still have three or four more years to live. I, on the other hand, say that we should consider how many sudden deaths we see every day. Some die walking, others sitting, others sleeping in their beds. And surely not

one of them believed he would die so unexpectedly, the day he died. I affirm besides that of those who died this year in bed, and not suddenly, not one of them thought that his life would end that year. Expected deaths are few.

So then, when the devil provokes you to sin with the proviso that you confess the next morning, tell him: How do I know whether today is not the last of my life? If this hour, this moment I turn away from God were the last for me, and there be no time to remedy it, what would become of me in eternity?

How many poor sinners, while they enjoyed poisoned food, death surprised and sent them to Hell? As fish on a fish-hook, so will men be taken, and perhaps at the moment when the sinner is offending God. And if the devil tells you that such a misfortune will not happen to you, answer him yourselves: “And if it does happen to me, what will become of me for all eternity.”

Saint Peter warns that the Lord “awaits with great patience, for love of men, before coming as Supreme Judge, since He does not wish any sinner to perish, but that all be converted to penance and be saved.” Jesus, being innocent, wanted, like a culprit, to die on a Cross and shed all His Blood to wash away penitents’ guilt.

The Lord does not want us to be lost, and so with the threat of chastisement, does not cease to warn us to change our lives. If we are not converted, He will unsheathe His sword.

Look, as the Lord says, how many unfortunates, who would not amend, were surprised by an unprovided death, when least expected, when living in peace, glorying in the long years they still had to live. He tells us as well: “If you do not do penance, you will all likewise perish.”

Why so many warnings of chastisements before sending one, if not because He want us to amend and avoid a bad death? Whoever warns us to be on the watch has no intention to kill us, says Saint Augustine.

It is necessary then to prepare our accounts before the day to render them arrives. If tonight you should die, and therefore have your life judged and eternally sentenced, would you be well prepared? What would you give, perhaps, to obtain from God one year, one month, just one day more?

Well, since God grants you time, why not sort out your conscience now? Will this perhaps be your last day? “Do not defer your conversion to the Lord, putting it off from one day to the next; because His Anger will come unexpectedly, and on the day of vengeance will put an end to you” (Ecclesiasticus).

To save yourself, my brother, you should abandon sin. And if some day you have to abandon it, why not right now? Are you waiting, perhaps, for death to approach? Yet that moment for the obstinate is not a time for forgiveness, but for vengeance. “On the day of vengeance I will put an end to you.”

If someone owes you a considerable sum, you soon try to assure payment, and make the debtor sign a written receipt; saying: ‘Who knows what can happen?’ Why, then, do you not use as much precaution when dealing with the soul, which is worth far more than money? How is it that you do not likewise say: ‘Who knows



what can happen?’ If you lose that sum, you have not lost everything; and even when by losing it nothing is left of your patrimony, there is still the hope of recovering it again. But if on dying you lose your soul, then truly you have lost everything, without hope of recovery.

You take great care to bequeath all the goods you possess out of fear of losing them if an unforeseen death occurs, or take out life insurance. And if that sudden death were to occur when not in God’s Grace, what would become of your soul in eternity?

Your Redeemer has given you life in order for you to save your soul, and you, trusting in His mercy, have perhaps given yourself up to perdition many times, and thus made use of His own Goodness to offend Him, thereby deserving Hell. Perhaps

you have even challenged Him: Jesus, by force of piety; you, by force of sins; He, giving you time to remedy the evil you have done; you, employing that time to add insult to injury. Acknowledge the great offence you have given Him and the obligation you have to love Him. How come Jesus gives so many graces to someone who offends Him in that way? Ask the Good Shepherd to receive this thankless little sheep returning to His feet; to receive it and set it on His shoulders never to flee again. Do not seek to separate yourself from Him, but love Him and be His. What greater pain can afflict you than to live without His grace, far from your Lord and God, who created you and died for you? Just as Jesus died for you, you should die for Him. He died out of love. You should die out of remorse for having offended Him.

“Be on the watch.” The Lord does not tell us to prepare when death comes along, but that we be “at the ready”, already prepared. In the trauma of death, amid that storm and confusion, it is almost impossible to sort out a tangled conscience. Our reason tells us this. And thus God warns us, saying that He will not then come to forgive, but to avenge the scorn we have shown for His Grace.

Just chastisement, says Saint Augustine, for one who, when able to amend, did not wish to, that he be unable to save himself.

Perhaps someone may say: 'Who knows? It might happen that I may then be converted and saved.' But would you throw yourself down a well saying: 'Who knows? Perhaps by throwing myself down here I will yet live and not die?' O my God! What is this? How sin blinds us and makes us lose even our reason! Men speak wisely when talking of the body; and crazily when talking of the soul.

Who knows if this last point you have read be the last warning God sends you? Let us prepare without delay for death, so as not to be caught unawares.

Saint Augustine says that the Lord conceals the last hour of life with the object that we be ready every day to die. We should work out our salvation not just fearfully, but trembling. Saint Paul warns us: "Labour with love and fear in the work of your salvation".

Saint Antonine tells of a certain king of Sicily who, to show a favourite of his the great fear with which he sat on the throne, made him sit at table beneath a sword hanging by a fine thread over his head. Thus the favourite, seeing himself in that dangerous predicament, could scarcely touch his food. Well, we are all in like danger, since at any instant the sword of death can fall upon us, and the business of our eternal salvation be settled.

It is a question of eternity. If death finds us in grace, what joy will the soul experience, seeing that she is safe, and can no longer lose God, and will be happy forever. But if death surprises the soul in sin, what despair will the sinner experience, saying: I fell into error, my mistake will be forever irreparable! At this fear, Saint John of Ávila, apostle of Spain, when told that he was to die, said: "Oh, if I had a little more time to prepare for death!" Likewise Abbot Agathon, though he died after performing many years of penance, said: "What will become of me? Who knows God's judgements?"

Saint Arsenius too trembled at the hour of death. As his disciples asked why so much fear, he replied: "My sons, this fear is nothing new in me; I have had it all my life." This thought ought to make anyone tremble: What to do when God rises up to judge me, and what to reply when He questions me?"

Who has loved us more than God? And who has despised and offended Him more than ourselves? The Holy



Face of Christ has to be our hope, so that the Eternal Father may not look at our sins, but at the Holy Face of Jesus Christ; that He look at His beloved Son, who dies for us from dolour and asks Him to forgive us. More than any ill, we should be pained at having offended our Creator. He created us so that we might love Him, and we have lived as if we had been created to offend Him. No, no more let us make use of our lives for offending Him, but to weep for the offences we have given Him and love Him dearly.

The Palmarian Creed teaches that it is decreed unto men to die once only, and that the life of man in this world ends with death. Death takes place in two stages: The first is clinical death, when the accidental body separates from the soul and the essential body. The second is

true death, when the essential body separates from the soul. In the majority of cases, several minutes elapse between the two deaths. At true death the time of merit or demerit ends for man, and eternal life or eternal death begins. Particular Judgment occurs between clinical death and true death. In the presence of Christ, Supreme Judge, the Particular Judgment of each soul united to his essential body takes place in four distinct moments, in the following order: First, Satan's deceitful discourse, to seduce the soul, in order that she damn herself eternally. Second, the Divine Mary's discourse, to give the opportunity of salvation to whoever reaches clinical death in mortal sin; and to anticipate heavenly joy to whoever reaches clinical death in the state of Grace. Third, the acceptance or rejection of salvation by whoever is being judged. Fourth, the sentence of Christ: Saved, for whoever accepted salvation; damned, for whoever rejected salvation. Immediately after sentence, true death occurs, when the soul and the essential body separate. At true death the soul goes to its eternal destiny: Heaven, if saved and without prior need of purification in Purgatory; Hell, if damned. O Particular Judgment, mysterious and merciful last opportunity for salvation, given by Christ to each human being at the hour of death!

Let us not have the mad presumption to leave our salvation for the moment of clinical death, imagining that we will surely save ourselves at that mysterious and merciful last opportunity for salvation at the hour of death.

The death of the sinner: Sinners reject the remembrance and the thought of death, and seek to find peace (which they never do) by living in sin. But when they see eternity closing in, and with it the anguish of death, they find no way to flee from the torment of their bad conscience, nor the peace they seek, for how is a soul to find it when full of transgressions recoiling against him like vipers? What peace can they enjoy thinking that shortly they are to appear before Christ the Judge, whose law and friendship they have so miserably scorned? What confusion they will feel!

The announcement of death the sinner now receives, the idea that he has forever to abandon the things of this world, the remorse of conscience, the time lost, the little time left, the rigour of God's judgement, the unhappy eternity awaiting the sinner, all this stirs up frightful storms which overwhelm and confound the spirit and increase lack of confidence. Thus, confused and desperate, the dying man will pass on to the other life.

Abraham, trusting in the divine word, hoped in God against all human hope, and by so doing acquired extraordinary merit. But sinners, to their ruin, lose merit and go astray when they hope, not only against all rational hope, but also against Faith, given that they scorn the threats which God addresses to obstinate souls. They fear a bad death, but have no fear of leading a bad life.

And, besides, who assures them that they will not die suddenly, e.g. struck by lightning. Though in that trauma they have time for conversion, who can assure that they will really be converted.

Saint Augustine had to struggle for twelve years before overcoming his sinful inclinations. So how then can a dying man, who has had his conscience almost always stained, easily make a true conversion, amid the pain, the faintness and the confusion of death?

I say 'true' conversion, for words and promises from the lips will not be enough, rather it is essential that words and promises come from the heart. O God! What confusion and fright, that of the poor sick man who has neglected his conscience, when he finds himself overwhelmed by faults, fear of judgement, of hell and of eternity! In what confusion and anguish will he be at such thoughts when he finds himself fainting, his mind in darkness and attacked by the pains of imminent death! He will confess, promise, groan, ask God for pardon, but without knowing what he does; and amid this storm of anxiety, remorse, distress and fear, will pass on to the other life.

An author says well that the supplications, sobbing and promises of the dying sinner are like those of someone attacked by an enemy who places a dagger to his chest to take his life. Unhappy the man not in the Grace of God who passes from the sickbed to eternity!

The wounds of Jesus are our hope. We would have to despair of pardon for our faults and of reaching eternal salvation if we did not have Jesus' Wounds as fountains of grace and mercy, by which God shed all His Blood to wash our souls of the so very many sins we have committed. Most Loving Jesus merits that all men love Him with all their heart. What torment would we suffer in Hell on seeing the Blood shed by Christ and the acts of mercy He made for us!

Not just one, but many, will be the anxieties of the poor dying sinner. He will be tormented by devils, because in that trauma these horrendous enemies deploy all their forces to cause the loss of the soul on the point of leaving this life. They know that they have little time to snatch him away, and that if they lose him then, he will never be theirs.

There will not be just one, but numberless devils, who will surround the dying man to damn him. One will say, 'have no fear, you will get better.' Another will exclaim, 'do you, who for so many years were deaf to God's voice, hope that He will have pity on you now?' Another asks, 'how can you undo the harm you did, give back the good names you took away?' Lastly, another will say, 'can't you see that all your confessions were invalid, with no sorrow for sin, with no purpose of amendment? How can you possibly renew them now?'

On the other hand, the dying man will see himself surrounded by his sins. These sins, like so many other executioners, says Saint Bernard, will seize him and say, 'we are your doing, and will not leave you. We will go with you to the other life, and with you present ourselves to the Eternal Judge.'

The one about to die will then want to free himself from those enemies and convert to God with all his heart. But his spirit will be full of darkness and his heart hardened. "The man of obstinate heart will fare badly on the day of judgement; and whoever loves danger will perish in it" (Ecclesiasticus).

Saint Bernard affirms that the sinner obstinate in evil during life will struggle to avoid the state of damnation, but will not succeed in freeing himself; and, oppressed by his own malice, will end his life in that same state. Having loved sin, he also loved the danger of damnation. And so the Lord will justly permit him to perish in that danger, in which he wanted to live until death.

Saint Augustine says that one who does not abandon sin before sin abandons him, with difficulty can detest it as he should at the hour of death, since all that he does then will be under pressure.

How unhappy is the obstinate sinner who resists the divine voice! The ungrateful man, instead of yielding and being touched by God's call, is further hardened, as the anvil at the blows of the hammer. And in just chastisement, will remain thus at the hour of death, at the gates of eternity.

Look at your soul, perhaps full of sin: passions rising up, bad habits oppressing you. Ask your beloved Saviour to have pity on you and free you from all evil. Hope in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, so that you be not confounded eternally, since He will not permit a soul that trusts in Him to be lost.

For love of creatures, sinners turn their backs on the Lord. At death they will turn to God and He will tell them, 'you turn to me now? Ask help from creatures, for they have been your gods.' The Lord will say that to them, for though they turn to Him, it will not be with true conversion. Saint Jerome said that he held it as certain, as experience had shown him, that whoever lives a bad life up to the end will not have a good death.

God does not cease to warn the sinner with the chastisement of a bad death, as Sacred Scripture states: "And with holy fury and warranted indignation, I will exercise My just vengeance" (Micheas). "My just vengeance shall be poured out like water, and My justice like an impetuous torrent" (Amos). "The Lord will exercise vengeance and will arm Himself with fury against His enemies" (Nahum). "We well know that vengeance is reserved to God and that it is He who is to wreak that vengeance when He judges those who work iniquity. It is a fearful thing to incur the Just Wrath of the living God" (Hebrews).

It says the same in other places; and all said, sinners live on tranquilly and secure, as though God had promised them pardon and glory for the hour of death. It is known that, at whatever hour the sinner converts, God will forgive him, for so has He offered. But He has not said that the sinner will be converted at the point of death. Rather, He has often repeated that whoever lives in sin will die in sin; for if only at death the sinner seeks Him, he will not find Him unless perhaps by a miracle.

It is necessary, then, to seek God when it is still possible to find Him, for a time will come when we shall be unable to find Him. Poor sinners! Poor blind who fool themselves with the hope of being converted at the hour of death, when they will no longer be able! Saint Ambrose says: "The impious did not learn to act rightly until there was no longer time." God wants to save us all; but chastises the obstinate.

If any wretch in sin were suddenly to have an accident in which he loses his senses, what compassion would that not arouse among those who saw him at the point of death without receiving the Sacraments or showing contrition! And what jubilation later in all if the man came to himself and asked for absolution for his faults and made acts of repentance!



But is he not a madman who, having the time to do all this, continues to live in sin, or goes back to sin and places himself in the danger that death surprise him when quite possibly he cannot repent? It shocks us to see someone die suddenly, and yet many voluntarily expose themselves to dying thus in sin.

The judgements of the Lord are like weights in a scales: "You have been weighed in the balance and found wanting in good works" (Daniel). We do not keep accounts of the graces God gives us; but He does, counting and measuring them, and seeing them scorned beyond the limits fixed by His justice, abandons the sinner to his sins, and leaves him so to die.

Unhappy the man who puts off conversion till the last day! "The penance asked of a sick man is also sick," says Saint Augustine. And Saint Vincent Ferrer affirmed that the salvation of one such sinner living in sin until death comes, would be a greater miracle than the resurrection of a dead man.

What repentance can be hoped for at the death of someone who lived loving sin until that moment? Saint Bellarmine refers that, attending a dying man and having exhorted him to make an act of contrition, the sick man replied that he did not know what contrition was. Saint Robert Bellarmine tried to explain it to him, but the patient said: "Father, I don't understand, nor am I now capable of such things." And thus he died, "giving visible signs of damnation", as Saint Robert Bellarmine wrote. Just chastisement of the sinner, Saint Augustine says, on dying to forget himself who in life forgot God.

"Do not seek to deceive one another, as no one mocks God. Because whatever a man sows, that shall he reap as well; hence whoever now sows to excite his fleshly appetites will afterwards reap fruit of eternal death" (Galatians). It would be a mockery of God to live scorning His laws and then win eternal recompense and glory. But God cannot be mocked.

Whatever we sow in this life, we will reap in the other; whoever sows here forbidden carnal pleasure, will then reap nothing but unending corruption, misery and death.

My Christian, whatever is said for others, is said for you as well. If you see yourself at the point of death, given up by the doctors, deprived of the use of the senses and already agonizing, how much would you not pray to God to grant you a month, a week more of life to settle your accounts of conscience?

Well, God grants you this time now. Give Him a thousand thanks, put right the evil you have done soon, and employ all the means necessary to be in grace when death arrives, for then there will be no more time to remedy that.

Who, then, but God could have had all the patience He has shown you? If His goodness were not infinite, we would have to doubt whether we would win forgiveness. But God died to forgive you and save you; and in Him you have to hope. If your sins shock you and condemn you, the merits and promises of the Lord inspire you with courage. He promised the life of grace to whoever returns to His arms. "Be converted, and do penance for all your wrongdoing. For I do not desire the death of the sinner, rather that he be converted and live" (Ezekiel). He promised to embrace whoever turned to Him: "Be converted to Me and I shall turn back to you." (Zacharias).

Whoever reached clinical death in mortal sin, receives the deceitful discourse of Satan to seduce the soul, in order that it be eternally damned. Then he receives the discourse of the Divine Mary, which is to indoctrinate, convert, and thus give him the possibility to save himself. Thanks to the discourse of the Divine Mary, no one saves or damns himself without having known the true Faith, since outside the true Church there is no possible salvation. Next, the person judged has to decide his eternal destiny, since if he accepts the discourse of the Divine Mary rejecting Satan's, all his mortal and venial sins will be forgiven, he will receive Sanctifying Grace, will be confirmed in Grace and will be saved. But if he accepts the discourse of Satan rejecting the Divine Mary's, he will be confirmed in disgrace and will damn himself. Once the soul in judgement determines his eternal destiny, Christ, as Supreme Judge, passes sentence: Salvific, if the soul accepted the discourse of the Divine Mary, rejecting Satan's; but damnatory if the soul accepted the discourse of Satan, rejecting the Divine Mary's. Immediately after the sentence comes real death, when soul and essential body separate.

Sentiments of a dying person unaccustomed to practising meditation on death: Imagine that you are beside a sick person who has but a few hours to live. Poor sick person! See how pain oppresses and distresses him, with faints, loss of consciousness, suffocation, breathlessness, cold sweats and weakness, to the point that he scarcely feels, or understands, or speaks.

And his greatest misfortune consists in that, being now so close to death, instead of thinking of his soul and preparing accounts for eternity, he only deals with doctors and remedies to free him from the ailment which is ending his life. "They are only capable of thinking of themselves" says Saint Lawrence Justinian on speaking of such cases. But are there not at least relatives and friends to show him the dangerous state in which he finds himself? No, there is not one amongst them all who dares to give him the news of his death and warn him that he should receive the holy Sacraments. All avoid telling him, so as not to trouble him! (Religious should give a thousand thanks to God that at the hour of death his beloved brethren of the Order, who without any interest other than his salvation, all help him to die well.)

Meanwhile, and though death has not been announced to him, the poor patient, seeing the family's confusion, the doctors' talking, the different, frequent and heroic remedies they apply, is filled with anguish and terror, amid continuous assaults of fear, mistrust and remorse, and suspects that the end of his days has arrived. What will he not feel when, in the end, he is given the news that he is to die? When they tell him: 'Settle things at home, for you are to die and not live.'

What grief will he feel to know that his illness is mortal, that it is urgent for him to receive the Sacraments, to make peace with God and say farewell to the world! Say farewell to the world! How so? Has he to bid farewell to all: home, town, relatives, friends, conversations, games, pleasures? Yes, everything. He will be told before notary, now present, to write this goodbye with the formula: 'I bequeath' to so-and-so; 'I bequeath'. And for himself, what will he take? Only a poor shroud, which will gradually decay in the tomb with his corpse.

Oh, what distress and sadness will bring him the tears of his family, the silence of his friends who, mute beside him, have no will even to speak.

Yet greater will be the anguish brought to the dying man by remorse of conscience, now very lively, owing the disorderly life he led, after so many callings and divine lights, after so many warnings given by spiritual fathers, and so many resolutions made, but not fulfilled or soon forgotten.

'Alas for me!' the dying man will say, 'with so many lights from God, so much time to settle my conscience, and I did not! And now I find myself at the point of death! What would it have cost me to fly from that occasion, cut that friendship short, confess every week? And though it were to have cost me dearly, should I not have done it all to save my soul, which matters more than anything? Oh, if I had carried out that good resolution I made, if I had followed on as I began then, how happy I would be now! But I did not, and now is not the time to start.'

The sentiments of those at the point of death who in life forgot their conscience are similar to those condemned to Hell who, without fruit or remedy, bewail their sins, cause of their chastisement.

Perhaps these sentiments and regrets would be yours if at this moment they told you of your approaching demise. Make up your mind to change, to renounce all worldly pleasure and love and serve God alone. And given that the Lord has shown you great proofs of His love, resolve to offer Him some show of your love. From now on, accept all the sicknesses and crosses which God sends you, all the mishaps and the disdain men show you, and ask for the strength to bear it all in peace, for love of God.

It is well to cite here what We said in our Thirteenth Apostolic Letter, when We spoke of putting off conversion: How many sinners are blind regarding their state of soul, and hope to perform that which they will not have the chance to do when they want!... Someone who has spent his life rejecting the graces and opportunities God has been giving him over the years, and continues hardened in his depraved morals, what will he do at the moment of death, when the assaults of the devil are fiercer than ever? Will he make an act of perfect love for God? He will only do so by a miracle of grace. And if he thinks of doing so at that moment, why not now? Or is it that he seeks to mock Divine Justice, and offend God shamelessly in the vain hope that God will have to forgive him at the moment of death? That is called presumption, and is a sin against the Holy Ghost, the same as despair, obstinacy in sin or deliberate impenitence. However much longer one remains in sin, so much the more difficult it is to abandon it. The heart hardens, and becomes insensible to its perdition. God continues giving graces for the sinner to save himself, if he responds to them; but he has to have sincere and humble contrition and change his life. God, infinitely merciful, is always ready to forgive, be there true repentance and amendment. But if the sinner continues scorning the graces God offers him, the best resolutions will be fruitless.

There were sinners who lived in sin and in pleasure who had constantly promised to die a good death and make reparation for all the evil committed in life. They did not abandon their bad habits; they felt lacking in strength. Yet now the time of death arrives for one of them. It is urgent to start what he never wanted to do, if he does not wish to die in that state. If he wants conversion, he will have to leave sin before true death; it will be urgent now to do what he should have done in good health. He will have to detest his sins, which have set down such deep roots in his heart that they overcome all the efforts he makes to uproot them, unless by an extraordinary grace. Yes, a true miracle is needed for one who has lived many years doing everything to gratify his love of self, without ever having done scarcely anything to please God, to die now making an act of perfect love for God. But this sinner, who has despised all the graces God granted him in life, is so hardened in his sins that now too he turns his back on God so as not to see Him and stops up his ears so as not to expose himself to divine love. If he has made neither devout prayers, nor good Confessions, nor good Communions, and has lived in sin scorning the time and the graces God granted him, how is he going to change and repent sincerely with an act of perfect contrition? The soul so deep in crime, prefers to go and burn in the abyss, rather than go up to



Heaven, into the presence of a God so pure, of Infinite Sanctity. Saint Catherine of Genoa says that the divine presence is so unimaginably pure and full of light, that a soul with the least imperfection would rather plunge itself into a thousand hells rather than appear thus in God's presence, and accepts Purgatory willingly and thankfully, conscious that the suffering matters little compared to the impediment of sin. But the soul, stained, disfigured and vitiated by mortal sin, hurls herself into Hell, to hide as it were from God. What miracle of grace is needed for that soul not to be carried away by despair, rather to humble herself deeply and ask forgiveness from God and be converted.

Oh, how brightly the truths of Faith shine at the point of death for the greater torment of the dying man who has lived a bad life; above all if he has been consecrated to God and has therefore had greater opportunities and time to serve Him, more inspirations and better examples!

O God! What pain will he feel on thinking and saying: I have admonished others and have acted worse than they; I left the world, and have then lived captivated by vanity and love of the world! What remorse he will feel on considering that with the graces God gave him, not only a Christian, but even a gentile would have been sanctified! How great his grief to remember that he scorned pious practices, as though fruits of spiritual weakness, and praised certain worldly sayings, fruits of love of self and of personal prestige, so as not to humble himself, nor mortify himself, nor avoid the entertainments offered him! How will death be for so very many apostates!

What will be the desire of sinners at the hour of death? How at death we would want to have the time we now lose! Saint Gregory I in his 'Dialogues' tells of a certain Chrisantium, a rich man, of bad habits, who at the hour of death, addressing the demons who visibly appeared to snatch him away with them, exclaimed: "Give me time, give me time till tomorrow!" And they replied: "Insensate! You ask for time now? Time you had, and

lost it, and spent it in sinning; and now you ask for time when for you there is no more?" The wretched man went on crying out for help and assistance. Close by there was a friar, a son of his, called Maximus, and the dying man said: "Help me, son, Maximus, attend to me!" And meanwhile, with face red like flames he rolled about furiously in bed, until, greatly agitated and crying out in despair, he expired miserably.

See how these insensates love their madness while they live; but at death open their eyes and recognize their past insanity. Yet this only serves to increase their lack of confidence in remedying the harm done. And dying thus, they leave great doubts regarding their salvation.

I believe that on reading this point you will tell yourself that this is a great truth. Well if it is, so much the greater will be your insanity if, knowing these truths, you do not amend in time. What you have just read will be like a fresh stab of pain for you at the hour of death.

Be of good heart, then, for you are in time to avoid such a frightful death. Quickly make use of the remedy, without waiting, as opportune, for that occasion which offers no hope. Don't leave conversion for another month or even another week.

Who knows whether this light, which God in His mercy grants you, may not be the last light, the last calling He gives you? It is folly not to think of death, which is certain, and on which depends eternity. Yet greater folly still is to think of death and not prepare to die well. Make now the reflections and resolutions you would make if you were at that point. What you do now you will do with fruit, but at that hour it may be in vain. Now, with the hope of salvation; then, unsure of attaining salvation.

On taking his leave of Charles V, a personage who was abandoning the world to dedicate himself to serving God, was asked by the emperor his reason for leaving court. And he replied: "To be saved it is necessary to spend time in penance between a disorderly life and the hour of death."

Do not dare to abuse divine mercy further. Give thanks to God for the lights with which He illumines you now, and promise to change your life, because God does not bear with ingratitude. Have you perhaps to wait for Him to send you to Hell, or abandon you to a life of laxity, a worse chastisement than death itself? The Lord said to Ezechiel: "'Do I by chance desire the death of the godless, and not that he be converted and live?'" And also: "If one who was godless were later to do penance for all the sins he committed, and keep all My commandments, he will possess true life and not die." Since your beloved Redeemer chose you to grant you His love, chose the Sovereign Good, to love Him above all goods. Loaded with the cross, Jesus Christ went before you; follow Him with the cross it pleases Him to send you, embracing the labours and mortifications He gives you.

For the dying man who has lived without a thought for the good of his soul, everything that occurs to him will be thorns. Thorns will be the memory of past pleasures, of triumphs and of worldly vanities. Thorns the presence of friends who visit him and the things he remembers on seeing them. Thorns the Spiritual Fathers who attend him, and the Sacraments he should receive: Confession, Communion and Extreme Unction; even the Crucifix they present to him will be like a thorn of remorse, for the poor moribund will read in the holy image how badly he has responded to the love of a God who died to save him.

"Great was my madness!" the sick man will say; "I could have sanctified myself with the lights and means the Lord gave me; I could have had a life of great happiness in God's Grace, and now, what remains, after so many lost years, but mistrust and anguish and remorse of conscience, and terrible accounts to render to God. The salvation of my soul is so difficult!"



And when will he make those reflections? When will the lamp of life gutter out and the scene of this world close, when he finds himself between two eternities: glory or disgrace, and is at the point of breathing his last gasp, on which depends

endless, eternal blessedness or despair, never to end.

What would he then give to dispose of another year, of another month, even a week of time, in his right mind, for in his state of sickness, the mind bewildered, the chest oppressed, the heart affected, he can do nothing, meditate nothing, nor get the disheartened spirit to carry out one meritorious act! He finds himself as though plunged into a deep abyss of confusion, where he perceives nothing but the immense ruin threatening him and his incapacity to remedy it.

He will ask for time, but will be told: the time to leave has come; prepare your accounts at once as best you can, in this short time, and leave without delay. You know that death awaits and respects no one.

Oh, with what terror will the sick man tell himself: "This morning I am still alive; in the afternoon perhaps dead! Today I am in my room as usual; tomorrow in the tomb, and my soul, where will it be?"

What a fright when the agony begins; when the cold sweat of death appears; when he hears the order for the family to leave the mortuary room and not go back in; when his sight begins to dim and, finally, when they

light the lamp to shine at the last moment of life! O blessed light, how many truths will you then discover! Through it, how different from what they now appear to us, shall we see the things of the world! How you make clear that they are all vanity, madness and falsity! But what does it serve to understand these truths when there is no time to make use of that lesson?

The Lord does not want your death to Grace, but that you be converted and live. His patience in awaiting you until now and the graces He has granted you should inspire deep gratitude, though you have committed the error of valuing His friendship at less than the vile and miserable goods for which you have scorned Him. Profit from the time left for you to live, so that you may know and practise what you should and amend your life. What would it profit you to realize these truths when no longer able to apply the remedy?

Death of the just: Precious before God is the death of His Saints. Gazing at death in the light of this world, it frightens us and inspires terror; but by the light of Faith it is desirable and consoling. It seems horrifying to sinners, but to the just it appears precious and lovable. “Precious as labour’s end, victory’s crown, life’s door”, says Saint Bernard. And in truth, death is the end to pains and labours. Man lives a short while and is laden with many miseries.

Thus our life is as brief as it is full of miseries, illnesses, fears and passions. Seneca says: “Desirous of long life, what do the worldly seek but to prolong torment further?” “To continue living”, exclaims Saint Augustine, “is to continue suffering.” For, as Saint Ambrose says: “The present life has not been given to us to rest, but to labour, and with our labour to merit eternal life.” Hence, as Tertullian rightly affirms, when God shortens someone’s life, He shortens his torment. So that though death was imposed on man as chastisement for sin, the miseries of this life are such and so many that, as Saint Ambrose says, dying seems more like a relief than a chastisement.

God calls ‘blessed’ those who die in Grace, since their labours are over and they begin to rest. “Blessed are those who renounce the things of the world and die in the Lord!” Of them Christ says: ‘Let them rest forever from their labours, since their good deeds accompany them on their way’” (Apocalypse).

The torments afflicting sinners at the hour of death do not afflict the Saints. “The souls of the righteous, however, are in the hands of God; and the torment of eternal death will not reach them” (Wisdom).

The Saints do not fear that command to leave this life, which so intimidates the worldly, nor are they afflicted at leaving earthly goods, for their hearts were never attached to them. “God of my heart, they ever repeated; my God for all eternity.”

The Apostle wrote to his disciples, stripped of their goods for confessing Christ: “You cheerfully bore the despoiling of your goods, considering that you possess a more excellent patrimony in Heaven” (Hebrews).

The Saints are not afflicted on leaving worldly honours, since they previously abhorred them and held them to be, as they are, but smoke and vanity, and only valued the honour of loving God and being loved by Him. They are not afflicted on leaving their parents, as they loved them only in God, and on dying they entrusted



them to that Heavenly Father who loves them more than they; and, hoping to be saved, they believe they can help them better from Heaven than in this world. In a word: all those who have ever said in life: “My God and my all”, will repeat the same at death with greater consolation and tenderness.

Whoever dies loving God is not upset by the pains which death brings with it, rather is pleased with them, considering that life is now ending for him as well as the time of suffering for God and of giving Him new proofs of love. So, with affection and peace, he offers Him the last remnants of his term of life and is consoled by uniting the sacrifice of his death with that which Jesus Christ offered up for us on the

Cross to His Eternal Father. In this way he dies happily, saying: “I, my God, wish to sleep peacefully resting in Your promises” (Psalm). Oh, what beautiful peace, to die yielding oneself up to and resting in Christ’s arms, who loved us unto death, and who wanted to die with bitter torments to win for us a sweet and consoling death!

Our beloved Jesus, to win for you a happy death, willed to suffer the most cruel death on Calvary. The first time you appear in His presence will be when He judges you at the moment you expire. What will you say to Him then? And what will He say to you? Do not wait for that moment to come before reflecting on it; reflect on it now. Perhaps you will say: “Lord, You, my beloved Redeemer, are the one who died for Me. There was a time when I offended You and was utterly ungrateful to You and unworthy of forgiveness. But then, helped by Your grace, I began to amend, and wept my sins the rest of my life, and You forgave me. Forgive me again now that I am at Your feet, and grant me general absolution of my faults. I did not deserve to return to Your love, for having scorned it. I see that Your glory, to contemplate You in Your kingdom, is a loftiest good of which I am unworthy, but I hope that I will not live separated from You, rather that I will soon behold Your sublime

beauty. I seek You in Heaven, not to rejoice more, but to love You more. Neither do I want to enter into that fatherland of holiness and see myself among those purest souls stained as I am now by my sins. Send me to purify myself first, but not to separate me forever from Your presence. For me it is enough that one day, when Your Holy Will so disposes, that You call me to glory, so that there I may sing Your praises eternally. Meanwhile, my beloved Jesus, give me Your blessing and tell me I am Yours, that You will always be mine, that I will love You and You will love me with endless love. Now, Lord, I am going far from You, to the purifying flames; but I go joyfully, because there I am to love You, my Redeemer, my God and My all. I go joyfully; though knowing, while I have to be far from You, that temporal separation will be my greatest suffering. I will count the instants until You call me, Lord. Have compassion on a soul which loves You with all its strength and which longs to see You to love You more.” We hope that you may speak to Him that way at least.

But better still would be to avoid Purgatory altogether, as Saint Thérèse writes: “Since that blessed day (of her offering as victim to Divine Love), it seems to me that love penetrates me and encompasses me. It seems that this merciful love renews me at each moment, purifies my soul and leaves in it not the slightest trace of sin. So I cannot fear Purgatory. I know that, of myself, I do not even deserve to enter that place of expiation, to which only holy souls have access. But I also know that the fire of love has greater sanctifying force than that of Purgatory. I know that Jesus cannot desire useless sufferings for us, and that He would not inspire me with these desires that I feel if He didn’t want to make them reality. How sweet is the way of love! How I long to dedicate myself with the greatest abandonment ever to do the will of God!” She based her hope regarding Purgatory on abandonment and love, without forgetting her so beloved humility, virtue characteristic of children. The child loves his parents and has no aspiration other than to abandon himself completely to them, for he feels weak and impotent. She did not see the gates of Purgatory open for those who are humble and abandon themselves lovingly to God, rather she thought that the Heavenly Father, responding to their trust with a grace of light at the hour of death, at the sight of their misery, will infuse into their souls a sentiment of perfect contrition to erase every debt. “How, then, will He let Himself be outdone in generosity? How can He purify in the flames of Purgatory certain souls that live consumed by the fire of divine love?... It seems to me that all missionaries are martyrs by desire and by will, and that consequently not even one should go to Purgatory. If at the moment of appearing before God they still have in their souls some trace of human weakness, the Most Holy Virgin will obtain for them the grace to make an act of perfect love and afterwards will award them the palm and the crown which they have so richly deserved... I don’t know if I will go to Purgatory, and it doesn’t worry me at all; but if I go I will not regret not having done anything to avoid it. I will never regret having worked only to save souls. How it pleases me to think that our Mother Saint Teresa thought the same!... For victims of love, it seems to me that there will be no judgement. I am rather inclined to think that God will hasten to reward with eternal delights His own love, which He will see blazing in their hearts... To be a true victim of love, it is necessary to give oneself completely. One blazes with love to the degree one gives oneself up to love.” “To be able one day to contemplate You in Your glory, beforehand I must pass through fire, I know. As for myself, for Purgatory I choose Your consuming love, Heart of my God. My exiled soul, on leaving this life, would wish to make an act of purest love and then, directing its flight towards the Homeland, enter forever into Your Heart!” If our one desire is to die of love, how happy we would be when death arrives. This is what we must learn from Saint Thérèse, to want to die in holiness.



“God the Father wipes away their tears with eternal consolation” (Apocalypse). At the hour of death, God will wipe away the tears His servants will have shed in this life, amid the labours, fears, dangers and combats against Hell. And what will most console a soul in love with her God when she knows that death is close, will be to think that soon she will be free from so much danger of offending Him as there is in the world, from so much spiritual tribulation and from so many temptations by the enemy.

Temporal life is continuous warfare against Hell, in which we are always at great risk of losing God and our soul. Saint Ambrose says that in this world we are constantly subject to the snares of the enemy, who sets traps for the life of grace. This danger made Saint Peter of Alcántara tremble when he was already agonizing: “Keep away from me, my brother,” he said addressing a friar who, when helping him, touched him with veneration, “keep away, for I am still alive, and still in danger of damning myself.”

Likewise Saint Teresa rejoiced each time she heard the clock chime the hour, glad that another hour of combat had passed, as she said: “I can sin and lose God at any moment of my life.”

Hence all the Saints felt consoled on knowing that they were going to die, as they thought that soon battles and dangers would end, and they would then feel sure of the inexpressible grace of never ever losing God.

In the lives of the Fathers of the desert, one of them, aged in extreme, finding himself at the hour of death, laughed while his companions wept, and when they asked him the reason for his joy, replied: "And you, why do you weep, when I am going to rest from my labours?" Saint Catherine of Siena as well said on dying: "Console yourselves with me, for I leave this land of grief and go to the fatherland of peace."

If anyone, says Saint Cyprian, were to live in a house with walls about to fall down, whose floor and ceiling shook and the whole threatened to fall into ruin, would he not want to leave? Well, in this life everything threatens the ruin of the soul: the world, Hell, the passions, our rebellious senses, all draw us towards sin and eternal death.

"Who will deliver me from the law of sin?" exclaimed the Apostle (Romans), desiring to be freed from this body of death. Oh, what joy will the soul feel when she hears it said: 'Come, my spouse, leave the place of tears, the den of lions who sought to devour you and make you lose divine grace.'

Hence Saint Paul, wishing to die, said that Jesus Christ was his sole life, and that he esteemed death as the greatest gain he could acquire, since thereby he attained that life which has no end.

God does a great favour to the soul in grace by taking it from this world in which it might not persevere and might lose divine friendship. Happy in this life is the one united to God; but just as the seafarer cannot consider himself safe until he reaches port and is protected from the storm, thus the soul cannot be truly happy until she leaves this life in the grace of God.

"Praise the fortune of the voyager, but only when he has reached harbour," says Saint Ambrose. For if the seafarer rejoices when, free of so many dangers, he is close to the desired harbour, how much more should someone close to the assurance of eternal salvation rejoice!

Besides, in this world we cannot live without faults, at least venial ones; for "the righteous falls seven times" (Proverbs). But whoever leaves this mortal life, ceases to offend God. "What is death," says Saint Ambrose, "but the tomb of the vices?" Hence those who love God long eagerly to die. And so the Venerable Father Vincent Caraffa consoled himself on dying saying: "On ending my life, my offences against God end." And the previously cited Saint Ambrose said: "Why desire this life, if the longer it is, greater the weight of our sins oppressing us?"

Whoever dies in the Grace of God reaches the happy state of neither knowing nor being able to offend Him further. 'The dead cannot sin.' For that reason, the Lord praises the dead rather than the living, though they be saints. And as yet there has not been lacking someone who disposed that in the throes of death, the one who announced this was to tell him: "Rejoice, the time has now come when you will offend God no longer."

"Into Your hands I commend My Spirit." Jesus, our sweet Redeemer, has redeemed you. What would be of you if He had sent death when you were separated from Him? Maybe you would be in Hell, where you could not love Him. Love Him, and if it pleases Him, desire to die soon to free yourself from the danger of losing His holy Grace again, and be sure of loving Him eternally.

Those who die in the state of Grace will receive Confirmation in Grace on reaching clinical death. When she receives the deceitful discourse of Satan to seduce her, the soul who reached clinical death in the state of Grace, having been confirmed in Grace, necessarily reaffirms her eternal salvation and crushes Satan's head. The discourse of the Divine Mary is then to anticipate heavenly joy. If the soul had some unforgiven venial sin, she would be pardoned at that moment, by a perfect act of love for God. Then Christ, as Supreme Judge, gives the saving sentence, since the soul accepted the discourse of the Divine Mary, rejecting Satan. Straight after the sentence comes true death at the separation of soul and essential body. At true death, the soul goes to its eternal destiny, which is Heaven, if not needing prior purification in Purgatory.

Death is not only labour's end, but also life's door, as Saint Bernard says. Whoever wants to pass on to see God must necessarily go through that door. Saint Jerome prayed to death and said: "O death, my sister, if you do not open the door I cannot go and enjoy the presence of my Lord!"

Saint Charles Borromeo, seeing in one of his rooms a picture representing a skeleton with a scythe in the hand, called the painter and ordered him to erase the scythe and in its place paint a golden key, thus seeking to inflame his desire of death further, because death opens Heaven to us, so that we can see God.

Saint John Chrysostom says that if a king had prepared someone a sumptuous room in his royal mansion, and then suddenly made him live in a stable, what a lively desire would that man feel to leave the stable and live in the royal castle!

Well, in this life, the righteous man, united to the mortal body, is found as in a prison, which he has to leave in order to live in the palace of Heaven; and for that reason should ask God to free his soul from that prison. And the aged Saint Simeon, when he bore the Child Jesus in his arms, thought of no other grace to ask for than death, so as to be freed from the prison of this life: "Now You can take Your servant from this world in peace, O Lord," that is, "he asked to be dismissed, as if he were there by force," comments Saint Ambrose. The

Apostle desired an identical grace when he said: "I have the desire to see myself free from the bonds of this body and to be with Christ" (Philippians)

How great the joy of the Pharaoh's cupbearer knowing through Joseph that he would soon leave prison and return to practise his office! A soul that loves God, will it not rejoice on thinking that it will shortly leave the prison of this world and go to enjoy God? While we live here united to the body we are far from seeing God and as in a foreign land, away from our own country; hence with reason Saint Bruno says that our death should not be called death, but life.

Hence the death of the Saints is usually called 'birthday', as at that moment they are born to heavenly life which will have no end. "For the righteous", says Saint Athanasius, "there is no death, but transit, since for them to die is no more than passing over to a happy eternity."

"Oh, amiable death!" exclaimed Saint Augustine, "Who will not desire you, given that you are the end of our labours, conclusion of our worries, beginning of eternal rest?" And with lively longing, added: "Oh, that I might die, Lord, to be able to see You!"

Let the sinner fear death, says Saint Cyprian, since from temporal life he will pass on to eternal death; but not one who, being in God's Grace, passes from death to life. In the life of Saint John the Almsgiver, there was a certain wealthy man from whom the Saint received great alms and the petition to ask God for a long life for



his only son. Yet the son died shortly afterwards. And as his father grieved at that unexpected death, God sent him an Angel who told him: "You asked long life for your son; well, know that he is already in Heaven enjoying eternal happiness."

Such is the grace that Jesus Christ wins for us, as Oseas prophesied: "He shall give us life by His death on the Cross". Christ, by dying for us, made our death turn into life.

Those who led the holy martyr Plonius to the gibbet, asked him wonderingly how he could go so cheerfully to death. And the Saint replied: "You are mistaken. I do not go to death, but to life." Thus did Saint Sinfonianus' mother encourage her boy when he was to be martyred: "Oh, my son, they are not going to take your life, rather change

it for another and better one!"

Acknowledge that whatever goods you possess, you received from God through Mary; that all are gifts of His bounty. Ask Him for nothing other than love; love and always love must you ask from God, until dying in His love you acquire the sign of true love; and that you blaze with love, not ceasing to love Him for a single moment and with all your strength for all eternity.

Peace of the just at the hour of death: "The souls of the righteous, however, are in the hands of God; and the torment of eternal death will not reach them. Nevertheless, the death of the righteous is seen by the ungodly as the greatest of misfortunes,... which is a terrible error" (Wisdom). If God has the souls of the righteous in His hands, who can snatch them away from Him? Sure it is that Hell does not cease to tempt and persecute even the Saints at the hour of death; but God, says Saint Ambrose, does not cease to assist them and to increase His succour in the measure that danger to His faithful servants increases.

Saint Thérèse, shortly before dying said: "Dear sisters, pray for the poor dying. If you knew what they suffer! How little it takes to lose patience! We must be charitable towards everyone, whoever they may be. I would not have believed it before."

It is terrifying to find oneself surrounded by enemies. But we must take heart and fear not, for many more are with the righteous than with his enemies, and there is an army of Angels sent by God to defend him.

The devil, then, will go and tempt the moribund, but the Guardian Angel will be there as well to comfort him; the Saintly Protectors will go; Saint Michael will go, destined by God for the defence of faithful servants in their last combat; the Most Holy Virgin will go, and sheltering the one who has been Her devotee beneath Her mantle, will rout the enemies; Most Holy Joseph, Patron of a good death, will go; Jesus Christ Himself will go to free from temptation that little innocent or penitent sheep, for whose salvation He gave His life. He will give him hope and the necessary strength to vanquish in that battle, and the soul, full of valour, will exclaim: "The Lord has care of Me. You are My helper and My protector" (Psalm). "The Lord is my Light and my Salvation, whom shall I fear?" (Psalm). God is more concerned to save us than the devil to ruin us; for God loves us far more than the devil detests us.

"Faithful is God, who will not permit you to be tempted beyond your strength", says the Apostle (I Corinthians), and perhaps you will tell me that many Saints died fearing for their salvation. I reply that there are very few examples of this fear among those who lived good lives. Vincent de Beauvais says that the Lord sometimes permits this to happen to certain righteous, to purify them at the hour of death from some slight faults. On the other hand, we read that almost all the servants of God died with a smile on their lips.

We all fear divine justice on dying; but just as sinners pass on from this fear to horrifying despair, the righteous pass on from fear to hope. Saint Bernard, when ill, as Saint Antonine tells, felt tempted to lose confidence, but thinking of Jesus Christ's merits, he cast aside all fear and said: "Your Wounds are my merits."

Saint Hilarion feared as well, but soon exclaimed full of joy: "Go forth, then, my soul, what do you fear? Almost seventy years have you served Christ, and now you fear death?"

That is to say: what do you fear, my soul, after having served an all-faithful God unable to abandon those who were faithful to Him in life? Father Joseph de Scamaca, of the Company of Jesus, replied to those who asked him if he died with hope: "Well then, have I perhaps served Mahoma to doubt the goodness of my God, to the point of fearing that He might not wish to save me?"

If at the hour of death the thought of having offended God comes to torment us, let us remember that the Lord has offered to forget the sins of penitents.

One will perhaps say: How can we be sure that God has forgiven us? Saint Basil asked the same, and answered saying: "I have hated iniquity and abominated it." Well, whoever detests sin can be sure that God has forgiven him.

Saint Thérèse said: "I desire neither death nor life. Were Our Lord to offer me the choice, I would not choose. I only will what He wills; what He does is what I love. I do not fear the last struggle, nor any pain – however piercing – my illness may bring. God has always been my helper. He has led me by the hand from my earliest childhood, and in Him I trust. My agony may reach the furthest limits, but I am sure that God will never forsake me."

The heart of man does not live without love: he either loves God, or loves creatures. And who does God love? Whoever keeps His Commandments, as Christ said. Hence whoever dies in the observance of the precepts dies loving God; and whoever loves God is saved.

When will the day come on which you can say: 'My God, I can no longer lose you'? When shall you contemplate Him face to face, sure of loving Him with all your strength for all eternity? While you live, you will always be in danger of offending Him and losing His Grace. You can hope confidently that God has forgiven you if you love Him with all your heart and wish to do all you can to love and please Him.

The souls of the righteous are in the hands of God and will not know death's torments. In the eyes of the insensate it seemed that they died; but they are at peace.

It seems to the insensate worldly that God's servants generally die as do they, afflicted and against their will. But it is not so, for God well knows how to console His children in that tribulation, and infuse into them a certain marvellous sweetness even among the pains of death, as a foretaste in anticipation of the glory which He is later to give them.

And just as those who die obstinate in sin already begin to feel on their deathbeds something of the pains of Hell, with remorse, terror and despair, the just, on the other hand, by so very frequent acts of love of God, their desires and hopes of enjoying the presence of the Lord, prior to death already begin to possess that holy peace which they will later enjoy in Heaven.

The death of the Saints is no chastisement, but reward. The death of one who loves God is not death, it is a dream; such that he can exclaim: "I, my God, wish to sleep peacefully resting in Your promises" (Psalm).

Father Suárez died with such sweet peace, that shortly before he said: "I never imagined that death would bring me such tenderness."

The doctor warned Cardinal Baronius not to think so much on death, and he replied: "Why not? Have I perhaps to fear it? I do not; on the contrary, I love it."

According to Santero, Cardinal Ruffense, at the point of dying a martyr for the Faith, ordered that he be brought his best clothes, saying that he was going to a wedding. And when on the gallows, he threw down the staff he used and exclaimed: "Walk, feet; walk swiftly, Paradise is close." Before dying he sung the 'Te Deum' in thanksgiving to God for becoming a martyr for the Faith, and then, with the greatest joy, placed his head beneath the executioner's axe.

Saint Francis of Assisi sang at the hour of death, and invited the other Friars present to accompany him. Friar Elias said to him: "Father, on dying, we should rather weep than sing;" to which the Saint replied: "Well I can do no less than sing when I see that presently I shall go to enjoy God."

A Teresian Nun, dying in the flower of youth, told the weeping Nuns about her: "Oh, my God! Why do you weep? I am going to unite myself to my Lord Jesus Christ. Rejoice with me if you love me."

Saint Louis of Granada tells that one day a hunter found a dying hermit, covered with leprosy, singing, so that he asked him: "How can you sing in that state?" And the hermit replied: "Brother, between God and I there is no other wall than this body of mine, and as I see that it is now falling apart, that this prison is collapsing and that I will shortly see God, I rejoice and sing."

This longing to see the Lord moved Saint Ignatius martyr, when he said that if the wild beasts did not come to devour him, he himself would rouse them to do so.

Saint Catherine of Genoa could not bear that death be held as a misfortune, and said: “Oh, beloved death, how poorly they hold you! Why do you not come to me, who day and night am calling you?”

And Saint Teresa of Jesus so desired to leave this world that she said, ‘not to die was death for her’, and with this thought composed her celebrated poem: “I die for I die not.” Such is the death of the Saints.

Find out what God wants of you, and decide to fulfil His holy Will. Perhaps you already deserved to be burning in hellfire for many years; but God, infinite Goodness, wants you to love Him alone, and burn in the fire of His holy love, since He has loved you more than anyone, and because He alone deserves love.

In the Messages of Palmar, the Most Holy Virgin Mary said: “Blessed whoever dies with the Names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph on their lips! And this devotion, now falling into disuse, needs to be instilled into the Spanish People: to pray every day that at the hour of death you have the names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph on your lips.” In other Messages there are promises for death, like this one of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face: “Everyone who bears the name ‘of the Holy Face’ dies in holiness, by the grace of Jesus Christ and the mediation of Mary, your Mother.” And the Lord said of the Scapular of the Holy Face: “I promise to take those who die wearing it, by My Mother’s Mediation, to eternal happiness at the very moment they depart this world.”

“How is death to be feared by whoever hopes that afterwards he will be crowned in Heaven?” says Saint Cyprian. How can anyone fear it who knows that by dying in grace his body will acquire glory?

“For one who loves God and desires to see Him,” Saint Augustine tells us, “life is sorrow and death is joy”. And Saint Thomas de Villanueva says as well: “If death finds man asleep in his vices, it arrives like a thief, despoils him, kills him and buries him in the infernal abyss; but if it finds him on the watch, it greets him as sent by God, telling him: ‘The Lord awaits you at the wedding; come, I will guide you to the happy kingdom you long for’.”

Oh, with what rejoicing does one in God’s grace await death to see Jesus soon and hear Him say: “Excellent, good and faithful servant; because you have been faithful in little, I will give you dominion over much; enter into the joy of your master.” Ah! How then will they appreciate the penances, prayers, detachment from earthly goods and all they did for God!



Whoever loved God will taste the fruit of his good works. Hence Father Hippolytus Durazzo, of the Company of Jesus, was never sad, but rejoiced when some Friar died giving signs of salvation. “Would it not be absurd”, said Saint John Chrysostom, “to believe in eternal glory and to feel sorry that someone goes there?”

Special consolation will then come from the memory of devotion to the Mother of God, of Rosaries and visits, of fasts and pilgrimages to honour the Virgin, of having imitated and served Most Holy Mary. We call Mary: “Virgo fidelis”. And indeed She is most faithful in consoling Her devotees at their last hour.

A moribund who had been very devoted to the Virgin Mary said to Father Binetti: “It cannot be imagined, my Father, how much consolation at the hour of death brings the thought of having been devout to the Most Holy Virgin. O Father! If you knew the joy I feel for having served this Mother of mine! I can’t even explain!”

What joy will be felt by whoever has loved and loves Jesus Christ and has often received Him in Holy Communion, on seeing His Lord arrive in Holy Viaticum to accompany him in the transit to the other life! Happy whoever can say with Saint Philip: “Here is my love, see here my love, give me my love!”

If someone were to say, ‘who knows the death reserved to me? Who knows if in the end I have an unhappy death?’ I will reply in turn, ‘what is the cause of death? Sin alone’. This, then, is what we must fear, and not death. Saint Ambrose says: “It is clear that bitterness comes from sin, not from death.”

Fear should not be felt at death, but during life. Do you want, then, not to fear death? Live well. “The last things will go well for one who fears the Lord, and he will be blest on the day of his death” (Ecclesiasticus).

Saint Claude de la Colombière judged it morally impossible for someone faithful to God during life to have a bad death. And Saint Augustine said so previously: “Whoever has lived well cannot die badly.” Whoever is prepared to die fears no kind of death, not even a sudden one.

And given that we cannot go to enjoy God other than by way of death, “let us offer Him what we must necessarily give back to Him”, as Saint John Chrysostom tells us, and consider that whoever offers God his life practises the most perfect act of love he can give Him, for by embracing with goodwill the death God wills to send him, how God wills and when He wills, he becomes like the holy martyrs.

Whoever loves God desires death, and sighs for it, for on dying he will unite to God eternally and be freed from the danger of losing Him. It is therefore a sign of lukewarm love of God not to long to go soon to contemplate Him, thus assuring ourselves of the happiness of never losing Him.

Meanwhile, let us love Him as much as we can in this life, which should serve us for this alone: to increase in divine love. The measure of love we have at the hour of death will be that which will decide the love which is to unite us to God in eternal blessedness.

Jesus did so very much for us by giving His Blood and Life for love of us. We should therefore be consumed in His holiest love in this life, in order to continue loving Him in eternity.

Means for preparing for death: “In all your actions, remember your last things, and you will never ever sin” (Ecclesiasticus). We all confess that we have to die, that we have to die just once, and that there is nothing more important than this, because on the outcome of death depends eternal blessedness or eternal wretchedness.

We all know as well that whether we die well or badly depends on whether we live well or badly. Why then do the majority of Christians live as though they were never to die, or as if a good or bad death mattered little? They live badly because they do not think on death. “Remember your last things and you will never ever sin.”

It is necessary to convince ourselves that the hour of death is not the right one to settle accounts and thereby assure the vital business of salvation. The prudent of this world, in temporal affairs, arrange in good time all necessary precautions to assure their due profits, post, connections; and to conserve or restore bodily health, and do not disdain to make use of adequate means.

What would be said of one who, having to appear at a public examination to gain a cathedra, did not wish to acquire the indispensable instruction until the moment of going to the examination? Would not the commander of a fortress be mad to wait for a siege in order to lay in supplies of food, arms and ammunition? Would a seafarer be so insensate as to wait for a storm before providing the ship with anchors and cables? Well, so does the Christian act when he leaves the affairs of his conscience to the hour of death.



The hour of death is a time of confusion and torment. It is then that sinners turn to God for help, but without true conversion, rather solely for fear of Hell, which they will see at close hand, and precisely for that reason in justice cannot reap any other fruit but those of their bad life. “Whatever a man sows, that shall he reap as well; hence whoever now sows to excite his fleshly appetites, will afterwards reap fruit of eternal death” (Galatians). It is not enough to receive the Sacraments, but it will be vital to die detesting sin and loving God above all things.

But how is a man to detest illicit pleasures after having loved them up till then? How can a man love God above all things when up to that moment he has loved creatures more than God?

The Lord called them fools, and truly they were, the virgins who went to prepare their lamps when the Spouse was about to arrive. All fear sudden death, which prevents settling the soul’s accounts. All confess that the Saints were truly wise, because they made preparations for death before it arrived. And we, what do we do? Do we wish to run the risk of not disposing ourselves for a good death until death approaches?

Let us do now what at that moment we would wish to have done. Oh, what torment will be the memory of time lost, and above all badly employed! Time to merit granted to us by God, and which flew by never to return.

What anguish will be the thought that penance is no longer possible, nor frequenting the Sacraments, nor hearing the Word of God, nor visiting Sacramented Jesus in Church, nor prayer! What’s done, is done. It will be necessary to have sound judgement, calm and serenity to confess well, dissipate serious scruples and settle the conscience, but *now is not the time!*

If you had died on that occasion when you sinned, where would you be now? Give thanks to God for having awaited you and for all that time in which you should have been in Hell, from that instant in which you offended Him! Think well of the great wrong you did by voluntarily losing His Grace, merited for you by His Sacrifice on the Cross.

Given that it is certain that you have to die, prostrate at once before the feet of the Crucified; give Him fervent thanks for the time which His mercy grants you to settle the affairs of your conscience, and then examine all the sins of your past life, especially those of your youth.

Consider the divine Commandments; remember the responsibilities and occupations you had, the friendships you kept, note down your faults and if you have not already done so, make a general confession of your whole life. Oh, how a general confession helps to put the life of a Christian in good order! Think that this account will

serve you for eternity, and make it as though you were at the point of doing so before Jesus Christ as Judge. Banish from your heart all attachment to evil, and every grudge or dislike.

Do away with any motive for scruples regarding the goods of others, taking away a good name, scandals given, and resolve firmly to fly from all occasions in which you could lose God. And consider that what seems difficult now, at the moment of death will seem impossible.

The most important thing is that you resolve to take measures to conserve God's Grace. Those means are: to hear Mass daily; meditate on the eternal truths; frequent Confession at least once a week; and frequent Communion, and where not possible, commune spiritually; visits to the Blessed Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin every day; attend public prayers in Church; spiritual reading; make an examination of conscience every night; practise some special devotion in honour of the Most Holy Virgin and, besides, propose to commend yourself with great frequency to God and His Most Holy Mother, often invoking the Sacred Names of Jesus and Mary, above all in times of temptation. Such are the means by which we can obtain a good death and eternal salvation.

To do this will be a great sign of our salvation. And as for the past, trust in the Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is giving you these lights as He wills to save you; and hope in Mary's intercession, who will obtain for you the necessary graces. With such an orderly life and hope placed in Jesus and in the Virgin, how much God will help us and what strength will the soul acquire!

Let us remember the promises of the Most Holy Virgin Mary to those who with true devotion recite the Penitential Rosary: "Those who recite this Rosary daily will have, moreover, a good death; they will be saved from damnation, and on leaving this world will pass on to the Life of Heaven... Those who die and go to Purgatory, I promise to release on the following day... They will receive notice in sufficient time before death in order to be comforted by the Holy Sacraments. Shortly before dying they will have a vision of My Divine



Son and of Me, your Mother." Not in vain do we repeat so many times: "Holy Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen."

Soon, then, give yourself up completely to God, who calls you, and begin to enjoy that peace which until now, through your own fault, you lacked. And is there greater peace for the soul than to be able to say each night before bed: "If death were to come to me tonight, I hope to die in God's Grace?" What consolation if, on hearing the thunderclap, on feeling the earth tremble, we can wait for death with resignation, if God should so dispose!

If God had abandoned you, you would be blind and obstinate in your sins, and would have no will to break with them nor love Him.

Now you should feel deepest pain for having offended Him, a lively desire to be in His Grace, and profound rejection of all those accursed pleasures which led you to lose His friendship. All those sentiments are graces which come from God and move you to hope that He wills to forgive you and save you; and which show you that despite your many sins, He does not abandon you and wills your salvation. Don't risk losing Him again, but love Him eternally.

It is vital that we try to be at all times as we would want to be at the hour of death. "Blessed are those who renounce the things of this world and die in the Lord!" (Apocalypse). Saint Ambrose says that those who die well are those who on dying are already dead to the world, that is, detached from the goods which perforce they will then have to leave behind. It is therefore necessary that from now we accept abandonment of our property, separation from our relatives and from all earthly goods. If we do not willingly do so in life, unavoidably and necessarily we will have to do so on dying; but then it will be with great pain and grave danger to our eternal salvation.

Saint Augustine, besides, warns us that to die in peace it helps greatly to settle temporal affairs in life, making the necessary dispositions regarding the goods we must leave behind, so that at the last hour we think only of uniting ourselves to God. It is well at the point of death to think only of the things of God and His glory, for the last moments of life are too precious to waste on earthly affairs.

The crown of the righteous is completed and perfected at the point of death, because then we reap the greatest harvest of merits, by embracing suffering and death itself with resignation and love.

But on dying you will not have those good sentiments if you have not practised them in life. For this purpose, some faithful regularly practise the devotion of preparation for death with great profit, imagining that they are on the point of leaving this life, about to face God's judgement, they confess as if it were the last day of their life and commune with great resignation to the Will of God. Thus Saint John Bosco and Saint Dominic Savio, on the last Sunday of each month, practised the Exercise for a Good Death

What is not done in life is difficult to do at the hour of death. The great servant of God, Sister Catherine of Saint Albert, daughter of Saint Teresa, sighed for the hour of death, and exclaimed: "My sisters, I sigh not out of fear of death, which I am awaiting now for twenty-five years. I sigh to see so many sinners misled, who wait to be reconciled with God until the hour of death, when I can scarcely pronounce the name of Jesus."

Examine, then, if your heart is still attached to something here on earth, to any individual, honour, property, home, conversation, entertainment, and consider that you are not here to live forever. Some day, quite soon, you will leave everything; why then want to maintain fondness for these things accepting the risk of a death without peace? Offer yourself completely to God from now on, who can deprive you of such goods whenever He pleases.

Whoever desires to die resigned should practise resignation from now on in as many troubles as may befall him, and cast off any attachment to the things of this world. Imagine you are about to die, says Saint Jerome, and you will easily despise everything.

If you have not yet chosen a state in life, choose the one which at the hour of death you would have desired to choose, the one that would have obtained for you a happier transit to eternity. If you have already chosen, do what at death you would have wished to have done in your state.

In the booklet "Make Good Confessions" is described a vision of Saint Teresa, in which she saw the deepest abyss open up before her eyes, all full of fire, blazing with living flames, with innumerable unhappy souls plunging therein, like snowflakes in winter. The Lord told her: "They are damned because they confessed badly. See, Teresa: tell this vision to all, and charge all Bishops and Priests never to tire of preaching on the importance of Confession and against confessions badly made, so that My beloved Christians may not turn medicine into poison and use this Sacrament to their ruin, a Sacrament of mercy and forgiveness." Saint Thérèse refers to this when she writes: "For the few moments left to us, let us not lose time, let us save souls. Souls are lost like snowflakes, and Jesus weeps, and we think of our suffering without consoling our Betrothed. Yes, Celine, let us live for souls."

Act as though each day were the last of your life, each action the last you will perform; the last prayer, the last Confession. Imagine that you are moribund, stretched out in bed, and that you hear those imperious words: 'Leave this world!' How much these thoughts can help to guide us well and despise worldly things.

Jesus said: "Happy that servant, placed as administrator, whom the master finds carrying out his duty when he comes." Whoever awaits death at all hours, even if he dies unexpectedly, will not fail to die well.

Every Christian, when the hour of his death is announced, should be ready to say: "A few hours of life are left to me; I want to use them to love God all I can, to continue loving Him in eternity. Little remains to me to offer Him, but I offer Him up these sufferings and the sacrifice of my life, in union with that which Jesus Christ offered up for me on the Cross. Few and brief are the pains I suffer, in comparison with those I have deserved; however, just as they are, I embrace them to show the love I hold for God. I resign myself to whatever chastisements He may wish to send me in this and in the other life. And providing I can love Him eternally, may He chastise me as He please; but not deprive me of His love. I acknowledge that I do not deserve to love Him, having despised His love so many times; but God cannot cast a repentant soul aside. It pains me to have offended Sovereign Goodness. I love Him with all my heart, and I trust entirely in Him. The death of my Redeemer is my hope. My Jesus gave all His Blood to save me; may He not allow me to separate from Him, for I love Him and hope to love Him for all eternity. May the Most Holy Virgin and Mother of mine help me in my last hour and free me from eternal damnation."

Value of time: In Ecclesiasticus it says: "The wise man employs his time well." "Practise justice before you die, because, after death, the time to merit is over." "Child, use your time well, and avoid evil." "Act according to Divine Wisdom before time has flown by, so that hereafter God may give you eternal recompense." That is, the Holy Ghost recommends us to use our time well, the most precious, valuable gift that God grants to mortal man. Even the gentiles acknowledged its value. Seneca said that nothing can equal the price of time. And with greater esteem did the Saints appreciate it.

Saint Bernardine of Siena affirms that a moment of time is worth as much as God, because in that moment, by an act of contrition or perfect love, man can acquire divine grace and eternal glory.

Time is a treasure only to be found in this life, but not in the other: neither in Heaven, nor in Hell. That is the cry of the damned: 'Oh, if only we had an hour!' At all costs, they would want an hour to remedy their ruin; but that hour will never be given them.

In Heaven there are no laments; but if the blessed could suffer, they would weep the time lost in mortal life, which they could have used to win a higher grade of glory; but the era of merit is then past.

A Benedictine Nun, deceased, appeared radiant with glory to a person and revealed that she enjoyed complete happiness; but that if there was something she could have wished, it would only be to return to the world and suffer more to win greater merits; and added that she would have suffered gladly until the Day of

Judgement the painful illness that brought about her death, just to win the glory that corresponds to the merit of one single Hail Mary.

And you, how do you spend your time? Why do you leave until tomorrow what you can do today? Think that time past is no more and is no longer yours; that the future does not depend on you. You only have the present time to act.

“Oh, wretch!” Saint Bernard warns: “Why do you presume about future things, as if the Father had placed time in your hands?” And Saint Augustine says: “How can you promise yourself tomorrow, if you do not know whether you will have another hour to live?” Thus, rightly, Saint Teresa said: “If you are not ready to die, fear to have a bad death.”

Give thanks to God for the time He grants you to remedy the disorders of your past life. If at this moment He were to send you death, one of your greatest griefs would be to think of the time lost. The Lord gave you time to love Him, and perhaps you have spent it in offending Him. You promised not to offend Him again, and yet how many times have you done so, and He forgiven you! Blessed forever be His mercy! If it were not infinite, how could He thus have put up with you? Who could have had the patience which God has shown you? How much it should pain you to have offended such a good God! Though it were only for the patience He has shown you, you should be enamoured of your Divine Saviour. Do not think of losing more time given you to remedy the evil you did, but employ it all in loving and serving Him, so that you can love Him eternally.

There is nothing more precious than time, nor anything less esteemed or more despised by the worldly. Saint Bernard lamented this, and added: “Days of health pass, and no one thinks that those days disappear never to return.” See that gambler losing days and nights in gaming. Ask him what he does and he will reply: ‘Spending my time’. See that unemployed idler who amuses himself in the street, perhaps for many hours, seeing who is passing by, or speaking indecently or pointlessly. If asked what he does, he will tell you that he is passing the time, no more. Poor blind, who lose so many days, days never to return!



O time despised! You will be the greatest desire of the worldly at the point of death. They will want another year, another month, another day; but it will not be given them, and they will hear say that there is no more time: “Time is now coming to an end” (Apocalypse). What would any of them give to have a week, a day of life, to be able to straighten out the accounts of their souls! “For just one more hour, says Saint Lawrence Justinian, they would give all their goods.” But they will not obtain that extra hour of time. Soon the Priest attending them will say, ‘make haste to leave this world; there is no more time for you.’

Hence it is vital that we remember God and seek His grace before our light fades away. What anguish for a traveller at nightfall to realize that he has lost his way, when there is no possible remedy! Well, far greater will be the pain on dying of one who has lived long years without employing them in serving God. For him death will then be night time, in which he can do nothing.

Conscience will remind him how much time he had, and how he misspent it to his soul’s harm; how many graces he received from God for his sanctification, and chose not to profit by them; and besides he will find the pathway to doing good barred to him.

Hence he will say groaning: ‘Oh, how mad I was! Oh, that time lost in which I could have sanctified myself! But I did not, and now there is no time.’ Of what use will such sighs and laments be when life is ending and the lamp is going out, and the moribund sees the solemn moment approaching on which his eternity depends.

Jesus Christ spent His whole life saving your soul; not for one single moment did He cease to offer Himself up to the Eternal Father for you, to win forgiveness and salvation for you. And you, at the end of so many years of life in the world, how many have you spent in serving Him? How the remembrance of many of your actions brings you remorse of conscience! Perhaps the evil was grave, while the good very little and full of imperfections, indifference, love of self and distractions. That was because you forgot all that your Redeemer did for you. Never again waste the time that His mercy grants you. Ever remember the love your Saviour bears for you and the dolours He suffered for you. Forget everything in the years you still have left, and think only of loving and pleasing Him.

It is vital that we go by the Lord’s path as long as we have life and light, for in the moments preceding death we will not have that light. That is not the time for preparing, but for *being prepared*. What can be done at death? What is done is done.

O God! If someone knows that shortly in a law court his life or death is to be decided, or all his goods, how diligently he would look for a good lawyer, make sure that the judges knew very well the reasons he had, and

make use of every means to obtain a favourable verdict! And we, what do we do? We are told that with certainty, very shortly, at the moment least expected, the greatest business we have shall be decided, namely our eternal salvation, and we still waste time?

Perhaps someone will say: 'I am young now; later I will be converted to God.' Know then, I reply, that the Lord cursed that fig tree He found without fruits, though it was not the season for them, as the Gospel states. By this Jesus Christ wished to give us to understand that man should produce fruits of good works, even in youth, otherwise he will be accursed and give no fruits in the future: "Never may anyone ever eat fruit from you". Thus did the Redeemer speak to that tree, and thus does He curse those He calls and who reject Him.

To the devil the time of our life seems short, and he loses no time or occasion to tempt us. Saint Louis Mary says that in these Last Times, "the devil, knowing that his time is short, far shorter now than ever, will redouble his efforts and attacks every day so that people be lost." Thus the enemy loses not a single moment to ruin us, and we make no use of our time to save ourselves! What madness!

Another will ask: 'What evil do I do?' O my God! Is it not an evil to waste time in games or useless conversations, which are of no benefit to our soul, other than to make it more worldly? Does God perhaps give us this time to waste it like that? Let us not disregard such an excellent gift in any way. Those workers of whom the Gospel speaks did nothing wrong; they just wasted their time, and therefore the owner of the vineyard reproved them: "How come you are idle here all day long?"

On the day of judgement, Jesus Christ will ask us to account for every idle word. All time not employed for God is time wasted. Any task you can do, do it conscientiously; for in the grave, where you are heading fast, you will have no opportunity.

The Venerable Mother, Sister Joan of the Most Blessed Trinity, daughter of Saint Teresa, said that in the Saints' lives there is no tomorrow; only in the lives of sinners, who always say: 'Later, later', and thus arrive at death. Now is the right moment. Hear now the voice of God, and "do not harden your hearts" (Psalm). Today God calls you to do good; do it this very day, for tomorrow perhaps there may no longer be time, or maybe God may call you no more.

And if, sadly, in your past life you have employed your time in offending God, be sure to grieve over it the rest of your mortal life, and before God go over all your years with bitterness of soul.

God prolonged your life for you to make reparation for time lost: "using your time well, because there are many dangers in life" (Ephesians); or else, as Saint Anselm comments: "You will recover that time if you do what you neglected to do." Saint Jerome says of Saint Paul that, though he was the last of the Apostles, he was the first in merits for all he did following his conversion.



Consider at least that at each moment we can obtain a greater stock of eternal goods. If we were granted as much land as we could walk around in one day, or as much money as we could count in one day, with how much haste would we act! So if we can acquire eternal treasures in one moment, why mispend our time? What you can do today, don't say you will do it tomorrow, for you will have lost the day of today and it will not come back again.

When Saint Francis Borgia heard speak of worldly things, he raised his heart to God with holy thoughts, and if later they asked his opinion on what they had said, he did not know how to answer. So they scolded him, and he answered that he preferred to be taken as a man of little wit than lose time in vain.

Don't lose the time that God has granted you in His mercy. You deserve to find yourself in Hell, groaning without hope, but God has preserved your life. Make use of your remaining days to live for God alone. If you were in Hell, you would weep despairingly without fruit. Now weep the offences you gave to God, and weeping for them, trust that He will surely forgive you them.

Importance of salvation: The business of eternal salvation is, doubtless, the most important, and yet the one that Christians most often forget. Saint Alphonsus Mary said that every step is taken, no time wasted to obtain a post, or win a lawsuit, or arrange a marriage. How many counsels, how many precautions taken! They do without eating, without sleeping!

And to win eternal salvation, what do they do and how do they live? They usually do nothing; rather everything they do is to lose it, and the majority of Christians live as though death, judgement, Hell, glory and eternity were not truths of Faith, but poetic fables, inventions.

How much affliction if a lawsuit is lost or the harvest is ruined, and how much care taken to repair the damage! If a horse or a pet dog strays, what eagerness to find them! But many lose the Grace of God and, nonetheless, sleep, laugh and amuse themselves! What stupidity, for sure!

There is no one who is not ashamed when called negligent in worldly affairs, but generally no one blushes at forgetting the great business of salvation, which matters more than any other. They themselves call the Saints

wise because they cared exclusively for their salvation, and they care for all the things of the earth, and nothing for their souls. Think only of the magnificent business of your salvation, which is of the very greatest importance!

Let us be persuaded, then, that eternal health and felicity is the *most important* business for us, the *one* business, the *irreparable* business if we neglect it.

It is, without question, the *most important* business, because it is of greater consequence, given that it involves the soul, and if the soul is lost, all is lost. “We should esteem the soul,” says Saint John Chrysostom, “as the most precious of all goods.” And to understand this, it is enough to think that God gave His own Son up to death to save our souls. The Eternal Word did not waver in buying them with His own Blood. In such a way, says a Holy Doctor, that it appears that man is worth as much as God. If the soul is worth so high a price, with what worldly goods can a man replace it, if lost?

Saint Philip Neri was right to call the man who does not attend to the salvation of his soul a ‘madman’. If there were men on earth without a spiritual soul (like the animals), and others with an immortal soul, and the former observed the latter dedicating themselves eagerly to the things of this world, seeking honours, wealth and earthly pleasures, without doubt they would tell them: ‘How mad you are! You could win eternal goods, and you think of nothing but these miserable passing things, and for them will damn yourselves to unending suffering in the other life! Let them be, then, for only unfortunates like us should think in those goods, we who know that everything ends at death.’ But that is not so, for we all have immortal souls!

How is it possible for there to be anyone to be ready to lose his soul for the miserable pleasures of this earth? How can it be that Christians believe in judgement, Hell and eternity, and live without fear?

In what have you spent so many years of the life that God has granted you to work out your eternal salvation? Your Redeemer bought your soul with His Blood, and gave it to you to save it; but you, perhaps, have acted only to lose it, by offending Him, who loved you so dearly. Firmly decide from now on to prefer to lose all, even life itself, before losing God’s friendship.

Eternal salvation is not only the most important, but the *one business we have in this life*. Saint Bernard lamented the blindness of Christians who, describing certain childhood pastimes as childish games, call worldly affairs ‘business’. Greater madness is the foolish puerility of men. “For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and then lose his soul?” (Gospel).

If you save yourself, it matters not that in the world you have been poor, afflicted and despised. By saving yourself, evils come to an end and you will be happy for all eternity. But if you deceive yourself and are damned, what will it matter to you in Hell to have enjoyed as many pleasures as there are on earth, and to have been rich and respected? With the soul lost, all is lost: honours, pleasures and riches.

What will you reply to Jesus Christ on the day of judgement? If a king were to send an ambassador to a great city to deal with some important matter, and this ambassador, instead of carrying out the business he had been charged with, thought only of banquets, comedies and spectacles, so that the deal fell through, what account could he then give to the king? O my God! What account will be given to the Lord on judgement day by a person placed here in this world, not to amuse himself, or enrich himself, or win honours, but to save his soul, and who had attended to everything but his soul?

The worldly think only of the present, not of the future. Speaking in Rome once with a talented youth called Francis Nazzera, Saint Philip Neri said this: “You, my son, will have a brilliant future. You will be a good lawyer, then a prelate, later perhaps a Cardinal, and perhaps Pontiff; and then? and then?” At the end he said: “Let’s go, think on those last words.” Francis went home, and meditating on those words: “and then? and then?”, abandoned his earthly affairs, left the world and entered the very Congregation of Saint Philip Neri, to concern himself with no more than serving God.

Salvation is the *only* important affair, for we have but a single soul. A prince asked Pope Saint Benedict XII to grant him a grace which he could not, without falling into sin. And the Pope replied to the ambassador: “Tell your prince that if I had two souls, I could lose one for him, and reserve the other for myself, but as I have no more than one, I do not want to lose it.”

Saint Francis Xavier said that “in the world there is no more than one single good and one single evil. The one good is to be saved, the one evil is to be damned.” Saint Teresa exposed the same truth to her Nuns, telling them: “My sisters, there is one soul and one eternity”; that is: we have only *one* soul, and cannot risk losing it; there is *one* eternity, that is, the destiny of our soul is eternal and the soul once lost will be lost for ever. Hence David prayed to God and said in a Psalm: “One thing alone do I ask of You, Lord: to live forever in Your heavenly Mansion.”

“Labour with love and fear in the work of your salvation” (Philippians). Whoever does not fear to be lost, will not be saved. So that, to be saved, it is necessary to work and do oneself violence. To gain salvation, it is vital that at the hour of death our life be a likeness to Our Lord Jesus Christ’s. And for that we must force ourselves to flee from occasions of sin, and besides make use of the means necessary to obtain salvation.

“The kingdom will not be given to vagabonds”, says Saint Bernard, “but to those who have worked worthily in God’s service.” All wanted to be saved without any work. “The demon”, says Saint Augustine, “works tirelessly for our perdition, and you, in the question of your eternal good or ruin, are quite unconcerned?”

How you should thank God to have permitted that you be here and not in Hell, which you have often deserved! But what is the use of your life, which He has preserved, if you live deprived of His Grace?

The *important* affair, the *one* affair, the *irreparable* affair: “No error can be compared”, says Saint Eusebius, “to the error of neglecting your eternal salvation.” All other errors can be remedied. If goods are lost, they can be recovered by new labours. If a post is lost, it can be recovered again. Even if life itself is lost, providing one is saved, all is remedied.

But for one who is damned there is no possible remedy. Once only do we die; once the soul is lost, it is lost forever. Nothing is left but eternal wailing with the other miserable insensates in Hell, where one of their greatest torments will be to consider that for them there is no time now to remedy their wretchedness.

Ask those *prudent* servants of the world, now submerged in hellfire, ask them what they feel and think, if they rejoice at having made their fortune on earth, even when now damned in eternal prison. Hear how they groan, saying, ‘we did wrong’. But what use is it for them to acknowledge their error when damnation is forever irremediable?

What grief will someone feel in this world who, with a little work was able to foresee and avoid the ruin of his home, and see it one day ruined, and reflect on his own negligence now when there is no possible remedy?

One of the greatest afflictions of the damned is to think that they have lost their soul and have been damned through their own fault. Saint Teresa says that if anyone loses a garment, a ring, any little thing, through their own fault, they lose their peace, and at times neither eat nor sleep.

What then, O my God, will be the anguish of the damned when, on entering Hell and seeing themselves now buried in that dungeon of torments, they reflect on their misery and consider that in all eternity they will find no remedy. Doubtless they will exclaim: ‘I lost soul and glory; I lost God, I lost everything forever, and why? Through my own fault!’

And if someone were to say: ‘But though I commit this sin, why should I be damned? Can’t I perhaps still be saved?’ I will reply: ‘Perhaps you will be damned’ And I will yet add that your damnation is probable, since Scripture threatens to give this tremendous chastisement to obstinate sinners, as you are at this moment. “Beloved children, may God will that we be not among those who abandon the Faith and are lost, but among those who avail themselves of the Faith and are saved” (Hebrews). Alas for those who abandon the Faith! Alas for those who separated from the Lord!

At least, by that sin you commit, you place your eternal salvation in great danger and doubt. And is this a business for running risks? “We are not dealing with a house, a city, a post,” says Saint John Chrysostom, “but with suffering an eternity of torments and of losing unending glory.” And you want to risk this business, which for you is all, with a *perhaps*? ‘Who knows’, you reply, ‘who knows if I shall be damned? I hope that God, later, will forgive me.’ But meanwhile? Meanwhile, you condemn yourself to Hell. Would you throw yourself down a well saying: Perhaps I will free myself from death? Surely not. Well, how can you found your eternal salvation on such a weak hope, on a *who knows*?

Oh, how many have been damned by that accursed false hope! Don’t you realize that the hope of those obstinate in sin is no such hope, but presumption and deceit, which does not move God to act with mercy, rather to unleash His Anger?

If you say you believe yourself unable to resist temptations and the dominant passion, how will you resist afterwards, when instead of increased strength, you will lack strength through the habit of sin? For on the one hand, the soul will be further blinded and hardened in its malice, and on the other, will lack divine assistance. Or do you hope that God will increase His lights and graces after you have increased your faults and sins beyond the limit?

Confess well so as to hear Christ’s words to Mary Magdalen: “Your sins are forgiven”, and feel great sorrow for your faults before you reach the point of death. Ask Jesus to increase your hope, for fear that, at the end of your life, the devil should want to inspire you with searing despair at the sight of your countless betrayals of God. For if you do not do so, that point will bring you worry and misery, and at that solemn moment you will not want Jesus’ presence to terrify you.

Vanity of the world: On a voyage, a certain ancient philosopher, called Aristipus, was shipwrecked with the boat he was in, and lost all the goods he had. But he was able to reach land safely, and the inhabitants of the country where he landed, among whom Aristipus enjoyed great fame for his science, provided him with as many goods as he had lost. About this he then wrote to his friends and compatriots recommending them, by his example, to provide themselves with those goods which cannot be lost, even by shipwreck.

Our relatives and friends who have reached eternity give us this same advice from the other life. They counsel us to procure in this world, above all, those goods which are not lost even by death. The day of death is called day of perdition, because on it we have to lose honours, riches, pleasures and every earthly good. For this reason Saint Ambrose says that we cannot call such goods 'ours', given that we cannot take them with us to the other life, and that only virtues accompany us into eternity.

What does it profit us, says Jesus Christ, to gain the whole world, if at the hour of death, by losing our soul, we lose everything? Oh! How many youths did this great saying lead to the cloister! How many anchorites did it lead to the desert! How many martyrs did it move to give their lives for Christ! How many did it inspire to amend their lives!

By these sayings, Saint Ignatius of Loyola won countless souls for God, especially the wonderful one of Saint Francis Xavier, who was in Paris, concerned with worldly matters. "Think, Francis," said the Saint one day, "think that the world betrays, that it promises and fails to deliver; but even if it fulfils a promise, can never satisfy your heart. And even supposing that it did satisfy, how long would that good fortune last? Could it last longer than your life? And at the end, could you take your happiness to eternity? Is there any potentate who has taken a single coin with him to the other life, or a servant to attend him? Is there any king who has a piece of purple there to robe himself?" With these considerations, Saint Francis Xavier left the world, followed Saint Ignatius of Loyola, and became a great saint.

"Vanity of vanities": thus did Solomon call all the goods of the world when by experience, as he himself confessed, he had tasted all the pleasures there are on earth. Sister Margaret of Saint Anne, a discalced Carmelite, daughter of Emperor Rudolph II, said: "What do thrones count for at the hour of death?"

Something surprising! There are Saints who were afraid to think of their eternal salvation. Father Séñeri, fearful, full of fright, asked his confessor: "What do you say, Father, will I be saved?" Saint Andrew Avelino trembled when, groaning, he exclaimed: "Who knows if I will be saved?" An identical thought afflicted Saint Louis Beltran, and moved him to rise from bed many nights saying: "Who knows whether I will be damned!" On the other hand sinners live damned, and sleep, laugh and rejoice!

Acknowledge, now that you are in time, your own madness and the evil you have perhaps committed separating from your Divine Redeemer who gave His Blood and His life for you. Truly He does not deserve to be treated as you have done. If death were to come now, what would He find in you but sins and remorse of conscience which would cause you to die overwhelmed by anguish? Confess to your Saviour that you acted badly, that you deceived yourself, bartering the Supreme Good for the miserable pleasures of this world.

We must weigh the goods on God's scales, not on those of the world, which is false and deceitful. The goods of the world are utterly miserable, do not satisfy the soul and soon end. The days of man fly faster than the post. The brief days of this life pass by swiftly; and what remains of the pleasures of the earth? They pass like ships, which leave nothing in their wake, not even a trace of their passing.

Let us ask so many rich, learned, princes, emperors who are in eternity, what they have found there of their past greatness, pomps and delights on earth. All reply: 'Nothing, nothing.' "You, men," says Saint Augustine, "just consider the goods that a magnate possesses, consider as well what he takes with him to the grave: a putrid corpse and a shroud which will rot with him."

Of the magnates who die, hardly are they heard spoken of for a short time; afterwards, even their memory is lost. And if they go to Hell, what will they do and say there? They will groan, saying: 'What did our luxuries and riches do for us, if now everything has passed like a shadow, and nothing is left to us but endless grief, sorrow and despair?'

"The children of this world or lovers of this world, regarding their worldly business, are more shrewd and concerned than the children of Light" (Gospel). It is amazing to see how prudent the worldly are in the things of this earth. They spare no effort to obtain honours and riches! How they care for their bodily health! They choose the most suitable means, the best-reputed doctors, the best remedies, the best climate, and yet how negligent they are with their souls! And despite everything, it is certain that health, honours and goods have to end one day, while the soul, the eternal, has no end.

"Let us observe", says Saint Augustine, "how man suffers from the disorderly love he has for things." What do the vengeful, thieves and licentious suffer to carry out their villainous plans? And for the good of the soul would suffer nothing.

O God! The worldly, at the hour of death, at that moment of great truths, know and confess their great folly. They would then wish to have left everything in time to have become saints.

Pope Saint Leo XI said dying: "Rather than Pope, it would have been better for me to have been my convent porter." Saint Honorius III, likewise Pope, exclaimed on dying: "I would have done better staying in the community kitchen to wash the dishes."

King Saint Philip II of Spain called his son at the hour of death and, removing his coverings, showed him his chest, covered with worms, and told him: "See, prince, how we die and how the glory of this world ends." And

then he exclaimed: “Ah! If God had granted me to be a laybrother in any religious Order and not monarch!” He then had them place a wooden cross at his neck, ordained things relative to his death, and told his heir: “I wanted, my son, for you to be a witness to this act so that you see how, at life’s end, the world treats even kings. Their death is the same as that of the poorest in the land. Whoever has lived a better life will obtain greater favour from God.”

And this same son, who became Saint Philip III, on dying, still young, almost forty-three years of age, said: “Take care, my subjects, in the sermon at my funeral, only to preach this spectacle you see. Say that in death, being a king serves only for greater torment for having been one. Oh, that instead of king I had lived in a desert, serving God! I would now go with greater hope to present myself before His tribunal, and not run so much risk of damnation!”

But what are such desires worth at the moment of death, save for greater despair and grief for not having loved God in life? Saint Teresa therefore said: “We should not take into account what ends with life. True life is to live in such a fashion that death is not feared.”

So that if we wish to understand the nature of earthly goods, let us look at them as if we were on our deathbed, and let us then say: ‘Those revenues, honours and pleasures will end one day. So it is necessary that we take steps to sanctify ourselves and enrich ourselves with the only goods that are to accompany us always and make us happy forever.’

You should not fear that Jesus will abandon you, if you seek Him now and love Him with all your heart; for when you scorned Him, Our Redeemer did not cease to seek you; don’t seek to offend God again even in the least thing, and embrace happily whatever pains and crosses He sends you. Let Him chastise you in this life, and not have to do so in the other, and so that you may love Him eternally.

“Time is short; and those who make use of temporal things... (live) as if they did not use them, because the outward aspect of this world passes away swiftly” (I Corinthians). What is our temporal life other than a scene that passes and ends at once? The aspect of this world, that is, its appearance, the scene of a comedy. “The world is like a scene” says Father Cornelius a Lápide S.J., “one generation passes and another takes its place. Whoever had the role of king did not take the purple with him. Tell me, O city! O house!, how many chiefs did you have?” Scarcely does the comedy finish, whoever had the role of king is no longer king, nor is the lord any more lord. Now you own the farm or palace; but death will come and others will be owners of it all.



The ill-fated hour of death brings with it forgetfulness and the end of all the grandeurs, honours and vanities of the world. Casimir II, king of Poland, died of a sudden when he held up a cup to his lips to drink. Speedily the scene of the world ended for him.

The emperor Celsus was assassinated eight days after having been raised to the throne, and thus ended the scene of the world for him. Ladislaus, king of Bohemia, a youth of eighteen years, was waiting for his spouse, daughter of the king of France, and preparing great celebrations, when one morning he had an excruciating attack of pain and died of it. So they sent courtiers at once for the purpose of advising the spouse to return to France, for the comedy of this world had

ended for Ladislaus.

This thought of the vanity of the world made a saint of Francis Borgia who, as we said above, on seeing the corpse of empress Elizabeth, dead amid her grandeur and in the flower of her youth, resolved to give himself entirely up to God, saying: “In this the grandeur and crowns of the world end up! Never again shall I serve a master who can die.”

Let us endeavour to live in such a way that at our death we can’t be told as was the fool mentioned in the Gospel: “Fool, this night I will demand your soul of you, since you will die. And all that you have stored away, whose shall it be?” And then Jesus added: “This will happen to everyone who stores up for himself and is not rich in grace in God’s eyes.” Later on He says: “Make yourselves purses that do not wear out, and treasure in Heaven that is never spent, where no thief reaches, nor does the moth consume”; that is, be sure to enrich yourselves, not with the goods of the world, but of God, with virtues and merits that will endure with you forever in Heaven.

Let us be concerned with winning the great treasure of divine love. “What does the rich man have if he has no charity? And if the poor man has charity, what does he not have?” says Saint Augustine. Whoever has all riches and does not possess God, is the poorest in the world. But the poor man who possess God, possesses

everything. And who possesses God? Whoever loves Him. “God is present in whoever keeps the Divine Commandments, and he united to God” (I John).

Let Jesus be your sole Master and Lord. Leave everything to obtain His grace, more to be esteemed than a thousand crowns and a thousand kingdoms. Whom must we love but Jesus, infinitely lovable, infinite good, beauty, goodness, infinite love? Never complain of what God ordains, for all is holy and ordained for your good. Let God dispose as He pleases, and you, promise to receive it with joy and render thanks for everything. Let Him give you His love and grace, and nothing more.

The present life is a voyage to eternity: On considering that in this world so many perverse men live prosperously, and so many righteous, on the contrary, live full of tribulations, the Gentiles themselves, with merely the help of natural light, knew the truth that, existing God, and God being all-just, there must be another life in which the perverse may be chastised and the good rewarded.

For the same reason that the Gentiles knew by the light of reason, we Christians confess as well by the light of the Faith: “We have no lasting city here, instead we go in search of the heavenly one that is to come” (Hebrews).

This earth is not our fatherland, but a place of transit we pass through to reach shortly the home of eternity. Hence the home you live in is not *your own home*, but like a hospice which soon, and when you least think, you will have to leave; and the first to throw you out when death comes will be your relatives and close friends. What, then, will be your true home? A ditch will be the dwelling of your body until the day of judgement, and your soul will go to the home of eternity, either Heaven, or Hell.

So Saint Augustine says to us: “You are a guest who looks out on passing.” Foolish would be the traveller who, when passing through a district, wanted to spend all his wealth on buying a house there, which at the end of a few days he would have to leave. Consider then, says the Saint, that you are passing through this world, and do not fix your sights on what you see. Look out on passing, and make sure of a good mansion where you are to live forever.

Happy are you if saved! How beautiful the glory! The most sumptuous palaces of kings are like huts compared to the City of Heaven, the only one which can be called ‘City of perfect beauty’. There will be nothing left to desire there. You will be contemplating and adoring the Most Blessed Trinity in the joyous company of the Divine Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ and of the Saints, without fear of any evil. You will live, in short, plunged into an ocean of joy in continuous beatitude, which will last forever. And this joy will be so perfect and immense, that for all eternity and at each moment it will seem new.



If on the contrary you are damned, woe betide you! You will find yourself immersed in a sea of fire and of suffering, desperate, abandoned by all and deprived of your God. And for how long? Perhaps when a hundred years have passed or a thousand, your pains will have ended? Oh! They will never end. A thousand million years and centuries will pass, and the Hell you suffer is only just beginning! What are a thousand years compared to eternity? Less than a day that went by. Do you want to know which home will be yours in eternity? It will be the one you deserve; the one you yourself build by your deeds.

Perhaps the home you merited by your life is the prison of Hell, where hardly had you committed your first grave sin, you should have been abandoned by God, without hope of loving Him again. Blessed forever be the mercy of the Lord, who awaited you and gave you time to put so much evil to rights. Do not seek to abuse God’s patience further.

It the tree falls southwards or northwards, wherever it falls, there it lies. Wherever your soul falls at the hour of death, there it will lie forever. There is no middle ground: either reign eternally in glory, or groan a slave in Hell. Either be forever blessed, in a sea of indescribable happiness, or be forever desperate in a prison of torments. Why torment ourselves, as some do, saying, “Who know whether I will be damned or saved?” When a tree is cut down, which way does it fall? It falls the way it was leaning. To which side are you leaning? What life do you lead? Make sure to lean always towards virtue, conserve the grace of God, flee from sin, and thus you will be saved and reach Heaven.

And to flee from sin, let us always bear in mind the *great thought* of eternity, thus called by Saint Augustine, with good reason. This thought moved many youths to abandon the world and live in solitude, to dedicate themselves solely to affairs of the soul. And truly they did right, for now they rejoice in Heaven for their decision, and rejoice eternally.

Saint John of Ávila converted a lady who lived estranged from God simply by telling her: “Consider, madam, these two words: ‘*always*’ and ‘*never*’.” Father Paul Séñeri, because of a thought he had one day of eternity, could not fall asleep, and from then on gave himself up to a very austere life.

Dresselius tells of a bishop who, with the thought of eternity, led the holiest of lives, saying mentally: "At each moment I am at the gates of eternity." A certain monk shut himself up into a tomb, and ceaselessly exclaimed: "Oh, eternity! eternity!" "Whoever believes in eternity," said the above mentioned Saint John of Avila, "and does not become a saint, should be shut up in a mental institution."

Saint John Chrysostom, considering that the rich Epulon, in the world considered blest, was later damned in Hell, and that Lazarus, considered unfortunate for being poor, was later ever happy in Heaven, exclaimed: "Oh, unhappy happiness, which led the rich man to eternal misery! Oh, happy misery, which led the poor man to eternal happiness!"

You knew that by sinning you condemn yourself to eternal dolour. Yet you wanted to oppose God's Holiest Will for the sake of a miserable pleasure. Never rebel again against His Holy Will. How sad for you if God Most Holy had sent you death when you were living badly! Perhaps you would find yourself in Hell detesting His Will. But now love it, and decide to love it forever and say: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." For what else does God Will but your good and your salvation? Fortunate are you if you spend the rest of your life doing His Holy Will and so die!

Man will go to his home in eternity, which means that each will go to the home he chooses. They will not take him, he will go of his own free will. It is sure that God want us all to be saved, but does not want to force us to be saved. Before us He places life and death, and will give us whatever we choose. The Lord has given us two routes to follow: one of Glory, another that of Hell. It is up to us to choose. Whoever insists on going by the route to Hell, how can he reach Glory?

It is incredible that, though all sinners want to be saved, and say: 'I hope to save myself', they themselves damn themselves to Hell. "But who will be so mad," says Saint Augustine, "as to want to take mortal poison with the hope of later being cured? And yet, how many Christians, how many madmen, do themselves to death by sinning, and say, 'later I will think of a way out'. Oh, deplorable error, which has sent so many to Hell!"

Let us not be among these demented; let us consider what is meant by eternity. If man takes so much trouble to have a house that is comfortable, spacious, healthy and well placed, as though he was sure that he would live there all his life, why does he show himself so careless when it comes to the house where he has to dwell forever?, asks Saint Euquerius.

We are not dealing with a dwelling more or less comfortable, spacious, but a place full of delights, among God's friends, or in a prison filled with torments, among the wretched crowds of the perverse, heretics and idolaters. For how long? Not for twenty nor for forty years, but for all eternity. A great transaction, doubtless! Not something of little significance, but of supreme importance.

When Henry VIII condemned to death Saint Thomas More, his wife, Louise, tried to persuade him to consent to the king's demands. But Saint Thomas More replied: "Tell me, Louise, you can see I am now old, how long can I still live?" "You could live for twenty more years", said his wife. "What a bad deal!" Saint Thomas then exclaimed: "For twenty years of life on earth you want me to lose an eternity of happiness and that I condemn myself to eternal misery?"

O God, enlighten us! If the teaching on eternity were doubtful, a probable opinion, even so we ought to try insistently, in case this opinion were true, to live well so as not to expose ourselves to eternal unhappiness. Yet this teaching is not doubtful, but quite certain; it is no mere opinion, but dogma of faith. "Oh, lack of faith! says Saint Teresa, "is the cause of so many sins and that so many Christians are damned! Let us enliven our faith, then, saying: 'I believe in eternal life!'" I believe that after this life there is another, which never ends.

And with this thought ever present, let us turn to suitable means to assure us of salvation. Let us frequent the Sacraments, let us keep up daily prayer and meditation, let us reflect on our eternal salvation and flee from dangerous occasions. And if it were crucial to separate from the world, let us leave it, for no precaution is too great to assure us of our eternal salvation. "No safety measures are too great where eternity is at risk", says Saint Bernard.

There is, then, no middle way: either happy forever or wretched forever. You will find yourself either in a sea of blessedness, or in a trench of torments. Either with God in glory, or eternally in Hell, apart from God. If you were now in Hell, you could not love Him, but would hate Him eternally. What evil has He done that you hate Him? He loved you to the extreme of dying for you, and is worthy of infinite love. "Therefore, who will separate us from the love of Christ if we are faithful to His Grace?" (Romans). Ah! Only sin can separate us from Jesus!

Malice of mortal sin: Whoever commits a mortal sin, what does he do? He offends God, dishonours Him and, as far as he can, deeply embitters Him. Firstly, mortal sin is a grave offence done to God. The malice of an offence, as Saint Thomas says, is calculated according to the person who receives it and the person who gives it. An offence done to an ordinary individual is doubtless an evil; but it is a greater offence if given to someone of high rank, and far more serious if given to the king. And who is God? He is the King of kings. God is infinite

Majesty, in comparison with whom all the princes of earth and all the Saints and Angels of Heaven are less than a grain of sand. Before God's grandeur, all creatures are as nothing. That is God.

And man, what is he? Saint Bernard replies: 'a sack of worms, fodder for worms, who in brief will devour him. Man is a wretch, who can do nothing, blind, seeing nothing, a poor destitute, who has nothing. And this miserable worm dares to insult God?' says the same Saint Bernard. The Angelic Doctor then rightly affirms that the sin of man contains an almost infinite malice.

Saint Augustine decidedly calls sin *an infinite malice*; so that though all men and angels offered themselves up to die, and even to be annihilated, they could not satisfy God for a single sin. God chastises mortal sin with the terrible pains of Hell; but despite all, this chastisement is, as all theologians say, less than the pain by which such a sin deserves to be chastised.

And, in truth, what pain would be sufficient to chastise as a worm that rebels against his Lord deserves? God alone is Lord of all, for He is Creator of all things. Hence all creatures obey Him. "Even the winds and the sea obey Him" (Gospel). Fire, hail, snow and ice fulfil His orders. But what does man do by sinning? He is saying to God: 'Lord, I do not want to serve You'?

The Lord tells him: 'Don't take revenge', and man replies: 'I want to take revenge' 'Don't take your neighbour's goods', and he seeks to possess them. 'Refrain from impure pleasure', and he makes no resolution to deprive himself. The sinner tells God, as did the godless pharaoh, when Moses told him to fulfil the divine order to let the people of Israel go free; that reckless man replied: "Who is this Lord that I obey His voice...? I know no such Lord." Well, the sinner says the same: 'Lord, I know You not; I want to do as I please.'

In summary: before God Himself man shows lack of respect and turns his back on Him, which is properly speaking mortal sin: the action by which man separates from God. The Lord laments this saying: 'You were thankless, you abandoned Me,; I would never have separated from you; it is you who have turned away.'

God declared that He detests sin, so that He can do no less than detest whoever commits it. "You are a God of Goodness and detest wrongdoing;... You detest all who do wrong" (Psalm). And man, by sinning, dares to declare himself enemy of God and do battle with Him face to face! Well, what would you say if you saw an ant that wanted to do battle with a soldier?



God is that all-powerful Lord who by His mere wish created Heaven and earth out of nothing. And if He wanted, at a sign of His, He could annihilate it all. And the sinner, when he consents to sin, raises his hand against God and, with pride, hastens to offend God and exclaims: "I know well it goes against God's Law, but what great evil is the sin I committed? God is good and forgives sinners." What an offence! What rashness! What pride! What colossal blindness!

If you are that rash rebel who so often dared to fail in respect for God and to flee from Him, now implore His mercy. Never abandon the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ. This love of His freed you from Hell. Love for Him will free you from sin in the future.

The sinner not only offends God but dishonours Him as well. For, by rejecting divine Grace for a miserable pleasure, you disdain and trample on God's friendship. If a man loses this sovereign friendship to gain a realm, and even the whole world, he would nevertheless commit an immense evil, for God's friendship is worth more than the world and more than a thousand worlds. And yet, God infinitely holy, God immortal, is offended for miserable perishable goods, or to satisfy a base inclination of our fallen nature or simply for a human whim. Hardly has the sinner begun to debate interiorly whether or not to give his consent to sin, then, as it were, he takes a scales into his hands and sets to consider which weighs more, whether God's Grace, or that passing good, or his base inclination. And when he then gives his consent, he declares that doing his own will is worth more to him than God's friendship. See here God scorned by the sinner.

Considering the grandeur and majesty of God, all should exclaim: 'Lord, who is like unto You!' But God, on the contrary, seeing Himself compared by sinners to the vilest satisfaction, which is preferred to Him, will tell them: 'To whom have you likened and equalled Me? Can it be that this pleasure is worth more than My grace?'

You would not have sinned if you had known that, by sinning, you would lose a hand, or a thousand euros, or perhaps less. Hence, only God is so vile in your eyes, says Salviano, that He deserves to be valued at less than an outburst of rage or a miserable enjoyment.

Besides, when the sinner, for any sin of his, offends God, he turns that pleasure into his god, as he makes it his goal. Thus Saint Jerome says: "Whatever someone desires, if venerated, it becomes god for him." Vice in the heart becomes an idol on the altar of that heart. Hence Saint Thomas says: "If you love delights, they are your god." And Saint Cyprian: "Whatever a man prefers to God becomes his god."

When Jeroboam rebelled against the Lord, he tried to lead the people into idolatry, and he presented to them his idols, saying: "Here, O Israel, are your gods." Thus does the devil act when he offers pleasures to the sinner, and tells him: 'What have you to do with God? See here your own idol; this passion, this delight. Accept it and abandon God.' And if the sinner consents, he does just that: in his heart he adores the pleasure as his idol. Vice in the heart is an idol on that altar.

And if at least sinners did not dishonour God in His own presence! But no; they offend and dishonour Him to His Face, because God is present everywhere. The sinner knows. And despite all he dares to provoke the Lord in His own divine presence!

God is the Infinite Good, and we have often exchanged Him for a vile pleasure, which disappears once tasted. Return to God, and hope that He will receive and embrace you as a son. Hell will not cease to offer you temptations; but God is more powerful; and you know well that you will never separate from God if you always commend yourself to your Heavenly Mother, Mary Most Holy.

We said that the sinner, besides, deeply embitters God, for there is no bitterness deeper than to see oneself repaid with ingratitude by someone beloved and favoured in extreme. And what does the sinner dare to do? Offend a God who created him and loved him so dearly that He gave His Blood and Life for his love. And man casts him from his heart on committing a mortal sin. God dwells in the soul that loves Him. "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode in him" (Gospel).

Note the expression 'We will make Our abode'. God comes to that soul and makes His mansion there: that is, He will not leave it, unless the soul casts Him out. "God does not abandon if He is not abandoned", as the Council of Trent says. And given that You know, Lord, that a certain ingrate will throw you out, why do You not leave right now? Abandon him, leave before he gives You that great offence. 'No', says the Lord, 'I don't want to leave him, but wait until he himself throws Me out.'

Hardly has the soul consented to sin, he says to his God: 'Lord, out of my way' He does not speak with words but with actions, as Saint Gregory I notes. The sinner well knows that God cannot live together with sin. He sees well that if he sins, God will have to leave. So that, in fact, he tells Him: 'Since You cannot stay with my sin and have to separate from me, leave when You please.' And, on dismissing God, at once the soul gives entrance to the enemy to take possession. By the same door by which God leaves, the devil enters. "Then the devil goes and brings with him seven spirits worse than himself, and they enter within and dwell there" (Gospel).

When a child is baptized, the Priest exorcizes the devil, telling him to leave, so that the unclean spirit leaves and makes way for the Holy Ghost. Hence that baptized soul, on receiving Grace, becomes a temple of God.



But when a man consents to sin, he does precisely the opposite, telling God, who was dwelling in his soul, 'leave me, Lord, and make way for the devil.' The Lord lamented about this to Saint Brigid when He said that the sinner, on dismissing Him, does as though removing the King's own throne: "I am like a King thrown out of His own kingdom; and in my place an infamous thief is chosen."

What grief would you feel if you received a grave offence from someone whom you had favoured greatly? Well, that same grief you cause God, who went as far as to give His life to save you. The Lord calls out to Earth and to Heaven to take pity on Him for the ingratitude with which sinners treat Him: "Hear, O Heavens, and you, O Earth, listen well. I brought up children and made them prosper, but they have despised Me" (Isaias). In a word, sinners pain the Lord's Heart by their sins.

God cannot feel pain; but, as Father Medina says, if it were possible for Him to feel it, just one mortal sin would be enough to make Him die, by the infinite grief it would cause Him. So, then, Saint Bernard affirms: "Sin, for what it is in itself, is death to God." In this fashion sinners, by committing a mortal sin, strike, so to speak, their Lord, and leave out nothing to take His life, if they could. And, according to Saint Paul, they trample on the Son of God, and despise all that Jesus Christ did and suffered to cleanse the world of sin.

As often as you have sinned gravely, you threw the Divine Redeemer out of your soul and did everything necessary to deal Him death, if He could die. Listen to what the Lord tells you: 'What did I do to you or how did I afflict you that you have so afflicted Me?' What wrong did the Lord do to you? He gave you your being, and has died for you: that is the wrong He did you! What are you to reply? That you merit Hell a thousand times over, and that the Lord in all justice could send you there. But He remembers that love which made Him die for you on the Cross, and has compassion on you. He does not want you to despair, and tells you that He is at the door of your heart (of that heart from which you threw Him out) and who calls with His inspirations to

enter there, asking you to open to Him. Open the door to Him, tell Him that He enter and never separate from you again.

Mercy of God: “In God mercy surpasses the rigour of His justice” (Saint James). Goodness is communicative by nature; of itself it tends to share its goods with the rest. God, who by nature is infinite goodness, feels a lively desire to communicate His happiness to us, and so tends more to mercy than to chastisement. To chastise is something far from the tendency of the divine Will; for this Father does not want happiness for Himself alone, rather, owing to His goodness, He wishes to share it with the children He has created. And when the Lord chastises in this life, it is to be merciful in the other. He appears wrathful in order that we amend and detest sin. And if He chastises us now it is because He loves us, to free us from eternal pain.

Who can admire and praise sufficiently the mercy with which God treats sinners, awaiting them, calling them, welcoming them when they return to Him? And above all, what a precious grace God grants us by waiting for us to do penance!

When you offended Him, the Lord would have been able to send you death and, yet, He awaited you; and instead of chastising, He filled you with good things and preserved your life by His fatherly providence. He acts as if not seeing your sins, so that you be converted.



And how, Lord, do You, who cannot bear the sight of a single sin, see so many and are silent? You see that dissolute, that vengeful, that blasphemous, whose sins increase day by day, and do not chastise them? Why such patience? God awaits the sinner so that he repent, to be able thus to pardon and save him.

Saint Thomas says that all creatures: fire, water, earth, air, by natural inclination tend to chastise the sinner for the offences he inflicts on the Creator; but God, in His mercy, detains them. You, Lord, await the impious, so that he amend; but do You not see that the ingrate takes advantage of Your

mercy to offend You? Why such patience? Because God does not want the death of the sinner but that he be converted and live.

Oh, God's patience!, says Saint Augustine, referring to His overgenerous patience towards the sinner, that if God were not God, it would seem unjust; because He permits man take advantage of that patience to sin the more. It might be deemed in certain fashion an injustice against divine honour. “We sin,” the same Saint continues, “we give ourselves up to sin (some sign pacts with sin, sleep for whole months and years beside it), we rejoice in sin (for no few glory in their crimes), and are You appeased? We provoke You to anger, and You to mercy.” It seems that we strive to challenge God; we, drawing down His chastisement; He, inviting us to forgiveness.

From today on, love no one more than God; may you live solely for Him who died for you, and that you suffer for His love alone, since for you He suffered so.

Consider, besides, God's mercy when He calls the sinner to penance. Adam rebelled against God, and then hid. But the Lord, who saw that Adam was lost, called him: “Where are you?” Words of a father who seeks the son he has lost. God did the same with you many times. You fled from God, and God sought you out, now with inspirations, now with remorse of conscience, now by way of holy talks, now with trials or with the death of relatives and friends. It seems almost as though the Lord will lose His voice from so many callings. “Consider, sinners,” says Saint Teresa, “that the Lord who is one day to judge you is calling you.”

How many times, Christian, did you turn a deaf ear to God when He called you? You well deserved Him to call you no more. But your God does not cease to seek you out, as He wants you to be at peace with Him in order to save you. Who is it calling you? A God of infinity majesty. And what are you but a miserable vile little worm?

And why does He call you? For nothing other than to restore you to the life of Grace, which you had lost. “For I do not desire the death of the sinner, rather that he be converted and live” (Ezekiel). For the purpose of recovering divine Grace, it would be little for a man to live his whole life in the desert. But God offers to give you His Grace in a moment, and you reject it. And nonetheless, God has not abandoned you, rather approaches and seeks you out eagerly, and lamenting tells you, ‘why, My son, do you want to be damned?’

Whenever man commits a mortal sin, he throws God out of his soul. But the Lord, what does He do? He arrives at the door of that ingrate and calls; He asks the soul to let Him enter, and pleads until He is tired out. Yes, says Saint Denis the Areopagite; God, like a rejected lover, seeks the sinner and pleads for him not to be lost. And Saint Paul manifests the same (II Corinthians) when he writes to his disciples: “I earnestly beseech you, then, in Christ's name, that through the Priestly Ministry you remain reconciled to God the Father.”

Most beautiful is the consideration Saint John Chrysostom makes on this text: “Christ Himself asks you. And what does He ask of you? That you be reconciled with God. So He is not your enemy, but you His.” By which the Saint shows that it is not the sinner who needs to strive that God be moved to be reconciled with him (given that it is he and not God who refuses to make peace), rather that it is enough that the sinner resolve to accept divine friendship.

Ah! This best of Lords ceaselessly approaches all countless sinners and tells them: ‘Ungrateful! Do not run away from Me. Why do you run away? Tell me. I desire your good, and only seek to make you happy. Why do you seek to be lost?’ But what are You doing, Lord? Why so much patience and so much love for these rebels? What benefits do you hope from them? What honour do You seek showing Yourself so impassioned for these vile worm of the earth who flee from You? What is man that You should exalt him? Or why do you place him upon Your Heart?

Sometimes the princes of the earth do not deign even to glance at the vassals who come to ask forgiveness. But God does not act in this way with us. He will not turn His face away if they turn to Him contrite. No; God does not conceal His Face from those who are converted. Rather, He Himself invites them and promises to receive them as soon as they arrive.

Oh, with what love and tenderness does God embrace the sinner who returns to Him! Jesus Christ clearly taught us this by the parable of the lost sheep, for the Good Shepherd, finding the lost sheep, places it lovingly upon His shoulders and invites His friends to rejoice with Him. And the Evangelist adds: “There will be more joy in Heaven for one repentant sinner who does penance, than for ninety-nine righteous who have no need for penance.” The Redeemer teaches the same with the parable of the prodigal son, when He declared that He is that father who, on seeing the lost son return, went out to meet him, and before speaking to him, embraces and kisses him, and not even with these tender caresses can express the consolation He feels.

The Lord even assures that, if the sinner repents, He will forget the sins, as though that person had never offended Him. He has no qualms in saying: “If you truly convert from the heart, come to Me; and then your sins, however great and numerous they be, will be forgiven, and your souls will become as white wool” (Isaias). That means: come, sinners, since God cannot despise a heart humbled and repentant. And Jesus will tell him, as to the deeply touched Magdalen: “If but a single spark of penance, of repentance, of love, of faith, of hope, falls into a heart and bears fruit, I wish to tend it and make it grow in order to take it to My Father.” By these words she was filled with love for Jesus and of repentance for her sins.

The Lord glories in showing mercy, forgiving sinners. And when does He forgive? At the instant. You do not have to weep hard; as soon as you shed the first tear, the Lord will take pity on you. God does not act with us as we act with Him. God calls us, and we do not want to hear Him. God is not like that. Hardly do we repent and ask His pardon, the Lord responds and pardons.

Simply the thought of the patience that the Lord has shown you should suffice for your heart to be always ablaze in His love. Who would have been able to suffer, as God has, the offences you gave Him? Hapless are you if you go back to offending Him and are damned!

Abuse of divine mercy: “God’s goodness is calling them to penance” (Romans). It refers to the parable of the cockle which, having grown in a field mixed among good seed, the servants wanted to pull it up. But the master ordered to let it grow, “and at harvest time I will say to the reapers: Collect the cockle first and tie it into bundles to burn”. From this parable is seen on the one hand God’s patience with sinners, and on the other His rigour with the obstinate.

Saint Augustine says that the devil deceives men in two ways: “By despair and by hope.” When the sinner has already sinned, he moves him to despair at the fear of divine justice; but before sinning, he encourages him to yield to temptation with the hope of divine mercy. Hence the Saint admonishes us saying: “After sin, hope for mercy; before sin fear divine justice.” And effectively, so it is. Because whoever relies on God’s mercy to offend Him does not merit it. Mercy is shown to the one who fears God, not to the one who uses it not to fear Him. Whoever offends justice can appeal to mercy; but whoever offends mercy, to what shall he appeal?, says Saint John of Ávila, who besides says that “to put up with one who counts on God’s goodness to offend Him further, would be injustice rather than mercy.” Clemency is offered to whoever fears God, not to one who abuses it. “Et misericórdia ejus... tíméntibus eum,” as the Most Holy Virgin exclaims in Her Canticle: “His mercy is poured out from generation to generation upon those who fear Him.” The obstinate are threatened by and subjected to justice because, as Saint Augustine says, the truth of God shines out even in His threats.

Hardly is a sinner to be found so desperate as to want expressly to be damned. Sinners want to sin, but without losing the hope of salvation. They sin, and say: ‘God is goodness itself; though I now sin, later I will confess.’ Thus do sinners think, says Saint Augustine. But, O my God! Thus did many think who are now damned.

Ecclesiasticus states: “Neither say: ‘I sinned: and what evil has befallen me for that?’ Because God, though patient and long-suffering, will give you your deserts. Do not seek to lose fear of forgiven sin, nor pile up sin upon sin. Do not say presumptuously: ‘The mercy of the Lord is great: Why amend? He will forgive me my many sins’; for as He exercises His mercy, so too He exercises His indignation out of His hatred for sin”. Namely, that His anger is as sudden as His mercy; and His anger is directed against sinners.

The mercy of God is infinite, but His acts of mercy, that is, of compassion, are finite. God is clement, but also just. “I am just and merciful”, said the Lord to Saint Brigid, “and sinners think solely of My mercy.” “Sinners”, writes Saint Basil, “do not want to see further than halfway. The Lord is good, but He is just as well. Let us not try to consider God solely by halves.”

“Take care”, says Saint John Chrysostom, “when the devil (not God) promises you divine mercy with the aim that you sin.” “Alas for him” adds Saint Augustine, “who to sin bases himself on hope! How many this vain illusion has deceived and lost!” Unhappy whoever abuses God’s compassion to offend Him further! Lucifer, as Saint Bernard affirms, was chastised with such amazing speed, since on rebelling he hoped to receive no chastisement.

There was a sinner who was later converted, and God forgave him. But his son, seeing how easily his father had obtained forgiveness, led a bad life in the hope of being forgiven himself, and was shown no mercy. For this cause, says Saint John Chrysostom, some were damned, because they dared to sin hoping in Jesus Christ’s benevolence.

In summary: if God waits with patience, He does not wait forever. For if the Lord always bore with us, no one would be damned; but many Christians are damned, as indicated in the Treatise on the Holy Mass: “At present the number of men eternally damned in Hell is to be counted in thousands of millions.” “Wide is the gate and broad the way that leads to perdition, and many there are who readily follow that way” (Gospel).

Whoever offends God, trusting in pardon, “is a joker and not a penitent”, says Saint Augustine. On the other hand, Saint Paul assures us that “no one mocks God” (Galatians). And it would be a mockery of God to offend Him whenever we wish and then go to glory. Whoever sows sins has no hope other than the eternal chastisement of Hell: “Whoever now sows to excite his fleshly appetites will afterwards reap fruit of eternal death” (Galatians).

The net with which the devil draws so many Christian to damn themselves is doubtless that falsehood with which he seduced them saying: ‘Sin freely, for despite all you have to be saved.’ But the Lord curses one who sins in the hope of forgiveness.



Hope after sin, when the sinner is truly repentant, is pleasing to God; but that of the obstinate is abominable to Him. Such hope provokes God’s chastisement, just as a servant would provoke a chastisement for offending his master precisely because he is so kind and amiable.

Ah! Perhaps you are one of those ungrateful who have offended God because you see that He is good to all! Give Him thanks that up till now He has borne with you. For He has waited in order to see you one day converted into a fervent lover of His goodness. Love Him above all things and appreciate His grace more than all the kingdoms of the world, and rather than lose His Grace prefer to lose your life a thousand times.

Someone might perhaps say: ‘Given that God has shown me such clemency in the past, I hope that He will show me the same in the future.’ But I reply: For having been so merciful to you, do you want to offend God again? Do you scorn God’s goodness and patience in this way? Are you unaware that if the Lord has borne with you up till now, it has not been so that you continue to offend Him, but so that the evil you did may distress you, and lead you to repent and amend? And if you, relying on divine mercy, cease not to abuse it, the Lord will withdraw it from you. If you are not converted, God will draw the bow and prepare it, because vengeance is His and He will reply to you in due course. “The Lord God of Hosts will be praised for His righteous vengeance” (Isaias). God waits, but when the hour of His justice arrives, He waits no longer and punishes.

God awaits the sinner in order that he amend; but seeing that the time granted him for grieving his sins only serves to increase them, He avails Himself of that same time to exercise justice. So that the same time granted, the same mercy conceded, will be motives for the chastisement to be more rigorous and abandonment swifter.

And how does God abandon us? Either He sends death to the sinner, who thus dies unrepentant, or He deprives him of the abundance of graces, and leaves him no more than sufficient grace, by which, though the sinner could save himself, yet he will not. With the mind blinded, the heart hardened, dominated by bad habits, salvation will be almost impossible; and thus he will continue, if not absolutely abandoned, at least morally so. God will remove His special protection. Oh, what a chastisement! A sad sign is when the owner breaks down

the fence and lets those who want, men and cattle, enter the vineyard: an evident proof that the vineyard has been abandoned. Annas and Caiphas are not the only cases.

You know from the Catechism that the sin against the Holy Ghost is wilful obstinacy in evil, out of contempt for the means of salvation. There are many forms of sin against the Holy Ghost, for example: Despair, which is to arrive at the obstinate conviction that it is impossible to obtain forgiveness for sins and eternal salvation from God; presumption, which is to expect to attain salvation without the need of repentance for sins and to continue to commit them without any fear of God's punishments; obstinacy in sin, which is to reject the inspirations of grace and the salutary counsels of virtuous persons with refined ill-will and rebellion against God; wilful impenitence, which is arriving at the obstinate resolve to be forever unrepentant for sins and to resist any inspiration of grace that might move to repentance. When any sin against the Holy Ghost reaches the highest degree of obstinacy, it is in practice unforgivable, not because God is unwilling to forgive, but because the impenitent person closes off the channels of grace in such a way as to render the reception by him of any grace impossible; for he decidedly chooses not to be saved, and God necessarily respects his free will.

Thus God, when He leaves a soul abandoned, removes the ramparts of fear, of remorse of conscience, leaves the soul in deep darkness, and then the monsters of vice penetrate. And the sinner, abandoned in that obscurity, despises everything: divine grace, glory, warnings, counsels and excommunications; he will even mock his own damnation. God will leave him in this life without chastisement, and his greatest chastisement will consist of this. Saint Bernard says: "I want none of that mercy, more terrible than any anger."

It is a terrible chastisement for God to leave the sinner in his sins and seemingly ask him no account of them. It could be said that He shows him no anger and allows him all he wishes in this world. Unhappy sinners who prosper in mortal life! Sign it is that God awaits eternal life to exercise His justice on them! If the ways of the impious prosper, then they are being fattened up like the flock for the slaughterhouse.

There is then no greater chastisement than that God permit the sinner to add sin upon sin, and wrongdoing upon wrongdoing. He will be erased from the book of the living; for Saint Robert Bellarmine says: "There is no chastisement so great as when sin is the penalty for sin," when from one sin begins a chain of innumerable sins. It would have been better for one of these wretches for the Lord to have let him die when he committed his first sin; for dying later, he will suffer as many hells as sins committed.

In this miserable state you have deserved that God deprive you of His lights and graces. But if you hear that He calls you to penance, acknowledge that He has not yet abandoned you; He wants you to be converted from the traitor and rebel you may have been, into a fervent lover of Jesus and Mary.

It is told in the Life of Father Louis de Lanuza that one day two friends were walking together in Palermo, and one of them, called Caesar, who was a comedian, noting that the other seemed pensative in extreme, told him: "I bet that you have been to confession, and that is why you are worried. I don't want to fall into scruples like that. One day Father Lanuza told me that God gave me twelve years of life and that if in that lapse I did not amend I would have a bad death. After that I have travelled through many parts of the world; I have had several illnesses, and in one of them was at the point of death. But in this month, when those famous twelve years are going to end, I feel better than ever." And then he invited his friend to go the following Saturday, to see the first performance of a comedy composed by Caesar himself. And on that Saturday, which was the 24th of November 1668, when Caesar was about to go on stage, he unexpectedly had a stroke and died suddenly in the arms of an actress. So did the comedy end.

So then, when temptation by the enemy prompts you to sin again, if you want to be damned you can freely commit the sin; but do not say that you desire your salvation. As long as you want to sin, consider yourself damned, and imagine that God decrees His sentence saying: 'What more can I do for you, ingrate, than I have done? And since you want to be damned, damn yourself, for the blame is yours.'

You will perhaps ask where God's mercy is. Ah, wretch! Does it seem to you little for God to bear with you for so long having so many sins? You ought to be prostrate before Him face to the ground, giving Him thanks and saying: 'Only because You are merciful, Lord, have we not been annihilated.'

By committing a single mortal sin you incurred a greater offence than if you had trampled on the greatest sovereign in the world. And such and so many have you committed that, if you had given these offences to God to a brother of yours, he would not have borne them. But God has not only waited for you, but has called you many times and offered you forgiveness. What more could He have done for you?

If God had need of you, or if you had honoured Him with great services, could He have shown you greater clemency? So then, if you offend Him again, you will make His divine mercy turn into indignation and chastisement.

If the fig tree found by its owner to be without fruit had not given any fruit either the following year granted to tend it, who would have dared to hope that it would be given more time and not be cut down? Listen then, to Saint Augustine: "Oh, fruitless tree! The blow of the axe was postponed. But do not think yourself safe, for you

will be cut down! The pain was deferred, but not cancelled. If you further abuse divine mercy, the chastisement will come, 'you will be cut down'."

Are you then wanting that God Himself will send you to Hell? Well, if He sends you, you already know, never will there be a remedy for you. The Lord is usually silent, but not for ever. When the hour of justice arrives, He breaks the silence. "This you did, and am I to remain silent? I convict you of sin, and shame you for it eternally" (Psalm). Before your eyes I will place the acts of divine mercy you received, and let them judge and condemn you.

Unhappy you, after having received the light that God now gives you, if you are again unfaithful and betray Him, for those lights are the signs that He wants to forgive you. But if you separate from the Lord again, acknowledge that you deserve a Hell created just for you. May the Lord not allow it, let Him not abandon you in the immense disgrace of finding yourself turned again into His enemy. If you have offended God, it is better that you first lose your life.

Of the number of sins: If God were to chastise an offence at once, doubtless He would not be so deeply offended as He is. But because the Lord is not used to chastising right away, rather waits benignly, sinners feel encouraged to offend Him further without fear.

It is vital that we understand that God waits, and is all-patient, but not forever; and that it is the opinion of many Holy Fathers (Saint Basil, Saint Jerome, Saint Ambrose, Saint Cyril of Alexandria, Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Augustine and others) that just as God has determined the number of days the person is to live and the gifts of health and talents He is to grant him, so also has He counted and fixed the number of sins He is to forgive him. And when this number is completed, He forgives no more, says Saint Augustine. The same affirm Eusebius of Caesarea and the other Fathers named above; and they do not speak without foundation. On the terrible day of the Last Judgement, the Supreme Judge without Appeal shall say to His Angels: "The time has come to cut out the cockle. Descend quickly, because the presses of the godless are already brimful of wickedness" (Joel). This means that the Lord suffers the nations with patience, until He chastises them at the height of their perversity. God awaits the day on which the measure of their sins be filled, and then chastises.

Sinners do not keep an account of their offences, but God does, so as to chastise when the harvest is once grained, that is, when the number of sins is complete. In Ecclesiasticus we read: "Do not want to lose your fear of forgiven sin, nor pile up sin upon sin." That is, it is vital, sinner, that you tremble still for the sins He has already forgiven you, because if you add another one, it could be that this with the others completes the number, and then there will be no more mercy for you.

Of such chastisements we find many examples in Scripture, especially that of Saul, for having recurred in disobedience to the Lord, and whom God abandoned to the point that the Prophet Nathan told him: "Since you have cast aside the word of the Lord, the Lord has cast aside your descendants from the throne of Israel." Saul answered: "I beseech you to have pity on my sin and obtain forgiveness for me, and come to Hebron with me to ratify my repentance before the people." Nathan said: "I will not accompany you, because you have rejected the word of the Lord." And when Nathan turned his back to leave, Saul grasped the hem of his cape, tearing it, Nathan understanding by this that God had broken with Saul. Therefore Nathan then said to the king: "In the same way, the Lord has this day torn the kingdom of Israel, and has wrested it from your descendants, in order to give it to another better than you. And this decision of the Lord is steadfast" (Kings). Because he had rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord had rejected him.

Moreover, in the Apocalypse, the Most Holy Virgin Mary warns that Rome has reached the height of her sins: "Depart from this new Great Harlot, or last Babylon the Great, if you truly wish to save your souls and wish to free yourselves as well from dreadful harm by the plagues to come upon her; because the measure of her sins has risen up to Heaven, and clamours out for God's Holy Wrath."

We also have the example of King Balthassar who, enjoying himself at a feast, profaning the vessels of the Temple, saw a hand writing some mysterious words on the wall. The Prophet Daniel arrived and explained the words as follows: "you have been weighed in the balance and found wanting in good works", giving him to understand that the weight of his sins had inclined the scales of divine justice towards chastisement; and in effect Balthassar was killed that same night.

And to how many wretches has the same happened! They live long years in sin; but hardly is the number complete, than death snatches them away and they perhaps go to Hell. Some want to find out the number of stars there are, the number of Angels in Heaven, the years of the life of men; but who can ascertain the number of sins that God will want to forgive?

Let us, then, have healthy and holy fear. Who knows if after the first illicit pleasure, the first bad thought consented, or new sin you incur, God will forgive you again?

Give the most fervent thanks to God. How many souls there are who, for less sins than yours, are now in Hell, and you still live outside that eternal prison, and with the hope of obtaining, if you want and so strive,

pardon and glory? You should really fear that if, after the sins you have committed and the graces He has granted you, you add a new fault, it might fill the measure to the brim and you would be justly damned. Love God above all things, and fear, more than death, to find yourself once more separated from His love.

Perhaps the sinner will say that 'God is a God of mercy.' Who denies that? The mercy of the Lord is infinite. But despite that, how many souls are damned each day? God attends favourably to whoever has goodwill. He forgives the sins, but does not forgive the will to sin. Also if you are young, you have to reflect seriously on this, for God does not count the years, He counts the faults.

And this measure of sins is not equal for all. To one God forgives a hundred sins; to another a thousand, to another, on the second sin he will be in Hell. And how many angels were damned on the first sin!

Saint Gregory refers to a child of five years who, for having blasphemed, went to Hell. And according as the Most Holy Virgin revealed to Blessed Benedicta of Florence, a girl of twelve was damned for her first sin. Another, a boy of eight years, also at the first sin died and was damned. This happens to the sinner who dies without true contrition. In the Gospel we read that the Lord cursed the fruitless fig tree the first time He went to find fruit on it, and the tree withered, for it had no second opportunity.

Some rash man will perhaps want to ask why God forgives one sinner three faults and not four. Here we need to adore God's ineffable judgements, and say with the Apostle: "O depths of the richness of God's Wisdom and Knowledge! How incomprehensible are His judgements and inscrutable His ways!" (Romans). And with Saint Augustine: "He knows whom He should forgive and whom He should not. To those whom He grants mercy, it is given freely, and to whom it is refused, with justice he is refused."

The obstinate soul will reply that, as he has offended God so many times and God has forgiven him, he hopes that He will yet forgive him a new sin. But because God has not chastised him until now, must He always act like that? The measure will fill and the chastisement will come.

The arrogant Samson continued his relationship with Delilah, trusting that he would continue to free himself from the philistines, as had had on previous occasions, but on that last occasion he was captured and finally lost his life. The Lord exclaims, "Neither say: 'I sinned: and what evil has befallen me for that?' Because God, though patient and long-suffering, will give you your deserts" (Ecclesiasticus); or what is the same: the day will come when we shall pay for everything, and however greater the mercy has been, so much graver will be the pain.

Saint John Chrysostom says that to be feared most of all is that God suffer the obstinate sinner, rather than the swift and immediate chastisement. Since, as Saint Gregory writes, all those whom God awaits with greater patience, are later, if they persevere in their ingratitude, more rigorously chastised, and it often happens, adds the Saint, that those who were long tolerated by God, die suddenly without time to be converted and do penance.

Note especially that however greater the lights God gave you, so much the greater will be your blindness and obstinacy in sin, if you do not do penance in time. Saint Peter says that: "it would have been better for him not to have known the way of Truth and holiness rather than, after having known it, to forsake the Holy Law of God given to him." And it is almost impossible that a soul be converted again after having been enlightened with divine light and then having relapsed into sin. Though Christ gives the mysterious and merciful last salvific opportunity at the hour of death of each human person, Satan makes use of all his astuteness to deceive and seduce the soul once more, so that she damns herself eternally.

Death will be terrible for those who refused to hear the Lord's summons when He called them; for just as the sinner has made a mockery of God by forming resolutions in Confession and never fulfilling them, so the Lord as well will make a mockery of him at the hour of death.

The proverb says: "The dog went back to eat its vomit", and such is the imprudent man who repeats his folly. Dionysius the Carthusian developed this thought, and says that as repugnant and squalid as the dog devouring its vomit, is the sinner who returns to commit the sins he repented of in the Sacrament of Penance, and makes himself hateful to God.

Perhaps you are like that dirty and squalid dog, for you have gone back so many times to delight in what you had detested. You merit no forgiveness; but amend and, to be faithful, decide to turn at once and always to Mary Most Holy when you find yourself attacked by temptation, and Her sweetest Name will be your defence.

"Child, have you sinned? Do not sin again. Pray rather for past faults so that they may be forgiven you" (Ecclesiasticus). Consider Our Lord's warning to you, for He would save you: 'Offend Me not again, child, and from now ask forgiveness for your sins'.

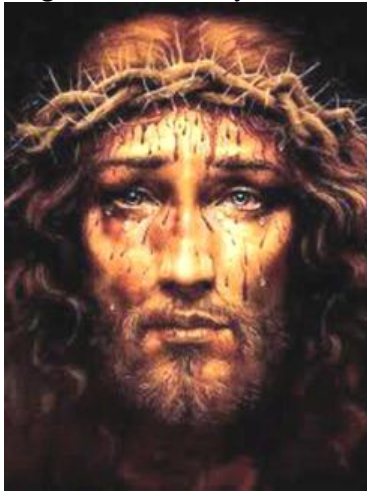
Saint Alphonsus Mary de Liguori counsels that, when you have most offended God, so much the more should you fear to relapse into offending Him; since perhaps another new sin you commit will make the scales of Divine Justice tip against you, and you could be damned. I don't say that there is absolutely no forgiveness for you if you commit another sin, as I do not know; but I affirm that it can really be so.

So that when you feel temptation, you should ask yourself: Who knows if God will forgive me no more and I be damned? Tell me: would you take some food if you believed that it is probably poisoned? If you have grounds for suspecting that your enemies have set up an ambush to kill you on the road, would you go by that way when able to use another safer road? Well, what security have you, that if you sin again, you will then feel true contrition and not again commit the dreadful fault? Or what security do you have that if you sin again, God will not abandon you afterwards, or that He will cause you to die in the act of sinning?

O God! What blindness! On buying a house, you prudently take the precautions necessary not to lose your money. If you are going to take a medicine, you will make sure that it cannot harm you. When crossing a river, you take care not to fall in. And then, for a vile pleasure, for a senseless delight, you risk your eternal salvation, saying: I will confess it all. But I ask you: And when will you confess? – on Sunday – And who will ensure that you live till Sunday? – Tomorrow, then – And how can you say you will confess tomorrow if you do not know whether you have even an hour longer to live?

Saint Augustine says “Have you a day, if you do not have even an hour? God promises to forgive the repentant, but does not promise that there will be a tomorrow to one who has offended Him. If you sin now, maybe God will give you time to do penance, or maybe not. If He does not, what will be of you eternally?” And, nonetheless, for a miserable pleasure you lose your soul or place it in danger of being lost for all eternity. Would you risk a thousand coins for that vile satisfaction? I ask you further: would you give everything, property, house, power, liberty and life, for a brief illicit fancy? Surely not. And yet for that same mean pleasure you want in a moment to lose your God, soul and glory.

Tell me then: these things which Faith tells us, are they no more than pure fables: glory, hell and eternity, or are they the loftiest truths? Do you believe that for a mortal sin a man ceases to be a son of God and becomes a son and slave of Satan, and that whoever lives in mortal sin, is not only on the way to eternal damnation, but in his soul harbours Hell itself? Do you believe that someone in mortal sin is guilty of eternal damnation, and that in a soul in mortal sin dwells Satan, who makes it his temple and abode? If death surprises you in sin, do you not deserve to be eternally lost? What rashness, what madness, to damn yourself to unending pain with the vain hope of putting things right later! “No one wants to become ill with the hope of being cured,” says Saint Augustine. Would you not consider it mad for someone to drink poison, saying: ‘perhaps an antidote will save me’? And do you want to deserve eternal death, trusting that later you can perhaps free yourself?



Oh, frightful madness which has led and leads so many souls to Hell! You sinned trusting recklessly in Divine Mercy; suddenly chastisement will befall you, without knowing where it comes from.

Perhaps you are one of those madhats who have lost the Grace of God so many times in the hope of recovering it later, and exposed your soul to the danger of eternal damnation. And if God had sent you death being in sin, what would have become of you? With all your heart, thank His clemency in awaiting you and in giving you to realize your madness. You know that God wills to save you, all you need is to want to be saved.

Today’s world has rebelled against God, its Creator. Obedience is denied to the Divine Commandments and the true Vicar of Christ on earth is rejected and defamed. As consequence of not submitting to God, the world has become subject to God’s enemies, the devil and his lackeys, who only seek the destruction of men and, as just chastisement, the Lord permits those enemies to act, that they propagate corruption and impose perverse laws for the ruin of souls, besides provoking sicknesses and using many other means to cause the death of the soul.

God’s curse now weighs upon perverse mankind. The present universal deluge of heresy and sin is, by divine permission, the greatest chastisement to have befallen the universe up till now, since it is immensely superior to any bodily death. In turn, man’s perversity is ceaselessly calling down the deluge of exterminating fire, which will cascade down upon the earth. Amid this deluge, the Holy Palmarian Church is the Apocalyptic Noah’s Ark, sole bearer of salvation.

We live at a very advanced stage of the Apocalyptic Era. There are self-evident signs everywhere, many of them foretold by Christ Himself in His Gospel: General Apostasy; abominable sins; perverse morals; atheistic teachings; wars; deaths and cataclysms permitted by God as sign of His Holy Wrath; loathsome illnesses caused by vice; godless rulers; evil laws; countless criminal abortions backed up by satanic state laws, and other aberrations. These are manifold signs of Satan’s universal reign in these Last Times, by divine permission. And this will go on from bad to worse as long as Our Lord and God puts no stop to it, for only He can remedy such a host of evils. And the perverse world races towards the ferocious and bloody Third World War and the first

Three Days of Darkness of the Apocalyptic Era; all of which will be a frightful purifying chastisement as manifestation of God's Just Wrath.

Remember that the apostate Jewish people received its greatest chastisement when it condemned Christ to death, as it then ceased to be God's people and true Church; but as consequence, also received a tremendous material chastisement, thirty-seven years later, when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. More than a million Jews lost their lives, many were sold as slaves and others dispersed.

Thus as well, the apostate church of Rome already received its greatest chastisement, namely the enmity of God, loss of Divine Grace, which is the spiritual chastisement; but now awaits the material chastisement for its great general apostasy, which will be the terrible Third World War, expression of God's Just Wrath.

Before the apostasy of Rome in 1978, the Messages of Palmar demanded yet more intensity of prayer and penance as preparation not to fall. The Lord said: "Dear children: pray, pray, pray constantly to help the Church in this hour of the power of darkness! Redouble your prayers and penances, for very sombre days are approaching for the Church, as never before in all History. The Church, step by step, is reproducing My Sacred Passion, till she climbs up to Calvary to be crucified in imitation of her Founder."

"O beloved children! Redouble your sacrifices, your penances and prayers. The day on which the Eternal Father will let His Arm of Justice fall upon mankind is close... Redouble your prayers, your penances and sacrifices! The hour of darkness is approaching. The prayer and penance you do in this Sacred Place is still little. Redouble your penances. Above all, pray intensely, not only with the lips, but from the heart. Pray intensely! And thus the Angel Exterminators will go straight past."

The Most Holy Virgin Mary said: "My beloved children: redouble your prayers and penances. That is still little. Only thus will you appease the Wrath of the Eternal Father... My beloved children: I do not gather you here for recreation, rather for prayer and penance; to meditate on the Dolorous Passion of Jesus Christ. To understand how God Himself became Man and suffered the Passion to atone to the Father and reconcile man with the Father. Meditate, meditate on the Holy Passion of Jesus Christ!"

Now again we have to redouble, increase, intensify our prayers, for everything prophesied will come, with great consternation and death toll, as Our Lord said: "O beloved little children: redouble your penances, your prayers, your sacrifices! The Third World War is at hand! The world laughs; but it is at hand, close at hand, more than men think."

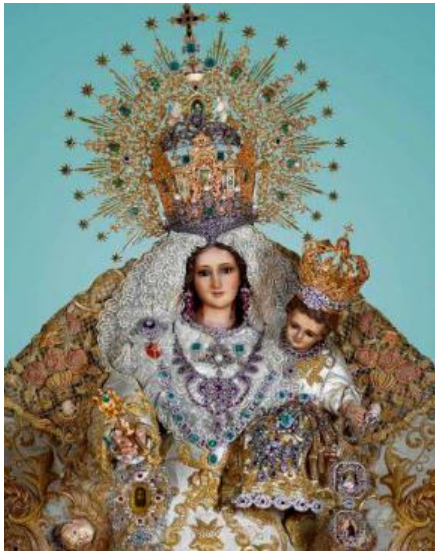
We cannot be indifferent to the death of others, for Our Lord said: "The chastisements announced in Palmar are being fulfilled. But so long as their own hides are unscathed, no importance is given them. If something happens far away, in another country, another nation, it does not matter to you, because you do not truly love your neighbours, but it is Christ who is dying in each country and in each nation."

The Lord promised that those who adore the Holy Face of the Lord meditating on the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ united to the Dolours of the Blessed Ever-Virgin Mary, will be preserved from the chastisement that the Eternal Father has prepared, and if they suffer in the chastisement, it will be to die martyrs and attain sanctity.

Let us ask especially for perseverance, that we become saints, and that God protect us, illuminate and engrave the Holy Face upon our hearts. This Holy Year of the Holy Face is an opportunity to prepare ourselves for death, to prepare us to render up our souls to God. This preparation is carried out by contemplating and meditating on the image of the Holy Face, in which we discover the path we must follow. The Holy Face gives examples of all the virtues to those who contemplate and meditate with humility and simplicity. The most important charity is the salvation of souls, and Christ gave His life for the salvation of each of us. If we unite ourselves to this act of charity of His, we can imitate Him and collaborate with Him in the salvation of souls. Though we Palmarians are few, we should not be intimidated seeing the mission which is ours to fulfil in the salvation of millions of souls, but to look at Christ and Mary almost alone on Calvary, toiling at the Reparation to the Father and the Redemption of mankind. We have to unite ourselves to Them by continuous acts of love, unite ourselves to Their sentiments, and with our prayers, sacrifices and Holy Masses, those souls will be saved. In the Holy Face is reflected Christ's infinite meekness, allowing Himself to be spat upon, ill-treated, beaten. If we learn from His example, we will be able to accept our crosses, bearing our sufferings and trials with the same meekness of Christ. And above all is reflected: love. The Holy Face is full of this love that consumes His Sacred Heart, which very few persons perceive and on which fewer still meditate. Let us approach the Holy Face, as the Most Holy Virgin did when they took Jesus down from the cross, and press our face to His, embrace Him and together with Him weep tears of love and repentance, and love Him sincerely. On contemplating the Holy suffering Face, our desires to see it eternally in glory should grow, though we still need to fight on and show Him our fidelity before we may receive that reward. Let us not leave our beloved Saviour hanging from the Cross alone, agonizing without any consolation; let us not leave our dear Mother at the foot of the Cross alone, with Her Immaculate Heart transpierced by dolour and Her beautiful and virginal Face bathed in tears.

We, Peter III, call all the faithful of the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic and Palmarian Church to take part in the pilgrimage to this Sacred Place of El Palmar de Troya for the coming 16th of July, Principal Feast of Our Crowned Mother of Palmar, Queen of Carmel and Universal Patroness, from whose most loving care you have received so very many graces, above all that of being children of the true Church. Make the effort to be in this Sacred Place on such a notable day to show your Heavenly Mother once more your sincere gratitude for the benefits you receive from Her. Come to prostrate yourselves at Her feet, for She always awaits you with the most ardent Motherly love.

As usual, the Most Solemn Worship of the Feast of Carmel will be celebrated in the Cathedral-Basilica of Our Crowned Mother of Palmar in the following order: On the 15th of July, vigil of the Principal Feast of Our Crowned Mother of Palmar, at 11,30 in the morning we will hold the Veneration of Our Crowned Mother of Palmar. On the 16th, at 1 am there will be a turn of Holy Masses on the Main Altar and other Altars, with the recital of the Holy Penitential Rosary; at 10 in the morning will be the Most Solemn Pontifical Masses with the recital of the Holy Trisagion; at 6 pm there will be a turn of Holy Masses on the Main Altar and all other Altars, with the recital of the Holy Way of the Cross. There will be other turns of Holy Masses, both on the Main Altar as on other Altars. At 9 at night will take place the Most Solemn Procession with the Sacred Images of Our Crowned Mother of Palmar and Crowned Saint Teresa of Jesus. We hope for the greatest possible gathering of pilgrim faithful for such a dear feast in honour of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, Queen of Carmel and Universal Patroness.



Given in El Palmar de Troya, Apostolic See, on the 10th of March, first day of the Novena to Most Holy Crowned Saint Joseph of Palmar, Viceroy of Carmel and Universal Copatron, in the Year of Our Lord Jesus Christ MMXX and fourth of Our Pontificate.

With Our Apostolic Blessing
 Petrus III, P.P.
 Póntifex Máximus

Petrus III P.P.