



S S P X



# The Angelus

“Instaurare omnia in Christo”

## The Final Consolation of the Church

Tragic Death, Comedic Death

Is Euthanasia Ever Lawful?

Eternity's Treshold

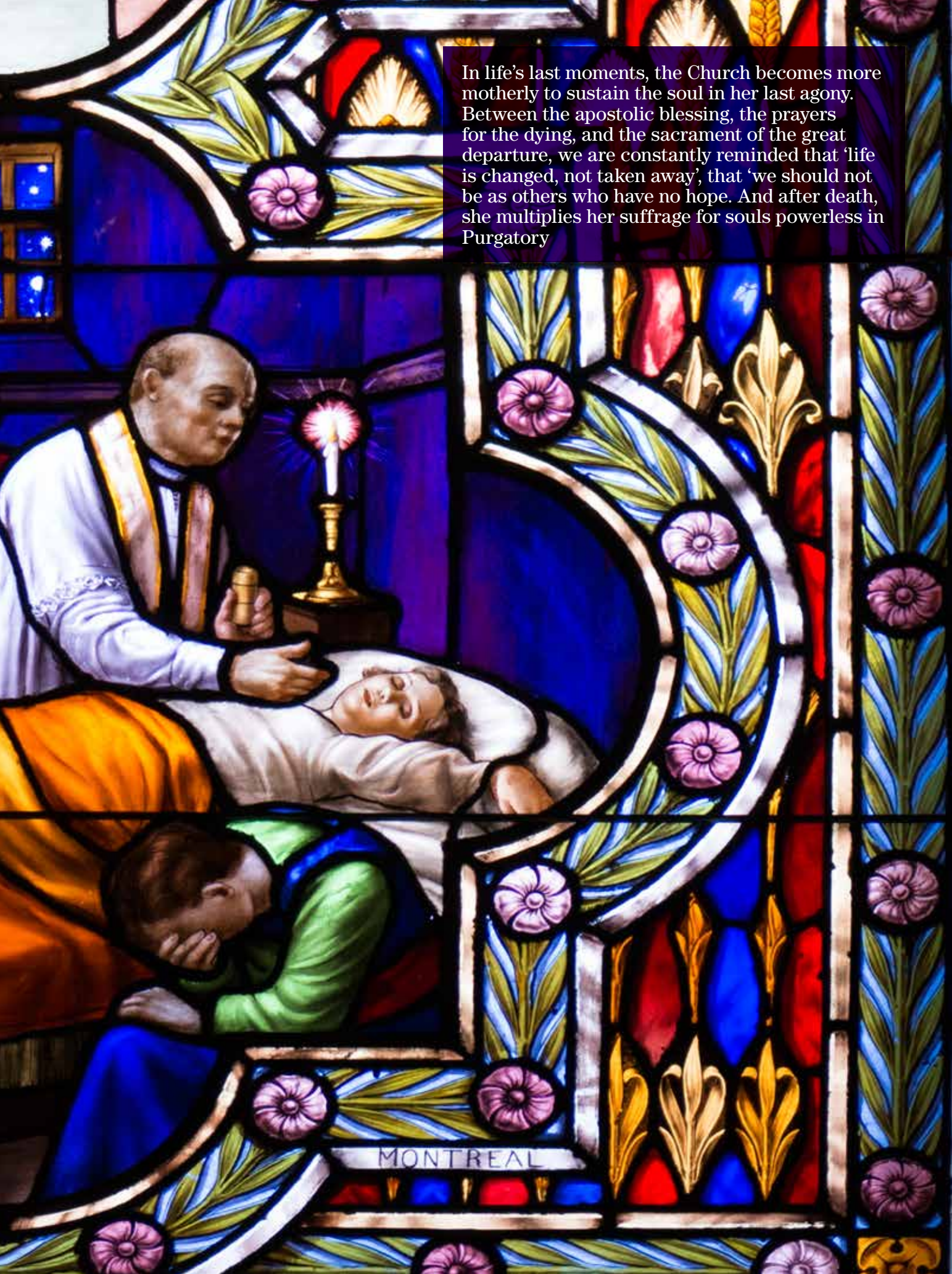




G. NINCHE RI



In life's last moments, the Church becomes more motherly to sustain the soul in her last agony. Between the apostolic blessing, the prayers for the dying, and the sacrament of the great departure, we are constantly reminded that 'life is changed, not taken away', that 'we should not be as others who have no hope. And after death, she multiplies her suffrage for souls powerless in Purgatory



MONTREAL



# Letter from the Publisher

Dear Readers,

"I am not dying, I am entering life." These words of the little Therese encapsulate the mystery of life and death. The meditation of the last ends, and particularly of death and the hereafter, have always been an integral part of the Catholic upbringing. Indeed, the last moments of human life are crucial to one's eternity and define the entire life on earth.

This is one of the reasons why the Church has paid so much attention to the last moments of life as to its beginnings, that is, these moments when the person is most helpless. Extreme Unction, the viaticum and other special blessings, manifest Holy Mother's care for her children in greatest need. Any civilization is measured by the way it cares for its elderly, and Christian civilization has always had first prize on this matter.

Likewise, time and again, the Sovereign Pontiffs have taught the proper respect due to persons bedridden and unconscious. Life is God's gift and no man can take it away from those who are not criminals. Death, in God's good time, reminds each one of us of our total dependence on our Creator whereas suicide and euthanasia, which haunt our Western horizons, mark another defiance of God. The revolution is raising its ugly head.

Two cultures are struggling for power: the culture of death with sterilized food and clean streets where death is an unwelcomed visitor; the culture of life with children in rags running around the streets smiling, with the deformed and invalid begging around street corners, where sickness as well as health, death as well as new born children, are welcomed as God's undisputable gift. It comes as no surprise that the same groups which promote sterilization and abortion are also pushing to violate the natural end of human life and override God's will.

Fr. Jürgen Wegner  
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# The Angelus

“Instaurare omnia in Christo”

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# Tragic Death, Comedic Death

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by Andrew J. Clarendon

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Death is the all-important moment made up of all past moments upon which depends all future moments. It is when the will is fixed upon what it loves most—ultimately, either self or God—and, as St. Augustine puts it, by the weight of this love either sinks or rises. The conflict between our opposing loves, our terrible human freedom that cannot choose not to pursue the goal of happiness but can disastrously choose the wrong means and thus miss the goal entirely, is explored in many artistic works. In literature, one of the genres centered on the conflicts that arise in pursuing happiness is drama. The basic distinction in drama between tragedy and comedy—the sad or happy ending, obstacles overcome or not—highlights the essential conflict all men face. Tragedy focuses on the weakness of humanity, on our flawed condition, on how our mistakes can destroy us and those dear to us; in a humbling, piteous, and even frightening manner, the hero is opposed by forces against which he cannot win, is forced to make a choice, in choosing makes a mistake, and experiences the resulting suffering which leads to a profound awareness of the human condition before his eventual death. Comedy, on the other hand, focuses more on the individual within and opposed by some aspect of society. In spite of some suffering



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<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, 4.2.265, 266. All Shakespeare quotations are from *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., ed. David Bevington (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1992).

as the plot progresses, the treatment is lighter, more humorous, and, most importantly, mistakes that would destroy a tragic hero are overcome, resulting in the affirmation of life and love usually in marriage. Nevertheless, death is common to all; as human beings, the “golden lads and girls” of comedy will one day “come to dust.”<sup>1</sup> Even if unmentioned or dismissed in the joy of the comedic ending, the notion that earthly happiness cannot last remains. Two plays from the English stage, written just over a hundred years apart, provide tragic and, in a spiritual way, comedic meditations on human mortality. The greatest tragedies in English are, of course, Shakespeare’s, and of these, *Macbeth* is unmatched in showing the hero’s descent into evil and resulting despair before death. Among Shakespeare’s antecedents in medieval drama is the greatest of the morality plays, *Everyman*, which, although also ending in death, shows in that momentous event the possibility of a happy ending.

## Most Horrifying Works of Literature

*Macbeth* is among the most horrifying works of literature. The force that opposes the hero is the greatest of any of the tragedies: the implacable evil of the devil and his fellow fallen angels. These are the “masters” (4.1.63) the sinister witches serve and who take the form of the famous apparitions in 4.1; these are the “murdering ministers” (1.5.48) whom Lady Macbeth calls upon to possess her so that she and Macbeth can assassinate Duncan. While death is everywhere in the play, the plot nevertheless follows the tragic pattern of a movement from happiness to misery: Macbeth begins the play as the savior of his country, putting down a rebellion and foreign invasion. The first encounter with the witches dramatizes the psychology of temptation; it is disturbing but not surprising that the witches know exactly what truths and half-truths will enkindle the fire of Macbeth’s ambition. It is significant that the putative female witches only begin the temptation, implanting the idea by supposedly prophesizing the future, while Lady Macbeth—Eve to Macbeth’s Adam—finishes it. Most of the time in Shakespeare it is the women who insist upon virtuous action, who help the men to do right or to solve a problem; Lady Macbeth is specifically designed to show the power women have over men to incline them toward the opposite. Like Adam, Macbeth recognizes the spiritual consequences from the beginning, mentioning the “deep damnation” (1.7.720) that results from murder. Inflamed by the witches’ predictions and utterly unable to outmatch his wife, he succumbs. Although Duncan’s murder signals Macbeth’s descent into active evil, his overwhelming guilt shows that he is “yet but young in deed” (3.4.145); it is really only when he engineers Banquo’s murder in Act 3 that he gives himself wholly over to darkness, claiming that “I am in blood / Stepped so far that, should I wade no more, / Returning were as tedious as go o’er” (3.4.137-139). The powers of darkness, however, are interested in a complete victory. Another meeting with the witches confirms him in his course, and he rejects all restraint, all reason: “From this moment / The very firstlings of my heart shall be / The firstlings of my hand” (4.1.146-148). This play is about a man who attempts to kill his conscience, to stifle the guilt that >

# Theme Extreme Unction

<sup>2</sup> Charles Boyce, *Shakespeare A to Z* (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1990), 391.

<sup>3</sup> Dante, *Inferno*, in *The Divine Comedy, Volume I: Inferno*, trans. Mark Musa (New York: Penguin Classics, 2003), I, 2.

<sup>4</sup> *The Holy Bible, Douay-Rheims Version*, (Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1971), James 4:15.

threatens to overwhelm him after the first murder. After all of the killings, including that of Macduff's young son, who is killed on stage in 4.2—a horrifying if appropriate moment for a play about living in the present and trying to control the future—the results of Macbeth's tragic mistake reach a crescendo in the final act. Enemies now surround the once revered general, his country is in chaos, and, other than nameless servants, his only attendant is a man named Seyton—a name that sounds like "Satan." He alternates between a rage that desires to destroy as much as possible before defeat and a profound despair that seeks release in death. Hence, in the "tomorrow" speech, the greatest expression of despair in Western Literature, Macbeth ends by calling all life "a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing" (5.5.26-28). When he finally faces death in the final fight with Macduff, the tragic hero realizes the fullness of his mistake: all along

Dante Alighieri (1265–1321), was a major Italian poet of the late Middle Ages. His *Divine Comedy* is widely considered the greatest literary work composed in the Italian language and a masterpiece of world literature.







<sup>5</sup> *Everyman in The Broadview Anthology of Drama: Plays from the Western Theatre, Volume I: From Antiquity through the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Jennifer Wise and Craig S. Walker (Peterborough, Ontario, Canada: Broadview Press, 2003), 68-69.

the demons have been equivocating, playing with words, in order to build up in him as much false confidence as possible. With no space for repentance, Macbeth can only howl out the tragic knowledge: “And be these juggling fiends no more believed / That palter with us in a double sense” (5.8.19-20). As Charles Boyce notes, when Macbeth “denounces the ‘th’ equivocation of the fiend[s] . . . ,’ he thus touches on their most important quality: [they] deform the lives they interfere with because they disturb a necessary element of human society: its dependence on mutual trust.”<sup>2</sup> The physical often reflects the supernatural in Shakespeare, and so Macbeth has the worse end of the any of Shakespeare’s great tragic heroes: the head that was so full of imagination and poetry but knowingly misused human freedom is cut off and presented to the rightful king. Macbeth’s story shows tragic death in horrifying intensity; he is one who commits catastrophic errors, is “supped full of horrors,” (5.5.13) and dies both unrepentant and not even valuing what he sinned for at the beginning.

## Morality Play

Since *Macbeth*, as a high tragedy, necessarily involves a certain magnitude, few men will ever have the great stature of its hero. The morality play *Everyman*, by contrast, is, as the title implies, more about all human beings. A popular medieval genre, morality plays are allegories about the soul; the drama works by having actors represent and speak for certain abstractions—such as Death or Good Deeds—into order to convey the theme. Written at the end of the fifteenth century, just before the Protestant revolt, *Everyman* at first seems to be a tragedy; on the physical level, the plot follows the basic tragic pattern from happiness to misery: at the beginning Everyman is a relatively content and seemingly well-to-do man who dies in the end. As with the force of evil in *Macbeth*, however, the play includes a spiritual dimension that indicates all is not as it seems. Like Dante who finds that he is the middle of a “dark wood”<sup>3</sup> just when his political career is approaching its height, in his encounter with Death, Everyman soon learns that he is in a spiritually miserable state, so far gone astray that he has no sense of his descent and peril. Having forgotten that our lives are short like a “vapor,”<sup>4</sup> Everyman must unexpectedly prepare for judgment. God tells Death that Everyman “a pilgrimage he must on him take, / Which he in no wise may escape”<sup>5</sup>; we are born to die, and our lives are, as Dante points out in *Purgatorio*, an exodus that is intended to end in the Promised Land. The anonymous author—perhaps a priest—goes on to dramatize the dying process; it is an artistic presentation not of a quick death, but of one that although unexpected leaves some time before the end. The treatment is not without a certain macabre humor: after amazement, Everyman goes on to offer Death that which is most valuable to someone clinging to the world’s goods:

O Death, thou comest when I had thee least in mind!  
In thy power it lieth me to save;  
Yet of my good will I give thee, if thou will be kind,  
Yea, a thousand pound shalt thou have,  
And defer this matter till another day. (119-123)

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## Theme Extreme Unction

<sup>6</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage

While not effective, trying to bribe Death is one reaction to the news. Everyman goes on to ask various characters—Fellowship and Kindred and his possessions—to come with him on his journey with Death, but is refused by them all. Goods, Everyman’s considerable possessions, poignantly reaffirms the Gospels’ warnings about material treasure: “As for a while I was lent thee, / A season thou hast had me in prosperity. / My condition is man’s soul to kill; / If I save one, a thousand do I spill [*i.e.*, ruin]” (440-443). What Everyman eventually learns serves as a rebuttal to Macbeth’s famous speech of despair. It is not that life signifies nothing, but rather that only spiritual things really matter. It is only the invisible things that last; only Good Deeds agrees to go with Everyman. Unfortunately, when Everyman first meets Good Deeds, she sorrowfully states: “Here I lie, cold in the ground; / Thy sins have me so bound / That I cannot stir” (486-488); it is the depiction of the soul in mortal sin. So, Good Deeds calls on Knowledge—one of the gifts of the Holy Ghost—who agrees to guide Everyman to a “holy man” (539) in order to go “To Confession, that cleansing river” (536). Having confessed and done penance, Everyman’s Good Deeds are able to rise; the rest of the play shows the actual moments of death, including Knowledge telling Everyman to seek Extreme Unction from Priesthood. As the various symbols of Everyman’s physicality such as Beauty and Strength depart, Everyman’s last words are a prayer from Scripture: “*In manus tuas—of might’s most, / Forever—commendo spiritum meum*” (886-887). As every man falls under the curse of Adam, the end of Everyman is inevitable—Knowledge, looking over the corpse of Everyman, says “Now hath he suffered that we all shall endure” (888)—but the consoling meaning of the plot is that the happy death of Everyman is what the Church intends for all of us.

There is, then, tragic death and comedic death. A Macbeth can see nothing in death but despair, for his vision and love is confined to the self, to the merely physical; the definitive rejection of God is the final retreat into egotism, into our weak and fallen humanity. On the other hand, while on the physical level human mortality is proper to tragedy, from the spiritual point of view, it can be the greatest comedy possible, that happiest of all possible endings. It is not accidental that one of the figures Our Lord uses to describe Paradise is the wedding feast—the usual ending of a comedy—a metaphor for the everlasting joy of those united with the Bridegroom. As Zosima says to Alyosha in *The Brothers Karamazov*: “We are rejoicing . . . we are drinking the new wine, the wine of a new and great joy . . . and [H]e is rejoicing with us, transforming water into wine, that the joy of the guests may not end. He is waiting for new guests, he is ceaselessly calling new guests.”<sup>6</sup> These two morality plays, *Everyman* and *Macbeth*, one in the medieval and the other in its Shakespearean manifestation, are potent reminders that the only real choice that matters is what, in the end, we really love.



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# Is Euthanasia Ever Lawful?

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by Fr. Arnaud Séléigny

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Euthanasia may be defined as “the act by which someone deliberately terminates the life a patient, even at the behest of the patient or of the family if the individual is not able to make known his will in the matter.”

It remains to judge the morality of this action. Let me state at once that euthanasia is nothing else than homicide. Moreover, if it is “voluntary” on the part of the patient, it is also suicide, which, according to St. Thomas, is the worst form of homicide (*Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 73, a. 9, ad 2).

There is in euthanasia, therefore, egregious malice, an especially unreasonable act, an act of singular gravity against divine law.

Let us briefly examine the reasons for the exceptional gravity of the sin of euthanasia in its

two elements, homicide and suicide.

Homicide is the most serious sin of injustice that can be committed against one’s neighbor since it deprives him of the greatest good he possesses and to which he has an absolute right: life. It is an explicit violation of the Fifth Commandment: “Thou shalt not kill.” An individual, even at the express request of the “victim,” and even with a general authorization granted by public law, may not take away the life of another, because it belongs only to God, and He alone may give it or take it.

What adds to the particularly odious and abject character of this specific act is the condition of the victim. In effect, euthanasia is only envisaged by a vulnerable person, diminished by sickness, made miserable by mental distress, sorrow, pain and suffering,

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often by age—circumstances which render him more or less dependent on others. The element of incurable suffering has been seen as an aspect of euthanasia since its reappearance in the *Utopia* of Thomas More, and it is also a fundamental element of contemporary legislation. So it is in the name of false compassion and faced with the ineffectiveness of medical care that the solution of killing the suffering person is proposed. That solution eliminates a problem that is perceived to be too hard to deal with or to face up to or to take on: the patient, difficult, and possibly long-term care of a sick, dying, or incapacitated person in a condition of helplessness. To be quit of the problem, for compassion's sake to be sure, many now want to do away with a person whom one has a duty to help, support, and love.

### Palliative Care

The existence of palliative care has shown that the central problem lies here. The disintegration of society, in particular with the breakdown between generations, individualism, and selfishness, no longer prepare people to deal with their kindred in the often terrible moments leading up to death. The mystery of redemption having disappeared from the horizon, suffering, whether it be one's own or another's, does not make sense: euthanasia comes to mind unbidden. That this is the fundamental reason is proven by the results of palliative care: sick people who are properly nursed, supported, and loved, even in an end-of-life situation, do not think of asking anyone to cut their days short. Oncologist Professor Lucien Israel, in his book *La vie jusqu'au bout* (Plon, 1993), explains that he only received two requests for euthanasia from his patients during his years of medical practice, which were withdrawn once they were given more attentive care. Nor should the doctor's feeling of inadequacy before a seemingly desperate situation be left out. This feeling can lead him to accept euthanasia as a solution. Finally, it costs money to occupy a hospital bed. When a life "is no longer worth leading," it ought to make room for another.

The particular malice of suicide must also

be considered in addition to the homicide if the euthanasia is "voluntary," that is to say, requested by the patient even if he is under some pressure. (If the request comes from his entourage, then it is purely and simply a case of homicide). Saint Thomas (*ST*, II-II, q. 64, a. 5) gives three reasons to explain the particular malice of suicide:

"First, because everything naturally loves itself, the result being that everything naturally keeps itself in being, and resists corruptions so far as it can. Wherefore suicide is contrary to the inclination of nature, and to charity whereby every man should love himself. Hence suicide is always a mortal sin, as being contrary to the natural law and to charity." As the holy Doctor astutely observes (*ST*, II-II, q. 126, a. 1), it is out of an exaggerated self-love that one commits suicide. "Wherefore even those that slay themselves do so from love of their own flesh, which they desire to free from present stress."

### Other People Need Us!

"Secondly," St. Thomas continues, "because every part, as such, belongs to the whole. Now every man is part of the community, and so, as such, he belongs to the community. Hence by killing himself he injures the community, as the Philosopher declares" (*Ethics*, v, 11). This profound reason is no longer understood nowadays. Euthanasia wounds the various societies to which the person belongs: nation, city, family. It is precisely the unbridled individualism and dissolution of society which results, so well described by the Thomist philosopher Marcel De Corte, that makes this wound incomprehensible. A member of a family, even if, and especially if, he is plunged in grievous suffering, irrevocably belongs to the whole; he even possesses an eminent function in it: to increase the love and devotedness of his kin. When our Lord said, "You will have the poor with you always," He meant not only those who lack their daily bread, but also the children, the elderly, the sick and the infirm, all of whom, in certain respects, are the "poor" whom we should look after as Christ Himself. Euthanasia evinces, and causes, the dehumanization which,





after having gone after the unborn child, seeks to destroy in men's hearts filial piety and love of the "poor." And there is undoubtedly no more important cement for society, in the natural order, than filial piety.

## Suicide and the Death Penalty

Cardinal John De Lugo, S.J. (1583-1660), has some interesting considerations on the subject (*Disputationum de justitia et jure*, Venice, 1751, I x, i). He begins his reflections with the truth that God alone may dispose of human life, for He is its sole master. Man is certainly master of his acts, he possesses a certain *dominion*, a particular capacity which makes him the subject of rights. But he has no *dominion* over his own existence, which has been given him by God, nor over any other man besides. That is why both homicide and suicide are forbidden. The objection of the death penalty then arises. De Lugo responds that society was founded by God and that, according to the words of the Apostle, "There is no power but from God" (Rom. 13:1). He adds that the authorities have a responsibility to punish transgressors. So doing, they are not arrogating to themselves a right that belongs to God alone, but they cut away a member who threatens the common good for which they are responsible. State authority acts, thus, like a minister of God, as, moreover, St. Paul teaches (Rom. 13:4). That is why the death penalty does not violate the Fifth Commandment of God: "Thou shalt not kill." The State is not arrogating to itself a right that belongs only to God, but it serves the will of God by preserving the society He has founded.

As regards the end-of-life question, De Lugo makes an important distinction. He says one must not confuse the *intention* to shorten one's life with *permission* to expose oneself to the danger of shortening it. The first is always unlawful because it amounts to bringing about death prematurely. The second may be lawful for a proportionate reason. Someone may take a risk by caring for those stricken with a contagious deadly disease.

Euthanasia is inherently vitiated: No authority

may decide to authorize a doctor to dispose of the life of one of his patients, even at the individual's request, for the patient may not dispose of that which he does not possess, nor is it lawful for the authority to authorize a doctor to dispose of a life except in the case of the death penalty. How odious it would be, moreover, to employ a doctor as executioner.

De Lugo finally adds interesting considerations which he was the first to formulate, even if they have become commonplace. He insists that one must not confuse the *non-usage* of a remedy to treat a terminal illness with an *action* that positively induces death. The second course is always unlawful, but the first may frequently be lawful. He explains: "The omission of such means is not the equivalent of killing oneself, but of allowing death to occur and of relying upon the ordinary means by which men commonly live....One cannot say that such a one, who is not bound to maintain his life by all means, commits suicide, but that he dies from the sickness or infirmity of his nature."

## How Far Do We Have to Go?

This topic naturally leads to an important end-of-life question caused by the development of new therapies and advances in medical technology: the well-known distinction between ordinary and extraordinary means, which was already discussed by De Lugo in the 17th century, and elucidated by Pope Pius XII in his speech to a congress of anesthesiologists, "Medical and Moral Problems in the Practice of Resuscitation," November 24, 1957. In the address, the pope begins by reiterating the basis of our duty to preserve our health: "Natural reason and Christian morality say that man (and whoever is responsible for taking care of his brother) has the right and the duty, in case of grave illness, to take the measures necessary to conserve life and health. This duty, which he has towards himself, to God, and even to the human community, and most often towards specific persons, flows from well-ordered charity, from submission to the Creator, from social justice and even from strict justice, as well as from filial piety." >

## Theme Extreme Unction

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This duty having been admirably summarized and set before our eyes, he adds the following clarification: “But usually the obligation is limited to the use of ordinary means (according to the circumstances of person, place, era, and culture), that is to say, means which impose no extraordinary burden on either oneself or another.” Herewith the well-known distinction is introduced, and the reason for justifying it immediately follows: “A more severe obligation would be too heavy for most men, and would render the acquisition of more important higher goods too difficult. Life, health, all temporal activity, are, after all, subordinate to spiritual ends. Moreover, it is not forbidden to do more than the strictly necessary to conserve life and health, on the condition that higher duties are not neglected.”

It seems worthwhile, and even imperative, that we comprehend the words of the venerable pope, because they have been subjected to many regrettable interpretations, and, moreover, they so carefully delimit the subject that they enable us to successfully reject the fraudulent attempts of the partisans of euthanasia to bypass public sentiment and lawmakers.

The question that is posed is the following: Just how far is one *obliged* to go in making use of currently available treatments? The answer is simple in its formulation: man is obliged to make use of the ordinary means for conserving his health, but he *may* avail himself of extraordinary means. However, the question still arises: how can one tell whether a means is ordinary or extraordinary?

### Be Prudent

In order to grasp the distinction, we must first understand that the terms *ordinary* and *extraordinary* are taken from the domain of ethics and do not intrinsically denote the nature of the care. They are not definitively attached to any particular treatment in every situation, as the notions “slightly probable,” “probable,” and “most probable” are associated by moral theologians with certain opinions once and for all. Such an attribution would be the negation of

the virtue of prudence. On the contrary, one must always remember that a decision about health care is a decision based on this virtue, which must take into account the facts pertaining to a particular case in a unique situation. Therefore it is not possible to categorize treatments as ordinary or extraordinary ahead of time. For example, putting someone on a respirator may be either one or the other. A patient with Guillain-Barré syndrome may experience paralysis of the respiratory system for a relatively short period and be exposed to death for its duration. Therefore putting the patient on the respirator would be to employ ordinary means; in other words, one is obliged to make use of this means. A patient in the final stages of lung cancer and experiencing suffocation *is not obliged* to be put on a respirator, and the means would be judged extraordinary.

This having been stated, it is necessary to make a further distinction, clearly addressed by Pope Pius XII in his speech, between the objective and subjective aspects of a case. In strictly analogous circumstances, a means will be judged, and will in fact be, ordinary for one, but not for another from a purely subjective standpoint for very diverse reasons, which can indeed be, for some persons, quite unreasonable. But medicine treats persons, whose will must be respected within the normal bounds of morality. Let’s take, for instance, a concrete case: blood transfusion. Even if a lamentable scandal has discredited this practice indirectly, it nonetheless remains the case that in most medical situations in developed countries, it may be considered ordinary. But it is rejected by Jehovah’s Witnesses for subjective reasons. One could also mention vaccination and injections, but these are usually for preventive care, except for rabies, in which case injections are the only kind of treatment available. It is easy to multiply the examples of instances where, from a subjective point of view, treatments have been rejected which had otherwise been judged ordinary.

### Consult a *Good* Doctor

Before speaking about objective





considerations, we should remember that when seeking to decide a difficult matter in a given domain, we normally consult a specialist endowed with prudence and competent in his field. Aristotle, intending to explore certain ethical notions, examines current opinions, but he carefully distinguishes between those of sages and of the multitude, the former being the only ones of value. If we need to examine a legal question, we consult a lawyer; if it's about construction, an architect. Thus, for the matter under discussion, a doctor is the wise and prudent consultant. This doesn't mean that every doctor is wise and prudent—which is true of the practitioners of any field of human endeavor—but that a doctor is the best person to judge the matter. This reminder seems apropos. It should be added that a good number of doctors competent and prudent in their specialties can be found. After all, we put our health in the hands of persons whose competence we trust.

That being said, how does the doctor himself assess the ordinariness or extraordinariness of the treatment being recommended in a particular case? Obviously we cannot replace medical experience with a few suggestions, but the doctor's assessment is based on objective elements. A number of these factors have been listed [specify: page no. or sidebar].

It should be added that this judgment may vary, as Pope Pius XII pertinently pointed out, "according to the circumstances of person, place, era, and culture." This means that a means which may be considered ordinary here and now, in a given situation—for example in an industrialized country with a highly developed health care system—might be considered extraordinary in similar circumstances elsewhere on the planet. Treatments that have been developed and perfected, according to the different standpoints just discussed, will in most cases be considered ordinary, excepting, of course, particular subjective circumstances that would modify this judgment.

One other question remains to be discussed, which constitutes the Trojan horse of the advocates of euthanasia: the alimentation and hydration of patients who can no longer feed themselves. The importance of this question is

such that we address it separately [see p. ##].

Effective resistance to the euthanasia mentality being spread by propaganda and legislative initiatives, some already successfully, necessitates knowledge of Catholic doctrine about the end of life and the snares that are being disseminated by mass media to transform the convictions of entire populations and attack the divine law in order to extirpate it from the hearts of men. Let us not passively accept the euthanasia of our minds nor the diabolical rejection of divine law.

## Evaluating Treatment

Here are a few objective elements that help clarify whether a treatment is ordinary or extraordinary.

- The degree of complexity. E.g., the difference in complexity between a routine appendectomy and cardiac surgery on a newborn.
- Risk. A life-threatening treatment is considered extraordinary.
- Cost. This may vary substantially from one country or continent to another. Insurance coverage may vary considerably, and associated costs may be taken into consideration.
- Feasibility. Whether care can be given at home or requires periods of hospitalization.
- Expected outcome. What benefit will the patient receive? This may be weighed against other factors, such as risk, painfulness, and cost, as well as the patient's state.
- Duration. This is a factor when prospective treatment may be long and perhaps painful. Kidney dialysis, for instance, is a standard treatment with few risks, reasonable cost, doable at home, but rather painful in the long term. Some may weary of it, realizing that cessation means imminent death.
- The physical and moral state of the patient. There is no point in subjecting someone to a painful treatment for modest relief whose weakened condition allows us to think that death is not far off.

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## Nutrition and Hydration

The question of the alimentation and hydration of patients who cannot feed themselves is still a hot topic today. First, it must be emphasized that food and water *are not medical treatments per se*, even if a doctor may have to intervene in order to nourish an incapacitated patient, for everyone is bound to nourish himself in order to conserve his life and health. Most of the time, if medical assistance is required, it involves basic interventions like a gastric feeding tube or intravenous infusion. A number of doctors refuse to call these treatments. Nevertheless, since they belong to the order of means, the distinction made by Pius XII between ordinary and extraordinary may be applied.

There may be cases in which an individual is not obliged to make use of these means; for example, an elderly person who is gently declining and cannot eat anymore. It is often inconvenient to insert a gastric tube, nor medically necessary to avail of oneself intravenous feeding. This is generally only done if the patient is suffering from dehydration. On August 1, 2007, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith gave a response to questions raised on this subject:

“First question: Is the administration of food and water (whether by natural or artificial means) to a patient in a ‘vegetative state’ morally obligatory except when they cannot be assimilated by the patient’s body or cannot be administered to the patient without causing significant physical discomfort?”

“Response: Yes. The administration of food and water even by artificial means is in principle an ordinary and proportionate means of preserving life. It is therefore obligatory to the extent to which and for as long as it is shown to accomplish its proper finality which is the hydration and nourishment of the patient. In this way suffering and death by starvation and dehydration are prevented.

“Second question: When nutrition and hydration are being supplied by artificial means to a patient in a ‘permanent vegetative state,’ may they be discontinued when competent physicians judge with moral certainty that the patient will

never recover consciousness?”

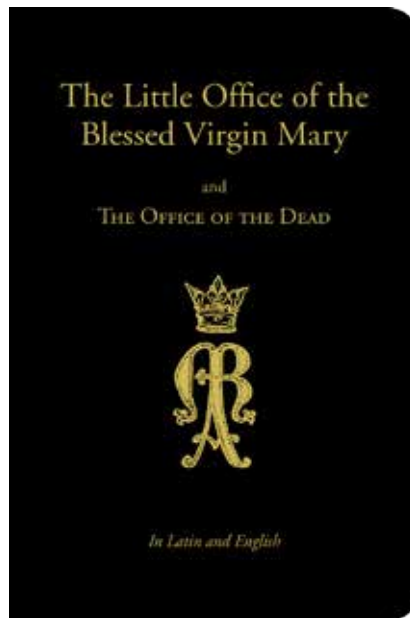
“Response: No. A patient in a ‘permanent vegetative state’ is a person with fundamental human dignity and must therefore receive ordinary and proportionate care which includes in principle the administration of water and food even by artificial means.”

These responses seem just and appropriate.

Translation of «Leuthanasie est-elle parfois permis?»  
*Fideliter*, March-April 2015, pp. 21-29. Translated by A. M. Stinnett.

# The Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary

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The best prayer is the prayer of the Church. Here it is—simpler than the Breviary, but essentially the same. Pray the inspired psalms of the Holy Ghost. Around since the 8th century. Hated by heretics, loved by friends of Our Lady. Recited by Saints John Damascene, Catherine of Siena, Vincent Ferrer, Louis of France, Bridget of Sweden, and many more.

The text of the *Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary* and the Office of the Dead is that of the 1915 Benziger Brothers edition with updated punctuation and slight rewording of some familiar passages in English. The content of the Offices was revised in conformity with the norms of the typical edition of the Roman Breviary published in 1961.

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Early Christian physicians and martyrs whose feast is celebrated on September 27. They were twins, born in Arabia, and practised the art of healing in the seaport Ægea, now Ayash (Ajass), on the Gulf of Iskanderun in Cilicia, Asia Minor, and attained a great reputation. They accepted no pay for their services and were, therefore, called anargyroi, “the silverless”. In this way they brought many to the Catholic Faith. When the Diocletian persecution began, the Prefect Lysias had Cosmas and Damian arrested, and ordered them to recant. They remained constant under torture, in a miraculous manner suffered no injury from water, fire, air, nor on the cross, and were finally beheaded with the sword. Their three brothers, Anthimus, Leontius, and Euprepus died as martyrs with them. The execution took place on September 27, probably in the year 287.

The Legend of Sts. Cosmas and Damian in St. Jacob's church by Lanceloot Blondeel (1533). Bruges, Belgium



# A Retirement Home

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by Fr. Pierre Buron

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The chaplain of Bremien-Notre-Dame, a retirement home, draws upon the daily experiences of his ministry to reflect upon the life of persons in their twilight years.

Those who rule over us could, in the next few months or years, speed up the movement toward the legalization of euthanasia. Leaving aside their intentions, which may well be reprehensible, let's consider the argument they generally make; it purports to allow elderly persons to "die with dignity." Indeed, when someone suffers debility, either physical or mental, they readily consider that such a person has lost his or her dignity, and consequently he or she should be allowed the option to choose death, at his or her own request or at that of the family. This concerns not only the elderly, as the case of Terry Schiavo in the U.S., or that of Vincent Lambert in France, has shown.

## Dignity Despite Suffering

Proponents of euthanasia talk first about the dignity of the body. They explain that there is a degree of physical debility that takes away a person's human dignity. When someone is bed-ridden, incontinent, needs a bib while eating because he has been reduced in some respects to the level of a little child, he is judged to be impaired, degraded. In our establishment there are individuals who are extremely diminished physically, yet who stay very active. Here's an example. Bremien is organized by floors: on the ground floor are the common living rooms. On the second story reside those able to take care





of themselves. The third story has the rooms of our residents who require more assistance. On this floor, they have their own dining room. It was on this floor that a retired soldier lived. He had enjoyed good health for a long time. Even after he turned 90, he kept up his daily jogging! But one day he had a bad fall in our establishment. He should have been hospitalized because he broke his femur. But it could not be operated on, and so he came back in that condition. He had to keep his leg stretched permanently, with a weight suspended from this extremity. For an active military man like him, this was one of the worst crosses that could have happened to him. How did he take it? Did he consider that he had lost his dignity? Indeed not. Deprived of the use of his legs, he evinced an overflowing vitality of mind and spirit. This is a good example, I believe, to show that dependence is not something unbearable nor contrary to human dignity; this officer had the habit of commanding!

## When Mental Faculties Decline

Then they talk about the dignity of the mind. Someone who loses the use of his mental faculties would forthwith lose his dignity, and thus one might consider making him disappear. But if lacking mental faculties were tantamount to losing one's dignity, then Down's syndrome children would lack human dignity! We have a resident here who has a Down's syndrome child. His religious sense is more developed than that of many Catholics possessing all their faculties. He was baptized; he undoubtedly has sanctifying grace. Is his life worthy, in the eyes of the French Republic? When St. Leo the Great exhorts, "Recognize, O Christian, your dignity," he reminds us of the immense dignity conferred on us by the baptismal character and our status as children of God.

Moreover, when someone no longer has brain power, that situation may help others advance in charity. I am thinking of a lady, a resident in our establishment for the last five years. Before coming here, she and her husband lived in an assisted living facility that was not Catholic. As soon as they learned of the existence of

Bremien, they took steps to move here. They were overwhelmed by the atmosphere that reigns between our walls, even if, of course, everything is not perfect. This lady's husband, before dying two years ago, had been very dependent; he lived on the third floor while his wife resided on the second. She showed such warm love and affection for him. More than once a day, she went upstairs to be with him and would spend a long time in his company, helping him with everything, for example, helping him to eat, for he had difficulty swallowing. She fed him like an infant. Isn't that charity?

We also have at Bremien a resident afflicted with Alzheimer's. She is completely dependent and suffers from parrotry. If one were to listen to the partisans of euthanasia, one would believe that one might reasonably assume that her relatives would like to get rid of her. But I can testify that the husband of this lady displays heroic devotion. He comes and visits her several times a week, spending a long time with her with loving affection. He talks to her, accompanies her, helps her eat, takes her out for a walk, and plays indoor games with her like dominoes. She is like a little child. Everyone is in admiration of her husband. Together, they sanctify each other, don't they?

## On the Front Line

These examples go a long way to expose the vacuity of the arguments of those promoting euthanasia, but also to show the utility of this retirement home. When Fr. Christian Bouchacourt had assumed his duties as District Superior in France, he came almost at once to visit our establishment and said in essence: "Bremien is on the front line of the apostolate. For missionary works have to be sustained by prayer, by the offering of suffering, and the accomplishment of duty." Our residents and those who take care of them are invited to pray, to offer, to work, so that this house has somewhat the same role as a monastery and as a lightning rod. By the way, when Tradition settled in this region to take in the elderly, it was followed by a convent of Sisters of Mary Reparatrix!

In short, the notion of "dying with dignity" >

## Theme Extreme Unction

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is draped in compassion, but compassion by lethal injection is not compassion. Four religious, Sisters of the SSPX, live here, visit the residents, help them, keep them company, comfort them. The patron of their congregation is Our Lady of Compassion. The Sisters know what compassion is.

These considerations lead to another reflection. Compassion leads us to relieve bodily sufferings. But often by caring for the body, especially for that of the faithful, good is done to the soul: vigor of spirit is restored or sustained. It is the direct opposite of the idea that the only solution to mental debility is to destroy the body. All of this bothers the Freemasons. Besides, make no mistake about it, it is the Masonic lodges that are pushing for the legalization of euthanasia; the notion of “dying with dignity” is Masonic in origin.

## We Are “One”

We are up against the plans of the “initiated,” but we are also up against some ideologies that dominate the field of medicine. In effect, nowadays, medicine is influenced by theories and practices stemming from Descartes, who invented a philosophy that divorces body and soul. Now, Descartes had not thought about a simple reality that frequents the world of the sick: wounds. When someone is wounded, it’s the body that’s wounded. The physical lesion causes pain and often wounds of a psychic nature (and vice versa, moreover). This demonstrates the very close union between body and soul. Our residents, often nonagenarians, bear in their bodies and in their souls wounds inherited





from the great conflicts of the 20th century. They suffer in their bodies and in their souls; their lives show that Descartes was wrong. We try to do good at one and the same time to bodies and to souls.

Doing good to souls in a house like Bremien is our daily business. As for me, I arrived at Bremien in 1991; so it has been 24 years that I have been chaplain here, chaplain for the residents, but also for priests, religious, and nuns, for a certain number of them have finished between these walls the course of their consecrated existence. I recall in particular two occasions I had to see souls expand upon reflection on the last things and divine grace.

The Death of St Francis de Sales, Church of St Nicolas du Chardonnet, Paris



## The Sacraments of the Great Passage

The first story took place near the beginning of my tenure. I was beginning this kind of ministry, as were the Sisters of the SSPX. When a sick person was entering their last moments we would go and pray for him, and I would offer him the Last Rites. It was a bit new, we had experienced some great moments of emotion and grace. Now, there was a very ill lady, and for that reason she did not want anyone to see her. Consequently, for months she had refused any visit from the priest or Sisters. Then, during a doctor's visit, she learned that she had cancer; we were praying for her. She felt that she was nearing her end, and so she accepted, after a long resistance, to receive us. Her reconciliation with her Creator was a great moment for all.

A person's decline, then, is often the occasion for him to open to God's call. I also remember a man who was also suffering from cancer but of the stomach. He was 90 years old and was fed intravenously. He was Catholic, but of the current stripe, and subscribed to *La Vie*. Nevertheless, he was happy to have found a Catholic retirement home like ours. His three children, two sons and a daughter, loved him well. One fine day, the daughter was at his bedside reading aloud a novel. I went to the room. I knew that this gentleman did not have much longer. We had, together with this man, a talk of about a half an hour about death that was tremendous; I don't remember having heard anything extraordinary, but for many years after, I remember it and it still affects me.

This ministry is not like others. Here, we help people live and prepare for death; life serves as a preparation for death. We are in the antechamber of eternity. So we live time in a different manner than others do. We realize, by experience, that what matters is not to have, but to be. So we help our residents to be—to be Christian. Here we live a bit differently, time passes in another way, one awaits eternity, and all of that imparts to life in this house of Bremien, truly, a marvelous aspect.

Translation of "L'expérience éloquentte d'une maison de retraite," *Fideliter*, March-April, 2015, pp. 31-35. Translated by A. M. Stinnett.



# Eternity's Threshold

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Extracts from *The Sacraments in the Christian Life*, by Fr. Philipon

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Almost every page of Sacred Scripture reminds us that man's life on earth is fleeting, so fleeting in fact as to be terrifying. "Man cometh forth like a flower . . . and fleeth as a shadow" (Job 14:2). Saint Paul's words often sound all too true: "The time is short... this world as we see it is passing away" (I Cor 7:29). On the day of baptism life is full of promise, and the end seems far off. But before a man knows it, old age is upon him, and death is just around the corner—any moment could be his last. His day of toil is ended; his turn now to leave the world. Christ provided for every need. When death approaches, He is again present to impart one last sacrament, so that the dying Christian may leave the world as befits him.

## A Purifying Sacrament

As he thinks back over the years, bitter regret may fill his soul, regret over the years of sin, over the numerous graces wasted and squandered. There is so much of this in the life of many a man or woman, so many sins committed, so many graces unheeded. But if the sinner must tremble at the approach of death, is there nothing to fear

for the man who was fervent and faithful? Would that it were so! But the Christian is not left to himself. At this last hour Christ Himself comes to comfort His faithful with His almighty power of redemption and with His close presence. To prepare them for this hour of final combat He instituted a special sacrament: extreme unction whose effect is summarily given in this prayer: "Cure, we beseech Thee, O our Redeemer, by



the grace of the Holy Spirit, the ailments of this Thy sick servant; heal his wounds; forgive his sins; relieve him of all miseries of body and mind; and graciously bless him with perfect health within and without that, being made well again by the gift of Thy goodness, he may be able to take up anew the duties of his state in life.”

Even after a long life of sin, if the Christian receives the sacrament of the dying with the appropriate dispositions, he will go straight to heaven without having to go to purgatory. For what confirmation is to baptism, extreme unction is to the sacrament of penance. As confirmation gives the fullness of the grace of configuration to Christ inaugurated in baptism, so does extreme unction bestow the fullness of the grace of purification begun in penance.

In the view of the Church Doctors this sacrament is, above all, the “consummation,” the completion, of Christ’s purifying action in the soul. “Extreme unction”, says St. Albert the Great, “denotes the full purification of body and soul through the removal of every impediment that would occlude the state of glory to either of the

parts of man, that is, to body or soul... Because it takes away every vestige of sin, extreme unction makes possible the immediate entrance to heaven.”

The very symbolism of the sacrament of extreme unction is strikingly suggestive of the effect it produces, namely, the utter removal of all trace of sin in every part of man, in body as well as soul. In the name of Christ the priest applies the holy anointings to every organ of sense, because it is in the senses that every moral defilement has its beginning. Thus, the anointing is applied to the eyes, the ears, the nose, the lips, hands and feet.

The sacrament overlooks none of the faculties of man that may have been accomplices to his sins. The Church is concerned that every possible source of sin be purified. It is her wish that the Christian who is preparing to appear before God should be spotlessly clean throughout. This is the purpose of extreme unction, than which there is nothing that better reveals her earnest wish that every stain of sin be removed from the dying Christian, so that he may be restored, as >



# Theme Extreme Unction

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nearly as possible, to the state of original justice through this final and perfect conformation to the image of Christ.

## Purification of the Soul

The Church teaches that extreme unction not only completes the work of purification begun in the sacrament of penance but is the crowning perfection of the whole Christian life. “The Fathers,” declared the Council of Trent, “regarded it as the fulfillment not only of penance but of the whole Christian life, which ought to be an uninterrupted penance.”

St. Thomas expresses the same view: “This sacrament is the last, and in a way, the completion of the whole Christian healing, by which a man is, so to speak, prepared for sharing the life of glory; for this reason it is called extreme unction.”

The sacrament is intended to purify the whole being of man, not only his external senses, but the imagination, the memory, and all the other interior faculties, especially the spiritual faculties of intellect and will. The grace of redemption penetrates all the powers of the soul to their inmost depths. Through the grace of the sacrament peace and tranquility are restored to the imagination and the memory. Thus the aim of the sacrament is the soul’s complete detachment from the world as death and eternity approach. God alone remains. Everything ephemeral and perishable is left behind.

Priests whose ministry frequently calls them to the bedside of the sick can testify to the palpable effects of the grace of this sacrament, and the effects of the state of grace, in the soul of a dying man or woman. As the veil of death gradually obliterates the soul’s outward vision of the things of earth, its inward vision begins to open, more and more, to the clear discernment of the other world. Christ has entered the uttermost recesses of the soul and its every faculty, removing all trace of past sins and every last vestige of earthly attachment that could delay the soul seeing its God immediately. Through the effects of this sacrament the soul, though still in the body, has already begun to breathe the life of eternity.

It cannot be sufficiently emphasized—so important is it—that the Christian should receive extreme unction while yet in full possession of his senses, so that he can approach it with all the living ardor of his faith, surrendering himself with full consciousness to the will of God through an act of perfect love. Extreme unction is primarily directed, not to the forgiveness of sin, but to the eradication and complete destruction of every vestige thereof.

It is to be remembered that man suffers not only from the wounds of original sin; he suffers also from the effects of his personal sins. Through sin the cloud of ignorance lies over his understanding, shrouding the mystery of God, and the taint of malice infects his will. His sense appetite, moreover, has become unruly, tempting him repeatedly to turn his back on duty and danger.

The purpose of extreme unction is precisely to restore the faculties of man to the state of original strength and integrity they had before the Fall. It seeks to move the will to turn to God with the spontaneous love that is the hallmark of His children, and it strengthens the soul to face with undaunted courage this last hour of combat and struggle to gain Christ. The fullness of grace imparted by this sacrament is such that all the maladies of the dying Christian’s soul are healed, supplying him with the strength to bear, unflinchingly, the sufferings of his last agony, however excruciating.

## To the Father’s House

As baptism is the sacrament of initiation into the divine life of grace, so extreme unction marks the departure from this life to the Father’s house in heaven. Between the first and the last sacrament, the other sacraments promote the continuous growth and union of the soul in the life of Christ. Like the other sacraments, extreme unction fosters the filial relationship which is the basis of the Christian life, being the concluding phase of this work. It prepares us, not simply to die, but to die as children of God. Like the Eucharist, it summons us to arouse the full fervor of our love for Christ, this time as a means to



gain, without delay in the hereafter, eternal life in Him.

In these last moments of life on earth, what is at stake is nothing less than our eternal allotment in the future life. That is why this last hour of suffering and affliction should be converted into an hour of supreme triumph. The death of saints is the crowning glory of their life. But they do not achieve it without a struggle. Only one who has stood at the bedside of the dying, witnessing their anxieties and agonies, can appreciate how much in need of God's helping grace is man's weak and sinful nature at that hour. The devil now redoubles his efforts to wrest an immortal soul from God for keeps. His prey is a poor human being, a sinner by any standard, brought low by sickness, faced with imminent death, and burdened with the remembrance of all his past sins and misdeeds.

It is then that the sacrament of extreme unction brings timely assistance. It revives the Christian's trust and confidence, turning his thoughts to the mercy of God, and helping him to meet death with the same courage as Christ on the Cross. The Christ of baptism is again present at the end of life, comforting and supporting His elect for the hour of death. During these last terrible minutes heaven and hell are at war over the eternal lot of the redeemed. The outcome, however, need not be in doubt. The whole Church is praying for the dying. The redeeming grace of Christ abides in us.

In some the sacrament may strengthen and enlighten their faith, giving them great peace and tranquility. To others it may give the grace of unflinching hope in God and perfect surrender to His will. Many at this hour may need to be delivered from various temptations of the flesh, from the temptation to revile and blaspheme God or to succumb to discouragement. The grace of the sacrament adapts itself, in a remarkable manner, to the individual exigencies of all. Indeed, one cannot but wonder at the manifold benefits that may result from the sacrament of the dying, including the restoration of bodily health if this be beneficial to the soul's salvation.

Ordinarily, the condition of one's faith has a great bearing on these last moments. If this virtue of faith be found wavering, then the very

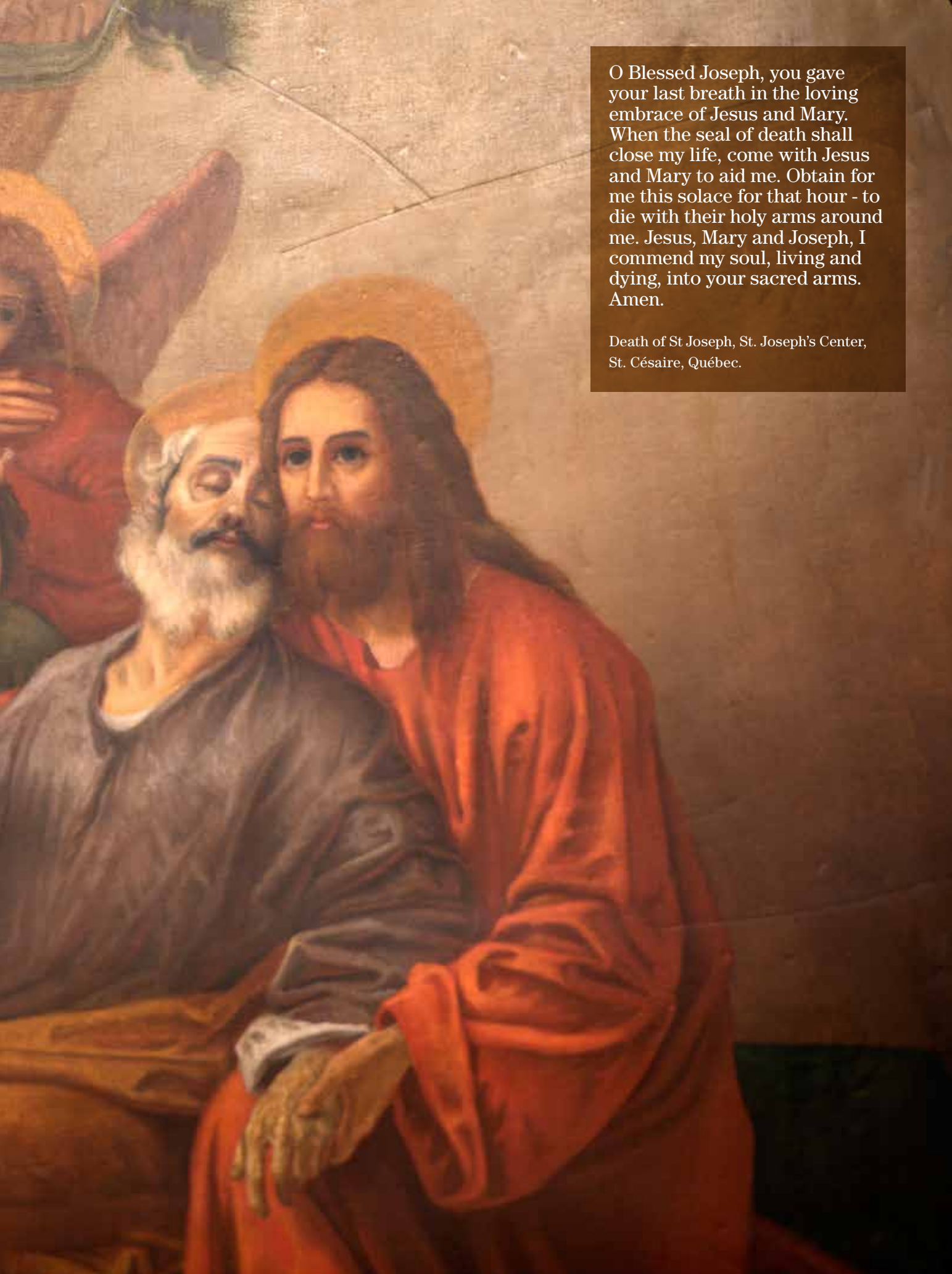
foundation of one's supernatural life, as well as one's fate in eternity, hangs in the balance. To souls wracked by doubt, the grace of extreme unction brings a willingness to embrace the word of God and the teachings of the Church. Sometimes, as in the case of certain saints, the whole reality of the supernatural is made vividly present. The world has become but a shadow to their bodily eyes, blinded as it were by the spiritual light. For these souls, one only reality abides: God. Such appears to have been the experience of St. Therese of Lisieux. "The world," she softly murmured, "it has vanished, a fleeting shadow... Heaven! It's heaven for me!"

Many a man or woman can remember similar words from dying lips after the priest had been there and when the whole family was gathered around, kneeling in prayer. Their life ended, and they were gone like a shadow; but through faith, not to say reason, the survivors were convinced beyond all doubt of the reality, as well as the mystery, of the everlasting beyond.

Thus, a mother on her deathbed confirms her children in their conviction that the family shall be reunited in heaven. For when the spirit of deep faith motivates the Christian life, the feeling of tragedy and despair that sometimes surrounds death is conspicuously absent. In fact, these final scenes assume a dignity as impressive as it is sacred. The sense of sorrow is relieved by the certainty that death is only the culmination in God of a life that is all His. Hence, death in God does not provoke the cry of desperation or the irremediable anguish that marks the death of the godless, haunted as they may be by the thought of utter extinction or consumed by remorse at the prospect of hell. The Christian attitude toward death is expressed by such words as: "My God, I give You my body, my soul, my life!" Extreme unction is the grace of final and supreme configuration to Christ dying on the Cross for the glory of the Father and the redemption of the world. Ever since the day that Jesus died for us, death is but the voyage to life eternal.







O Blessed Joseph, you gave your last breath in the loving embrace of Jesus and Mary. When the seal of death shall close my life, come with Jesus and Mary to aid me. Obtain for me this solace for that hour - to die with their holy arms around me. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I commend my soul, living and dying, into your sacred arms. Amen.

Death of St Joseph, St. Joseph's Center,  
St. Césaire, Québec.

# Last Rites

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By Fr. Christopher Danel

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The term “Last Rites” in common use typically refers to the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, but in a wider context, it can refer to the whole complex of rites used to assist the dying, or at least those who are in danger of death from illness, injury, or the decay of old age. The principal part of this complex consists of Penance, Viaticum (the final reception of Holy Communion), and Extreme Unction. To these three Sacraments, there are auxiliary rites which have come down through the past twenty centuries of Catholic use. These consist of the Apostolic Blessing in articulo mortis and the Commendation of the Soul, along with the Seven Penitential Psalms, the Litany of the Saints, and a ceremony that can be used for the visitation and care of the sick in general. These various parts of the rites for the sick are found in the Roman

Ritual of Pope Paul V (1614, called Pauline) reissued with very little revision under Bl. Pius XI (1925).

## Historical Sources

That the Sacrament of Extreme Unction was established by Jesus Christ is *de fide*, and there is the testimony of St. James in his Epistle, Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the Church, etc. *But the precise liturgical history* of the Sacrament in the first eight centuries is somewhat obscure, and there seems to have been a great multiplicity of local customs. The eighth-century Gelasian Sacramentary provides a series of older prayers within the context of rites for the sick, and the Carolingian



supplement to the Gregorian Sacramentary (Hadrianum) supplies some further detail. It would be the Ritual of Theodulph d'Orleans (AD 797) and the Pontifical of St. Alban's Abbey in Mainz (AD 950) which would do the most to lift the mists, and both of these had a great influence on the rituals used throughout the Middle Ages and into the Tridentine era, at which point the Pauline Ritual definitively codified those rites, as we shall now consider.

### “Pax huic domui”

The priest enters the home or room of the sick person with the invocation mandated by Our Lord Jesus Christ when he sent out the twelve apostles and the seventy-two disciples (cf. Mt, ch. 10; Lk ch. 10). He commanded them: And when you come into the house, salute it, saying: Peace be to this house (*pax huic domui*). To this priestly greeting the response is given: *Et omnibus habitantibus in ea* – And to all who dwell therein. He sprinkles the infirm, the sickbed, and the room with holy water, reciting the *Asperges*. The oldest extant rituals contain this rite, and that of Theodulph indicates that a small amount of ashes were to be mixed into the water. The three prayers which follow this aspersion in the rite of Extreme Unction were already in established use by the ninth century. The first prayer begins: Along with our lowly coming, O Lord Jesus Christ, let there enter into this home unending happiness, divine blessing... Drive forth from this place the spirits of evil, let thine angel of peace come hither... O Lord, extol thy holy name in our esteem, and bless + what we are about to do. Sanctify the coming of thy unworthy servant, for Thou are kind, Thou art abiding with the Father and the Holy Ghost through all eternity. Amen.

### Penance

At this point the sick person, if able, will make his Confession using the customary ritual for the reception of this Sacrament, and will be given Absolution and a private penance according to his condition. To his private penance, earlier

centuries added some trace of public penance as well. It was the practice of St. Isidore of Seville (†636) to have an assisting priest clothe the infirm in a hairshirt and sprinkle him with ashes. There is a detailed account of this rite written by one of St. Isidore's priests, and the practice became widespread through the High Middle Ages. This final public penance of previous ages harkened back to the words of St. Ambrose: If anyone has a hidden sin, let him assiduously do penance for Christ... Let him implore Christ with tears, implore Him with sighs, and implore the whole people with cries. At this point, the *Confiteor*, *Misereatur*, and *Indulgentiam* are said, and the rites continue.

### Viaticum

Having made his Confession, the infirm is prepared for his reception of Holy Communion for the last time, potentially, and it is of grave precept that he receive It. Receiving the *Panis Vitae* – Our Lord substantially present, Who said, “I am the Bread of Life” – will be the most suitable accompaniment of the infirm to the threshold which separates this life from the next. Viaticum, in fact, means an assistance or accompaniment for the journey. The ceremony of Viaticum is the same as for the ordinary administration of Holy Communion to the sick, except for the very act of reception, at which point the priest says: *Accipe, frater, Viaticum Corporis Domini nostri Jesu Christi, qui te custodiat ab hoste maligno, et perducatur in vitam aeternam. Amen.* – Receive, brother, the Viaticum of the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ. May He protect thee from the hostile foe, and lead thee into life everlasting. Amen.

### The Penitential Psalms and the Litany of the Saints

In earlier centuries, it was the customary practice for those surrounding the sickbed to recite the Seven Penitential Psalms and the Litany of the Saints for the spiritual aid of the infirm as the priest continued with the rite, and >



in particular during the anointings. The Litany contained some special invocations, such as: *Ut fructuosam atque salutiferam poenitentiam tribuere digneris* – That Thou wouldst vouchsafe to give fruitful and saving penance; *Ut infirmum nostrum visitare et confortare digneris* – That Thou wouldst vouchsafe to visit and confirm our sick. The Gelasian Sacramentary of the eighth century includes references to specific prayers added to the end of the Litany. The infirm was also aided by the priest in professing the Apostle's Creed and praying the Our Father. A monastic ritual of AD 811 provides the rubric: *canet, si valet* – may he sing them, if able. The Penitential Psalms and the Litany, though not required, still hold their place among the rites dedicated to the sick, and the Pauline Ritual places them in their own chapter following the rite of Extreme Unction.

## Extreme Unction

The principal part of the rite consists of the anointing of the five senses of the infirm preceded by the imposition of the priest's hands with an accompanying prayer. The prayer for the imposition of hands is exorcistic in nature and comes from at least the eleventh century. As the priest makes the sign of the cross thrice over the infirm and imposes his hand, he says: In the name of the Father + and of the Son + and of the Holy + Ghost. May all power of the devil become extinct in thee through the laying on of my hand and through the invocation of the glorious and blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, of St. Joseph, her illustrious spouse, and of all the holy angels, archangels, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, and all the other saints. Amen.

It is the anointing of the senses that constitutes the matter of the Sacrament, and the eyes, ears, nostrils, lips, hands, and usually the feet are each anointed in the form of the cross. The Oil of the Sick (*Oleum Infirmorum*) is used for the Sacrament, the Holy Oil having been solemnly blessed by the bishop at the Chrismal Mass on the preceding Holy Thursday. Additional

parts of the body were also anointed in earlier centuries, such as the chest, back, loins, joints, and especially the places feeling the most pain (*locus maximi doloris*, per the rituals), although some excesses were seen; a ritual from Reims (ca. AD 800) listed 24 anointings in all. There is a longstanding custom that when priests receive the Sacrament, the palms of their hands are not anointed, as these were already consecrated with Holy Oil at his ordination, thus his hands are anointed on the outside for Extreme Unction.

During the anointings, the form of the Sacrament is pronounced: *Per istam sanctam Unctionem, et suum piissimam misericordiam, indulgeat tibi Dominus quidquid per N. deliquisti. Amen.* – Through this holy anointing and through His tender mercy may the Lord forgive thee whatever sins thou hast committed by the sense of N. Over the past centuries, the form has adhered to the following four types, seen in the rituals of the ninth to eleventh centuries: (1) Eucharistical, formed as a prayer: "Turn the ear of Thy goodness to our prayers, merciful God, etc."; (2) Optative, expressing a desire: "May this anointing, through the sign of the cross, the holy oil, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, be to thee propitious unto salvation"; (3) Indicative, stating a fact: "I anoint thee with holy oil that thou wouldst be eternally saved"; (4) Imperative, expressing a command: "Accept health of body and the remission of all of thy sins, etc." The current form, which is optative/deprecatative, was already in use in the tenth century.

The anointings are followed by three prayers which implore of God the fruit of the anointing. They are also from the ninth and tenth centuries. An additional element of concluding the rite is the placing of the cross before the infirm, which is counseled in the current ritual (n. 14), "so that he may frequently glance at it and also kiss and embrace it for sake of devotion." Although the priest currently presents the crucifix to the infirm for him to kiss immediately upon his entrance, after *Pax huic domui*, the ceremonial placing of the cross before him as the priest takes his leave was developed into an expressive rite of its own during the Medieval period, with accompanying prayers.



## The Apostolic Blessing

Plenary indulgences were first extended to the Crusaders and to Jubilee pilgrims, and the Portiuncula Indulgence secured for the faithful by St. Francis of Assisi is another fruit of the same era. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, plenary indulgences were extended to the unfortunate souls struck by the plague. In 1747, Pope Benedict XIV amplified the indulgences for the sick by giving the faculty to grant the Apostolic Blessing with a plenary indulgence to all of the dying, and he prescribed its rite. It is recognized that all priests have this delegated faculty from the Apostolic See. The plenary indulgence imparted during grave illness takes effect at the moment of death (in articulo mortis). The principal text for conferring the Apostolic Blessing is as follows: May Our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, Who hath given to His blessed Apostle Peter the power of binding and loosing, mercifully receive thy confession, and restore unto thee the pristine robe of baptism. And I, by the power given to me by the Apostolic See grant thee a Plenary Indulgence and remission of all sins. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, + and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

## Commendation of the Soul

This rite intended for those at the point of death is already found in the texts of the seventh century, and are certainly of even greater antiquity. A candle is lighted by the deathbed, and an abbreviated version of the Litany of the Saints is prayed for the infirm (*libera eum, Domine*), followed by the prayer *Proficiscere, anima christiana de hoc mundo* – Go forth, Christian soul, from this world. Two exorcistic formulae follow, including a litany for the dying, then three prayers invoking God's pardon for the dying man's soul. Two subsequent prayers to Our Lady and St. Joseph were incorporated in the 1925 revision of the Ritual. A complementary part of the rite can be used as needed; it includes the reading of the Priestly prayer of Christ (Jn, ch. 17) and the Passion. The Irish monks once used also the Cantic of Canticles, which St. Thomas

Aquinas remarked upon in his last illness (Come, my chosen one...). A prayer attributed to St. Augustine is added, with portions of Psalms 117 and 118, and three final prayers resume the whole tenor of the rite. During the final agony, some short verses are prayed for the infirm's eternal repose, including *In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum*. At the moment the soul is breathed forth from the body (expiration), the infirm having called repeatedly on the Holy Name (Jesu, Jesu, Jesu), the deathbed candle is blown out and the living begin their prayers for the dead: *Subvenite, Sancti Dei* – Come to his aid, ye saints of God!

Providing spiritual succor to the sick and the dying is one of the privileges of the Christian life, and especially of the Priesthood. It is one of the corporal works of mercy, and the prime example given is that of the life of Our Lord Himself, whose public ministry regarded so frequently the care of the sick. He admonishes all to follow His example, as He rebukes the goats on His left, but praises the sheep on His right, who are destined for eternal life: *Infirmus fui, et visitastis me* – I was sick and you came to visit me.



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ΟΧΣΙΩΜΟ ΤΗΝΑΙΜΟΡ  
ΤΩ ΧΘ





Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. (James 5:14-16)

Wall mosaics of the ancient Chora Church, Istanbul. Christ the great physician healing the multitudes of sick and afflicted, 14th Century, Constantinople.



# The Balm of Sickness

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Pope Pius XII. Radio message to the sick, November 21, 1949.

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How often in welcoming and blessing groups of pilgrims who gather at the feet of the common father of all the faithful, Our anxious thought has flown to those who were absent, to you above all, beloved sons and daughters, the sick and infirm of Italy and of the whole world, who cannot come here with those others, because you are nailed to the cross of your sufferings.

How often has Our heart yearned to visit you, to pass in your midst in much the same way as Jesus did during His earthly life, on the shores of the lake, along the roads, in the homes, and as He continues to do in the Eucharist, in the shadow of the great Marian shrines, blessing and healing. But how is it possible to visit you, scattered as you are over the whole surface of the globe, in which there is not one corner that is immune from sickness and suffering?

And so We thought of visiting you with Our word, of making Our voice travel to the very end of the earth, reaching all without exception, wherever you may be, in hospitals, in sanatoria, clinics, private domes, to speak with each of you alone, to bend over your bed, to make you feel the tenderness of Our paternal affection, to apply to your sufferings the balm of the passion of our Savior Jesus Christ, a balm which, if it does not always heal, at least always brings comfort and relief.

As the Holy Year approaches, We would like to prepare you for this great period of grace by helping you better to understand and appreciate the harvest you can reap by meditation on the sufferings of Jesus: a harvest which can sweeten your bitter lot with patience, enlighten it with hope, transfigure it with the consciousness of its value and of its fruitfulness.



The balm of the passion of Jesus will give you the patience to bear this trial. It is often very difficult for poor human nature, oppressed by the weight of sickness, or by an acute or chronic illness which tortures by its intensity or endlessness, to be resigned, to go on believing that God loves it still when He lets it suffer so! Is it not crucified? Yes; but look at Him Who is “the crucified” par excellence. Do you recognize Who it is? He is the beloved Son, in Whom the Father is well pleased. (a) Behold Him, look into His eyes, and tell the Good God that you believe that He loves you.

suffering lasts so long! Will it perhaps last forever? That may be only your impression, but it may be, alas, that your sickness is humanly speaking incurable, and that this you know. You have prayed, but have not obtained either a complete cure or even an improvement. And so you feel that God has abandoned you.

Then a sense of discouragement fills your heart, and overcome by suffering and despondency, you let a groan escape you. Unless this becomes a complaint, your Heavenly Father will not reprove you for it. He hears it as if it were a lament of His beloved Son, to Whose voice



Stretched perhaps on an uncomfortable bed, as you turn now to one side and now to the other without ever finding peace, look at Jesus, held immobile by the nails which fix Him to the rough wood of the bare cross.

Is your throat burning with fever? Are the medicines bitter? To Jesus on Golgotha they gave only vinegar and gall. (a) And so to each of your complaints He replies sweetly: “Ah yes! I know how it is; I experienced the same pains. Having taken upon Myself all sufferings, by that experience too, I am compassionate and merciful.”

This balm, too, will support your hope. Perhaps you feel it tottering at times. The

He seemed to remain deaf. Look on Jesus, then. Prostrate in agony He had prayed: “My Father, if it is possible, let this chalice pass Me by; only as Thy will is, not as Mine is.” (a) Dying on the cross He had cried: “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” (b) And, obedient unto death, He exclaims: “Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit.” (c) But behold Him later: risen, glorious, blessed for all eternity!

No; your suffering will not last forever. Open your heart to immortal hope, and say with the afflicted Job: “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that on the last day I shall rise up from the dust ... and in my flesh I shall have sight of God.” (a) Give >



## Faith and Morals

heed to the Apostle St. Paul, who assures us that “these present sufferings are not to be compared to that glory which is to be revealed in us.” (b)

Finally, this balm will add to your sorrows an ineffable sweetness, because the passion of Jesus reveals the fruitfulness of your suffering for yourselves, for others, for the whole world. More than all else, you suffer because of your inactivity, because you feel you are unproductive and useless, a burden on those about you. And you grieve that your life is so unwholesome and sterile. Yet does not sickness serenely accepted refine the spirit, infuse into the soul noble thoughts, point out to wayward hearts the vanity and stupidity of worldly pleasures, heal moral ills, and inspire generous resolutions?

But there is still more to be added!

Look at the cross, look at all those who have suffered!

By His words and examples, Jesus taught men. By His miracles, He went about doing good. But it was by His passion and His cross that He redeemed the world: “We adore Thee, O Christ, and bless Thee, because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.” The same Jesus exhorts you to take up your cross and follow Him. It is an invitation to cooperate with Him in the work of redemption. Just as the Father sent Him, so He sends you; and We, His vicar here below, confirm and bless the mission He has

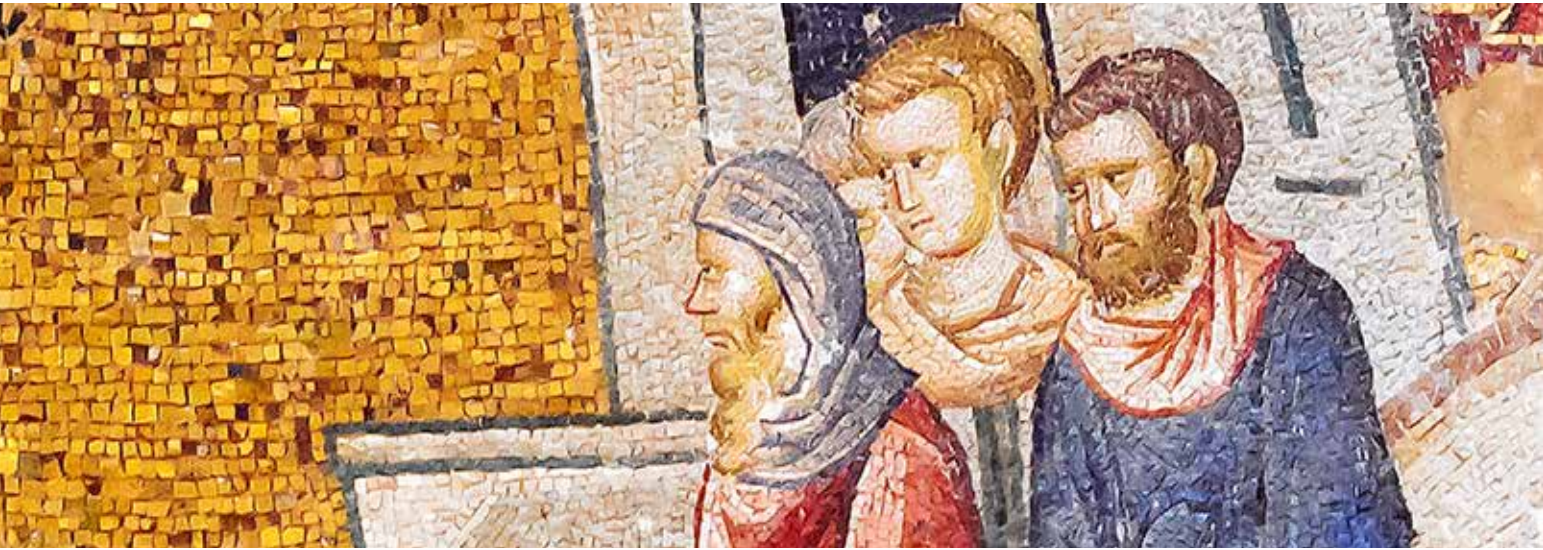
entrusted to you. Beloved children, you who are sick and infirm, during the Holy Year We shall be depending on the prayers and activity of all the faithful. But We are counting still more on holy suffering, which, in union with the passion of Jesus, will give to that activity and to that prayer their perfection and efficacy.

That balm of the passion which strengthens you with patience and hope in your trial, and which enables you to appreciate its incomparable value and sovereign power, will certainly not harden you into a prideful form of insensibility, which has nothing in common with filial conformity to the will of the divine Father. This conformity closes neither heart nor lips to prayer, but lends them the odor of incense, which in the flame rises to the very throne of God.

Yes, O Jesus! Let Our prayer, in union with the sufferings of Thy most holy Mother, be accompanied also by the prayer of all who suffer in their own flesh, or in the flesh of those whom most they love in life.

Turn your eyes towards that poor father reduced to inactivity by illness, who cannot with the sweat of his brow nourish and educate his young children. Turn them towards that mother whose diminished strength forces her to abandon the family circle which with so much love she governed and directed for the well-being and happiness of the whole family.





Turn your eyes toward those young men, so determined and enterprising, who asked only to work and use their lives well, and now see themselves, instead, fastened to a bed of pain while so many others foolishly waste their health and youthful vigor. Turn your eyes to those men and women full of charity, instruments of God's providence for the afflicted and the wayward, whose sickness is such a loss to those many unfortunate people once helped by their charity.

Jesus, hear Our prayer, hear Us as Thou didst hear the petition of the centurion for his servant, of the nobleman for his son, of Jairus for his daughter dying in the flower of youth, of the Cananite woman whose faith so deeply moved Thy heart.

But if in the secret of your adorable designs the trial is to be prolonged, perhaps to be ended only by death, then to these grant serenity, and a sweet and holy demise. To those others grant filial resignation, a full enjoyment of the supernatural fruits of the Holy Year, and the supreme consolation of fulfilling, despite the infirmity of their body, or rather by means of that very infirmity, the noble mission of salvation entrusted to them. To those who stand weeping at the bedside of the sick, give the strength to make their presence an encouragement, and to unite their distress with the sorrow of Thy most pure Mother standing at the foot of the cross.

And as a pledge of the most abundant divine

comforts, may this Apostolic Blessing come upon you all, this Blessing which We invoke upon you with every fibre of Our heart.

## Consecration of the Sick to the Blessed Virgin Mary

(Prayer composed by Pius XII)

O kind and good Mother, whose own soul was pierced by the sword of sorrow, look upon us while, in our sickness, we arraign ourselves beside you on the Calvary where your Jesus hangs.

Dowered with the high grace of suffering, and hopeful of fulfilling in our own flesh what is wanting in our sharing of Christ's passion, on behalf of his Mystical Body, the Church, we consecrate to you ourselves and our pain. We pray that you will place them on that Altar of the Cross to which Jesus is affixed. May they be little victims of propitiation for our salvation, for the salvation of all peoples.

O Mother of Sorrows, accept this consecration. Strengthen our hopeful hearts, that as partakers of Christ's sufferings we may also share in his comfort now and for evermore.

Amen.



# Legend of the Locket



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From Fr. Finn's *Mostly Boys* (New York: 1896), pp. 90-95

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I was in my first sleep when the sound of the doorbell awakened me, whereupon I sprang from my bed, and, after a few hurried preparations, hastened to throw open the door. It was a bitter cold night in January, and the moon without threw its pale light over the wan spectral snow-covered landscape. The sharp gust that swept into the hall as I opened the door made me pity the delicate-looking child who stood at the threshold. Her hair gleamed with a strange and rare effect in the moonlight, long golden hair that fell in graceful ripples about her shoulders. She was lightly dressed, this little child, as she stood gazing straight and frankly into my eyes with an expression at once so beautiful and calm and earnest that I shall never forget it. Her face was very pale, her complexion of the fairest. The radiance about her hair seemed to glow in some

weird yet indescribable fashion upon her every feature. These details I had not fairly taken in when she addressed me. "Father, can you come with me at once? My mother is dying, and she is in trouble."

"Come inside, my little girl," I said, "and warm yourself. You must be half frozen." "Indeed, Father, I am not in the least cold." I had thrown on my coat and hat as she made answer. "Your mother's name, my child?" "Catherine Morgan, Father; she's a widow, and has lived like a saint. And now that she's dying, she is in awful trouble. She was taken sick about a few hours ago." "Where does she live?" "Two miles from here, Father, on the border of the Great Swamp; she is a stranger in these parts, and alone. I know the way perfectly; you need not be afraid of getting lost."





A few minutes later we were tramping through the snow, or rather I was tramping, for the child beside me moved with so light and tender a step, that had there been flowers instead of snowflakes beneath our feet I do not think a single petal would have been crushed under the airy fall of her fairy feet. Her hand was in mine with the confiding clasp of childhood. Her face, for all the trouble that was at home, wore a gravely serene air, such as is seldom seen in years of sprightly, youthful innocence. How beautiful she looked! More like a creature fresh from the perfect handiwork of God than one who walked in the valley of sin, sorrow, trouble, and death. Locked upon her bosom I observed a golden locket fashioned in a heart shape. She noticed my glance, and with a quick movement of her fingers released the locket and handed it to me. "It's a heart," I said. "Read what's on it, Father." "I can't, my little friend; my eyes are very good, but are not equal to making out reading on gold lockets by moonlight." "Just let me hold it for you, Father. Now look." How this child contrived, I cannot say; but certain it is, that at once, as she held the locket at a certain angle, there stood out clearly, embossed upon its surface, the legend: "Cease! the Heart of Jesus is with me." "Mamma placed that upon my bosom one year ago, when I was very sick, Father." And kissing the locket, the child restored it to its place. We went on for a time in silence. I carried the Blessed Sacrament with me; and, young as she was, the girl seemed to appreciate the fact. Whenever I glanced at her, I observed her lips moving as in prayer, and her eyes seemed, in very truth, fixed upon the place where rested in His sacramental veil the Master of Life and of Death. Suddenly the girl's hand touched my sleeve - oh, so gently! "This is the place, Father," she said in soft tones that thrilled me as they broke upon the stillness; and she pointed to a little hut standing back in the dim shadows of three pine trees. I pushed open the door, which hung loosely upon its hinges, and turned to wait her entrance. She was gone. Somewhat startled, I was peering out into the pallid night, when a groan called me to the bedside of the dying woman. A glance told me there was no time to lose. The woman lying in that room had hardly reached middle life, but the

hand of Death had touched her brow, upon which stood the drops of sweat, and in her face I read a great trouble. I was at her side in an instant, and, God be thanked for it, soon calmed and quieted the poor creature. She made her confession, and in sentiments of faith and love such as I have rarely seen, received the Last Sacraments of the Church.

Standing beside her, I suggested those little prayers and devices so sweet and consoling at the dread hour. I noticed, as the time passed on, that her eyes frequently turned toward a little box at the farther end of the room. "Shall I bring you that box?" I asked. She nodded assent. On placing it beside her, she opened it with trembling hands and took out the dress of a child. "Your little daughter's dress?" I said. She whispered, and there was love in her tones: "My darling Edith's." "I know her," I continued. "She brought me here, you know."

I stopped short and caught my breath. The woman half rose in her bed; she looked at me in wonder that cannot be expressed. I, no less amazed, was staring at a golden, oval locket fastened to the bosom of the child's dress which the woman was holding in her hands. "Madam," I cried, "in the name of God, tell me, where is your daughter? Whose is that locket?" "The locket is Edith's. I placed it here on the bosom of her dress when my little girl lay dying a year ago. The last thing my darling did was to hold this locket to her lips, and say: 'Cease! the Heart of Jesus is with me.' She died a year ago."

Then the mother's face grew very sweet and very radiant. Still holding the locket in her hands, she fixed her eyes straight before her. "Edith, my dear Edith, we are at last to be united in the Sacred Heart. I see you, my darling. 'Cease! the Heart of Jesus is with me.'" Her voice faded with the last syllable into silence. She and Edith were again united.



# Clinging to the Church

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Boyd Huppert

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Here is a beautiful story of a man, who, desperately clinging to life and throwing himself into God's hands, sought to finish his days by restoring a little church. This story has a ring of a Christmas fairytale, but it is directed to the Sacred Heart.

Some times in our lives, we are on the brink of giving up all hope, then something pulls us back on track. That time came three years ago for Greg Thomas. "When I found out that I had cancer, they told my family to go ahead and start planning my funeral." Diagnosed at the age of 57 with stage 4 head and neck cancer, then released from his propane delivery job, Thomas began passing the hours alone on long walks from his home with his dog and his thoughts. "It's a nightmare you can't wake up from," he recalls.

The daily walks down a gravel road soon led him to the wood-framed country church which would change his life. Built in 1868 by Czech settlers who later moved to a bigger parish in Montgomery, the Budejovice Church had been vacant and without a congregation for more than a century. The foundation was crumbling and the paint was peeling, but it was there on the church steps that a man, crumbling himself, came to pray and shed tears.

"I've been on a feeding tube now for three years," says Thomas, lifting his shirt, "and this is how I feed myself." Before Thomas started

painting the church's interior, he had asked for a key to the locked building. This is how Thomas now feeds himself—spiritually.

"One of the beads on my rosary is reserved for him," smiles Blanche Zellmer, who has lived near the church for more than 90 years. Prayer is a work, and God has repaid his faithful restorer: the old church is newly clothed in white and Greg's cancer is now in remission.

Greg Thomas is restoring the old church, that's true. But it's hard to discern who's saving whom. "It's what He's done for me," he says, glancing toward a statue of Jesus, "and this is my way of saying 'thank you' to Him."

No doubt, God has blessed Greg Thomas with much devotion and faith in His Sacred Heart, as he spends his free time in fulfilling this lovely project of restoring one of the thousand little pioneer Catholic churches which were a living witness of the Faith in ages past. But it would be difficult for one to have had this story had he been going to the Crystal Cathedral of Los Angeles. And, may this fairytale-like story have its own lesson for us: like St. Dominic and St. Francis, and like Greg Thomas of this day, God wants us to restore and invigorate the true Faith within this poor country of ours.

For more information see:  
<http://www.kare11.com/news/article/993611/391/Dying-man-finds-miracle-in-abandoned-church>







# Awakening Goodness

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by SSPX Sisters

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“Bring to life in the hearts of the children a generous interest in their fellows; awaken in them, by conversation and example, a profound sympathy for the poor and ignorant, and prepare them to be the benefactors of their race. That’s Christian education. While approving science, I find that such an education is worth all the sciences” (St. Pius X).

We already know that the child is not born naturally good. We must be convinced that this little blond or brown-haired tot bears in its soul the troublesome consequences of original sin: ignorance, weakness, a disordered love of pleasure, and malice. It was by love that the child was created, and it is to love God and men, our brothers, that it is on earth. That is why it is by spreading good all round that the child will most perfectly fulfill the mission the good God has

entrusted it.

Christian parents need to make the education of their children in goodness an essential part of their vocation as educators. Unfortunately, too few really think about it, perhaps because they are exclusively occupied by the details of education and lack a comprehensive view. And yet, a person’s goodness must be the inseparable companion of the charity by which we shall be judged on the last day of our life. “It is by this sign that they will know that you are my disciples.” “Charity is good, is kind, thinks of others,” as St. Paul teaches us in his first Epistle to the Corinthians (Cor. 13).



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## The Mainspring of Courtesy

True goodness is not improvised. One may experience bouts of goodness, and that can also depend on temperament. The important thing is to cultivate the virtue so as to possess it habitually and supernaturally. The benevolence of a good man has as its principle the goodness of his heart. It is even the hidden spring of the Christian courtesy that should be an expression of our genuine sentiments.

We stress goodness. One may, and it often happens, find real charity, the proverbial “heart of gold,” beneath a brusque, or even disagreeable, demeanor. But this person with a “heart of gold” will not be able to do all the good God expects of him if he persists in keeping the roughness of his character.

Goodness attracts, reassures, facilitates conversation. It presupposes the possession of several virtues: a peaceable spirit, a serenity of heart that is reflected on the countenance,

gentleness, patience, even-tempereness grounded in an unshakeable confidence in God, self-forgetfulness and attention to others, modesty, prudence, etc. It calls for a well-tempered character, capable of making the right decisions in order to do good. For it takes strength to be gentle, patient, and good.

“Prepare your children,” said St. Pius X, “to be the benefactors of their race.”

## Don't Wait

This education in goodness must start early for a charitable bent of mind and kind reflexes to suffuse an entire life. It is all the more necessary in that the little child, absolutely dependent for everything upon its parents, is naturally egocentric. Everything turns around its little self so that it lacks nothing. It sees the adults take care of it with a devotion it cannot comprehend >



because, for it, this solicitude is normal. It is loved and its parents feel compensated by the least little smile. However, God has placed in its little heart astonishing aptitudes for goodness and generosity. The whole art of education is to know how to awaken and develop these hidden energies with the help of grace.

First of all, nothing works like the example of the parents, for example serves both as a model and support. Be yourselves what you want your children to be. Show yourselves good, kind in words as in deeds, kind and generous toward the poor, those who suffer, all those whom one calls neighbor. If someone requests a service, render it every time you can, even showing that you are happy to do so. Let your affectionate solicitude foresee the needs of those around you. If you are unable to do all or part of what is asked, show that it truly pains you not to be able to help as much as you would like. Speak with your children about what one could do to help a poor old man who has no one to take him to a doctor's appointment, or a little old lady who has so much trouble doing her errands, etc.

## The Absent Are Always Right

Insofar as he is able, associate your child in your works of mercy. And in his regard, always welcome with goodness and serenity all his little worries, his little confidences. Make it easy for him to come and tell you when he's done something wrong, and make him understand that good can still come from something bad. That is how God is with us. He allows evil in order to draw forth a greater good. Let your home be truly a loving place. At table, never speak ill of anyone not present. After a boring visit, during which you made an especial effort at kindness, don't allow yourself to make any disparaging remarks, even if they may seem innocuous. "Charity does not think ill." In the same line of thought, never allow your children to make unkind remarks, which they may do more or less publicly. Be just in your correction. Accustom your children to discover the good in those around them, to make excuses for blunders, and to banish right away, by a positive act of charity, any malevolent feeling

(jealousy, pride, etc.) which might well up in their heart.

## Against Arrogance

The child must exercise his goodness towards those who are littler than he, his "inferiors," and, in order to do so, must know how to go out of his way sometimes to help others. Be sure that he does not consider inferiors the cleaning lady who comes to help mother, or the girl who occasionally babysits, and treat them with insolence. Here again, it is the dignified manner and respect with which the parents act toward their employees or subordinates that will teach the children politeness and respect.

Eliminate any games that may develop in them meanness or even cruelty, or anything that could exacerbate pride or the sense of domineering others. It is also important to watch over children's behavior towards animals, so as to ban any cruel games involving them. It is ridiculous to console a child by letting him strike the table he bumped into. Allowing such behavior may eventually lead him to revolt against events permitted by God and perhaps even to blaspheme.

On the contrary, profit from the least occasions to encourage any manifestation of true pity. Teach your children to put themselves in the place of others. Compassion is born of the experience more or less felt of suffering, moral or physical. One says willingly: "No one can understand such suffering unless he has experienced something similar." You desire, of course, to spare your children suffering; educators are there to watch over their existence. But there are many occasions of suffering allowed by Providence to strengthen the soul of a child and to awaken the sentiment of compassion for others. For example, it is winter, big snowflakes are coming down. What fun! Time to go and make some snowballs for a royal battle. But the little scatter-brain forgot his gloves. Of course, he cannot resist playing with this beautiful snow, but soon his little hands will turn blue with cold and he will suffer. So when he comes inside to warm up, don't let the chance





pass to mention the suffering of poor children who don't have enough warm clothing, or a warm house. And together you'll see what you can do, for one must not be content with good feelings, but must do something concrete, however minimal it might be.

## Know How to Give

A gluttonous, self-centered child was never willing to share a treat he was enjoying. One day a delicious dessert was passed beneath his eyes without him being offered any. When he asked for his share, his parents remarked: "Why do you want done for you what you do not do for others?"

At catechism, a little before Christmas, suggest that the children offer one of their toys for the Christmas of poor children. Help your children, without forcing them, to give a toy in good condition, a doll still pretty, for "giving to the poor is giving to God." Especially don't cool their generous enthusiasm by suggesting that they choose something they no longer play with or that is less good...

## Anne de Guigné


Tell them stories about the saints, especially when they were their age. There is a particular grace that encourages and renders virtue more amiable, if not easier. Heavenly friendships can be tied between such a saint and your child. Think of the three children of Fatima, St. Dominic Savio, and Anne de Guigné. The latter, a little girl, was naturally bossy, choleric, jealous; in short, not an agreeable sort. When she lost her father, who died on the field of battle in 1915, little Anne, who was just four years old, saw her mother in the grips of a profound sorrow and wanted to console her. Her mother spoke to her these simple words: "If you want to console me, Anne, be good."

These words provoked in the generous soul of little Anne a veritable conversion, and she never ceased growing in holiness until the day when the Lord came to take her. She was a little more than ten years old. She lived in a constant state

of concern for the least needs of those around her. This care for the good of others pushed her constantly to sacrifice herself for them. This perpetual self-forgetfulness had cost her a lot at first, but, moved by the Holy Ghost, she reached the point, towards the end, of tasting the joy of self-giving.

Christian parents, you too, train up your children in goodness without delaying any longer. For if the effort towards goodness and charity is not educated very early, will it ever be possible? Aim at your ideal with perseverance. Pray to the guardian angels of your children. If the fruits of your education are a long time coming, don't rush anything. Good acts may be helped, but they must be free. For, you must know, if this effort is not rooted in charity, it will lose all meaning. However, sooner or later, you will see the blossoming of the virtues you desire for your children, and then they also will savor this word of our Lord that "there is more joy in giving than receiving."

"Arriverai-je á rendre mon enfant bon?" *Fideliter*, May-June 2009, pp. 70-73.

A close-up photograph of a stone statue of St. John the Apostle. The statue is positioned in front of a wall of fluted columns. The lighting is dramatic, with strong shadows and highlights that emphasize the texture of the stone and the folds of the garment. The statue's head is turned slightly to the right, and its right hand is visible, holding a book. The background shows the vertical lines of the columns, creating a sense of depth and architectural context.

St. John is commemorated on December 27, which he originally shared with St. James the Greater. At Rome the feast was reserved to St. John alone at an early date, though both names are found in the Carthage Calendar, the Hieronymian Martyrology, and the Gallican liturgical books. The “departure” or “assumption” of the Apostle is noted in the Menology of Constantinople and the Calendar of Naples (September 26), which seems to have been regarded as the date of his death. The feast of St. John before the Latin Gate, supposed to commemorate the dedication of the church near the Porta Latina, is first mentioned in the Sacramentary of Adrian I (772-95).

Statue of St. John the Apostle, St. John's Cathedral, Den Bosch, Netherlands





# Do Manfully

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by Fr. Gillilan

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A complaint often heard by many young women looking for a Catholic spouse today is: “Where are all the men?” Unfortunately, many young men seem to have gone AWOL in the combat for the reign of Christ the King. If they are not running with the devil, they are at least running with the world. This race they run is not St. Paul’s but their own. Why are many of our young men sprinting away from Christ’s call to leadership and fatherhood? Ultimately, they have not the maturity to “man up.” The road most traveled is by far the easiest road traveled.

If maturity is needed, then what matures a man? A priest once said that three things were needed to mature a man: love, suffering, and responsibility.

## Love

Not the emotional and sentimental love that weakens the will and effeminizes society, nor the lustful “love” that enslaves our youth, but it is the sacrificial love that young men need. They must love something outside of themselves. They must love a woman. This Woman is firstly the greatest of all women that walked the face of the earth, the Blessed Mother. She is the mother of fair love and of chaste love, both of which will teach all men to love properly. She was loved first by God, and she knows what it is to love in return. The next woman they must love is their own earthly mother. She who gave them birth must be loved and thanked for the gift of life. Thirdly, they must love their sisters and their feminine relatives. The love of these women is ordered and good. It protects and safeguards. It honors their name.



It defends against attackers and pursuers. It is a love that is unselfish. It is a love that teaches respect and admiration of women. If this love is missing in the beginning, our young men will seek a love that is lustful, selfish, damaging, and often abusive. How many of our young men find themselves in selfish relationships that do not seek to preserve the women's greatest gift, her virginity. True love is unselfish. Our Lord Jesus Christ gave us the proof for this as He hung upon the cross in order to protect the beauty of His Bride.

## Suffering

Since the fall of Adam, every man must suffer. Centuries ago, before the comforts of air conditioning, flat screens and modern travel, man was forced to confront suffering face to face. Today we have many quick and ingenious ways to escape mental and physical suffering. Our young men are not exempt from this ingenuity. They are often more eager to run to Redbox than to the Confessional box after the pangs of a guilty conscience; more quick to glorify themselves on social media than to humble themselves in front of the communion of Saints. It is our human nature. Men do not like suffering. Our Lord Himself would have chosen a different garden were it not His Father's will. Christ gives us the grace for every difficulty presented to us, but what is needed on our part is the courage to accept the cross presented. The young man of today desperately needs fortitude, that moral virtue which gives us the strength to endure through the difficult. If a young man cannot persevere through the cross given him, he is no soldier of Christ. The supernatural builds on the natural: "Be a man, then be a man of God." If our young men can't hold down a job, they certainly won't be able to down a family. If they can't be faithful now on YouTube, how can they be faithful some day to their wives. Today, more than ever, young men are needed who can "astise their bodies and make them their slaves"; men who can be masters of themselves and not be mastered by something else; men who can unite their sufferings with those of the Sufferer. A

disordered world needs men who are who willing to put order back into themselves, young men who can take suffering and inflict suffering on their unruly and wild concupiscence. We need men with enough grit to become saints. Our Lord was the man of suffering. All sufferings were not in vain but brought life and redemption. Christ was silent before a sensual Herod, so must our men do likewise today before the sensual world. When of the enemies of the cross present themselves, we must take no part in their works.

## Responsibility

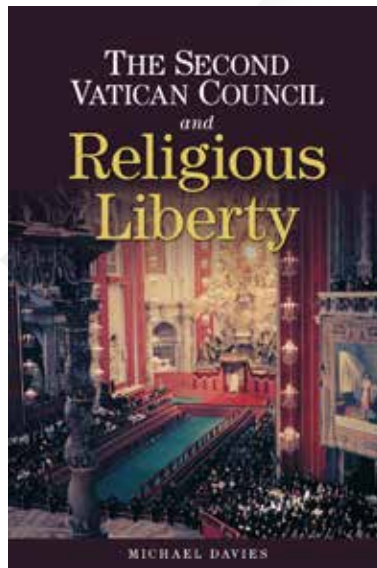
Why is man so quick to avoid responsibility for his actions? Why did Adam hide himself after he ate the fruit? Why was he not standing in the midst of the garden saying, "Here is the fruit we ate, Lord"? Man fears to admit culpability because he fears the just consequences of his irresponsibility. Modern man is an expert at this practice. He wants the mountain top without the hike, the pleasure without the pain. He will indulge himself in sexual activity but dodge the progeny designed with the act. If modern man is found guilty of a crime, surely someone or something else that made him do it. He will hire the best lawyers to prove to the world he had no control over his actions. Heaven forbid that he take responsibility for his actions.

Our young men need to take responsibility and need to be given responsibility. They must be man enough and humble enough to own up to the truth, to their faults and to take the prescribed punishments and consequences. Once they are at this point they must be given the burden of responsibility. Obligations will force their wills to make decisions motivated toward a higher good than themselves. To be on time for work or college is demanding. The video games must be turned off earlier, texting must be cut short, preparations must be noted. Responsibility by its nature is unselfish. There is now something much bigger at stake than one's personal life and pleasure. Jesus Christ Himself took the responsibility of Redemption. Modern man will be saved by taking seriously the responsibility of the cross.

# The Second Vatican Council and Religious Liberty

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by Michael Davies

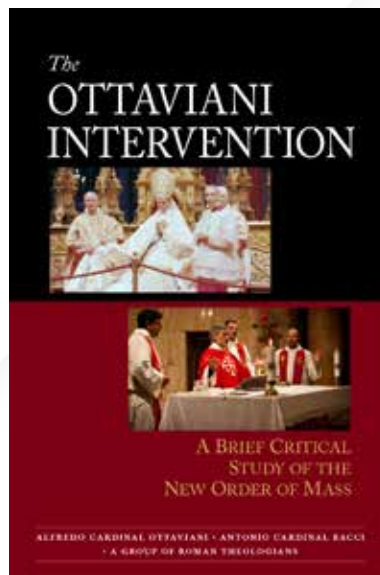


Back in print! Popular historian Michael Davies wrote one of the best studies on the doctrinal battle over the Church's teaching on religious freedom. This time the Modernists did win....This book deals with the right and wrong conceptions of religious freedom. Special emphasis is placed on the weaknesses and confusions of the (non-infallible) Declaration on Religious Freedom of Vatican II, which contains a number of questionable assertions which have greatly added to the confusion of Catholics and others since it was approved by Vatican II in 1965. This makes *The Second Vatican Council and Religious Liberty* indispensable for any Catholic who is aware of the recent changes in the Catholic Church.



# The Ottaviani Intervention

## A Brief Critical Study of the New Order of Mass



"It is evident that the *Novus Ordo* has no intention of presenting the faith as taught by the Council of Trent, to which, nonetheless, the Catholic conscience is bound forever. With the promulgation of the *Novus Ordo*, the loyal Catholic is thus faced with a most tragic alternative."

This statement, made with absolute and definitive clarity, from Section VI of the *Ottaviani Intervention*, was made in response to what might be considered one of the most critical moments in the history of the Catholic Church since the original Pentecost Sunday, the traditional worship of the Roman Church was about to be replaced.

The issue of the ongoing liturgical revolution in the Catholic Church became critical on April 28, 1969, when Paul VI announced the *Novus Ordo Missae*. It was the last chance for action within the traditional channels of ecclesiastical authority. Somehow the pope had to be dissuaded from implementing this substitute for the traditional Catholic Mass of the Roman Rite. This attempt, ultimately unsuccessful, was done in *A Brief Critical Study of the New Order of Mass*...or what has become known as the "Ottaviani Intervention."—From the Introduction



# Consecration of Our Lady of Sorrows Church, Phoenix



The bishop wraps and seals the relics that will be integrated into the altar.

The bishop reads the certificate testifying the authenticity of the relics.



The relics are carried into the church



The bishop sprinkles the outside and the inside of the church with Gregorian Water



The bishop writes the Latin and Greek alphabet in the ashes.



The bishop sprinkles the altar with water and signs it with the sign of the cross.

The relics are buried in the altar.





# Christian Culture

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## Why we have Churches

“Thus saith the Lord: Heaven is my throne, and the earth my footstool; what is this house which you will build for me? And what is this place of my rest? My hand made all of these things” (Is. 66:1-2). This is a question worth pondering. St. Paul assures us that God, “being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands” (Acts 17:24). Why, then, do we build churches? What is a church, if it is not the house of God? What are we to think of this?

It is true that God fills heaven and earth (Jr. 23:24), and He cannot be confined to any one place. But He is not present everywhere in the same way. Remaining the same in Himself, He is present differently in different places, because of the difference in the things that He is present to. If it were otherwise—if God were equally present everywhere—we would not say, “Our Father, who art in heaven.” God’s presence is more perfect in heaven than in hell; and on earth He is close to the just, but far from the wicked.

The just resemble God and manifest his holiness, and God exercises a special providence over them. “The eyes of the Lord are upon the just, and his ears are inclined to their petitions” (Ps. 33). God’s providential care was manifested to the patriarch Jacob when he was in Bethel. The patriarch saw the heavens opened, and a ladder was reaching up from earth into heaven; angels were ascending and descending the ladder, and the Lord was leaning against the top of it. The Lord assured Jacob, “I will be thy keeper whithersoever thou goest” (Gn. 28:15).

When Jacob awoke, he exclaimed, “Truly the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not! This is the house of God, and the gate of heaven” (Gn. 28:16-17)—words which the Church repeats frequently when she celebrates the dedication of a church. Let us make sure that we understand them. God was in Bethel, not because of the place itself, but because of the person who was in it; He was watching over his servant Jacob. The Lord is present where his servants are. Jesus Christ affirmed this when He said: “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them” (Mt. 18:20). In comparison, then, “how much more terrible is the place, and how much more certainly is the Lord there, where not only two or three, but very many are gathered in God’s name!” Such is the church, the appointed meeting-place between man and his Creator.

Consequently, God is present in the church in a special way—even when the Blessed Sacrament is not reserved there—simply because it is a house of prayer (Mt. 21:13); and He exercises a special providence over those who pray in the church, so that their prayers have greater efficacy; for He said to Solomon, concerning the Temple: “I have chosen and sanctified this place, that my name may be there forever, and my eyes and my heart may remain there always” (2 Par. 7:16). And “my eyes will be open, and my ears erect to hear the prayer of whosoever shall pray in this place” (2 Par. 7:15).





# SSPX Ost-postolate

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by Fr. Pezzutti

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**The Angelus:** After the interview of Fr. John Jenkins on his Polish apostolate, we are pleased to hear from another American priest laboring in the Eastern parts of Europe, Fr. Shane Pezzutti. And, by way of introduction, Father, would you mind telling us about your background before joining the SSPX shock troops?

**Fr. Pezzutti:** Well, I was born in Columbus, Ohio, and I am the oldest of 8 children from a Catholic family. After attending Catholic schools, I graduated with a degree in the history of philosophy. My journey to Catholic Tradition began with the reading of papal encyclicals, comparing them with the texts of Vatican II and discovering the many contradictions. Later, I went to the SSPX Mass in Cincinnati. I was so impressed by the priests there, the altar servers, the people, and the Gregorian chant that I never

returned to the indult Mass in Columbus.

**The Angelus:** Did you find your vocation to the priesthood in Cincinnati?

**Fr. Pezzutti:** Yes, it was at the Cincinnati chapel that I met traditional Catholics like the future Fr. Themann and his family, but later I met Fr. James Doran. He was replacing the pastor one weekend, and after Holy Mass we spoke together and he invited me to visit Winona. So, I owe a lot to him for his great priestly inspiration. Then, as a seminarian, I was also tremendously blessed to have Fr. Yves le Roux as Rector, another outstanding priestly example for all of us at the seminary. I was ordained a priest in 2010.

**The Angelus:** Was Eastern Europe your first assignment?





**Fr. Pezzutti:** To my great surprise, yes! We joked among ourselves that maybe this new priest would go to Africa or that new priest would go to Mexico, etc., but we never joked about Eastern Europe, because...well, that was simply out of the question--or so I thought! I was actually driving when Fr. Beck broke the news to me. He said to me, "Well, Father, unfortunately you are not staying in the USA. Yeah! It says here that you will be going to Poland. That's all I know, so you will have to contact Fr. Karl Stehlin." When I heard that, I almost ran off the road! How could I go to Poland? I'm not Polish; I don't know Polish! I thought to myself: "Does the SSPX even have missions in Poland? Well, God certainly knows better than I. He knows what He is doing. He will send me where He wants me."

**The Angelus:** I am sure that you got in touch with Fr. Stehlin, didn't you?

**Fr. Pezzutti:** Indeed! He called me from Poland. When I told him that I was ready and willing to help in Poland however I could, he answered in a jovial and enthusiastic voice, "Well! Not exactly, Father. You will be living in Lithuania, and you will be responsible for the other two Baltic countries of Estonia and Latvia." What? Again, I was stunned: "Where in the world is that? Do we even have missions in those countries?" As I got off the phone with him, I told my parents and we were all shell shocked.

**The Angelus:** Before your trip, did you do more research about your destination?

**Fr. Pezzutti:** Yes. We quickly realized that Lithuania was right next to Russia! We discovered that it was a former republic of the Soviet Union. It felt like the twilight zone. I have to admit that I was pretty nervous. Then, checking the SSPX websites. I quickly began to discover the tremendous work that Fr. Stehlin had done in Eastern Europe and his great devotion to Our Lady, the Immaculata. I had really never heard much about it, but I felt honored to work with such a priest and in such an interesting mission. Also, somehow I felt that maybe with this assignment in Eastern Europe, and so close to Russia, I could do something to help Our Lady of Fatima!

**The Angelus:** What was your trip to Lithuania like?

**Fr. Pezzutti:** After quite a long and adventurous journey with many delays, I finally arrived in Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania. On my way to the priory in Kaunas, in an old nasty Soviet train, I met a young man who spoke to me in English, but with a heavy Russian accent. He asked, "Are you a priest?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Why? Why would you believe in religion? I don't believe in religion. I'm from Moscow and I am an atheist." I said to myself, "Welcome to Eastern Europe!" Well, after a long and interesting conversation with the young man, he stood up and said: "I don't believe in religion, but I respect you for your beliefs." Maybe somehow a seed was planted in his soul. I still pray for him.

**The Angelus:** Any first impressions of the city of Kaunas?

**Fr. Pezzutti:** I kept thinking about the fact that I was in a former Communist territory, with such a painful history. Lithuania had been ruled by the Russian empire, and afterwards by the Soviet Union, and it was tossed between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Russia during World War II. This tiny Catholic Baltic nation had suffered long decades of persecution. And, although Lithuania has many very beautiful forests and scenery, you can also still see many old apartment buildings from the Soviet era. They used a peculiar white brick material which, in my opinion, is hideous. That made a deep impression on me.

**The Angelus:** Can you tell us more of the era of persecution?

**Fr. Pezzutti:** You have to understand that the Soviet Union was a terrible godless political system which terrorized its own citizens. It ferociously persecuted all "traitors" to the communist ideology. It publicly proclaimed that religion was a psychological disorder and that it corrupted the minds of Soviet citizens. For over 70 years, the Communists severely persecuted religion, especially Catholicism in Lithuania. Millions were tortured and murdered. Even in Catholic Lithuania, up until the 1980s, atheistic school teachers forced the children to draw >

# Christian Culture

blasphemous pictures which mocked Our Lord Jesus Christ and priests. Teaching catechism publicly to children was forbidden. These were the terrible errors of Russia, which Our Lady of Fatima warned us about.

**The Angelus:** How about the priory? Were things pleasant there?

**Fr. Pezzutti:** Well, Lithuania has some very unique and actually quite tasty food, but I had to get used to some of it. By way of anecdote, at that time, we had an intimidating Lithuanian cook. After a while, I got up enough courage to ask her to make some lasagna, which I was missing terribly! She answered very seriously, “Oh, no; we don’t have comfort here.” Lasagna is comfort? She was serious! I thought that was funny.

Anyway, our priory in Kaunas is kind of a center for a lot of the missions in Eastern Europe, but of course it depends on our headquarters in Poland. It is a really nice building, and presently it houses three priests. We take care of as many as six mission chapels: two in Lithuania, two in Russia, and one chapel in both countries of Belarus and Estonia. The priory hosts also an Oblate sister of the SSPX from Lithuania, and sometimes pre-seminarians.

**The Angelus:** What were your first duties in the strange new world of the East?

**Fr. Pezzutti:** My first priority was to learn the intimidating Lithuanian language, and to solve the various visa troubles which arose. After that, Fr. Stehlin soon visited Kaunas in order to take me on my first mission run to Latvia and Estonia. My duties were basically the following: I had to help in Lithuania on the second and fourth weekends and on the first and third weekends to travel to Latvia and Estonia, which was pretty difficult. I usually left by bus on Friday morning. After over four hours on an old Soviet bus I arrived in Riga, Latvia, where the Society actually works together with a Byzantine Rite priest.

**The Angelus:** What did it feel like to be celebrating Mass in a bi-ritual church?

**Fr. Pezzutti:** That was a whole new world to me even though I had always been interested in the Eastern Rites. In Riga, we have an Eastern Rite Community there, and a Latin Rite Community which I was responsible for. Both groups were very thankful for my presence. Also, at first, it was also a little awkward to get used to the fact that the priest there was married, as you

Priory in Kaunas



Fathers Bösiger and Pezzuti in Belarus





can imagine. My duties were usually to offer Mass in Riga on Friday night and, the next morning, jump on another four hours bus ride to Tallinn, Estonia. Our mission there also was quite small, with only about 30 faithful for Sunday Mass. Sunday travels were also a challenge. I would offer the Holy Mass in Tallinn and preach in the Estonian language, and then teach catechism. Then I would rush to the bus station and four hours later I was back in Riga, Latvia. I would preach in the Latvian language and then give catechism. Sundays were long days and, so, I slept very well before getting back to Kaunas on Monday morning. The difficulty was that it was a long four day trip through three countries, with three different languages, three different currencies, and about seventeen hours on the bus.

**The Angelus:** It seems hard enough as you mention it. Were there times when you felt overwhelmed by your responsibilities?

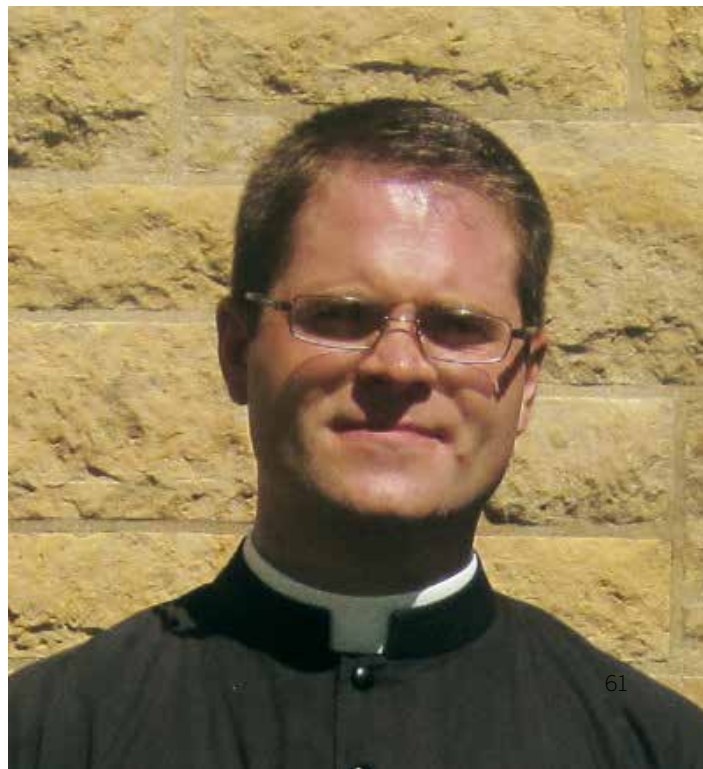
**Fr. Pezzutti:** It was tough, but I have to say that Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Immaculata blessed me with such a great peace and happiness during that first year. Whenever the difficulties began to escalate, I always saw the

merciful hand of God lifting me up and helping me along. I had seen that same thing throughout my time in the seminary also, and I saw it again as a priest. God is a very good Father, and He will always help us when we really are in need. That is a fact. I also had to try to study those three difficult languages: Lithuanian, Estonian, and Latvian, and to preach in them. Usually I would write a sermon in English and one of the faithful would translate it, and then I would simply read it to the people. But, still it took a lot of time and practice just to read those languages correctly.

**The Angelus:** Besides the physical exhaustion that went with the travels, what was the most difficult aspect of your parish responsibilities?

**Fr. Pezzutti:** I found it quite challenging to understand the various mentalities of the faithful in Eastern Europe. If you observe how they practice religion and how they pray, you see immediately how little they know. The Soviets were very effective in destroying religion and faith in souls. So, it took me some time to adjust to that fact. Indeed, I am still trying to adjust to it. I had to realize that I was not surrounded with hundreds of traditionalist faithful, all who >

Father Pezzutti





# Christian Culture

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probably knew theology and the situation in the Church better than I! The faithful in the USA, for example, take initiative and organize a lot by themselves. Our faithful in Eastern Europe are less equipped religiously and more dependent on the priest.

**The Angelus:** That is quite a different mindset from what we are used to.

**Fr. Pezzutti:** Indeed, and to top it all, there is also what we call the “Homo-sovieticus.” The Soviet Union, besides malevolently attacking religion, created a universal climate of suspicion. Everyone was a potential spy. You had to hide everything, even from your closest friends, because you were never sure who would inform on you. Also, you had to accuse your neighbor before he accused you! The KGB is said to have recruited one out of every three persons to gather information about “treacherous activity.” This mentality still permeates society there even among our faithful.

**The Angelus:** You mentioned the two other countries of Belarus and Russia. What about them?

**Fr. Pezzutti:** After my first year, I was asked

also to help in our missions in Belarus and Russia. Now, I would be visiting five ex-Soviet countries, with four different languages! I prayed often to the Immaculata to keep me sane. My first trips to Belarus and Russia were quite exciting. People say that Belarus is the country where you can best see the remnants of the Soviet Union and, of course, visiting Moscow felt quite daunting. St. Petersburg, by contrast, was always a joy to visit because it is an incredibly beautiful city. At that time, I was traveling a lot, and I had to begin studying Russian. The Cyrillic alphabet takes quite some time to get used to.

**The Angelus:** Besides the regular Sunday apostolate, what is the strategy to strengthen the faithful?

**Fr. Pezzutti:** Fr. Stehlin wanted us to preach Ignatian Retreats for the faithful, because through retreats we could begin to build some kind of religious and moral foundation in these souls. Often enough, we had to start from ground zero, something unheard of among Western traditionalists. We also organized conferences and pilgrimages to maintain the fervor of our little troops. Besides that, I was also trying to develop our internet apostolates, and publishing

The chapel in Talinn





humble little magazines and books about Tradition in the various languages. They do not have the Angelus Press over there! There was a lot of work to be done. After three years of such work, I was appointed prior in Kaunas, which only increased the workload.

**The Angelus:** Do you have any big plans for the future?

**Fr. Pezzutti:** We wish mostly to follow Divine Providence. Our priority is to strengthen our existing missions and develop them slowly and organically. We are always short on priests, but that is a problem everywhere in our Society. We have a building project in Tallinn, which will greatly help our apostolate there. Also, we recently purchased a chapel ideally situated in St. Petersburg, and we are presently renovating it. We are very hopeful that things will develop there. In Moscow, we are also seriously looking for a chapel location because currently we are renting a hotel room for Sunday Mass. We also have plans to expand the work in Lithuania.

**The Angelus:** To conclude, how would you define your Eastern apostolate?

**Fr. Pezzutti:** We want to bring the work

and heritage of our founder, Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, to these countries, the heritage of Catholic Tradition, the heritage of all the Catholic saints and popes. We want to reestablish Catholic Tradition in these countries, through the traditional Mass and through devotion to Our Lady of Fatima, the Rosary and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. We are seeing more and more vocations, which is a great blessing for our humble missions. Our small and poor missions really depend on the generosity of Western benefactors, especially from the USA. May the Immaculate Heart of Mary bring all of those who have helped us many graces for their generosity and prayers!

Easter Vigil in Estonia



The chapel in Riga

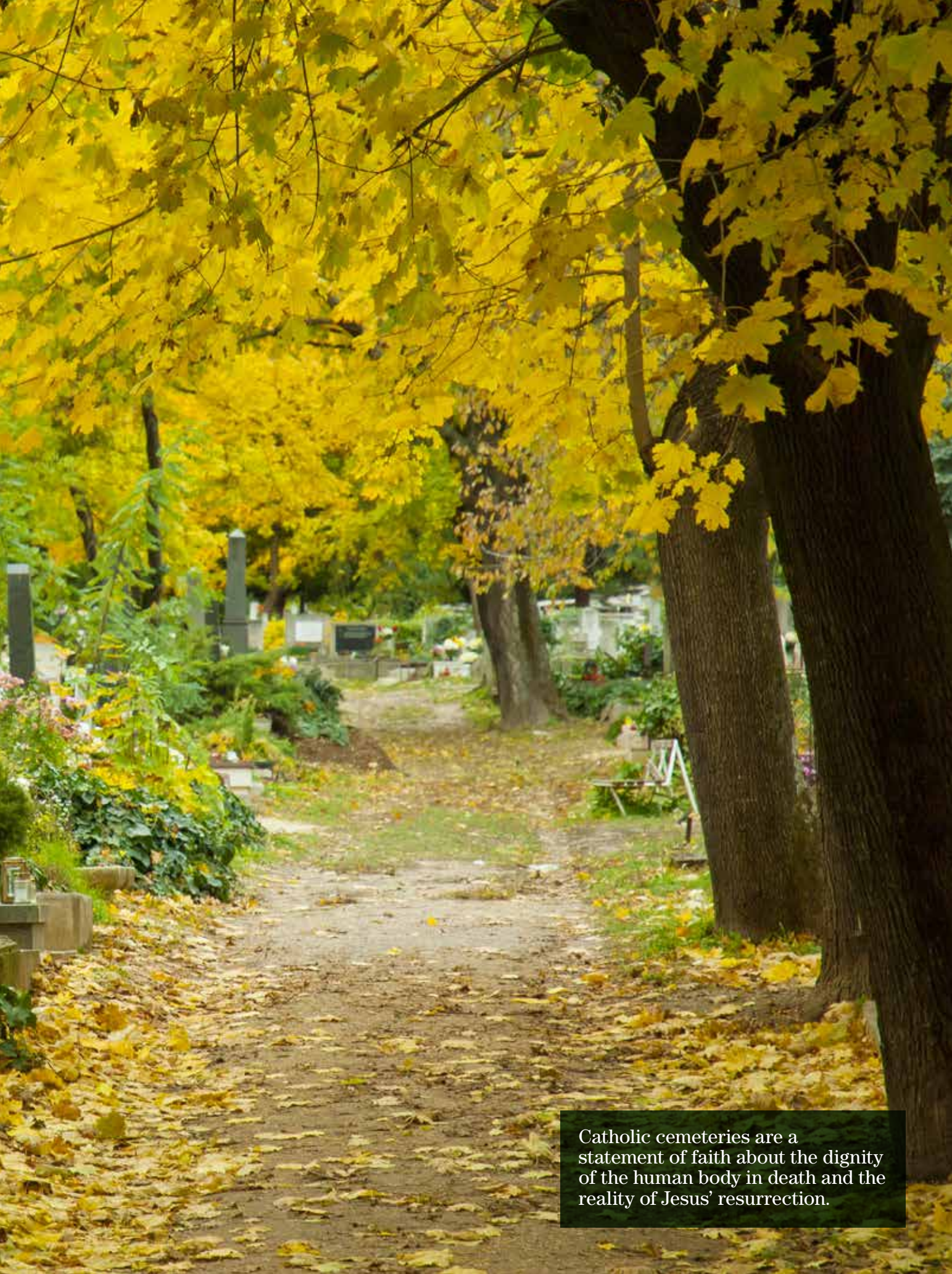






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# The Dwelling Place of God

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by a Benedictine Monk

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“For unto thy faithful, O Lord, life is changed not taken away: and the abode of this earthly sojourn being dissolved, an eternal dwelling is prepared in heaven.”—Preface for the Mass for the Dead

The mystery of our earthly human life certainly includes our passing from this world to be judged by God. We will be rewarded according to our merit or punished for our sins. Every time we see a friend or relative die, this reality is placed before our soul. As members of the Church Militant, we must ask ourselves the question: How do I avoid eternal darkness and the pains of hell, and how do I enter into the dwelling place of God filled with charity and light?

God has no desire to send our souls to hell,

but if we refuse to follow Him to His glory by willfully rejecting His invitation to become a true child of God, He respects our decision. It is not God, but the revolted soul that chooses to be in the company of the damned that dwell in darkness, hatred and injustice in the bowels of hell. “O God, Who wills not the death of a sinner, but rather that he be converted and live...”

The most effective way of avoiding evil is to practice good. The best way to avoid hell is to desire to go to heaven. Our catechism tells us that we were created to know, love and serve God here on earth and to be eternally happy with Him in heaven. He thought of us from all of eternity and has prepared a place for us in heaven. He wishes to dwell in us and He wants His very Being to become our dwelling place. He desires to communicate to the human soul His goodness,



beauty and glory. Since God is love, He is the gift of self to the creature that He loves. The reason that He created us was to be able to share His love with us, but He asks that we freely love Him in return. This means to live our lives according to His will.

The love that we have for God, according to a Carthusian author, is the means to spiritually move our soul towards God. When we consider the love that He has for us, we take our rest in God. To love God and to be loved by Him is the eternal happiness that we were created for. By considering the death of St. Benedict we can observe the same movement towards God and rest in God. In the church of the monastery, being helped to stand by two of his disciples, he gives his soul into the hands of God. Two monks in different places had a vision of the saint's death. They saw a road leading to heaven, covered with precious carpets and lined with lamps. The lamps that show the way represent faith and the carpeted road walked upon shows his acts of charity, the desire to go to heaven shows the necessary hope to arrive. The soul's journey to God is very similar. Without God as his guide and strength, it would be impossible for the soul to dwell in God.

The essential beatitude of the soul, according to St. Augustine, is to perfect its two faculties of knowing and loving. In heaven we will know God as He is, face to face and we will love Him without any reserve and with a love that cannot be divided.

Here below, our intelligence is wounded by ignorance, which makes us struggle to grasp the hidden truths of nature. Our ideas of God are weaker and even more obscure. In heaven, by the gift of a divine light, we will contemplate, without veil, the beauty of God. We will fully grasp the object of our intelligence, which is Divine Truth. All of the questions that our mind could imagine will be perfectly answered. We will see the majesty of the Supreme Being of God, face to face. We will see and understand what sanctity is by contemplating the source of all sanctity. We will understand the justice, wisdom, bounty, and mercy of God by simply looking upon His Face. We will see the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whose word we have believed and to whom we

entrusted our souls. We will see the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of love, sent to sanctify our souls. By participating in the very thoughts of God Himself, we will truly become a child of God, dwelling in our Creator.

And we will love Him with all of our strength, heart and mind. Our heart will be pure, possessing the one and only object of our desire, God Himself. We will be inseparable from God and all those that dwell in Him. Our love will be perfectly satisfied without losing its strength of desire for all of eternity, rejoicing in full possession of goodness. The intellect will rejoice in the full knowledge of perfect truth. We will rejoice in God forever in this eternal dwelling prepared for us in heaven.





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# Q & A

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by SSPX priests

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## What are the fruits of the sacrament of Extreme?

The Council of Trent explains them very clearly. “The effect is the grace of the Holy Ghost, whose anointing takes away sins, if there are any still to be expiated, and removes the trace of sin; and it comforts and strengthens the soul of the sick person. This anointing occasionally restores health to the body, if health would be of advantage to the salvation of the soul.”

## Is there a difference between Extreme Unction and the Sacrament of the Sick?

It is difficult to not see a serious novelty in the new rite which takes the place of Extreme Unction. The Catechism of St. Pius X called it “a sacrament instituted for the spiritual as well as for the temporal comfort of the sick in danger of death.” Its effect is principally to cure the sickness of the sin, the traces of sin and

to comfort the soul so as to withstand the last temptations and the fear of death. On the other hand, the new rite gives priority, if not exclusivity, to the bodily help.

## Q&A

Does the absence of the term “extreme” imply a change in those who are apt to receive the sacrament?

The traditional doctrine clearly brings up the presence of a danger of death, because of sickness or old age (Old Canon Law, c. 940), whereas the new code, while speaking of danger, omits the key term ‘death’ as a necessary condition for its reception (New Code c. 1004). In olden days, whoever was not in danger of death was inapt to receive Extreme Unction.

If St. James in his letter speaks of the ‘sick’ who receive the anointing from the priest for his recovery, this was soon understood to mean a sickness to death. And the Church cannot change the substance of the sacrament which includes the subject which alone is apt to receive it. There is today a tendency to cover up the eventuality of death, under strange trappings as mere sickness, bodily health, when the sacrament is given in fact for people who are at death throes and need all the graces they can get.

## Q&A

Has this change of definition affected the practice of the sacrament?

There is little doubt about the change of practice and many have witnessed it. So as to defuse the fear of associating the coming of the

priest with death, the sacrament is commonly given as a community exercise for all people over 70 years of age. Presently, it allows virtually any elderly to receive it, “as long as they are weak, though not dangerously ill” (Introd. to rite of anointing the sick, Dec. 7, 1972). Now, we see this anointing frequently given to persons, although not in danger of death, before a surgery. It is also commonly provided during the same sickness without sufficient recovery from death danger. All these practices would have been deemed invalid, or at the very least illicit, before Vatican II.

## Q&A

What about the administration of the sacrament itself?

There have been important changes also in the rite of anointing. If olive oil was formerly necessary *ad validitatem*, today any oil is permitted. The change in the form itself indicates the change of stress. The new form begs “*that, delivered from your sins, God save you and restore you in his goodness.*” The old form was more clearly asking: “*may God forgive thee whatever sins thou hast committed by the evil use of sight* (hearing, smell, taste and speech, touch).” Although the new form still holds the main effect of the sacrament (the curing of the sickness of sins), it puts the stress on bodily healing.

## Q&A

Is there any difference in the anointing itself?

The most suggestive changes occur in the anointing themselves. Says the Council of Florence: “*The anointing should be done on these parts: on the eyes because of sight, on the ears because of hearing, on the nose because*





of smelling, on the mouth because of taste or speech, on the hands because of touch, on the feet because of walking. "Pope Paul VI changed it: "The sick are to be anointed on the forehead and hands." It is very possible that this ritual modification lines up with the doctrine moving from healing the remnants of sin to bodily cure. The traditional anointing of the five senses means that this sacrament *cures the sickness of the sins* committed by the means of the five senses. The new rite insists on the *cure of the body*, and two bodily anointments are sufficient.

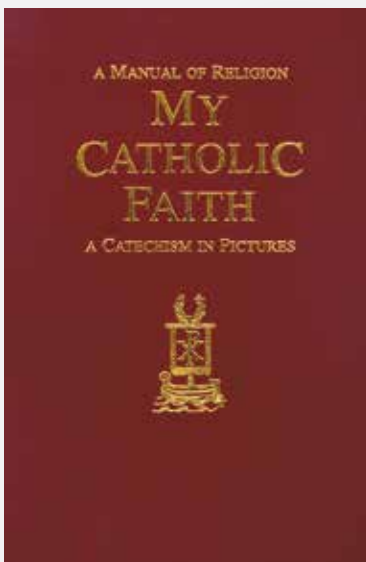
## Q&A

### What do you suggest that children do when their parents are seriously ill?

In any serious case, I suggest that they contact their pastor ASAP, if only to inform him of a potential case. It is also good to get the advice of a wise doctor so as to ascertain the existence of a danger of death, however remote. It is important that the patient be also in full possession of his senses so as to receive all the fruits of the sacrament in the best disposition of mind, spiritual and corporal, to fulfill God's will. They are truly comforted when they know that they have made their peace with God, and have received all the spiritual blessings of the Church before the great journey.

If, perchance, the parents have been administered the sacraments in the new rite by the local priest (not by a nun!), the simplest thing is to mention it to your Pastor and let him decide what is to be done.

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Parish church of Maria Gern, in the German Alps





## Pope Francis and the Hammer and Sickle Crucifix

This past July, Pope Francis made yet another papal trip to South America. While in Bolivia, he was presented with two secular honors by Bolivian President Evo Morales, who is an avowed Marxist. In addition to the honors, the Holy Father was also presented with a personal gift from the President: a figure of our crucified Lord mounted upon a wooden hammer and sickle emblem instead of the normal cross. Needless to say, in times past this sort of sacrilegious “art” would never have made it past the Pope’s advance planning team, much less into the hands of the Holy Father himself. In our day, however, it seems that even the Pope did not find the gift offensive since the sculpture was created by fellow Jesuit Fr. Espinal (a Bolivian Marxist and Liberation Theologian).

On his return flight to Rome, Pope Francis made the following statement when asked about the gift by a reporter who presumed there would be some negative reaction by the Pope: *...in this concrete case, Fr Espinal was killed in 1980. It was a time when liberation theology had many different branches.*

*One of the branches was with Marxist analysis of reality. Fr Espinal belonged to this. Yes, I knew because I was in those years rector of the theology faculty and we talked a lot about it, about the different branches and who were the representatives, no? In the same year, the general of the Society (of Jesus), Fr. Arrupe, wrote a letter to the whole Society on the Marxist analysis of reality in theology. Stopping on this point saying, “it’s no good, these are different things, it’s not right, it’s not correct.” And, four years later in 1984, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the*

*Faith published the first small volume, the first declaration on liberation theology that criticizes this. Then comes the second, which opens to a more Christian perspective. I’m simplifying, no? Let’s do the hermeneutic of that time: Espinal was an enthusiast of this Marxist analysis of the reality, but also of theology using Marxism. From this, he came up with this work. Also the poetry of Espinal was of this kind of protest. But, it was his life, it was his thought. He was a special man, with so much human geniality, who fought in good faith, no? Making a hermeneutic like this, I understand this work. For me it wasn’t an offense, but I had to do this hermeneutic, and I say it to you so that there aren’t any wrong opinions.*



In this response it is possible to discern a very dangerous denial of objective reality. Since the blasphemous “crucifix” is read through a “hermeneutic” of “protest art” it is not considered blasphemous. In other words, things take on only the meaning which I choose to give them and following this way of thinking to its logical conclusion, there is no objective, unchanging truth. When one begins to think this way, it becomes very simple to move to doing away with just about any truth of the Faith (whether dogmatic or moral) which does not fit into my personal hermeneutic.



## New York's St. Patrick's Cathedral Receives a Facelift

What is arguably one of the most iconic of Cathedrals in the United States has undergone an extensive renovation over the past year and a half and was unveiled at the beginning of September. Although the term “renovation” usually causes a feeling of dread to come over anyone attached to the tradition of the Church, the work done on St. Patrick's actually restored the Cathedral (particularly the Sanctuary) to its pre-1962 splendor.



The construction of St. Patrick's Cathedral was begun by Archbishop John Hughes in the mid 1850s. When Archbishop Hughes announced that the location for the new cathedral was to be at 5th Avenue and 50th Street in Manhattan, the project was initially dubbed “Hughes' Folly” by the New York press since it was “so far uptown.” Needless to say, the rapid expansion of the New York City quickly showed that the location was anything but a folly, since the Cathedral now stand at the heart of Manhattan. Taking over 40 years to complete, St. Patrick's was finally consecrated in 1910. Soon after Francis Cardinal Spellman became the Archbishop of New York, he began a renovation of the sanctuary which included the addition of a new High Altar surmounted by a bronze

baldachino. Additionally, Cardinal Spellman completed Our Lady's Chapel which was the final element of architect James Renwick, Jr.'s neo-Gothic masterpiece. The original High Altar was given to Fordham University —Spellman's alma mater — for use in the University Church where it remains to this day. In the early 1980s, John Cardinal O'Connor placed a new “main altar” near the front of the large sanctuary so that he could “be nearer the people while offering the Mass.”

This altar served to disrupt the beautiful architectural lines of the sanctuary as well as creating an obstacle for flow of movement during Masses.

Happily, the recent renovation has removed the “O'Connor Altar” and, as was mentioned, restored the sanctuary to its pre-1962 condition. The remainder of the restoration included repointing all the masonry, completely

cleaning all of the Cathedral (both interior and exterior), cleaning and repairing all the stained glass windows and restoring the chancel organ, to name but a few of the works undertaken. The cost for the renovation was estimated at approximately 175 million dollars, a cost which did not sit well with many of the faithful of the Archdiocese since it came at a time when the Archdiocese was shuttering some 75 parishes claiming lack of funds to keep them open. Aside from this, one cannot deny the beauty of the restored edifice.

Some photos of the restoration work can be found here:

[www.saintpatrickscathedral.org/photoalbums/restoration-photos](http://www.saintpatrickscathedral.org/photoalbums/restoration-photos).



### Martin Luther to be Honored in Rome

The civil authorities of the city of Rome have decided to name a square after the famed heretic Martin Luther. On September 16, the city formally named a square on the Viale Fortunato Mizzi, located a number of blocks from the



ancient Coliseum, as the Piazza Martin Lutero.

The Seventh Day Adventist council in Rome began the initiative to name a Roman square in honor of Luther since 2017 will mark the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Protestant revolt against the Faith.

It has also been reported that The Vatican did not offer any opposition to the project. This may well be the first sign that there will be some effort put forward by the Vatican to rehabilitate Luther or, at the very least, lift his excommunication, an effort that is being pushed by some of the more progressive ecumenists in the hierarchy. Adding to this concern is the reported fact that the Vatican is working with the Lutheran Church in Germany to join in “celebrating” the 500th anniversary of the Reformation which is said to have begun with Martin Luther posting his “95 Theses” to the Wittenburg Castle Church.

Once again we are able to observe the fruit that the rampant false ecumenism ushered in by the documents of Vatican II has produced: an arch heretic and the result of his labors are “celebrated” by the Vatican and the City of Rome.

### News Flash! Chimpanzees are NOT people!

In an earlier issue of *The Angelus* it was reported in these pages that a lawsuit had been brought in New York State Supreme Court asking that two chimpanzees (Hercules and Leo) be declared to be persons and be “freed” from their captivity at the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

At the time of the original report, the judge had not handed down a ruling but, given the current state of affairs, it was not far fetched to imagine that the judge would rule in favor of “personhood” for the chimps.

We are now able to report that on 30 July 2015, Judge Barbara Jaffe handed down her ruling. Hercules and Leo are not persons, the judge wrote and added, Animals, including chimpanzees and

other highly intelligent mammals, are considered property under the law... They are accorded no legal rights beyond being guaranteed the right to be free from physical abuse and other mistreatment.

One may be tempted to think that, thankfully, common sense and right thinking prevailed. This would, however, be overstating the case. “Rights,” properly speaking, can only be assigned to persons, so it is quite incorrect to say that animals have the “right” not to be abused or mistreated. Human beings have an obligation not to abuse any of God’s creatures not because the creatures have rights but because of God’s positive law.





## The Health of the Church in Germany

Even while we have been painfully watching the German bishops' attempts at undoing the Church's teaching on the indissolubility (as well as other aspects) of marriage, statistics were released over the summer which indicated that the Church in Germany is in a state of utter collapse. This year, 218,000 Catholics officially left the Church, an increase of 22% over last year's staggering number of 165,000. Over all Mass (Novus Ordo) attendance stands at just under 11% of those who still call themselves Catholic.

Needless to say, the German Bishops' Conference were quick to make excuses and to explain that this near total implosion of the Faith is really not so bad. Cardinal Marx (the president of the German Episcopal Conference) explained that "the joy of the faith and the charisma of Pope Francis" will help the Church in Germany preach the gospel more effectively. There is no doubt that we are witnessing a complete denial of reality on the part of the German bishops, who refuse to see and acknowledge the crisis so evident to anyone with eyes to see. But then, denial of the reality of the present deplorable state of the Church has been a hallmark of almost every bishop in the world, up to and including the current Bishop of Rome.



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## The Golden Door

The Life of St. Katharine Drexel

The inspiring story of a modern-day saint. At the time of her death in 1936 Mother Katharine Drexel had established over 60 schools and Xavier University, the first Catholic university in the country for its Negro citizens. To accomplish her part in this work it was estimated that she had given away \$12,000,000 of her inheritance—but from her viewpoint it was not a sacrifice but a privilege.

# Exit or Requiem

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by Fr. Jean-Michel Gleize

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On January 18, 2014, Fr. Jean-Michel Gleize, a professor at the International Seminary of St. Pius X, gave a conference in the Swiss canton of Valais on the question of “assisted suicide.” In it he analyzed the liberal ideology on which the so-called “right to die with dignity” is based, a right advocated by the Swiss organization Exit and other international organizations in favor of euthanasia.

## The Philosophical and Political Grounds for Assisted Suicide

The argumentation given here is taken from the brochure produced by the Dignitas Association whose motto is “To live with dignity, to die with dignity.”

Introduction: The philosophical and political basis [for assisted suicide] “resides in the fundamental

values which have been the pillars of the Swiss State since the creation of the modern Confederation in 1848, as well as in the evolution of these values since that date. The point of departure is, then, the liberal attitude that holds that the individual, in a liberal State, disposes of all the freedoms so long as their exercise does not harm either public interests nor the justified interests of third parties.” Among these values they list: “defense of freedom and self-determination against third parties who try to limit these rights for whatever reason, be they of ideological, religious, or political origin”; “the defense of plurality as guarantee of the constant evolution of society on the basis of the free competition of ideas” (p. 23).

“Respect for the freedom of the individual in favor of the enlightened and responsible citizen is shown by, among other things, the fact that positive legislation currently in force does not punish attempted suicide, contrary to former legislation” (p. 23).



“Every person on Swiss territory has a right to the freedom to live his life independently of the individual ideological, religious, or other ideas of third parties.... No one has the right—nor by any dispositions of the State—to impose on another his individual ideas in the matter of ideology, religion, or politics, nor even a right to try to do so” (p. 24).

“Since experience shows that it is difficult to interpret the rather vague terms *humanity*, *respect*, and *dignity* as such, it is less by trying to interpret these terms than by reflecting on the actual role of medicine that will enable us to advance.” The role presented by Dignitas has been formulated by Edgar Dahl, a German specialist in medical ethics, in his essay on the Hippocratic Oath published in 2008. He takes notice of the fact that until the present, medicine has been defined as having as its object the maintenance of health; this is what is said in the Geneva Oath (“I consider the health of my patient as my first concern”). Dahl considers this formulation to be incomplete, since the activity of doctors is not limited to the maintenance of health. The proof of this, he argues, would be that palliative care specialists take care of patients who in any case will never recover their health. That is why, he writes: “It seems, then, much more appropriate to consider the relief of human suffering as the role of medicine....The struggle against illness is not an end in itself. To the contrary, it is undertaken with the aim of keeping us from the physical or psychological suffering which generally accompanies sickness. By accomplishing the task of relieving the suffering of human beings, medicine ought always to respect the self-determination of their patients. No one has a right to treat a patient against his will....For example, it always and exclusively depends on the agreement of the concerned patient that a measure aimed at prolonging his life be implemented or halted. When medical ethics is based, as I have just explained, on the relief of suffering and respect for self-determination, it seems evident that it is absolutely compatible with assisted suicide, for a doctor who satisfies the request of a patient in the terminal stage to cease all therapies and to prescribe a lethal drug, relieves his sufferings and respects his autonomy. A political policy that aims at preventing at all costs any suicide without concern for the person involved violates the laws of humanity” (pp. 24-25).

“Democracy and fundamental rights.” According to a poll taken in 2008, 75% of the Protestant popula-

tion and 72% of the Catholic population want for themselves the possibility of assisted suicide.

The first objective is the solution towards life; if that does not work out (for objective medical reasons or for subjective psychological reasons) arrangements for an accompanied suicide are made...

## This Philosophy Scrutinized

The basic principle invoked is liberalism. This term must be understood in the strong sense, apart from its usual applications (political, economic, or religious), taken in its root. The principle is the following: “Liberty is the fundamental good of man, a sacred and inviolable good; this unlimited liberty is the basis upon which are founded all the initiatives that man can undertake in private and public life, and the absolute norm according to which all his initiatives will be judged.”<sup>1</sup> And as Pope Leo XIII shows in his Encyclical *Libertas*, the principle of liberalism is itself but the expression of the autonomy of conscience or of individual reason.

This principle is granted from a legislative standpoint since it is inscribed in the political constitutions of all contemporary democracies. From it flows logically the right to suicide, whether assisted or not, and also the right to assist someone who wants to commit suicide. However, this logical outcome of liberalism has not yet been unanimously deduced by all the partisans of liberalism at the legislative level, since assisted suicide is only not punishable; that is to say, not authorized but tolerated. And it is only tolerated at present in some countries, not all. Additionally, the right to assisted suicide is not recognized by medical ethics; indeed, it is even challenged. In fact, the opinions of members of the medical profession are still very divided. Edgar Dahl is obliged to acknowledge as much in quoting passages from the Geneva Oath. Nevertheless, if medical ethics were to be governed by democratic political principles, by granting the principle of liberalism it would have to grant the consequences that flow from it. One may say, then, that the debate over assisted suicide contains a latent contradiction, or at least a timorous indecision or compromise. One dare not justify in theory or else one refuses to demand in practice what is (whether one will or not) inscribed in the principle. The strategy of organizations like Exit or Dignitas lies precisely in showing the conclusion that logically flows from >



the principle, whether one likes it or not.

Our answer must successively address, first, the root, which is *the false principle of liberalism*; and then a couple of weeds that stem from it: *assisted suicide* and *the new definition of medicine*.

## 1. Refutation of Liberalism

“The fundamental principle of liberalism is absurd, against nature, and chimerical” (Billot). In effect, liberalism postulates that the principal and supreme good of man is liberty. Now, the good of man can only be conceived of in two ways: as an end (the principal and supreme good that represents the goal of man’s life and which he must attain in order to be happy) or as a means towards an end. Where does liberty fit in? Certainly not at the level of an end, for liberty corresponds to a power or faculty of acting, and every power or faculty exists for the sake of something else, even if that is its own operation, which in this life consists in the search for a good, genuine or apparent. Then it obviously follows that liberty is to be ranked among means. And it is a means that can be badly used, which is why it is necessary to control liberty, to educate it, to guide it, to direct it, and sometimes even to limit it in order to protect it from itself. “If one denies this obvious fact by subscribing to the fundamental principle of liberalism, one will be led necessarily to either of two absurd consequences: one will either maintain that liberty, even in this life, is confirmed in good, or else that the best situation is one in which one may entrust oneself to one’s defectible liberty so that it may retain in every circumstance the use of its deficiency. Is this not the height of madness?” (Billot). Liberty is not the principle and supreme good of man. It is a good, we won’t deny, and we are not against liberty. But it is not the supreme, principal good of man which should prevail over all the others.

## 2. Refutation of the Right to Suicide

This consequence is the application of the principle to a particular case. If liberty is the supreme good, it outweighs life. Better to be free by taking one’s life rather than to not be free by conserving one’s life. Notice that, from this viewpoint, the position of Dignitas is perfectly coherent, in spite of the appearances. Their published position is that their first objective is the solution towards life, but, should that fail (for objective medical reasons or for subjective

psychological reasons) arrangements for an accompanied assisted suicide may be made. This statement implies that life still remains the greatest good after freedom. So, if one can save both liberty and life, it is better. But if it is necessary to choose, preference is given to liberty to the detriment of life. Consequently, if Dignitas defends in a certain measure the solution towards life, this is not done in the name of life but always in the name of liberty. Let’s not be taken in by appearances. If there is an apparently dissuasive attitude regarding suicide, which may reassure the naïve, it rests on a radically false principle.

In reality, life is a good superior to liberty because it is prior to liberty, not only chronologically (in the sense that one is living before being free, and one comes into the world before making any decisions), but also ontologically, that is to say, by definition (in the sense that one must always be living in order to be able to be free). In its root, liberty presupposes life, and it cannot be exercised by choosing against life. Suicide is at the same time a choice both against life and against liberty: it is an alienation. Therefore it is sophistical to say: “Better to be free by taking one’s life rather than to not be free by conserving one’s life.” The sophism consists in the fact that the alternative does not exist, since one cannot be free by taking one’s life: the taking of one’s life is concomitantly the taking of one’s liberty.

More profoundly, an essential distinction must be made among the goods man possesses. There are those he possesses by his own will by reason of a free choice. By an act of human liberty one may keep these goods or give them up. For example, someone who freely buys a house or even freely accepts it as a gift, always retains the freedom to get rid of it, to sell it or to give it away to someone else. There are other goods which man possesses by nature necessarily, without any choice on his part: man is not the master of these goods and may not dispose of them according to his own will.<sup>2</sup> He receives them by reason of the choice and of the liberty of another, but not by reason of his own choice. This is the case with life, since it is prior to liberty as a foundation is prior to what rests on it. Life is received as the root of liberty and thus as a good that cannot be the object of a decision or a choice of liberty. It is not a gift freely accepted, but a deposit of which one only has the usufruct and not the ownership. Contrary to what is asserted by very many people to justify the right to suicide within so-called



just limits, life is not a gift which one is free to dispose of the moment it becomes too cumbersome or too heavy to bear. A gift belongs to us because we have accepted it freely; whereas life does not belong to us, and we have not accepted it freely. It is a deposit which has been imposed on us, and it is not up to us to decide when and how we can get rid of it.

Notice that the refutation of the first consequence of liberalism, assisted suicide, is itself the consequence of the refutation of the principle (liberalism).

This refutation supposes a reference to external reality, to the reality of nature, which is at the foundation of a certain necessity. This implies that liberty is not absolute, but is relative to nature, which is the absolute. Liberty is the means given us in order to make good choices and to cultivate as we should the nature we have received, our humanity. Understood in a good way, the laws of humanity are the laws of nature which liberty is held to respect. Contrariwise, ideology makes reference not to the real, but to preconceived ideas. Liberalism is among these ideologies that make reference to the idea of liberty conceived as the foundation of everything else. Liberty is not governed by nature; one no longer acts in conformity with what one is, but with what one wants. Hence divorce, abortion, euthanasia, homosexual marriage, gender theory. In all these instances, one makes an object of choice of something that cannot be an object of choice.

### 3. Refutation of the New Definition of Medicine

Edgar Dahl's argumentation is substantial this: (a) The doctor's role is first and foremost the alleviation of suffering. (b) Now, the relief of suffering may lead to the suppression of life. (c) Therefore the doctor's role may lead to the suppression of life.

Refutation of (a). Suffering is the perception (sensible or spiritual) of an evil (corporal or spiritual). The sensible perception is uniquely that of a physical evil which is pain, whereas the intellectual perception of an evil whether corporal or spiritual is sadness. Suffering is thus a subjective factor, like all knowledge: whether I know it or not, the objective reality remains. So, there can be suffering with or without illness. And there can be sickness with or without suffering. To attack suffering is not necessarily to attack the illness. And to attack the illness is not necessarily to attack suffering. If the doctor's role is first and foremost to relieve suffering, that means that

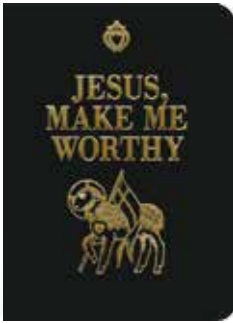
medicine is reduced to dispensing palliative care. In reality, that represents what medicine can do at best in certain extreme cases; but ordinarily, medicine has as its object to preserve health, that is to say, life. Health is defined, in effect, as a state of optimal life. We do not deny that the role of medicine involves the relief of suffering, but we say that that is an accessory or occasional role, and that its principle and essential role is to preserve health and hence life. It is true that the fight against sickness is not an end in itself. But the end in itself is not to preserve from suffering, which is a possible but not necessary consequence of sickness. The end in itself is to preserve someone from declining and from death, which is to say from the failing and cessation of life, which are not only possible but necessary the consequences of sickness. Mr. Dahl's argument is an inconsistent sophism that abounds in confusions and amalgams. It is an absolutely gratuitous conjuring trick, a vain and weak attempt to demonstrate the indemonstrable.

Refutation of (b). Suffering supposes a living being who is suffering. The cessation or the relief of suffering supposes a living being who no longer suffers or who suffers less. To suppress life is to suppress the sufferer, not suffering. The problem is not resolved, but eluded. It is an evasion. And it is also an absurdity, for it supposes that suffering is an evil worse than death, and that quietude (the absence of suffering) is a greater good than life. The absurdity of this presupposition leaps out: quietude in effect supposes life, and that is why one cannot suppress life to safeguard quietude. From the very fact that you suppress life, you make quietude impossible. It is better to suffer than to die because life is a greater good than quietude, and death is an evil worse than suffering. I'm showing this by an abstract reflection, but the truth can be verified by experience: except in relatively rare cases, among persons who are morally perverted and denatured or whose judgment is diminished because of a mental disorder, there is normally an innate instinct for survival. One may say what one likes ahead of time, but once faced with suffering, even extreme, our natural reflexes react in favor of life.

<sup>1</sup> Louis Billot, *L'Église*, vol. 3, *L'Église et l'État* (Courrier de Rome, 2011), No. 1114, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 82, art. 1.

Translation of "Exit ou Requiem," *Nouvelles de Chrétienté*, May-June 2015.



## Jesus, Make Me Worthy

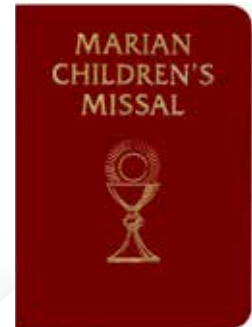
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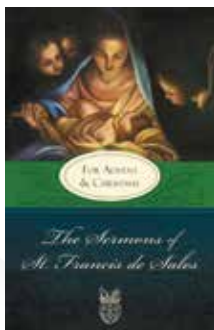
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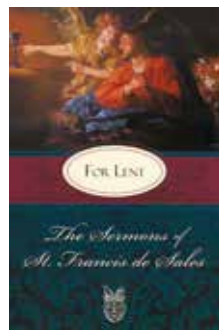
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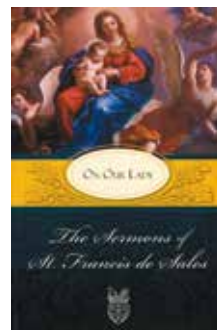
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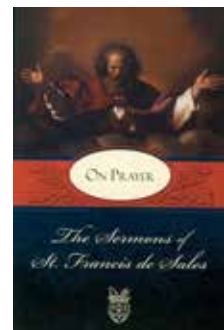
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Dear Friends,

On the end life issues, there often arises the question of how to get the health care issued properly. In our will, should we simply use the Living Will form as given by the SSPX in the past?

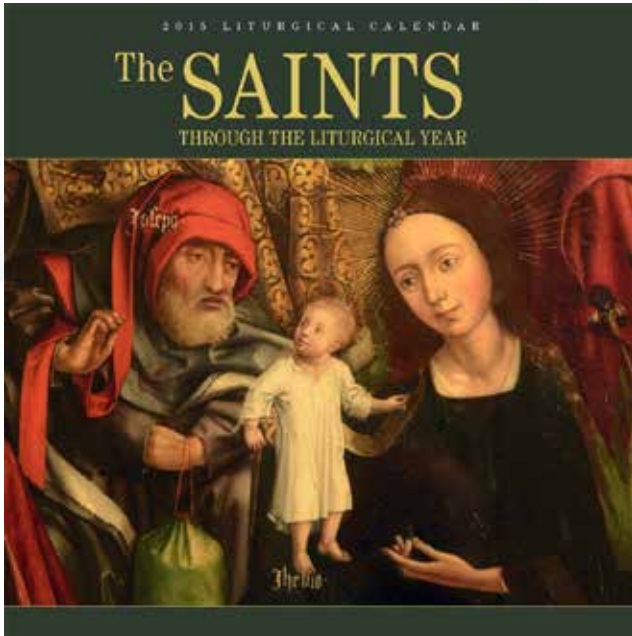
Signed: Mike Banschbach

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Dear Mike,

Thank you for your concern on a question which is becoming increasingly muddled today. As given in July 2001 by Fr. Scott when he was in office, it seems quite reasonable to hold on to it. This is what he said substantially: Practice has shown that signing a Living Will form may be easily misinterpreted. The most secure way, in fact, is to make a Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care. In this way, the physicians have to have recourse to you or, in case of incapacity, to the person you designate with such power.

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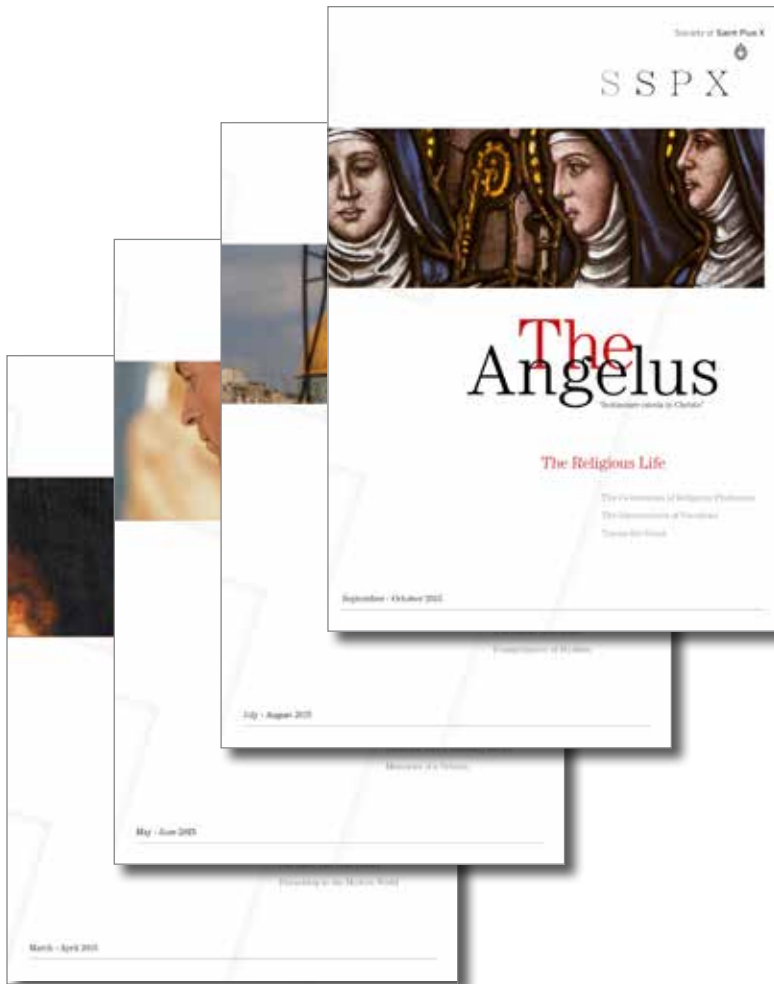
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# The Last Word

Dear Readers,

Catholics may sometimes find Catholic rules a bit harsh, but if it can be hard *to live* in this world as a good Catholic, it is surely better and more comforting *to die* as a Catholic. Thanks to what are called the *Last Rites*. Sadly enough, not every Catholic can even define what these Rites are. They are the four elements comprising The Last Rites: the Last Confession, the Last Communion, Extreme Unction, and the Apostolic Blessing.

First, there is the Last Confession. Imagine going to confession for the last time, knowing it is your very last! With what fervor, what contrition would you confess your whole life to this priest holding the place of the Sacred Heart! And a fervent confession can send one straight to heaven!

Then, the Last Communion. Great importance is given to the First Communion, but the Last Communion is also extremely special. So special, in fact, that this communion has a special name: the Viaticum—the last food for the last bit of road remaining in life. And it has a special formula: “Receive, brother/sister, the Viaticum of the Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ, may He protect you from the wicked enemy and lead you to eternal life. Amen.” Only an infinitely loving God could have thought of this gift, like a mother running to the death bed of her child and giving him all the love she can at his last moments. And such communion can send one straight to heaven, too!

Then, there is Extreme Unction, as it has been explained at length in Q/A p. of this issue of the *Angelus*. A third ‘free ticket’ to heaven!

And, as if these three sacraments were not enough, Holy Mother Church even adds a special blessing called the Apostolic Blessing, which grants a plenary indulgence. Imagine St. Pius X standing at the foot of your death bed. He has the keys of heaven, and he can grant plenary indulgences at will. That’s the Apostolic Blessing. Extraordinary. A fourth ‘free-pass’!

God is, indeed, “infinitely rich in His mercies.” Let us realize that we ask to receive all of the above *Last Rites* whenever we say fervently, “and at the hour of our death.” Another great reason why Our Lady urges us to say the Rosary!

It is a great gift and consolation to die “comforted with the rites of Holy Mother Church”!

Go and do likewise!

Fr. Daniel Couture

Society of Saint Pius X



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