

FINAL PERSEVERANCE

SEEKING GOD'S MERCY AND STRENGTH

Reconciliation

Going to Confession is an immense help to all of us throughout our lives, but most especially as we approach the end of our earthly pilgrimage. Through this sacrament, we are able to unload all of our spiritual burdens, express sorrow for past sins and receive the extraordinary peace that comes from setting things right with God.

Within our faith tradition, we find many examples of the power of prayer for conversion and healing before death as well as prayers for a peaceful death. For example, in the 'Hail Mary' we ask the Blessed Mother to intercede for us "at the hour of our death." The many stories of miraculous healings and full recoveries serve to highlight the greatest of all "healings" – that is, the healing of our souls. Every time we go to Confession that same miraculous spiritual healing takes place and our friendship with God is restored! He invites each one of us to come to the sacrament with a sincere heart and desire for repentance, so that we might receive this incredible gift of peace and the consolation of a freed conscience.

"At the evening of life, we shall be judged on our love." -St. John of the Cross

Anointing of the Sick

The love of Christ for the sick and infirm is so profound that he identifies Himself with them: "I was sick and you visited me" (Matthew 25:36). This particular love of Christ for the sick is the reason why we seek to comfort the sick and dying.

In the sacraments, the Divine Physician continues to heal the sick and suffering. The miracles Jesus performs in the Gospels reveal a deeper, truly radical healing: the victory over sin and death. Christ accomplishes this victory by his suffering and death on the cross, since He "took our infirmities and bore our diseases" (Matthew 8:17).

In a unique way in the sacrament of the anointing of the sick, God gives us the grace and strength to bear the cross of our particular condition or illness and to unite it with the cross of Christ. By this union, suffering can acquire new meaning. By patiently bearing our sufferings and praying through them, we are able to offer the graces we receive for the conversion of another or for whatever reason the Lord would like to use it. Through the anointing of the sick, we are also given a particular gift of the Holy Spirit to renew our trust in God and to help us resist the discouragement that illness often causes. Finally, when given at the hour of death, the anointing of the sick fortifies us for the final steps in the journey to our Heavenly Father.



St. Vincent de Paul at the Death of Louis XIII, Folleville

AN ACT OF HOPE

*Lord God,
I hope by your grace
for the pardon of all my sins
and after life here
to gain eternal happiness
because you have promised it
who are infinitely powerful,
faithful, kind and merciful.*

*In this hope I intend
to live and die.*

Amen.

AT THE HOUR OF OUR DEATH

The Apostolic pardon is a particular blessing granted to a dying person by a priest, which removes all punishment for sins. The pardon does not absolve sin (that's the job of the Sacrament of Confession), but as a type of indulgence it grants the rightly-disposed Christians who receive it, full remission of temporal punishment due to sin. With the Apostolic Pardon no further expiation occurs in Purgatory.

The current use has two forms:

“Through the holy mysteries of our redemption may almighty God release you from all punishments in this life and in the life to come. May he open to you the gates of paradise and welcome you to everlasting joy.”

“By the authority which the Apostolic See has given me, I grant you a full pardon and the remission of all your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

Catholics believe that Jesus left to St. Peter the authority “to loose and to bind” (Matthew 16:19). Our priests, entrusted with this duty of exercising “the power of the keys” in heaven and on earth, can release a soul from its debt—normally paid by purification in Purgatory—thereby completely preparing her for the glories of heaven, when “we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2).



THE ROSARY

By praying the Rosary and meditating on the mysteries (Joyful, Sorrowful, Luminous or Glorious), we grow in our appreciation of tremendous gifts God has given to us through His Son and His Blessed Mother. Although our thirst for happiness will only be completed when we gaze forever on the face of our Creator in heaven, the satisfaction of our deepest desires begins now in the joys of our life of prayer. In a special way, our heaven begins in the Rosary.

PRAYER TO ST. JOSEPH *Patron of a Happy Death*

O Blessed Joseph, who breathed your last in the arms of Jesus and Mary, obtain for me this grace: that I may breathe forth my soul in praise, saying in spirit, if I am unable to do so in words: “Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul.”
Amen.

In addition, many who are suffering experience a deep peace and consolation when their loved ones pray the rosary with them or around them (even if they can no longer speak). Even those who suffer with dementia or Alzheimer’s disease find a unique consolation in the prayers of the rosary or just holding the beads as others pray with them. We do not know the many ways that God can still touch a soul even when unconscious or compromised mentally. God’s grace knows no limitations!

“Grant me, O Lord my God, a mind to know you, a heart to seek you, wisdom to find you, conduct pleasing to you, faithful perseverance in waiting for you, and a hope of finally embracing you.”

-St. Thomas Aquinas

During the Month of November, a time when the Church remembers in a particular way those who have gone before us in death, these inserts are made available with the aim of presenting anew Catholic beliefs on the sacred goal of life: attaining the Kingdom of Heaven.

