

## Preparing for a Good Catholic Death during the COVID-19 pandemic



From Our Lord's conquest of death and His defeat of Satan, the devotions of prayer for a 'happy death' and the 'art of dying well' derive their power to transfigure our experience of death. They rob death of its sting, taking us deeper into our baptismal participation in Our Lord's death and Resurrection (Rm 6:4.)

### Praying for a Happy Death

St. Joseph, Patron of a Happy Death, and 'the Terror of demons', rightly terrifies the devil and his hordes since he was entrusted by God with the virtues and graces to protect Jesus and the Blessed Virgin Mary. He died a happy death in the arms of Jesus and Mary. Make the following prayers your daily practice.

#### Act of Consecration to St. Joseph.

O dearest St. Joseph, I consecrate myself to your honour and give myself to you, that you may always be my father, my protector and my guide in the way of salvation. Obtain for me a greater purity of heart and fervent love of the interior life. After your example may I do all my actions for the greater glory of God, in union with the Divine Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. O Blessed St. Joseph, pray for me, that I may share in the peace and joy of your holy death. Amen.

#### Prayer to St. Joseph for a Happy Death.

O Glorious St. Joseph, behold I choose thee today for my special patron in life and at the hour of my death. Preserve and increase in me the spirit of prayer and fervour in the service of God. Remove far from me every kind of sin; obtain for me that my death may not come upon me unawares, but that I may have time to confess my sins sacramentally and to bewail them with a most perfect understanding and a most sincere and perfect contrition, in order that I may breathe forth my soul into the hands of Jesus and Mary. Amen

#### Prayer of Padre Pio

It is getting late and death approaches, I fear the darkness, the temptations, the dryness, the cross, the sorrows. O how I need You, my Jesus, in this night of exile! Stay with me Lord, because at the hour of my death, I want to remain united to you, if not by Communion, at least by grace and love. Amen

### The Art of Dying Well

The following is based on the traditional practice, adapted to the current circumstances where a priest and family may not be present at the hour of death:

1. Look at a Crucifix, or imagine one, and adore your redeemer. Remember His passion, endured for your sins.
2. Think of the love of your Saviour towards you as a sinner. Imagine Jesus on the cross with his arms extended, his head bowed, embracing and supporting you, helping you face your sins.
3. Examine your conscience, asking the Holy Spirit to uncover the sins of your life. Ask for the grace of honest repentance, not making excuses or rationalisations of sinful actions, trusting solely in the redemptive sufferings of Christ. If you are aware of any mortal or serious sins, ask for the grace to make an act of perfect contrition, which will absolve even these sins in the absence of a priest (under certain conditions).
4. Expect to undergo the final assault of the devil and prepare to endure five temptations. At the moment of temptation pray, 'My Jesus, mercy! Mary, help!' Pray for grace against the five temptations as follows:
  - Against the temptation to apostasy, pray for the virtue of Faith and reaffirm your baptismal Faith.
  - Against the temptation to despair over your sins, pray for the virtue of Hope in God's forgiveness.
  - Against the temptation to anger at dying, pray for the virtue of Charity and the fruit of patience.
  - Against the temptation to prideful self-reliance, pray for humility and total dependence on God.
  - Against the temptation to cling to this life, pray for detachment and abandonment to God's will.
5. Pray for the assistance of your guardian angel and the communion of saints, especially those saints who were great sinners — St. Peter, St. Mary Magdalene, St. Dismas (the Good Thief) and St. Paul.
6. Unable to receive Viaticum, make a spiritual communion by ardently longing to receive Holy Communion.
7. At the moment of death pray out loud or in your heart, 'Jesus, Jesus, Jesus' or 'Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul'.