

INTRODUCTION

A few suggestions to those who use this book:

1. For two reasons—to save space and to avoid repetition—every sermon does not adequately express comfort and sympathy to the bereaved. It should. Let the individual preacher insert this.
2. Likewise, a request for prayers and Masses for the deceased should be included in each talk.
3. An adequate parish pulpit program should include some of these thoughts, even outside the occasion of funerals.
4. Priests might use these thoughts to console, even outside the pulpit.
5. This book might be profitably read by those who have suffered bereavement. Recommend it to them.

The following additional sermons, suitable for funerals, will be found in other books by Father Tonne:

POOR SOULS—Talks to Children, page 114

POOR SOULS—Talks on the Creed, page 114

POOR SOULS—OCCASIONAL TALKS, page 86

MEMORIAL DAY—OCCASIONAL TALKS, p. 72

Father Tonne's next book will be a collection of stories and anecdotes adapted for use in the pulpit, in catechism and convert instruction, and in discussion clubs. He hopes to publish several volumes of such stories. Each volume will be thoroughly indexed and cross-indexed, and will not include stories already used in his fifteen books of sermons.

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FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS—General

"But we would not, brethren, have you ignorant concerning those who are asleep, lest you should grieve, even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so with him God will bring those also who have fallen asleep through Jesus." I Thessalonians, 4: 13, 14.

In 1525 the Capuchins started a profoundly meaningful practice connected with the burial of the rulers in the Hapsburg line. This custom was carried out at the burial of Francis Joseph I in the year 1916 in Vienna, Austria.

As the funeral procession stopped before the closed gates of the crypt where His Majesty was to be interred, the lord steward knocked on the gate. A voice from within, that of a Capuchin friar, asked:

"Who asks for admittance?"

"The emperor and king, Francis Joseph I," replied the official.

"I do not know him," came out from the depths of the crypt.

Again the steward knocked, and again came the query:

"Who asks for admittance?"

"Francis Joseph of Hapsburg," replied the officer.

"I do not know him," again was the reply.

For the third time he knocks; and the third time he is asked who seeks admittance. This time the lord steward answered:

"A poor dead man."

At those words the gates creak open and the coffin containing the royal remains is received into its last resting place.

The whole purpose of this striking and significant custom was to emphasize that death makes no distinction of person, that we are all equal in the eyes of God. And that is the whole purpose of the arrangements which the Catholic Church makes for the burial of a Catholic. I am prompted to speak of those arrangements this morning so that all will know them and abide by them. In speaking on this subject I have in mind no particular person, occasion or group. Purposely I am talking on this topic at a time when we are not having a funeral in our parish.

Furthermore, seldom are people more touchy and more easily offended than at the time of death in the family. Sorrow makes us sensitive. Accordingly, please remember these regulations, and the reasons for them.

1. Mother Church has three kinds of funeral Mass: the low Mass; the sung or High Mass; and the Solemn Funeral High Mass. Occasionally the grieving family will ask for a low Mass with the singing of English hymns. The Church wants a High Mass, if at all possible, for the funeral of every child of hers, so much so that even if the family could not afford it, or if the deceased had no immediate relatives, the priest should bury him with a High Mass.

2. Much difficulty arises from requests for certain songs at a Catholic funeral, songs which are not suitable for a Catholic service. For example,

"Lead Kindly Light" was never meant for a funeral. It was written by Cardinal Newman when he was seeking the Light that finally led him into the Catholic Church. Other examples of touching and beautiful hymns are

"Face to Face" and "Abide With Me." These express nothing Catholic. The organist will be able to tell you what is allowed and what is forbidden in the way of music for funerals.

3. A word about flowers. They also are beautiful, but their beauty and fragrance are enjoyed only by the living. Yes, they do express sympathy and condolence, but how much more expressive that sympathy and how much more helpful to the deceased person if those flowers were Mass cards, promising the Holy Sacrifice and all its blessings to the departed.

I have seen a Catholic coffin so surrounded with flowers that the undertaker was hard put to it, to find a place for all of them to be seen. And there would be one or a few Mass cards. What a waste, and what misapplied sympathy.

I have seen other Catholics laid out with flowers about them, but with Mass cards much more numerous. As they stood opened about the deceased, they reminded me of angel wings spread out, ready to carry that soul back to its Maker.

Flowers are not to be taken into the Catholic Church.

4. Soldiers are properly buried with the flag for which they died draped over their remains; children, because of their manifest baptismal innocence, may have some flowers above their coffin.

5. A growing and commendable custom is to supply to everyone at a funeral a little Mass Missal containing in English all the prayers said by the priest. We cannot recommend this practice too highly. Too often the service is meaningless to non-Catholics, and, sad to say, to some poorly instructed Catholics. (See note)

6. Will there be a sermon or not? The bishop decides that. In this diocese we preach at funerals, but Mother Church has a rigid rule that we are not to praise and make a saint out of the deceased. Many saintly people have died in this parish and it is perfectly proper to point out their good qualities, as an inspiration to all of us. But we do you much more good by speaking on some subject referring to death and the life beyond.

7. At the grave we urge that you follow as attentively as you can the prayers said by the priest. It is a trying time for the bereaved and for those who wish to console and help them. Do not make it more trying by unrestrained grief. Remember the words of St. Paul that we should not grieve like those who have no hope. Rather we should think and act and pray in the knowledge that God will raise up our departed dear ones. In that spirit Mother Church conducts a funeral. Amen.

Note: A convenient, inexpensive pamphlet, "The Catholic Burial Service" is published by The Catholic Truth Society, 2051 S.W. 6th Ave., Portland, Oregon.

FUNERAL CEREMONIES—General

"It is not in man's power to stop the spirit, neither hath he power in the day of death." Ecclesiasticus, 8:8.

It is very interesting to read and study the funeral practices of pagans. Of particular interest are the funeral customs in China. As you know, the Chinese have a deep devotion to their dead, but most of their devotion and most of their ceremonies have an eye to the material and physical well-being of their departed.

According to the **BOOK OF RITES**, drawn up over two thousand years ago, a Chinese funeral should be as simple as possible. Through the centuries, however, the oriental obsequies have taken on added grandeur and expense. Today—the more elaborate the funeral, the more "face" or reputation the bereaved family has in the community. Rather reminds us of a great many American "pagan" funerals, doesn't it?

Time will not permit us to tell all about a Chinese funeral, but one phase of it I find especially interesting, even though it is senseless. The family feels that the deceased will need and want many things when he awakes in the next life, things which he used in this life, things which he needed, things of which he was fond on this earth. Accordingly, either in the yard of the home or some other place nearby the mourners burn paper images of these things. They believe that these articles can reach him in the next life only by being burned. Among these objects represented in paper one will see sedan chairs, wagons, trunks, servants, furniture and clothing. If the deceased happened to have an automobile, a paper car is burned so he will have one in the next life. If he had a telephone or radio, a paper model is made and burned. Almost everyone who comes to express sympathies brings paper money as a gift to the dead person; he will need it in the next life.

To us who believe in the spiritual and who share in what God has made known to mankind, such funeral ceremonies seem meaningless and even ridiculous. How much more helpful to the departed, how much more in line with the fact that the spirit lives in the life to come, are the ceremonies of a Catholic funeral. Let me outline them this morning and explain briefly their beautiful meanings.

1. After death and a few days of lying in state, the body of a Catholic starts out on its last journey—to the grave. The undertaker has cared for the body, has prepared it for burial in as becoming a way as possible with the thought that there will be a future resurrection of that body. Nevertheless, the Catholic ceremonies look more to the soul and its needs. The funeral procession pauses at the portals of the church. There all flowers and other decorations are removed from the coffin which, where customary, is covered instead with a black cloth having a large white cross sewn upon it. This covering makes us equal in death. The cross reminds us that our salvation came through the cross of Christ.

2. The priest meets the corpse at the doorway. He recites Psalm 129, an appealing prayer which seems to come from the lips of the deceased, so well does it express his needs. Listen to the first few lines:

"Out of the depths I have cried to Thee, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice.

"Let Thy ears be attentive to the voice of my prayer."

Then the priest asks the saints and angels to come to his assistance, and asks Christ Himself to receive that soul.

2. As the procession walks slowly down the aisle, the choir sings and the priest recites that beautiful prayer, Psalm 50, known as the "Miserere." The first two lines give an idea of its appropriateness:

"Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy. "And according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my iniquity."

3. As the coffin comes to rest before the Communion rail, lighted candles are placed on either side. They represent primarily Christ the Light of the world, through whom we hope for life in another world. The light burns up the wax until it is entirely consumed, as the soul gave life to the body until it took flight. Candles give light, symbolic of the indescribable light of another life.

4. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass now follows. Of this we will speak more fully at another time. May I point out here, however, that it is the Mass which is the important act in a Catholic funeral, because the Mass is the continuation of the death of Christ on the cross for all of us. It is offered up for the soul of our friend this morning with special meaning.

5. After Mass you noticed a server take his place before the coffin holding a crucifix, and flanked by two servers with lighted candles. From what I have said you can see that we want to keep the cross of Christ ever before us, together with the candles, representing the Light of the world, Light in death.

6. You noticed the priest place incense on burning coals in the censer. Then as the priest intoned the Our Father and went on reciting it silently, he sprinkled blessed water over the body. Water refreshes. Water quenches the thirst. This holy water shows that our prayers for the deceased will refresh his soul, will quench his thirst for spiritual help.

7. The priest swings the censer about the coffin. Incense is a symbol of our prayers wafting heavenward, as it were, in clouds. The Bible speaks of both holy water and incense, and, of course, of lights.

8. As the funeral arrives at the cemetery the priest blesses the grave. The body is sacred. It must rest in holy ground.

9. The priest also recites two prayers from the Bible, the first is the prayer of Zachary, telling how the Redeemer came and how He will "shine on those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death." The second prayer reminds us of the resurrection of the body. Another beautiful prayer concludes the graveside service. In some places the priest and others drop some soil upon the casket to remind all that we are dust.

This is the end of the funeral, but not the end of our devotion, which goes on in Masses and prayers for the deceased. How consoling and full of meaning. Amen.

FUNERAL MASS—General

"This is my body, which is being given for you; do this in remembrance of me." St. Luke, 22:19.

One hundred years ago the pastor of a little country parish in France, called Ars, was a saintly priest by the name of John Vianney. Today he is known as St. John Vianney. With limited natural talents he changed the parish from an indifferent, thoughtless group into a zealous, Christ-like congregation. His favorite theme was Christ in the Eucharist, especially Holy Mass and Holy Communion. Every talk he gave was simplicity itself, as we see in the following illustration. Speaking to the boys and girls one day he said:

"My children, you remember the story I told you of that holy priest who was praying for his friend. God had made known to him, it appears, that this friend was in Purgatory; it came into his mind that he could do nothing better than to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for his soul. At the moment of consecration, with the Sacred Host in his hands he said:

"O holy and eternal Father, let us make an exchange. Thou hast the soul of my friend, who is in Purgatory, and I have the Body of Thy Son, who is in my hands. Well, do Thou deliver my friend, and I offer Thee Thy Son, with all the merits of His death and passion.'"

At that very moment when the priest raised the Host above his head to be adored by the people, the soul of his friend was seen rising to heaven, all radiant with glory.

In this story told by a saint of comparatively recent times, we have a hint of the power and the value of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which we have just offered for the soul of our friend whose body lies here before us.

The high point, the central point of Holy Mass is the separate consecration of the Body and of the Blood of Christ, and the offering, as it were, of Christ's Body and Blood to His heavenly Father. That is what makes the Mass important, infinitely important. It is the sacrifice of Christ continued in our own day and in our own church. Yes, this very hour in this very church we have offered the Son of God to His Father in heaven, begging peace and light and refreshment for the soul of the deceased.

I know that all of you, non-Catholic as well as Catholic, believe that Christ died for all of us on the cross, that on the cross He redeemed us, He saved us. How do we share in that rich redemption? By having the sacrifice of the cross brought right down to our own day, as it is in the Catholic Church.

1. This practice is not a hundred or a thousand years old. It is as old as Christianity itself. We know that the early Christians offered Mass for the dead. Proof of this is in the records, especially in the carved records of the catacombs or underground churches in and near Rome.

2. You noticed the priest come out to the altar dressed rather strangely, as far as modern styles go. The Bible teaches that special vestments are to be worn by those who minister at the altar, much as an army officer or a

justice of the Supreme Court will wear a uniform or a gown to show his office. The priest is an official representative of God to man and of man to God.

Furthermore, these distinctive garments show the antiquity of the Mass.

2. The language may sound strange to you, but Latin is used as the official language of a universal Church. If you were to attend a Catholic funeral in China or Alaska, you would hear the same sonorous and solemn words. Their meaning is known through little books of translation called missals which the up-to-date and intelligent Catholic makes it a point to use.

3. What the priest says at the altar is not some secret incantation or mystic rite designed by man. The words are the setting and the expression of the greatest religious drama ever enacted, a real drama, a tragedy, the tragedy of Calvary. You will notice also that much of the Mass is taken directly from Sacred Scripture. The remainder is in Scripture language and with Bible thoughts. You may have noticed that when the priest walked over to that left side of the altar to read a part of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the congregation stood up—out of reverence for the words of our Lord and Master. We Catholics not only love the Bible and read the Bible, we try to live the Bible, in our lives and in our ceremonies.

4. You noticed, too, that the priest did a lot of bowing and turning and walking to and fro. He also genuflected quite frequently. He was bending his knee to Christ present upon the altar. He was bowing to Christ or in reverence to the name of Christ. He turned to bestow the blessing of God upon the people, to say: "The Lord be with you." For the most part he was praying with hands and arms extended like this, to show that the priest represents Christ on the cross, the only One who really deserves to be heard by the heavenly Father.

5. All the prayers of the Mass are beautiful and expressive and designed to help the deceased for whom it is offered. One of the most appropriate is a fervent and eloquent prayer right after the solemn moment of consecration, when the priest asks Almighty God to remember the departed and to grant to him:

A. "a place of refreshment" where the dew of God's grace will fall upon the soul departed.

B. "a place of light" in contrast to the darkness of death.

C. "a place of peace" where the soul will be at eternal rest.

6. When you realize the power and the value of this sacrifice which is going on all over the world night and day, is it any wonder that we Catholics prize and love the Mass? Yes, we are offering this Mass this morning, offering the Son of God to His Father—for the soul of our departed friend.

Amen.

DEATH IS UNCERTAIN

"We are sojourners before thee, and strangers, as were all our fathers. Our days upon earth are as a shadow, and there is no stay." Paralipomenon, 29:15.

Years ago in the fashionable section of London the Rothschild mansion was a point of tourist interest. Among the many people who passed by the pretentious place, a number did not fail to notice that the end of one of the cornices was unfinished. Many a man made the remark:

"One would think that the richest man in the world could afford to finish that cornice."

Still others would say:

"Is it carelessness that caused that corner to be incomplete?"

The explanation was much more meaningful. It is simple yet very suggestive. Lord Rothschild was an orthodox Jew. According to tradition, the home of every pious Jew must have some part unfinished, to remind the occupant and to remind the world outside that he who dwells there is just a pilgrim and a stranger on the earth, just a sojourner and a traveler on this earthly sphere. That incomplete cornice would speak, as it were, to all who hurried by. It would tell those seeking wealth and fame and power:

"Really this is not the home of Lord Rothschild; he is traveling to eternity."

Thus every unfinished Hebrew home was a constant reminder that the resident was merely a sojourner, a traveler on this earth. Of that same fact we are reminded by every death and every funeral. The thought strikes sharply home this morning as we gather in grief to pay our respects to the remains of one we loved, and to conduct those remains to their last earthly resting place—the grave.

Yet, in that very truth that we are merely travelers here, we find our greatest consolation this morning. We know that this loved one has come to the end of his journey. Our prayer and our hope is that he will now receive the reward of his faithfulness to God during that journey through life.

It is a sobering thought, yet a hopeful thought. All of us will one day come to the end of our travels through time, to start our life in eternity. It is the most certain thing about life—that life will end. In fact, the only certain thing about life is that it will end. Everything else is unsure, insecure, uncertain. Death, however, is certain.

At the same time, just as certain as it is that we will all die, just that uncertain is it as to when and where and how. There is no more appropriate time to consider this fundamental fact than at the hour when another has been called away. The very circumstances of his death—so sudden, so unexpected—bear out the eternal importance of considering the uncertainty in the circumstances of death.

1. Every one of us will die, but not one of us knows when. People die during the night and during the day; they die in infancy, in childhood, in

youth, in middle age, and, of course, in old age. As someone has said:

"The old must die; the young may die."

If you want proof of this read the death notices in your daily paper. Read the obituaries and observe particularly the ages of the people who pass away daily. Every age of life will be represented. Not all of the deceased are old; many of them are middle-aged.

Men know not the day nor the hour as Sacred Scripture tells us:

"You must also be ready, because at an hour that you do not expect, the Son of Man is coming." St. Luke, 12:40.

Nevertheless, certain saints knew and foretold the day of their death, for example, St. Casimir, St. Benedict, St. Philip Neri, St. Aloysius, St. Martha and a number of others. To them, however, it made little difference, because they were living every day as if it were their last. They were always ready. They thought of death as an angel who might come at any moment. They were always prepared.

2. Every one of us will die, but not one of us knows where. Men die everywhere. They die at home and abroad; they die in bed and they die in the street; they die at work and they die at recreation; they die in places of sin and they die in church.

Again, take up your daily paper and make note of the deaths, not only those in the obituary column, but the news of natural and accidental deaths throughout the world. Yet, no newspaper can give you the names of all who have passed away the previous day, nor can it tell you where. Death's territory is world-wide.

3. Every one of us will die, but not one of us knows how. Some die slowly, some die suddenly; some die peacefully, some die painfully; some die prepared, some die unprepared; some die from a tiny germ which you cannot see with the naked eye, and some die from a giant block-buster dropping from the sky.

Some are drowned; others are shot; others are suffocated and strangled; still others are crushed to death in some automobile accident. Once more take up your newspaper. It has a daily sermon on a most important subject—death. Take note how people come to their death.

As to how you will die it is most important that you be in the grace and friendship of God; it is important that you be strengthened by the Last Sacraments; it is important that you thought about it long before, and that you lived accordingly.

May we extend again our sympathies to the bereaved. And may we offer all of you the thought that you are just a traveler, just a sojourner. So travel that when death comes you will be ready. Amen.

FIVE MINUTES AFTER DEATH—General

"We see now through a mirror in a dark manner, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know even as I have been known."
I Corinthians, 13:12.

The story is told of a British army officer who had served many years in His Majesty's forces in India. He had come through many harrowing experiences. In his old age he returned to his native England to spend his declining days on home soil.

One day some friends persuaded him to tell them something of his life and service in India. With great gusto he described battles in which he fought and sieges in which he took part. He told of being ambushed and surprised by the enemy, and of how he and his men in turn waylaid and surprised the enemy. He told of his part in the Sepoy Mutiny, a bloody affair. In breathless interest they strained to hear every word of his account. At last the veteran officer declared: "Yet, gentlemen, I expect to see something more thrilling than anything I have ever seen up to now."

What could be more exciting than what he had gone through, thought his listeners. What experience could be more nerve-tingling than the battles and struggles he had already weathered. They knew he was past seventy and retired from active service. They waited. After a pause he said slowly and softly, almost in an undertone:

"My greatest experience is yet to come . . . It will be the first five minutes after death."

That old soldier expressed a thought upon which we might dwell this morning. What will the soul experience during those first five minutes—as we reckon time—after death? It will all take place in the twinkling of an eye. What will take place?

We all know, for instance, that in this casket before us lies merely the frame of our deceased friend, this good father and husband. His soul has gone forth from his body. That soul gave life to his body here on earth. Now that soul is gone to another world. What did this good *soul* experience as it traveled from this world to the next?

1. First of all he experienced the truth of St. Paul's words to the Corinthians which I quoted:

"We see now through a mirror in a dark manner, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know even as I have been known."
I Corinthians, 13:12.

On this earth our beloved friend knew God by seeing Him indirectly through God's creatures. God was reflected in the people and things God made. It was a vague and indistinct vision, as it were, of the Almighty. But the beatific vision lifts the veil, clears the picture, so that the soul of the lately departed has seen God.

This good man lived by faith throughout his life. On the word of God and the word of God's Church he directed his life. He accepted, even though he did not see, even though he did not understand. During those

first five minutes after death, he realized that he had always been believing what was true. He actually saw. No longer did he merely believe. What a blessed experience!

2. In those few moments after death he was convinced that the spiritual was much more important than the material, the soul more precious than the body. He was convinced of the truth of that statement in our catechism: The soul is more important than the body. During life he tried to remember and live that truth, but he was constantly surrounded by people and things and books and movies and newspapers that put the material foremost, that even gave the impression that there was nothing but the material. Consistently and insistently false prophets told him that there was nothing more than what the senses told him. Yet, he lived according to the spirit. Today he knows, right after death he knew, that the spirit is far superior to the senses.

3. Another experience of our dear friend right after death is the realization that the struggle with sin is over. On this earth the struggle was constant. No day passed without it. There were temptations without and temptations within. He used many means to resist those temptations, but the effort was always trying and taxing. Now he is free of the allurements of sin. What bliss!

4. The uncertainty of earthly life has been exchanged for the certainties of eternal life. Like the weather, even more so, the picture of life changes from day to day, from year to year. There are the uncertainties of employment, the uncertainties of health, the uncertainties of friendships, the uncertainties about the well-being and training of children, the uncertainties about their making a way in the world. As a loving father this man felt the weight of these uncertainties. Death, however, has opened his eyes to the care God has for those children. What a consolation!

5. Another satisfaction which came to this good man was the feeling of going home and being at home. He always loved the place he called home here on earth. He loved his dear ones. Loved to be with them. But there is no lasting home on this earth, as he well knew. Now he is at home. And in that future home he awaits his dear ones to join him.

6. Another fact about the first five minutes in the future life is that the most unlearned person will in the first five minutes after death acquire a knowledge of God that rivals the wisdom of the greatest theologian. He will know things which the keenest minds of all ages have tried to fathom and figure out.

7. Another phase of the future life is that we will see God face to face—forever. Perhaps this soul must first be purged of some slight faults of earth. But he looks forward to that eternal living in the presence of God.

No wonder that experienced, veteran officer from India, who had gone through some of the most thrilling experiences possible to man, nevertheless still looked forward to the most thrilling of them all—the first five minutes after death. There is consolation and encouragement in the thought that the soul of this good man has had these thrilling experiences.

Amen.

*"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul."
St. Matthew, 10:28.*

In his enlightening book **THE CITY OF GOD** St. Augustine tells the following story of a physician of Carthage by the name of Gennadius. This doctor had repeatedly denied the immortality of the soul; he refused to believe that the soul of man lived on after death. One night this doctor had a dream. He saw before him a young man clothed in white, who asked:

"Do you see me, Gennadius?"

"Yes," the doctor answered in his dream.

"Do you see me with your eyes?" asked the youth.

"No," answered Gennadius, "for they are closed in sleep."

"With what, then, do you see me?" insisted the youth.

"I know not," answered the doctor.

"Do you hear me?" the young man went on.

"Yes," the doubter replied.

"With your ears?"

"No," the physician responded; "they are closed and wrapped in sleep."

"With what, then, do you hear me?"

"I know not," the doctor admitted.

"Are you speaking to me?" was the next question.

"Yes," was the answer.

"With your mouth?"

"No," replied the physician.

"With what, then?"

"I know not," answered the doctor.

Then the young man declared:

"Think of it—you are sleeping and yet you see and hear and speak. The hour will come when you will sleep in death, and yet you will see and hear and speak and feel."

Gennadius awoke to realize that God had sent him an angel to teach him that the soul really does live on after death, that death is just a different kind of sleep, in which the soul is very much alive.

We recall this interesting incident today as we stand in prayer and mourning over the coffin of one whose soul has left his body and still lives on. I know that few if any of you present this morning doubt the immortality of the soul. But there are people living today who, like Gennadius of old, deny that the soul lives on after death. Hence it is very much to our benefit that we believing Christians refresh the reasons for the immortality of the spiritual part of man. Can we prove it? We certainly can. That the soul will live on endlessly after death is clear from both the Bible and from reason:

1. The whole story of God's dealings with man as recorded in Sacred Scripture is meaningless, the life and death of Christ is without purpose, unless man's soul lives on after death. We even have definite words from the lips of Christ, like those I quoted:

A. "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul." St. Matthew, 10:28.

B. Again, when Jesus tells us of the Last Judgment, He describes the good and the bad and how they will be tried. He concludes with these words:

"These (the condemned) will go into everlasting punishment, but the just into everlasting life." St. Matthew, 25:46.

C. Again, when Christ was hanging in agony upon the cross, He said to the good thief on His right:

"This day thou shalt be with me in paradise." St. Luke, 23:43.

Again and again the word of God makes it certain that there is a life after death.

2. This teaching of Christ and the Bible is supported by several clear proofs from reason:

A. Complete justice is never obtained in this world. Too many wicked people are wealthy, too many pious people are poor; there is too much unrewarded good and too much unpunished evil, not to demand another life in which all these differences will be straightened out. Even human justice demands such an adjustment. The perfect justice of God certainly requires that good be rewarded and evil punished.

B. That the soul lives on after death is a universal belief of mankind. Existence after death is the most widespread and uniform of beliefs, after the belief in a Supreme Being, from which it follows. The most ignorant, the most uncivilized, the most sunken races and peoples have some fundamental faith in an hereafter.

C. A further argument is from the desire of all men to be perfectly and permanently happy. Isn't that your desire? Are we not all looking for some place, some state where we can be surely and safely happy forever? We know that cannot be in this life. It is reserved for another life. It is a desire God has planted in the human heart to make us long for the eternal life with Him.

D. Science itself offers a convincing proof that the soul lives on. It is a principle and fact of science that nothing is ever annihilated or completely destroyed. Even the smoke that disappears as if into nothing is still somewhere and will remain somewhere. Nothing is entirely destroyed.

How much more so must we expect continued life in that part of man which is his real life—his soul?

E. A further proof from science is in what we might call evolution. The spirit of man grows stronger with the years, while his body weakens. In other words, his soul is developing its powers from day to day. It is unreasonable that all this stops when the soul is separated from the body.

Accordingly, as we face death this morning, it is not a mere wishful hope that the soul of our beloved friend still lives. It is not a dreamy desire, a groundless straw for which we grab in our grief. No, the soul that inhabited this body is alive and will remain alive forever. Holy Scripture proves that. Reason proves it. But above all, our God-given faith teaches it. We will thank God for this knowledge. We will live according to it. And we will pray for the deceased in the assurance that we still can help him.

Amen.

WHAT IS PURGATORY?—General

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hand of the living God." Hebrews, 10:31.

Imagine being pinned down by a steel plate sixty feet below the surface of Pearl Harbor for seventy-three hours. That was the unhappy experience of Chief Petty Officer Earl Thomas Brown of Oakland, California, an experience that came to a happy ending. A boat had exploded in Pearl Harbor. Chief Brown was tunneling through the mud under the wreck when the tunnel caved in, pinning him under a heavy steel plate. Again and again his comrades tried to set him free from the wreckage, but failure met their efforts. Finally divers worked their way under the heavy piece of steel and brought Chief Brown to the surface. The imprisoned man described his feelings:

"Those three days were days of prayer. While in that position I thought about my family—my wife and three children—and how I should have gone along with them to church and encouraged them in the practice of their faith. My last determined and conscious act was that I, too, would become a Catholic. I made a promise: If I got out alive, I will become a Catholic."

He also thought of the fact that he had never been baptized. In the face of death he wanted to receive baptism. Then he told the chaplain who did baptize Chief Brown after four months of instruction:

"It was like purgatory, but it has brought me to the heaven of the true faith."

This man, buried sixty feet beneath the surface for three days, said his experience was like purgatory. In some ways it was.

In the face of death he thought of purgatory. As we face death this morning in the form of the lifeless body of a beloved father and husband, we might also think of the consoling and uplifting teaching of Mother Church regarding purgatory. Some of our friends of other faiths present here will appreciate, we feel, an explanation of what we Catholics believe regarding this place of purgation.

1. In answer to the question: What is purgatory? Mother Church answers that purgatory is a state where souls suffer for a time after death on account of their sins. The word purgatory is from a Latin word which means to cleanse or purify. Our common word "purge" is related to it.

2. As to where purgatory is Mother Church has defined nothing specific. St. Thomas thought that it was a particular place beneath the earth. The scholastic or religious thinkers of the middle ages divided the lower regions into four districts:

- A. Hell, which is the place of the damned.
- B. Purgatory, which is the place for those being purged before they can enter heaven.
- C. Limbo, a place for those who died before Christ opened the gates of heaven by His death.
- D. And a fourth place also called limbo for the souls of children who die without baptism.

3. It is a place where souls suffer, and not bodies. The bodies of the dead are placed in the grave to await the final resurrection. Purgatory is for souls stained or spotted with venial sins which have not been forgiven in this life, and for souls which still have temporal punishment to undergo for sins which have been forgiven in this life. We call these souls the Poor Souls, because they stand in need of our help. We also call them the Holy Souls:

A. Because they are in the state of grace.

B. Because now they can sin no more.

Because they are completely resigned to the will of God. They realize that nothing spotted or unclean can enter the pure white presence of the All-holy God.

They are sure of their salvation. They know that after their complete cleansing they will certainly be in the presence of God.

In this phase of the Catholic teaching on purgatory there is deep consolation for your loved ones left behind. You must know that your dear husband and father, good though he was, loving and understanding though he was, still, like all human beings, had his faults, his failings. The God who finds spots in the sun, may have found spots on his soul. These need to be purged away.

But in that purging we have the special consolation of knowing that he can sin no more, that he is resigned and even happy in God's will, and that he is certain of salvation, of some day being with God.

4. Purgatory is a state where souls suffer. What do they suffer? How do they suffer? They experience two particular pains—the pain of sense and the pain of loss. The pain of sense means:

A. Fire and darkness similar to that in hell. That is why we beg for the poor souls a place of refreshment, light and peace.

B. Their sufferings are greater than any of this earth, although less than those of hell.

C. Mother Church has not declared exactly what these sufferings are. The pain of loss means that they are kept from the blissful presence of God. Regarding this:

A. Their faith makes them understand that God is holy and beautiful, while they are stained with sin.

B. Hope inspires an intense longing to be with God.

C. Their love for God increases the pain of their longing for Him.

5. These pains vary according to the guilt of the soul and according to the help of friends on this earth.

6. How long they are there will depend again upon their guilt and the assistance we send them. When we consider the perfect holiness and justice of God, and when we recall what many of the saints made known regarding the length of those sufferings, we are reasonably sure that their time of purgation, their stay in purgatory will be long. The shortest time there, in any case, will seem long to them.

The sailor in our story thought those three days pinned helplessly down in the depths were like purgatory. He could not help himself. Neither can the poor souls. His comrades helped set him free. So can we free the poor souls. With our expression of sympathy goes the promise to pray for this particular soul. Amen.

PURGATORY BEFORE CHRIST—General

"It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins." 2 Machabees, 12:46.

A few years ago the American Hebrew magazine reported the following incident. A group of salesmen of the Ward Baking Company were to meet in Brooklyn. Among them was a Jew. He thought he could not attend the meeting. He begged one of the organizers of the Bakery Workers Union, a certain Hyman Schanker, to excuse him, on the plea that he had to say Kaddish, a Jewish prayer for the dead, for his father.

Schanker insisted: "This is a meeting you must attend. I'll see to it that you are able to say your prayer right at the meeting."

In the excitement and interest of the gathering Schanker seemed to forget his pledge to the Jewish salesman. However, exactly at the hour appointed, six o'clock, Hymie felt a prod in the ribs to remind him of his promise. Schanker ordered the several Jewish members present: "Hats on!" Then he announced to the assembly:

"Our friend here must say a sacred prayer to the memory of his father. I hope our Christian brothers will not mind the interruption to the meeting. Our friend here is a good Jew, and he wouldn't want to miss the prayer; on the other hand, he is a good union member and he didn't want to miss the meeting."

Then and there Jew and Christian bowed their heads, as the devout Jew prayed for his deceased father. At the conclusion, Catholic and Protestant alike hurried over to the chairman and blurted out:

"Hymie, that was swell. It makes us feel that . . . well . . ."

Schanker felt what they could not say. There was a tear in his voice as he commented:

"Let's go on with the meeting, boys."

This simple and touching incident emphasizes a fact too frequently unknown or forgotten, namely that prayer for the Poor Souls is as ancient as the Jewish religion itself, and that, long before the coming of Christ, the people of God prayed for the souls in purgatory.

This little incident at a union meeting in Brooklyn also disproves the unfounded, ungrounded, unhistorical, and unscriptural claim that pope and priest invented purgatory, apparently for the purpose of being paid to pray Poor Souls out of their place of purging. Both the Old and the New Testaments speak of a state of purification after death. Scripture does not say in direct and definite words that there is a purgatory. Nevertheless, though this word "Purgatory" is not expressly and positively used in the Bible, it is certainly presupposed and more or less clearly referred to in several passages.

Particularly, in connection with our story of the Jewish salesman praying for his departed father, it is significant to recall another story from the Old Testament, told in the Second Book of Machabees, Chapter 12. Judas, general of the Hebrew army, discovered upon the bodies of some of his

slain soldiers certain offerings made to the idols of Jamnia. Jewish law strictly forbade the taking and keeping of these pagan treasures.

Still, Judas hoped that these men who had died fighting for God and religion, might find mercy, either because of ignorance, or sincere sorrow before their death. Accordingly, he ordered prayer and sacrifice for his fallen followers. Let the Bible tell it:

"And making a gathering, he sent twelve thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead, thinking well and religiously concerning the resurrection.

"(For if he had not hoped that they that were slain should rise again, it would have seemed superfluous and vain to pray for the dead.)

"And because he had considered that they who had fallen asleep with godliness, had great grace laid up for them.

"It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins." 2 Machabees, 12:43-46.

Here is a clear and undeniable proof of the practice of praying for the dead in the old law, a practice strictly observed by the Jews of that time, a practice which evidently was not introduced or started by Judas on this occasion. It had been an accepted custom and devotion already. He was simply acting on the belief and conviction that prayer and sacrifice could help his comrades killed in battle.

When our Jewish salesman in Brooklyn prayed for the soul of his father, he was in line with the best traditions of the Jewish faith. He was in line with the practice of the Old Testament. His forefathers way back before Christ had prayed for the dead.

To anyone who might offer the objection that we do not find mention of purgatory in the Bible, we point out this passage as outstanding among many. Catholic devotion to the departed goes way back. The Jewish salesman in Brooklyn and the Jewish general in the Book of Machabees had the same faith, a belief that they could help their loved ones who had gone before them into eternity.

It is in that faith we gather here this morning. It is in that faith, we have celebrated Holy Mass for this loved one. It is in that faith we will continue to pray and to offer good works for this poor soul and all poor souls.

We are following a practice and a faith that was strong years before the Lord of life and death came into this world, long before He died that all men might get to heaven, long before He rose, that all men might hope some day to rise with Him. The Church Christ founded, the Church Christ guides from day to day, teaches a belief in purgatory, a belief that was held by the holy Hebrews centuries before the Christian era, a belief that is followed by good Jews today. Amen.

HELP THE POOR SOULS—General

"Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you my friends, because the hand of the Lord hath touched me." Isaias, 19:21.

A young lady in one of our large eastern cities had the pious habit of having a Mass said for the Poor Souls every month. A sudden sickness caused her to lose her job and almost all her savings. One dollar was all she had in her pocket-book as she left home for the first time after her illness. As she passed a church she realized that she had not offered a Mass for the departed that month. She went into the rectory, arranged for the Mass, which the priest consented to offer the next morning. The young lady attended. As she left the church, she met a young man, rather tall and rather pale. He spoke:

"You are looking for work, aren't you?"

"Yes, sir," she answered in surprise.

"Well, go to 1014 Prospect Avenue. A lady there needs a maid."

With these words he disappeared. Hopefully the girl headed for the house with that address, knocked, and was met by a kindly looking lady in middle age. "Madam," said the girl, "someone just told me that you needed a maid. Would you consider me?"

"But my dear girl," the woman exclaimed, "who could have told you I needed help? I have mentioned it to no one."

As the girl attempted to describe the young man, her eye caught sight of a photograph on the piano.

"That looks a lot like him," she muttered gratefully.

"But that is my only son, who died two years ago. It could not be."

Then the girl told her story—how she regularly offered a monthly Mass for the Poor Souls, how she used her last dollar for that very purpose, and how she met the young man as she came from that very Mass. Evidently it was just that Mass which had helped him in another world. In her gratitude the mother not only employed the girl as a maid, she took her in as her own daughter.

This is merely one of a thousand instances in which the Souls in purgatory have rewarded even on this earth any devotion or thoughtfulness shown them. Today as we gather to pray for a Poor Soul who was near and dear to many of us, we can profitably recall the many powerful ways which Mother Church recommends for helping the Holy Souls in Purgatory.

1. First and foremost and most powerful of all helps is the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for those detained in the state of purgation. The Mass is without limit in value. It is the unbloody continuation of the bloody sacrifice of Christ on the cross. It has been offered from the very beginning of Christianity, not only for the living but also for the dead. We see this in the catacombs of Rome.

Furthermore, in every Holy Mass, even that offered on the highest feasts, there is the Remembrance of the Dead, which Mother Church places as the fourth prayer after that most solemn moment of the Consecration.

We prayed it just a moment ago in the Holy Mass we offered for this person whose body we are carrying to the grave. Let me repeat it for you now that in the tender feelings of this hour it may take deep root, and you may pray it often hereafter:

"Be mindful also, O Lord, of Thy servants and Thine handmaidens, who have gone before us with the sign of faith, and who sleep the sleep of peace.

"To these, O Lord, and to all who rest in Christ, grant, we beseech Thee, a place of refreshment, of light, and of peace. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen."

What a simple and beautiful prayer! How can our Lord refuse to hear it, when it is offered in connection with the supremely satisfying death of His Son?

There are three principal ways in which you can aid the departed by means of the Mass:

- A. By assisting at Mass and earnestly making this remembrance of the dead I just mentioned.
 - B. By hearing Mass for the Poor Souls and applying to them what we call the fruits of reparation and petition of the Sacrifice.
 - C. By having Mass offered for them. This is the most valuable assistance you can give them.
2. In connection with Mass another means of helping the Holy Souls presents itself, namely praying for them at the time of Holy Communion. One of their greatest pains in Purgatory is the inability to receive our Lord in the Sacred Host. Pray for them when you receive.
 3. A third means of assisting the departed is prayer, prayer of all kinds, public prayer and private prayer, prayer in the official words of Mother Church, prayer in your own words, short prayers and long prayers, week-day and Sunday prayers, night prayers and morning prayers, prayers to various saints, and prayers to the Queen of All Saints, Our Blessed Mother. Don't forget, she is Mother of the Poor Souls also. She is intensely interested in seeing them get to heaven as soon as possible. Ask her to help the Holy Souls.
 4. From earliest times the giving of alms or charity for the sake of the souls in Purgatory was a customary means of helping them. Every will should take into consideration the poor or some worthy cause, if for no other reason than to help the soul of him who has made the will. Give this serious thought.
 5. Works of penance and sacrifice form another means to help them. You who make the sacrifice gain in grace and grow in virtue, while you help to satisfy and atone for those suffering in purgatory.
 6. Still another method of helping the Holy Souls is by means of indulgences. This covers a wide field, but an important one because at every moment of the day and night one can obtain some shortening of the temporal punishment due to sin, in favor of those who are suffering.

Your love and devotion may suggest other ways of helping the departed, but these are the main ones—Holy Mass, Communion, Remembrance, Prayer, Penance, Almsgiving, and Indulgences. Use any of them; use all of them. The important thing is that, like the young lady of our story, your help to the Poor Souls should be regular and should be done at a sacrifice. Those aided souls will see that you are rewarded. Amen.

JOYS OF THE POOR SOULS—General

"At midnight Paul and Silas were praying, singing the praises of God, and the prisoners were listening to them." Acts, 16:25.

One of the strangest and at the same time one of the most inspiring stories in the Bible is that of St. Paul and St. Silas in prison as told in the Acts of the Apostles, 16:19-34. They had driven a divining or evil spirit from a young girl whose masters were making a lot of money through her fortune-telling. With their source of profit gone, these dishonest fellows dragged Paul and Silas before the magistrates. They stirred up the people and the civil authorities to tear off the clothes of Christ's representatives, beat them with rods, and then throw them into prison, fastening their feet so they could not move.

At midnight a sound steals out of the jail's dead silence. The other prisoners awake one by one. They had never heard such music before. They listen. Yes, it is coming from the inner prison into which they had seen two broken, bleeding men thrown the day before. Yes, those two prisoners were singing.

Paul and Silas could not sleep because of their smarting wounds. Perhaps they did not want to sleep. Anyway they spent the night in prayer and even broke forth into song, singing the praises of God.

A sudden earthquake broke open the doors of the jail and unfastened the chains of the prisoners. The jailer, seeing the open doors, was about to kill himself, when St. Paul stopped him, declaring they were still there. As a result the jailer and his entire family were baptized.

There are many lessons in this incident from the life of the apostles of the nations, but one I would like to emphasize, namely, the fact that they were singing in prison, singing in their pain and misery. They were happy in prison.

Their happiness reminds us of the joy of some other people who are in prison, who also enjoy a certain happiness, namely, the Poor Souls. Is there any joy in Purgatory? Do the souls there have any particular consolations? Are there any smiles amid their tears? Fortunately the answer is affirmative. In their place of purging the Holy Souls experience many deep delights, joys which we would do well to recall at this scene of death.

In general Purgatory holds for us many consolations as well as pains. Point out the pains and punishments we must; but its delights and peace we must not forget. The sufferings of the Poor Souls are severe, but those pains are mingled with intense joys.

1. First, the Poor Souls are certain of their salvation. What a consolation—to know that, come what may, they will one day be with God. What worry and dread we harbor on that point! They have absolute assurance of sometime being with God. Theirs is the joy of one homeward bound, of the pilgrim returning of the soldier coming home. The journey is rough and the hardships many, but the soul is sure of going home.

2. The Holy Souls are in continual union with God. They long to be with

Him in heaven. They think of God more than the most recollected saint.

3. Furthermore, they are completely and perfectly resigned to God's holy will. What a joy that must be! Their wills are so thoroughly in tune with the will of God, that they will what God wills, to the extent that even if, by some flight of fancy, the gates of heaven were opened to them before their time, they would refuse to appear before the face of God, for they would still see in themselves the stains of unpurged sin. We who grieve over the death of our loved one can experience part of his joy in the other world by completely resigning ourselves to God's will.

4. The Holy Souls also experience the inexpressible joy of doing things just to please God. They accept their sufferings, they put up with the delay, they worship the divine will, they pray for souls still on earth—all with the burning desire to delight the Almighty. Here, too, we can experience a similar happiness by doing something just to please God. We can accept our grief and our separation and the loss of this loved one—just to please God. It is a spiritual thrill which the Holy Souls experience continually.

5. In addition to the certainty of salvation, the positive assurance of one day being in heaven, the Holy Souls also have the special satisfaction of not being able to commit sin. How happy we would be if we had not the slightest impulse to impatience, for instance; if we had no desire to commit the smallest fault; if we were stripped of the three-fold sinful desires that come from the world, the flesh and the devil. The Holy Souls have not the slightest inclination to sin. What a joy!

Moreover, they are wrapped in peace. They live in peace. Mother Church reminds us of that "from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof," when, shortly after the most solemn moment of consecration in the Mass, she bids us pray:

"Be mindful, O Lord, of Thy servants and handmaidens who have gone before us with the sign of faith, and who sleep the sleep of peace."

How one can be at peace amid torments and pain is something of a mystery, a mystery which clears up somewhat, however, when we recall that many martyrs even in their most terrible tortures felt a peace and a joy beyond expression. If pain and joy can thus commingle here on earth, by the grace of God, how much more harmoniously can they mingle in that other life of waiting for God.

We might mention another joy of the Poor Souls, that of praying and sacrificing for others, even though they cannot merit for themselves. We know that they can pray for those on earth. This loving task is their delight. This loving mother (father) who has gone beyond is still praying for her children here on earth. What happiness is hers in helping her own.

Think of these true joys of the Holy Souls this morning. The thought of these consolations will be a consolation to us. Amen.

TREASURES IN HEAVEN—General

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where rust and moth consume, and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moth consumes, nor thieves break in and steal." St. Matthew, 6:19.

In the summer of 1922 a group of excavators dug up the tomb of an Egyptian king. They unearthed treasures which aroused the interest of the world. They found those treasures in the tomb of King Tut-ankh-Amen.

The excavators found four rooms which had been untouched for 33 centuries. Those rooms contained unbelievable riches: they found Pharaoh's jewelled throne, they found his carved gold and silver couches, they found stools, and chests of clothes, alabaster jars of perfume still faintly fragrant, and they found piles of food, right where the mourners had placed them.

It was customary among the Egyptians to bury with the corpse everything the dead person might need in the next life—food, drink, clothing, a bed and chair, means of recreation, and even pictures for the walls.

Of all the tombs thus far discovered of ancient Egyptian kings, that of King "Tut" had not been entered by thieves, had not been rifled of its precious and interesting treasures. That tomb tells us much about how they lived, and how they looked upon the future life thousands of years ago.

This story of King "Tut" reminds us of the words of our Lord which I quoted a moment ago:

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where rust and moth consume, and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moth consumes, nor thieves break in and steal." St. Matthew, 6:19.

What a striking contrast between the burial of that ancient king, and the burial it is our sad duty to conduct this morning! In the tomb of King "Tut" the mourners placed the treasures of this earth—money and jewels, food and clothing, perfume and pictures—treasures which resisted rust and moth and thief for centuries, but treasures which finally were unearthed to become the property of others. One thing is certain those possessions did the dead king no good.

On the contrary, as we prepare to place the mortal remains of this good Christian in the tomb, we place with it the treasures of heaven, which he has gained and gathered throughout his life. Nothing can rust them; nothing, consume them; nobody can steal them. They are spiritual treasures which he has won by his good life, treasures to which we can add by our prayers and penances for him. We might briefly consider some of this good man's treasures, in order that we who mourn his passing, may take inspiration and consolation.

1. Like every other son of Adam, he worked. But his pay was not merely that which came in an envelope, or which could be counted in dollars and cents. He made his labor count for eternity, by offering it up daily to

Almighty God, by performing his tasks conscientiously, by spending his hard-earned money on his family and his home, and by giving a generous share of it to God's Church.

The Catholic who works just to build up a bank account or to acquire property is laying up mere "treasures on earth," which will be as useless as the riches placed in the tomb of King "Tut." But the Christian who offers his daily labor to the Lord, who performs every task for God, will be paid in eternal, rustless riches.

2. He practiced his Catholic faith, thus gaining rewards beyond all earthly counting. He put the spiritual above the material, every time he made an effort to receive the Sacraments, every time he made the sacrifice of attending Holy Mass, every time he gave up his ease to attend Lenten and other special devotions of the Church.

Every one of those efforts was a treasure in heaven, a treasure we hope and pray he is enjoying today.

3. He tried to be a fond father and a helpful husband. Only a man who has tried to be conscientious as the head of a home can know of the heartaches, the sacrifices, the demands on time and energy which the office of father requires. Yes, he provided the material goods for his loved ones, but he also fed them with the spiritual, by seeing to their Catholic education, and by his example of Catholic living. In the bank of God these are imperishable treasures.

4. We can also gain treasures in heaven by doing penance, and by accepting the sufferings of this life in the spirit of Christ. Daily life is usually a penance in itself. It can and does become a precious penance when we accept its sacrifices, its weariness, its monotony, its set-backs, in the knowledge that these disagreeable portions of daily living are treasures which we are laying up in heaven.

The world will honor the man who builds up a fortune, who has property and money in the bank, who has many of the material things which contribute to the comfort of living. Some of this is necessary and useful, but to put all one's hope and trust in the things we can see and feel and count, is to lay up mere treasures of earth, which will rust and perish.

On the contrary, to understand the spiritual, the things of the soul, and to build up a bank account in heaven is to lay up treasures which can never be taken away from us.

In the grief which we share with you loved ones left behind, there is a note of hope and cheer. Your dear husband and father took to heart the command of Christ that he lay up treasures in heaven. We will add to those treasures by offering the Holy Sacrifice, by penance, by following in his footsteps, and by praying for him, as we will do right now. Amen.

LEAN ON THE CHURCH—General

"Be strengthened in the grace which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy, 2:1.

Jack and Harry Chapman were brothers. Both were in the State Penitentiary at Columbus, Ohio. Both were eating their last meal together. In half an hour Harry would walk that last mile—to his death. Jack was almost beside himself with grief and anger, while Harry, the condemned man was calm, even happy. He reached over the table and touched the hand of his brother:

"Don't feel badly, Jack. I have made peace with God and know that I have a much more abundant life awaiting me . . . Lean on the Church, Jack: It's so strong."

Jack went back to his cell half-crazy with grief at the loss of his brother, and with anger toward a society that would separate them by death. After Harry's execution in the death chamber, Jack finally went to see the same Father Sullivan who had brought Harry into the Catholic Church, and had given Harry that calm and courage he showed in his last moments.

Jack told Father Sullivan how after Harry had spoken to his brother, he realized for the first time that there was meaning to life. Jack repeated Harry's words:

"Jack, I have just learned that this life is not all there is to it. There is another world. Don't look so shocked, Jack. It's true. This little book, the catechism, will show you the real way. The way to a brighter, richer life."

Then Jack repeated Harry's parting words:

"Lean on the Church, Jack. It's so strong." Jack also became a good Catholic. He knows the Church is strong.

Dramatic and unusual as this story may appear to be, we are reminded of it this morning as we gather to honor what is left in an earthly way of a kind father and loving husband. The man whose body lies before us at this sad hour also leaned on the Church. But he learned to lean upon Mother Church, not late in life, but in his early years. He experienced the strength and courage that comes from seeking support on the spiritual staff that Mother Church offers to all her sons and daughters.

1. In his early boyhood he was already forming the strong character we all admired by learning from the Church the difference between right and wrong, and by receiving from Mother Church the strength to choose the right.
2. In youth he was beset by the same temptations that assail all young men, but he had helps in the holy sacraments and the guidance of the Church Christ founded.
3. When he finally chose for his life partner the good woman who weeps most over his departure, our deceased friend found courage and strength in the difficulties of married life by leaning on the Church before whose representative he had pledged deathless love. When God blessed their

loving union with children, he needed still more courage to rear and train and care for them. That courage he found in Christ's Church.

After all, before the bar of God's all-seeing justice we all stand as sinners in the sense that we have all committed the crime of offending God in some way or other, small or great. All of us stand in need of mercy and forgiveness, all of us stand in need of strength that comes to the children of the Church through the sacraments of penance and the Holy Eucharist. Often, regularly, fervently our friend sought that strength. He really leaned on the Church.

At times there were doubts and questions, personal problems, family problems, problems in his profession. To the priest of God's Church he brought those problems. He leaned on the Church.

4. All through his final sickness he sought strength in the only place where it can really be found. The bright spots in his bed-ridden days were the times when we could bring him Holy Communion. He seemed to live from one Communion to the next. He seemed to receive so much consolation and courage and new life from each reception of the food of angels.

5. At last came the day when he was to receive for the last time the bread that makes the weak strong and the strong stronger. Though pitifully weak, he mustered all his energies and all his faculties. Like the young man of our story who knew that death would come to get him in half an hour, our beloved friend, knew that death was merely a matter of moments or hours away. He was calm; he was courageous; he was confident; he was strong—spiritually.

He made his last confession, received Holy Viaticum, and tried to pray along as we gave him Extreme Unction and said the prayers for the dying. The only sad strain in the scene of his death was the grief of leaving his loved ones. But even here he was strong. He was leaning, leaning heavily on Mother Church.

6. Yes, his entire life was leaning on the Church, like that of the condemned criminal who found this a source of strength in the last hours of life. Among his dying thoughts no doubt was the assurance that he would be remembered after death, not only by the tears and groans of natural grief, but by the prayers and sacrifices of his loved ones, his friends, and his guiding companion through life—the Church.

7. And, just as the deceased leaned on the Church in his life and in his death, so you bereaved ones must lean on the Church which alone offers us true consolation, true sympathy, true hope at such an hour.

Lean on the unmistakable belief that you can help him by your prayers, by offering Holy Mass for him, by little sacrifices for him. Lean on the unquestionable faith that he is still living, and, we hope, enjoying the fruit of his trust in the spiritual organization founded by the Son of God. Lean on the Church, you who weep and mourn his passing, lean on the Church and some day you will have the joy of being united with your husband and father and friend, in a land where we will live in the presence of God forever. Amen.

HE STILL SPEAKS—Priest

"He was beloved of God and men, whose memory is in benediction." Ecclus., 45:1.

In the closing years of the eighteenth century, when America was still an infant, pioneers were pushing westward. They poured into the great Indiana territory in order to combine their forces with the French who had settled there some time before. But the combination posed a problem. The French had to be educated in the American language before the two nationalities could work together. At that early date there were no public schools. Whoever could not pay for private schooling, had to learn on his own or go without.

A Catholic priest, Father Rivet by name, came to the community of Vincennes, Indiana, at that time. Immediately he started a school. He took steps to have his school supported by the United States government. As a result, the Rivet School was run at public expense from 1795 to 1804, by direct recommendation of the Father of our country, George Washington. This school stands out in history as the first in America to give education to poor children at public expense.

Incidentally, we do wish that those who throw mud at our Catholic schools as un-American, might remember this first public, free school. It was started and maintained by a Catholic priest.

But the point I want to emphasize this morning about Father Rivet is the direction he gave before his death. He requested that he be buried in the churchyard rather than in the church itself, as was the local custom at that time, so that, as he said:

"The children will perhaps believe they hear again this voice so well known to them and thus recall the rules of conduct I have so often pointed out to them."

We have gathered this morning to honor the mortal remains of another priest of God, another ambassador of Christ, who like the pioneer Father Rivet gave all his time and talents and energies to the church and school in your fine parish. You have lost your father, your helper, your friend. You have lost your shepherd, your leader, your advisor, your teacher. You have lost your priest, who by his example at the altar and on the street, who by his preachings from the very spot where I stand, who by his firm but kind directions in that confessional, who by his comforting words at your sick-bed, endeared himself to you as a true and tireless shepherd. Indeed, God loved good Father X; and you loved good Father X. To him can we rightly apply the words of my text, words of praise bestowed by the Spirit of the Lord upon Moses the leader of the Jewish people:

"He was beloved of God and men, whose memory is in benediction."

The memory of your beloved pastor should never fade in your hearts. Just to remember him will ever be a blessing. To think of him will be to think of what he did for you, what he said to you, and how he showed you the way to God.

I am sure that his wish, even though unexpressed, is a great deal simi-

lar to that of Father Rivet, almost two hundred years ago, just as it is the fervent wish of every true shepherd of souls, the wish, namely, that you, his spiritual children, recall the rules of conduct he gave you in the pulpit, in the classroom, in parlor instructions, in the confessional, and in the dozen and one other places where a priest imparts instruction and gives guidance. As we gather about his casket this morning, as we stand beside his grave in a few moments, as we will often gather beside his grave in the days to come, we can still hear his voice, we can still hear his holy directions, we can still hear him repeating the commands of his Divine Master, we can still hear him speaking the sentences of Sacred Scripture. It is for us to give heed.

1. He still speaks to you, dear parents. From the grave, as during life, he still urges you to keep serious supervision over the children God gave you. Many of them he baptized. Many of them received their first instructions from him. Many of your children received our Lord for the first time from his consecrated hands. To him the little ones were also precious. They are precious to God. That is why he always begged you parents, and begs you still, to give those little ones the best of example, the best of care, not only for their little bodies but for their innocent souls.

2. Father X still speaks to you young people. He tells you today, as he told you on many another day, of the dangers you will meet, and of the helps of Mother Church in meeting those dangers. Often he urged you to receive the sacraments. He still urges you.

3. Dear Father X still speaks to you, his beloved children. You boys and girls listened to his instructions eagerly. He is still instructing you boys and girls.

4. Father always had a kind and encouraging word for you older folks. Remember those words. They still come from lips cold in death but warm in our memories.

5. Yes, Father still speaks to us priests. Seldom did he give us directions in word. But often he gave us instruction by his splendid example of all that a worthy priest of God should be. His friendly greeting, his heartfelt hospitality, his word of encouragement when we were discouraged, his sincere praise for our feeble efforts and our God-given success—still echo in our priestly hearts.

He still speaks. Indeed, we are sad this morning, sad that someone we learned to love and esteem, has been taken by death. But in that sadness is a decided note of gladness. In the silence, the sad silence about his grave, there is a decided note of a glad voice, an encouraging voice, a sure voice, the voice of your beloved pastor, who now knows that the ways of Christ are the best ways, the path of virtue the best path. By remembering him often in prayer we will benefit ourselves, for we will then remember his priestly directions. Amen.

THE ANSWER OF DEATH—Priest

"O Lord, make me know my end, and what is the number of my days; that I may know what is wanting to me." Proverbs, 38:5.

Pope Innocent the Ninth occupied the Chair of St. Peter for only a few months—in the year 1591. As he lay on his death-bed the pontiff showed the General of the Jesuits a small box, shaped like a casket.

"Guess what is in it?" said the Holy Father.

The good priest's guesses were all misses. Finally the Pope opened the box. In it lay a small likeness of himself, dressed in his papal robes, lying in state, as he would be in death. His visitor showed surprise. Pope Innocent explained:

"A pope must make great decisions, decisions upon which depend the eternal happiness or damnation of many. Whenever I waver in my decisions I come to this room, open my casket, and ask myself:

"Innocent, what would you wish to have said or decided once you are lying here in this casket?"

"The answer never fails. According to the answer of death I decide."

Upon the shoulders of the Holy Father rests the responsibility for the souls of the world. In a similar way, although on a much smaller scale, the responsibility for all the souls in the territory of his parish, rests upon the shoulders of the parish priest. It is a tremendous responsibility, a responsibility that good Father X bore with conscientious faithfulness. Often in the quiet of prayer and spiritual thought he must have looked ahead to this very day and this very hour. Often he must have looked at himself in his casket, as we look at him today. He looked at himself and asked himself:

"Father X, what would you wish to have said or done once you are lying here in this casket?"

Only by such a serious standard could such a zealous and faithful priest have directed his life. It is the explanation of his tireless labors. It is the explanation of his kindness and patience. It is the explanation of his faithfulness to prayer and every one of his priestly duties. Yes, and it is the one reason we can detect a note of joy in the dirges of this melancholy morning. He now lies in that casket actually. Rather, his body lies here; his great soul, his generous soul, his apostolic soul has gone to be with the great Good Shepherd. In the midst of our mourning we are minded to speak of the responsibilities of the priest and how good Father X carried them out.

1. A priest must preach. Whether he feels like it or not, whether he is pressed with other tasks or not, whether he has a receptive audience or not, he must break the bread of truth to the sheep of his fold. Father X was extremely conscientious about his preaching. He was clear and simple, and above all, sincere. He told you the truth, when he knew that truth would hurt, told it with kindness, but told it with firmness. Yes, from the pulpit he could look down in imagination to the day when he would lie here in death. He wanted to have no regrets at this hour.

2. A priest must teach. He must instruct the little ones in the truths and practice of their faith. Not an easy task, but an all-important one. The priest must instruct those who wish to become members of the true Church. Each convert takes many weary hours of instruction. It is a delightful duty, but a difficult one for the busy priest.

3. A priest must administer the sacraments. He pours the waters of life over the head of the cradle Catholic and the adult convert in Baptism. He must prepare children and adults for the great sacrament of Confirmation. He must be available for Confession, to grant him divine forgiveness. He has the duty of distributing the Bread of Life, with the additional duty of seeing that every soul in his parish receives Holy Communion. In the pulpit and in the parlor, in season and out of season he must preach and teach the holiness of marriage. It is his privileged responsibility to prepare young couples for this holy state and then witness their weddings in the presence of God. His is the duty of giving the Last Sacraments, a trying task made more difficult by postponement and silly fears on the part of those who do not understand. All these responsibilities Father X performed as if he were doing them on the day of his death.

4. Every pastor of souls has the added obligation of offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for his flock. Too few Catholics know, and still fewer realize, the blessings that come to them from the Masses offered by your pastor for the parish. On every Sunday of the year and on thirty-five other days he stands before the altar of God and draws down upon you the graces and merits of the Mass. In addition he prays for you the divine office every day.

5. The pastor is also responsible for the parish plant—equipping, maintaining, repairing, painting and decorating, not to mention the planning and building, and the heart-breaking task of paying for new buildings.

6. Another duty of the priest is to keep the parish records. He must put down in a book every Baptism, First Communion, Confirmation, wedding and funeral, as well as every penny that comes in and every penny that goes out. Regular reports must go to the bishop on the spiritual, physical, and financial condition of the parish.

Your beloved pastor had many other duties; these were the principal ones. As a true shepherd he performed them to the best of his ability. He tried to be a kind but firm father to all.

Indeed, he listened to the answer of death. In the words of my text, taken from Proverbs, he wanted to know what was wanting to him. He wanted to know what he could do more for the flock entrusted to him. For such faithfulness, for such devotion, he deserves the prayerful remembrance of everyone—today and every day. Amen.

INNOCENT OF HANDS—Religious Sister

"Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord: or who shall stand in his holy place?"

"The innocent in hands, and clean of heart." Psalm, 23:3, 4.

The sad scene here this morning recalls to mind the sad yet joyful scene in the life of another saint. Popularly known as the Little Flower of Jesus, St. Therese of Lisieux was growing minute by minute in the love of God. The circumstances of her death frighten us even as we recall them.

She was in the last stage of consumption. One night, lying upon her uncomfortable bed, wide awake and wrapt in prayer, she suddenly felt a gush of warm blood coming up from her heart. In her handkerchief she caught it as it came to her lips. It was another hemorrhage. She knew that it was a signal from the angel of death. Naturally she was frightened. It was midnight. She was alone. There was no one to assist or comfort her.

Yet, in her fears there was a holy joy. As she later related, when she felt her very life-blood spurting from her mouth, she wanted to scream for joy, joy that the hour of her release from this world had come. She did not strike a light or call out or even look at the stained handkerchief. She waited and prayed until morning.

When the Mother Superior came into her room, the Little Flower held up the blood-stained cloth and asked in all her sweetness:

"Mother, is this the messenger of death?"

"Yes, my child," the Superior told her.

The Little Flower could hardly contain her joy. It was written all over her face. It was present in every tone of her voice. She was supremely happy that the time had come to go home to the Lord whom she had loved so fervently, whom she had followed so faithfully.

Often had she prayed those words of the Psalmist:

"Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord: or who shall stand in his holy place?"

"The innocent in hands, and clean of heart."

At last the time had come to experience the truth of those words. At last the moment had arrived when she would mount up to God, when she would stand in His holy place, because she had tried to be innocent in hand and clean of heart.

Sad as we are this morning at the departure of good Sister N.N., there is a sense of supreme joy on this occasion, the joy that she too, like the Little Flower, welcomed death, the joy that she too fulfilled the requirements of the Psalmist for those who would ascend up to the mountain of the Lord. And what we say of Sister this morning can be said of everyone of her faithful Sister religious. You are all Little Flowers in the garden of the Son of God. You are all precious in His sight, because you have given all that this world might offer in order to serve Him and Him alone. The

death of a fervent religious accordingly arouses feelings of joy, feelings of jubilation, feelings of genuine happiness.

We might dwell for a moment on the reasons for that joy. We might try to understand how a saint like the Little Flower could be so inexpressibly happy when she realized that death was near. We might think for a moment about the reasons for the happiness this good Sister showed in her last moments, and, above all, of the happiness which is hers today.

1. Her poverty will be rewarded by the boundless riches of heaven. Willingly she gave up the possessions of the world, that she might possess something, Someone much more valuable. It was not easy at times to keep her vow of poverty. It meant going without things that the body craves. It meant humiliating asking of permissions. It meant denying herself. It meant being dependent upon others for the very necessities of life.

But today that poverty receives its reward. Sister is infinitely rich in the love of God. She is rich in the company of the Blessed Mother she loved so tenderly. She is rich in the companionship of her Sister religious who had gone before her, rich in the fellowship of the souls she taught and the souls she served in the sick-room. Yes, what she gave up was a lot, but what she gained was a lot more—ininitely more. What a joyful exchange!

2. Like the Little Flower, Sister had to suffer for a number of years. Her field of labor was a bed of pain. Furthermore, even in her days of health she often experienced weariness and exhaustion, pains and discomforts. Such come to all of us in some way or other. What a joy it must be to reach that point when there will no longer be suffering, when there will no longer be weariness or pain or discomfort. Sister is now in that unspeakable joy.

3. There is a special joy in the reward that comes after labor. The man who works for a day and receives his pay at nightfall experiences a thrill and a satisfaction that can never come to one who does not have to work. Sister worked day in and day out, year in and year out, never receiving a pay check, as we call it. But today she stands before the Divine Paymaster to receive the reward for every task, big and little. The simplest things of her daily life are being paid for in the coin of eternal love. For everything was offered up to Almighty God.

4. Sister is experiencing a special joy in the honor that comes to one who shunned honors on this earth. She was known quite widely for her capable and zealous labors, but her name was never in the headlines, her work never won her public acclaim. Yet, today, with Jesus and Mary smiling upon her, Sister is receiving the reward she deserves.

The life of every good Sister is an inspiration to all of us, just as the lives of the saints inspire us. May this funeral, with all its sad, sweet meaning, with all its joyful notes and feelings, inspire other young women to follow the path this Sister trod, that someday you may experience the joy that is hers today. Amen.

BUILDERS OF TEMPLES—Religious Teacher

"You are the temple of the living God." II Corinthians, 6:16.

Long ago two temples were built. The first was built with hands. The best of stone was selected for its foundation. From foreign lands was brought the most snow-white marble. The trimmings in gold and silver were the best that workmen could find. Iron and brass were brought from afar. Years were spent in the construction. At last the great temple was completed. There it stood in all its grandeur and magnificence—with its vaulted roof, its mighty foundations, its gilded walls, its soaring arches and its colossal pillars that seemed, in their whiteness, to be cut out of snow. Men marveled. Men praised. Men exclaimed:

"This temple shall never see decay.

At the same time another temple was being built, but not of stone or marble. There was not the hustle and the hubbub, the noise and excitement that marked the building of the first temple. You could not see the builders toiling. You could not see great piles of stone and precious woods. Quietly, almost secretly, construction went on. At last it was completed, but no one marveled at the finished work. No one praised the builder. No one predicted that he would be remembered forever.

Time passed. The first temple began to break down. The roof caved in; the pillars crumbled; the arches sagged. The temple became just a pile of rubbish.

The second temple grew stronger and more beautiful with the years. It was a temple built by a teacher. It still abides and will abide forever—it was the temple of a child's immortal soul. It will outlive and outshine all the temples made with hands.

We have gathered this morning to honor such a builder, to carry back to mother earth the body of one who built for eternity, the while we pray for the splendid soul that inspired a lifetime of sacrifices and skill in the cause of Catholic education.

Sister Mary was a splendid teacher, from a community of splendid teachers. Her success in the classroom was unusual because her zeal and her talents were unusual. But when we call her a teacher we do not say it all, unless we are wise enough to mean by a teacher everything that it implies. A teacher is a builder, a builder of temples of God. She is the architect and the contractor and the laborer. She works with materials much more precious than the rarest marble and the most expensive wood. She works with human minds and human wills. These are precious for they go to make the temple of God, which we are. Several thoughts suggest themselves as we stand by the coffin of a religious teacher.

1. First, get rid of the idea, if you ever had it, that teaching is easy. It is one of the most taxing occupations we know. Only a person who has stood before a class all day long, day after day, week after week, year after year, can understand the mental and physical demands it makes. Merely sharing knowledge is not too difficult; merely teaching arithmetic and grammar is not too trying; merely teaching the knowledge and love of

God is not the big burden. The tremendous task of the Catholic teacher is the forming and training of the will and character, the education, the drawing out of the best in the soul of a pupil, building it up, as it were, for eternity. I emphasize the difficulty of this task in order to solicit the cooperation of you parents in the work of our good Sisters. You are a co-worker, an important helper, in the erection of this temple of God—your child's immortal soul. Work with the teachers in our school. Understand their task. Uphold them. Back up their labor in school by your example at home.

2. Another thought is that the religious teacher, like the one who three days ago has gone to receive her reward, has dedicated her life to building temples for eternity. It is not a temporary task, marking time until marriage or until something else turns up. It is a life-time occupation. To it she is consecrated and dedicated to her very finger tips. She throws herself into her work with every talent and ounce of energy. She is working, she knows, not for advancement, not for honors, not for a more choice position—she is working for the Divine Architect—building His temples.

3. Speaking of the Divine Architect, we are reminded that a religious teacher builds according to the blue-prints of our Blessed Lord. She follows minutely the directions of the Sermon on the Mount. She works to form God's temple according to God's own specifications.

4. Still another fact is that the product of her teaching rivals the product of any other form of education. Put aside forever even the suspicion that Catholic education is inferior. Child for child, talent for talent, the average child in a Catholic school will equal and often surpass the educational progress of those not trained by such inspired teachers.

5. Contractors often work according to a model. In Catholic education the builder herself is the model. She shows in her life and her deportment the living example of what she teaches, especially in the all-important phase of religion. To every child she represents what the true temple of God should be. What a challenging task! And how admirably Sister Mary fulfilled it.

Today, we sympathize with this community in the loss of an able builder of God's temples. We sympathize with her few relatives. We sympathize with the children she taught, who mourn her passing.

But Sister Mary is happy today. Carrying out our thought of a builder, we often notice on the cornerstone of a building or on a plaque at the entrance the name of the architect and the contractor—cut in brass or some other enduring metal. All very well. But the temples which Sister Mary built are inscribed with her name, a name carried by those souls into another life. Some were there to greet her. All will some day meet her. What a glorious reward awaits her. There should be some young lady here to take her place, so that you also may one day share a similar reward. May God reward His faithful builder. Amen.

HUMAN JEWELS—Religious Nurse

"Amen I say to you, as long as you did it for one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it for me." St. Matthew, 25:40.

History tells us an instructive story of a man named Macarius. He was not the famous saint by that name, although he also had a saintly character. He was the supervisor of a hospital in Alexandria, Egypt. One day a wealthy woman told him of the jewels she was collecting, and of the many she already had in her possession. Macarius offered to obtain some marvelous jewels for her at a bargain price, assuring her that his many contacts with strangers gave him an excellent opportunity to do this.

Happy in the prospect of adding some precious stones to her collection, the woman gave him five hundred gold pieces to purchase jewels for her. They agreed on a day when she would visit the hospital and see the jewels. On the appointed day, bright and early, the woman was there, eager to behold the gems that would be hers—and at a bargain. But the gems were not what she expected; they were human beings.

Macarius led her through the wards of the hospital, pointing with pride to this patient and that one, whom he had brought in and cared for with the money she had given him. There were the jewels he had secured with her gold.

The woman, be it said to her credit, accepted the bargain with good grace, because Macarius must have pointed out to her that whatever she did for the sick and the poor was done for Christ Himself.

This morning we have gathered in grief to conduct the funeral of another woman, one whose riches far surpass the treasures of the wealthiest. No, in stocks and bonds, in property, jewelry and other earthly possessions she was the poorest of the poor. She owned absolutely nothing. Yet, she is rich. Her wealth is invested entirely in human jewels, in the thousands of human beings whom she nursed and attended in the many years she served the Lord as a religious and a nurse in the zealous community of St. Joseph.

If Macarius of old could point with pardonable satisfaction to one patient after another that was aided by the money a wealthy woman thought was going for gems, how much more just the *pride* of Sister Martha's guardian angel, as he points to thousands, yes, thousands, of men, women and children, of all classes, of all races, of all religions, of all walks of life whom this good Sister has helped with the apparently exhaustless riches of her loving heart.

She was never paid in this world's pelf. So poor was she that if there was need of a new pair of shoelaces, she had to ask her superior for them. Yet, all the while she was amassing a truly tremendous treasure, one that she could take with her into the land beyond. True, there are always a certain number of human satisfactions in rendering service—the grateful gaze of a patient whose pillow she smoothed; in the contented thanks of one who has received a glass of water or some soothing medicine from her hand. Then there is the heartfelt "Thank you" of the patient who recovers,

plus the praise, for the most part, of a world that does not understand the source of strength and sweetness of our Catholic nursing Sisters.

That source we must seek in the depth of a nurse's soul. Her service of her fellow-man was offered as service to her Master. She daily thought upon, and daily acted upon the promise of our Divine Lord Himself, when He told of judgment day and described so minutely what would be said and done on that dread day.

"I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; naked and you covered me; sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me." St. Matthew, 25: 35-37.

What a picture of a true nurse! The very things they do, not once, not a dozen times, but hundreds and even thousands of times, those are the very things Christ promises to reward, when they are done for His sake. And Sister Martha did all this for the sake of the Lord. That was the heart and well-spring of her service, a service to which she brought talent, and training and tender affection. Too many take a romantic and sentimental view of these women in white, not realizing the rigid requirements they must pass before they can serve in their high capacity.

1. Physical health is of primary importance. To be in constant attendance not merely on one patient but on several; to minister food and drink and medicine and perform the dozen other services each suffering body requires, will drain bodily energies. The religious nurse, by regular hours and healthful diet and avoidance of excess, is best able to withstand this strain.

Besides, Sister Martha made a double dedication of her body: by her religious profession she gave her energies to God; by her pledge as a nurse she gave that body again to the service of God and fellow-man.

2. Thorough training, long and exhausting, is demanded of one who would be first lieutenant to the doctor. She must be familiar with all phases of medicine, surgery and bed-room care. Sister was high above the average in talent and ability. She knew that mere feeling for the sick was not enough. One had to know how to help them.

3. A third and most important requirement in a nurse is character, a sterling, cheerful, reliable character. This we all know Sister Martha had. Daily, in prayer and spiritual thought, and especially in the grace of Holy Mass and Holy Communion, she formed her heart after the heart of the Divine Physician.

The death of this good Sister leaves a void in the ranks of this glorious army of mercy. Some young lady must take her place. Some young lady must find in this nun's life the inspiration and the model for a similar life, one that will be crowned, as hers is crowned with eternal jewels, placed on her brow by the eternal King Himself. For that we shall pray. Amen.

AN INTEREST IN HEAVEN—Child

*"Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest?"
Psalm 54:7.*

A traveler was once touring the Alps. He was particularly interested in the higher pasture regions, where large herds of cattle and flocks of sheep and goats are put to graze.

A blade of grass is precious in those high regions. The herdsman leads his flock to every spot of green he can find. Because goats are more agile and sure-footed, the shepherd takes them to places where other cattle and sheep cannot go. Furthermore, the goat is much more venturesome and daring.

But her bravery seems to be tempered when the goat has a young one with her. The wise mother goat will not jump across a gap or scale a steep mountain side that instinct tells her would be beyond the courage and strength of her young. How can the shepherd get the goat up to those juicy patches of green?

The shepherd picks up the kid, and lifts it up on some ledge or across some chasm to a spot where there is grass. No sooner is the baby goat over than the mother goat leaps to be beside its young.

Christ has called Himself the Good Shepherd. In many ways He has proved Himself to be the Herdsman of holy Church. The figure of the Good Shepherd is a striking and apt one for our Lord, especially at the death of a child. Christ, as it were, takes a dear little one from its parents, and raises it up to the eternal pastures. He compels the dear father and mother to look up; He inspires them with a desire to follow their little one. Like the Alpine shepherd, the Lord almost forces the bereaved family and friends of the little one to think of higher things, to aspire to higher things. Loved ones left behind may have been somewhat forgetful of heaven before, may have thought too little about their heavenly home, may have been making rather feeble efforts to reach their eternal goal.

But now that they have a child in heaven, now that they have a loved one in that heavenly city, now that they have a dear one in the home of God, those left on earth begin to think more about paradise, begin to strive more to attain it.

Christ has picked up your little one, dear father and mother, and has placed him in heaven, to direct your eyes and your hearts and your minds heavenward. Now you have an interest in heaven. Now there is more reason than ever before to think about your everlasting home.

1. You have an interest in heaven in the sense that an interest means a right, a title, and a share in something. You have given your little one back to God, who has taken Him to heaven. Part of heaven therefore belongs in a sense to you. You are part owner of one of its citizens. You have cooperated with God to bring another soul into this world that it may glorify God forever in another world.

The same is true in many ways in this world. Once we put something into a work or enterprise or investment, we are interested in it, because

part of it belongs to us.

I was once taking a walk in a big city when I met an acquaintance of some years back. He had done well financially meanwhile, and had made many wise investments. Among them was stock in a big office building. Nothing would do but that we take a walk by that tremendous edifice, go into the hallway and ride the elevator up to the top. You would think he owned the entire building to see how interested he was in every detail of the structure.

In a similar way, dear father and mother, your little one is in heaven. A part of paradise is your investment, as it were. From this day you will feel that you must be interested in it.

2. The mere fact that your little boy is in heaven will also make you interested in everything about heaven. I heard of a man whose grown daughter married and moved to a distant city. Up until she moved away, he knew little or nothing about the town where she went to live. But after she was there, he took an interest in all the news items he saw about that town. He read up on the history of it and its industries. He even went to the library and read the article in an encyclopedia on the place where his daughter lived.

How much more will you sorrowing ones try to learn about the place where this little child has gone to live. How eagerly you will listen, for example, to sermons on heaven. How attentively you will read articles in Catholic papers and magazines about every phase of that heavenly home.

It was the royal psalmist David who called out: "Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest?"

Yes, on the wings of thought and the swifter wings of love you dear ones will fly to the home of the child God has taken from you and placed in His very own paradise. That is one loving purpose the good Lord had in the death of this child.

See that purpose. Thank God for giving you an interest in heaven. Thank God for the grace of gazing upward. Thank God for the grace of thinking about your happy child in heaven. God's angels have taken him up to heaven that you might have something precious in heaven to think about, that you might take a special interest in your eternal home. May this little one look down upon us and ask God to help us win our way to him. Amen.