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J.M.J.

PREPARATION FOR DEATH

—*Saint Joseph Cafasso's
prayer at the foot of the cross
as a preparation for death.*



Great God, prostrate before Thee, I accept and adore that sentence of death which Thou hast pronounced over me. I stand awaiting the coming of my last hour and, knowing that it may come upon me at any moment, I carry myself in spirit to my deathbed to bid adieu to this world and to make now for that occasion a clear and solemn protestation of those sentiments and affections with which I intend to terminate my mortal career and enter into my eternity.

(1) I have sinned. I confess it with all the bitterness of my soul. I detest with my whole heart all the faults that I have committed during my life. For each of them I would be ready to die in reparation for the offence to God, and I would wish to have died a thousand times rather than have offended Him. I ask pardon of God and of men for the evil that I have done, and I will ask it until the last moment of my life in order that I may find mercy on the day of judgment.

(2) Since my wretched body has been the cause of my offending my dear God so much, with my whole heart I make a total sacrifice of it to my Lord as a just punishment for it. Not only do I resign myself to descend into the tomb, but I rejoice and thank God who has given me this means of paying my debt. Through these ashes which will remain from me in the sepulchre and by these bones which will speak for me, I will confess until the day of my resurrection that the Lord is just, and just also the sentence which has condemned me to death.

(3) I thank my parents, companions and friends for the charity they have shown me in putting up with all my defects, and I thank them for all the favors and all the assistance which in their goodness they have given me. I ask pardon of them for having given such a poor return, and for the scandal I have given them. I ask them to continue to give me the charity of their prayers, and, when I am separated from them, I firmly hope that I will see them again one day in Paradise.

(4) As God in His inscrutable Providence has wished that I should have the disposal of temporal interests, I ask pardon if I have not made the use of them that He expected of me. As He alone is Lord of all, I again place everything in His hands.

I intend that the disposition that I have made or that I shall hereafter make may be for His greater glory, and, in that portion of life that remains for me on earth, it is my firm will and determination to spend all that remains to me when my needs are satisfied, for the work of the Lord, being disposed and indeed desirous to strip myself of everything whenever God wishes it of me.

(5) With regard to the most important point, which is the spiritual preparations for that day which will be my last, I render the most sincere thanks to God for having thus disposed of me and taken me out of the world. I salute and desire and bless that day that will put an end to my own sins, and take me away from the midst of so many sins that are committed on the earth. I now in advance thank that person who will give me the consoling message, and, until that day arrives, I shall regard it as so dear to my heart that I would not exchange it for the greatest day of this world.

(6) I entrust my death to the love and care of my heavenly Mother. In her tender heart I place my last hour and my last sighs. It is in the arms of this Mother that I wish to leave this world and enter my eternity. I intend that every sigh which I shall give at that moment, every breath and every look, shall be voices which call her, which solicit her help for me from Heaven, so that I may soon see her, contemplate her, embrace her and may be able to die with her help. But if, by special favor of her tender heart, she wishes to call me on a day consecrated to her, it would be a still greater consolation for me to be able to present to her the offering of my life at a time when Heaven and earth celebrate a feast in honor of her name and of her great mercies.

(7) I recommend in a special manner my passage to eternity to St. Joseph, the spouse of Mary, whose name I unworthily bear, to my guardian angel, to my two special protectors, St. Ignatius and St. Alphonsus Liguori, to all the angels and saints of Heaven, and to those souls in Paradise who remember me. I salute them all from this valley of tears, and I appeal to each one of them to pray for me that the happy day will soon come when I shall meet them face to face and enjoy with them that feast that will have no end.

(8) For everything concerned with the time and circumstances of my death, after the example of my divine Redeemer, I resign myself fully to whatever the Heavenly Father has arranged for me, and I accept the death that God in His eternal decrees considers best for me. To fulfill His will, I accept all the pains that He wishes me to suffer at the time of death. In this hardest sacrifice and in my most painful agony, I wish and intend that His holy will be always done.

(9) With my whole being I give thanks to the good God who, by His special mercy, has willed to call me to the Faith at my birth and place me, unworthy that I am, as a son in the arms of the Church. I today renew those promises that were made for me at the sacred font. I grieve for and detest whatever there has been in my life not in conformity with those promises. I condemn and regret anything that during my life may have been wanting in obedience and respect to the Holy Roman Catholic Church. Today and always I formally declare that I wish to live in the closest communion with that good Mother. To her I entrust my ashes that she may bless them and keep them in her custody until the day of judgment.

(10) I desire and ask for all the sacraments and comforts which our holy religion has reserved for her dying children at the hour of death; and when the Lord shall demand the sacrifice of my life, I intend to unite it to that which so many confessors of the Faith have

made and to breathe forth my spirit in homage of and for the support of our holy Faith.

(11) As I am about to finish my mission on earth, I give back and consign to God that grand vocation with which He has willed to adorn me. I have no words here below to thank Him worthily for it, and I await eternity to do so. I thank with all my heart all those who have employed themselves to this end for me, and I recommend myself to each of them in order that I may obtain mercy at the great moment in which I shall be called upon to render an account of my earthly career. I shall die, and the thought consoles me that with my death there will be one less unworthy minister upon the earth, and that another more zealous and fervent priest will come to make up for my coldness and other defects.

(12) As I am certain with the certainty of faith that God can, and that He wishes, to pardon all those who repent of their sins, relying on that firm confidence which cannot be deceived, and penetrated with the most lively sorrow for my past faults, I protest that I hope most firmly for pardon of all my failings and for the attainment of my eternal salvation. Whatever be the assaults that my enemy may launch against me in life or in death, I will repeat that I believe in my God, that I hope in Him and that He will save me.

(13) Now that my days are about to finish, and that time is about to vanish for me forever, I know and understand better than in the past my duty on earth, which is to know and serve my God. As long as life remains I will lament that time in which I have not loved Him, and I will repeat continually from now on, "Either to love or to die." Whatever I shall have to do or suffer in this miserable life, I intend that it be a proof of love for my God, so that living, I shall live only to love, and dying, I may die in order to love still more.

(14) The sorrow which I experience, O Lord, for not having loved Thee, the desire which I feel to love Thee ever more, renders this life burdensome and distasteful, and

makes me pray Thee to shorten my days on earth, and to pardon me my Purgatory in the next life, so that I soon may arrive at loving Thee in Paradise. I ask of Thee this grace, O Lord, not through fear of punishment—which I confess that I deserve a thousand times more—but from the sincere desire to love Thee much, to love Thee soon, and to love Thee face to face in Paradise. Let the anguish which I feel, O God, for not having loved Thee, and the danger which I am running of offending Thee and not loving Thee more, serve as my Purgatory!

(15) Finally, when I shall have departed to the grave, I desire and pray the Lord to make my memory perish on this earth so that no one shall any longer think of me except to pray for me—a favor which I ask from the charity of the faithful. I accept as penance for my sins all that shall be said against me after my death. I condemn and detest all the evil that may in the future be committed because of me. I wish that I could prevent all the sins of the world by my death, and so I would be ready to die as many times as there are sins committed on the earth.

Oh! May the Lord accept this poor sacrifice so that when dying, I may have that sweetest consolation of sparing one offence to my Lord on that day. This is my firm will and determination with which I intend to live and die in each and every moment that God may wish to dispose of me.

I place the moment of my death in the hands of my dear Mother Mary, of my good angel guardian and of my special protectors, St. Joseph, St. Ignatius and St. Alphonsus Liguori, all of whom I expect to assist me at the hour of my death and in my voyage to eternity. Amen.

Come then, welcome death. Come, but conceal thy coming, so that the hour of death may not give life back again. It will be no longer death for thee, my soul, but a sweet sleep if, when thou art dying, Jesus assists thee, and if when thou art expiring, Mary embraces thee.