

ACCEPTATION OF DEATH

SAINT LEONARD OF PORT MAURICE (1676–1751)

MY God, from eternity you have decreed my death, both with regard to the substance, and to the most minute circumstances of it.

I therefore, first, accept it with regard to the substance, and offer it to you as a holocaust, rejoicing that, by my destruction, your absolute and independent authority and dominion over our life and death is made more manifest. I offer it to you as a sacrifice of propitiation, and in penance for my sins. I rejoice that this body of mine, which has been the accomplice of so many sins, is to be devoured by worms. And because I hope from your mercy and love to be delivered from the torments of Hell, I accept from this moment, and embrace with cheerfulness, the pains of Purgatory; for I delight in paying at least this little tribute of pain to your sovereign justice: and I hope to pay for all eternity an unceasing continual tribute of benedictions to your immense goodness.

I offer it to you as a pacific victim, or in thanksgiving for the most excellent, most precious, and innumerable benefits which you have prepared for me from eternity, which you have conferred on me in time, and which, I hope, you will confer upon me for all eternity.

I unite my death with the most precious death of your divine Son, and I offer it also for the most sublime ends for which he offered his death. I unite the pains, the sorrows, the agonies which shall precede and accompany my death, with those which he suffered on the cross.

I willingly accept death, because then at least my sins shall cease, and I shall no longer be the cause of the intolerable deordination, that a rational creature, created to love the Supreme Good, should live as if made only for the purpose of offending him.

I willingly accept death, because I hope that, through the infinite merits of my Lord Jesus Christ, I shall arrive at the sight, O my God, of your most beautiful countenance, that, by the beatific vision, I shall be under the happy necessity of loving you with a true, ardent, disinterested, and perpetual love, and that I shall have the consolation of seeing you sovereignly loved by innumerable creatures, and, above all, loved by yourself, as much as you deserve.

I accept also all the circumstances of my death as ordained by you. If the time, the place, the manner of my death were at my disposal, I certainly would place them in your hands; because I am certain that you know better, and desire more earnestly, than I do, what is conducive to my welfare. You have

fixed the year, the month, the day, the moment of my death. I do not know when it shall be. I know not whether this shall be for me the last month, the last week, or last day; but I know that for many, and for many who have better prospects of a long life than I have, this shall be the last week and the last day. You have fixed the place, the cell, the bed on which I am to die; you have fixed the malady, the symptoms, perhaps the unforeseen accident, which shall cause my death.

I adore, I accept, I submit most willingly to all these arrangements of your providence. I sacrifice myself entirely to your most amiable will. I throw myself altogether into the arms of your paternal providence. I unite this act of resignation with the resignation with which your Son accepted his passion and death. I desire and beg, O my Jesus in the holy sacrament, the grace to be fortified before death by the most holy viaticum, and by the other sacraments of the Church, which I now, for that moment, expressly ask. Should I be unable, in my agony, to ask by any sensible sign for the sacramental absolution, I now ask for it in a particular manner. And I also now, for that moment, have the express intention of gaining all the indulgences which I can gain at the hour of my death. 'Into thy hands I commend my spirit.'

Most holy Mary, who are the refuge of sinners, and the most particular advocate of the dying, through the pains which you suffered at the death of your Son, I pray you to assist me with the affection of a mother at that most tremendous step, and to protect me against all the attacks of the devil, so that I may breathe my soul into the wounds of your and my Jesus. '*Pray for me, a sinner, now, and at the hour of my death.*' My dear protector, Saint Joseph, my angel-guardian, my holy advocates [N. N.], you know better than I do the importance of this great step, the greatness of my danger, and of my need of assistance. Ah! do not abandon me in such great necessity. Complete the other favours (which, with so great charity, you have bestowed upon me) by assisting me to die a good and holy death. Thus I shall enjoy the fruit of your protection for endless ages. All ye saints of God, make intercession for me.

SOURCE OF TEXT

Alphonsus Mary de Liguori, *Preparation for death; or, Considerations on the eternal maxims*, trans. Catholic clergyman (Dublin: James Duffy, 1843), 471-74.

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