

Apostolate to Assist Dying
Non-Catholics
or
Apostolate of the
Prayer Card

*A Means of Assisting Well-Meaning
Non-Catholics to Die a Happy Death or
of Leading Them to the Light of the
One True Faith*



For the use of Priests, Sisters, Nurses, Social
Workers, or any one else who wishes to help
in that work which of all works is the most
divine—the salvation of souls.

A TRULY CHRIST-LIKE WORK

Nihil Obstat:

RAYMOND F. STOLL, S.T.D.
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Apostolate to Assist Dying Non-Catholics

Is it true that nothing can be done for the dying man, because he is not a Catholic and does not wish to become one? Many seem to be of this opinion; but it does not sound like the voice of our Heavenly Father, Whose mercy is above all His works. The truth about this most important matter is that much can be done for the non-Catholic at the hour of death. This it was that furnished the inspiration for the "Apostolate to Assist Dying Non-Catholics," a work as old as Christianity, and in some ways as old as the human race itself. Only the method is new.

The Apostolate makes an attempt to prepare the non-Catholic for a happy death by placing in his hands, in any way possible, a Prayer card, which has no appearance of Catholicity, but which contains all the acts necessary and sufficient for his salvation. If the patient is too sick to read, the prayer can be read for him and with him. The *body* of the work is the getting of the card into the hands of the non-Catholic with the suggestion that he say the little prayer frequently and as fervently and earnestly as possible. The *soul* of the work, which is by far the more important part, is your earnest prayer to God, that in His mercy He may grant to your patient or friend the efficacious

grace of really meaning what he says, when he prays the little prayer:

I believe in one God. I believe that God rewards the good, and punishes the wicked.

I believe that in God there are three Divine Persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

I believe that God the Son became Man, without ceasing to be God. I believe that He is my Lord and my Saviour Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the human race, Who died on the Cross for the salvation of all men, Who died also for me.

I believe, on God's authority, everything that He has taught and revealed.

O my God, give me strong faith. O my God, help me to believe with lively faith.

O my God, relying on Thy almighty power and infinite mercy and promises, I sincerely hope to be saved. Help me to do all that is necessary for my salvation.

I have committed many sins in my life, but now I turn away from them, and hate them. I am sorry, truly sorry for all of them, because I have offended Thee, my God, Who art all-good, all-perfect, all-holy, all-merciful—my kind and loving Father.

I love Thee, O my God, with all my heart. Forgive me, I implore Thee, for having offended Thee.

I promise, O God, that with Thy help I will never offend Thee again.

My God, have mercy on me.

DEAR CHILD OF GOD:

"My Daily Prayer" comes to you as one of God's children. God is your kind, merciful, and loving Father. He is the most understanding and the most forgiving of all fathers. He really cares for you. He loves you; and He wants you to know Him, love Him, and serve Him in this world and be perfectly happy, for all eternity, in the world to come. This is your longing desire—the salvation of your soul—after all, the only thing that counts. "My Daily Prayer" will be for you a wonderful help in attaining this all-important end. Say it earnestly and fervently. Make it a real prayer. Let every word come from your heart. Say it every day. May God bless your efforts!

My Daily Prayer

I BELIEVE in one God. I believe that God rewards the good, and punishes the wicked.

I BELIEVE that in God there are three Divine Persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

I BELIEVE that God the Son became Man, without ceasing to be God. I believe that He is my Lord and my Saviour Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the human race, Who died on the Cross for the salvation of all men, Who died also for me.

I BELIEVE, on God's authority, everything that He has taught and revealed.

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I LOVE Thee, O my God, with all my heart. Forgive me, I implore Thee, for having offended Thee.

I PROMISE, O God, that with Thy help I will never offend Thee again.

MY GOD, HAVE MERCY ON ME.

The ordinary means of salvation, according to the will of Christ, is the Catholic Church, and all who believe her to be the true Church are under solemn obligation to enter her fold; but this is not the class of people the Apostolate has in mind. It is interested in trying to save the souls of that much larger group—non-Catholics in good faith—who are generally allowed to die without any spiritual help, totally abandoned in that moment on which their eternity depends. Of all the works of religion, does it not seem that this is the most neglected one? Very often the person is not even baptized and never will be. Many know nothing about Baptism; others do not believe in it; not a few have been baptized invalidly. Their only salvation lies in making an act of perfect love of God or of perfect contrition, either of which is the Baptism of Desire, and the only Baptism of Desire; a mere desire for Baptism is not sufficient.

The serious question is—and it is a very serious one—how to reach this large class of people at that most critical time. If anything, even suggesting Catholicity, be placed in their hands, it is rejected on principle and in many cases considered a positive insult. The Prayer card has been prepared in the hope of solving the question at least to some extent. There is no mention made of Catholicity, nor does it even suggest it; there is nothing at all that

could possibly offend. In fact, everything on the card is just as appropriate for well-meaning non-Catholics as for Catholics, and there is no attempt made to deceive. Even the "Imprimatur," which has been properly secured, is omitted by permission of ecclesiastical authority. The card has been made attractive, so that it will not be thrown away. The decorations on the hand-tinted card are classical, not religious. The coloring in red is done by hand; this touch of hand-painting is a very valuable asset. Since good intentions do not supply for essentials, the act of attrition has been purposely omitted, in order that all the attention might be centered on the act of perfect contrition, which of itself in most cases must accomplish the work of the Apostolate without the help of the Sacraments.

It is the ordinary teaching of the Church that any non-Catholic, whether or not he be baptized, who sincerely makes the Acts on the card, will have done all that is necessary for his justification. It is understood, of course, that, if not baptized, he does not know of the necessity of Baptism, and then the act of perfect contrition or perfect love of God is for him Baptism of Desire, which is equally efficacious as Baptism of Water, as far as justification is concerned.

It might be asked, what should the priest, a Sister, or lay person do, when the patient actually makes the Acts

printed on the card? If it is certain that the patient is a non-Catholic in good faith, to whom there is no use speaking of the Catholic Church, and has really made the Acts, this is what should be done: Thank God for His goodness and mercy and ask Him most sincerely to grant the patient the grace of perseverance. But since it is possible that the act of sorrow was only attrition, it would be well to consider what could and should be done about baptizing him, even though he would claim to have been baptized in some Protestant denomination. If the patient recovers, the case should be followed up, if possible, for later on he might see things differently, through God's grace, and seek to be admitted into the body of the Church. Many cases of this kind have already occurred through the efforts of the Apostolate to Assist Dying Non-Catholics.

It should be very carefully borne in mind that the work of the Apostolate is not a substitute for conversions. It would be far better, as is evident, if the person would become a Catholic and be able to partake of the many blessings of the one true faith, but this is not our supposition, which should be very clearly understood. We suppose a well-meaning non-Catholic, seriously sick, to whom there is no use speaking about entering the Church, and who is in good faith.

How strange it is that so much is done for the dying Catholic and so

little, and sometimes nothing at all, for the non-Catholic about to enter eternity, even in some of our Catholic hospitals. Both souls are of equal value in God's sight. Did not Christ shed His Precious Blood on the cross for the salvation of all?

The field is very large and for the most part unexplored. Statistics show that even in our Catholic hospitals more than one half of all the patients treated are non-Catholics.

How hopeful we ought to feel in our efforts to save the dying non-Catholic, when we recall the story of the penitent thief on the cross. This story is repeated every day and would be repeated far more frequently, if all those who are called upon to care for the dying would use greater effort to obtain for their patients from the hands of a merciful God this greatest of all graces. How much more hopeful we should be, when we call to mind the many fervent prayers that are ascending each hour of the day to the throne of God for those who will die this day or this night. These prayers, offered up either by Religious or lay people, are truly Catholic in character; they are offered for all, for the Catholic and Protestant, for the Pagan and Jew.

How especially hopeful and even certain we should be, when we think of the solid foundation on which the Apostolate is built. This foundation is nothing less than the two revealed and

most consoling doctrines—the mercy of God, which is above all His works, God, Who wishes not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live, and the universality of the Redemption, Christ having died on the cross for the salvation of all mankind.

Very probably the wounded man, spoken of in the gospel, did not call for help, but he was very glad to accept it, when offered. So it is with those of whom we are speaking. They will seldom call on us for help; but when help is offered, they will always accept it and be truly grateful for it.

Any one can do this work. Some Protestant ministers are using the card in their ministrations to the sick and dying. Since they cannot give their dying patients the consolations of Holy Church, they could do nothing better. Many Protestant nurses likewise, prepare their Protestant patients for death by means of the card.

The following quotation from a letter, sent to all the priests of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, shows that His Excellency the Most Reverend John T. McNicholas, O.P., S.T.M., considers the possibilities of the Apostolate very great. The Archbishop's words are: "I beg of every priest in the Archdiocese to enter enthusiastically into this Apostolate to Aid the Dying. Thousands of non-Catholics, through our efforts, may acknowledge the supreme Dominion of God and the Divinity of Christ, beg

pardon for their sins and implore Divine Mercy. My suggestion is, that every pastor and assistant pastor be as resourceful as their gifts of mind and heart permit them in placing as many cards as possible into the hands of the non-Catholics in their parishes."

Besides the principal use of the Prayer card, it serves other very important purposes, e.g.:

1. When a prospective convert comes for his first instruction, the priest can give him one of the cards and ask him to say the prayer as fervently and as earnestly as he can. With his good dispositions of desiring to enter the Church, doing what is right and saving his soul, this saying of the prayer earnestly and fervently will in almost every case be an act of perfect contrition. If so, his original sin will be remitted and all actual mortal sins will be taken away, and the priest will have the great advantage of instructing a person in the state of grace, instead of one in the state of mortal sin.

2. Catholics, too, may profitably employ the cards, especially if they have been remiss in making such acts, so necessary for salvation.

3. The hand-tinted card can be given as a gift to a non-Catholic friend who is not sick, with the suggestion that he say the prayer every day earnestly and fervently. Since there is nothing about the card at which the non-Catholic could take offence, he will

very probably accept it and take your suggestion. Many converts have already been made in this way. How the number would increase, if all Catholics would have but a few of their non-Catholic friends making an act of perfect contrition, calling on the mercy of God and praying for faith every day.

The Apostolate is not operated for profit. The only motive is to help souls in their hour of greatest need. Consequently anyone is perfectly free to reproduce the cards, provided that the text of the prayer be not changed. Considering everything: printing, coloring, postage, etc., it is understood, that the cards cannot be given away, except to those who are not able to pay; otherwise the Apostolate could not exist.

Cards are available in English (different styles and Braille), French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Dutch, Swedish, Norwegian, Polish, Slovenian, Slovak, Lithuanian, Bohemian, Hungarian, Croatian, Russian, Ukrainian, Finnish, Greek, Chinese, and Japanese.

Copies of the cards can be obtained from:

a) Rt. Rev. R. J. Markham, S.T.D., Compton Road, Hartwell, Cincinnati 15, Ohio.

b) Sisters of the Poor of St. Francis, St. Clare Convent, Hartwell, Cincinnati 15, Ohio.

c) Sister M. Carmelita, R.S.M., Convent of Mercy, 1409 Freeman Avenue, Cincinnati 14, Ohio.

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Explanatory literature in English, German, or French, and a few sample cards are sent free of charge.

RAPHAEL J. MARKHAM.