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# The Catholic Sick Room

By  
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# THE CATHOLIC SICK ROOM

BY JAMES F. SPLAINE, S.J.



HIS little work, although it contains some prayers, is not meant to be a prayer-book; nor is it meant to be a treatise on the Sacraments of Holy Communion, Penance, and Extreme Unction, although it may give some instructions about them. It is simply a hand-book for Catholics in charge of the sick, reminding them how and when they ought to send for the priest, how they ought to prepare for his arrival, and how to help the patient, both as to his body and as to his soul.

## I.—SENDING FOR THE PRIEST

1.—Do not wait till the doctor gives the patient up—so that nothing short of a miracle could save him. Long before that there is usually “danger”—not perhaps immediate, but still danger—the priest ought to be sent for, because one of the prayers used in giving Extreme Unction begs for a perfect restoration of health, physical as well as moral, of body as well as of soul, so that the sick man, through God’s mercy, may be able to return to his usual employment. Not that we need wait even for this remote danger. Sickness often opens the door for grace, and therefore it is advisable to let the priest know as soon as the patient takes to his bed, especially if he be one who has led a careless life. Nor ought we to wait till such a person himself asks for the priest, nor attend to his excuses for putting it off. Still less should we blind him to his danger. People sometimes defer sending for the priest lest they should alarm the patient. But on a properly instructed Catholic his ministrations, and especially the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, as explained above, ought to have an exactly contrary effect.

However, while urging the importance of calling the priest in good time, let it not be thought that, when the

sick person has already lost his senses, it is altogether too late, and useless. The Church of Christ, being a loving mother, has foreseen this unfortunate contingency, and provides for it as far as possible. Therefore send for the priest.

2.—At the same time do not send for him unnecessarily, nor during the night if it can be avoided. But it will not do to run risks. In sudden and violent attacks of any kind, in typhoid and scarlet fever, smallpox, pneumonia, and other rapid diseases in which delirium comes on soon, and likewise in serious accidents, no time is to be lost. An ordinary fracture of the leg or arm is not a “serious accident,” but a bad fall or a heavy blow very often is.

3.—A doctor who is reluctant to allow a priest to come would seem to have had little experience among Catholics. Doctors who know us are only too glad to hear that a priest has been to the sick room, and not infrequently, though not Catholic, they send for him themselves. For they notice that, whatever may be the explanation of it, after the administration of the rites of the Church there ensues a great calm; and in many cases this is half the cure. There is not nearly as much chance of recovery for a man who is harassed in mind and conscience, as well as in body, as there is for one who is in peace.

4.—Except when it cannot be helped, do not send a mere child, or a non-Catholic, for the priest. Let the messenger be some one who can give an intelligent answer as to the name and address of the sick person; whether or no delirium has already set in; what the nature of the sickness is; when it commenced; whether any priest has already been to see the patient, and if so whether he administered any of the Sacraments; and, if not, whether the patient can swallow without vomiting. This is all the more necessary when the priest happens to be out, and the call has to be registered for him. If he be at home, the messenger ought not to go away until he knows whether he is wanted further.

5.—While waiting for the priest, especially if death or delirium be imminent, help the patient, *whether a Cath-*



*olic or not*, to make acts of the love of God, and of contrition, such as the following:

“O my God, I love Thee above all things, because Thou art so good; teach me to love Thee daily more and more.”

“O my God, I am very sorry that I have offended Thee; I love Thee with all my heart because Thou art so good, and I will not sin again.”

Make use, if possible, of prayers that he knows.

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## II.—HOLY COMMUNION OR VIATICUM

### *Preliminary Arrangements*

1.—When the Blessed Sacrament is coming to the house, prepare by putting the sick room in order. If there are other people besides the sick person sleeping in it, see that they get up, and that the beds are decently adjusted. Sponge the sick person's face and hands to refresh him, and, if Extreme Unction is to be administered, see also that the feet are clean and the stockings removed.

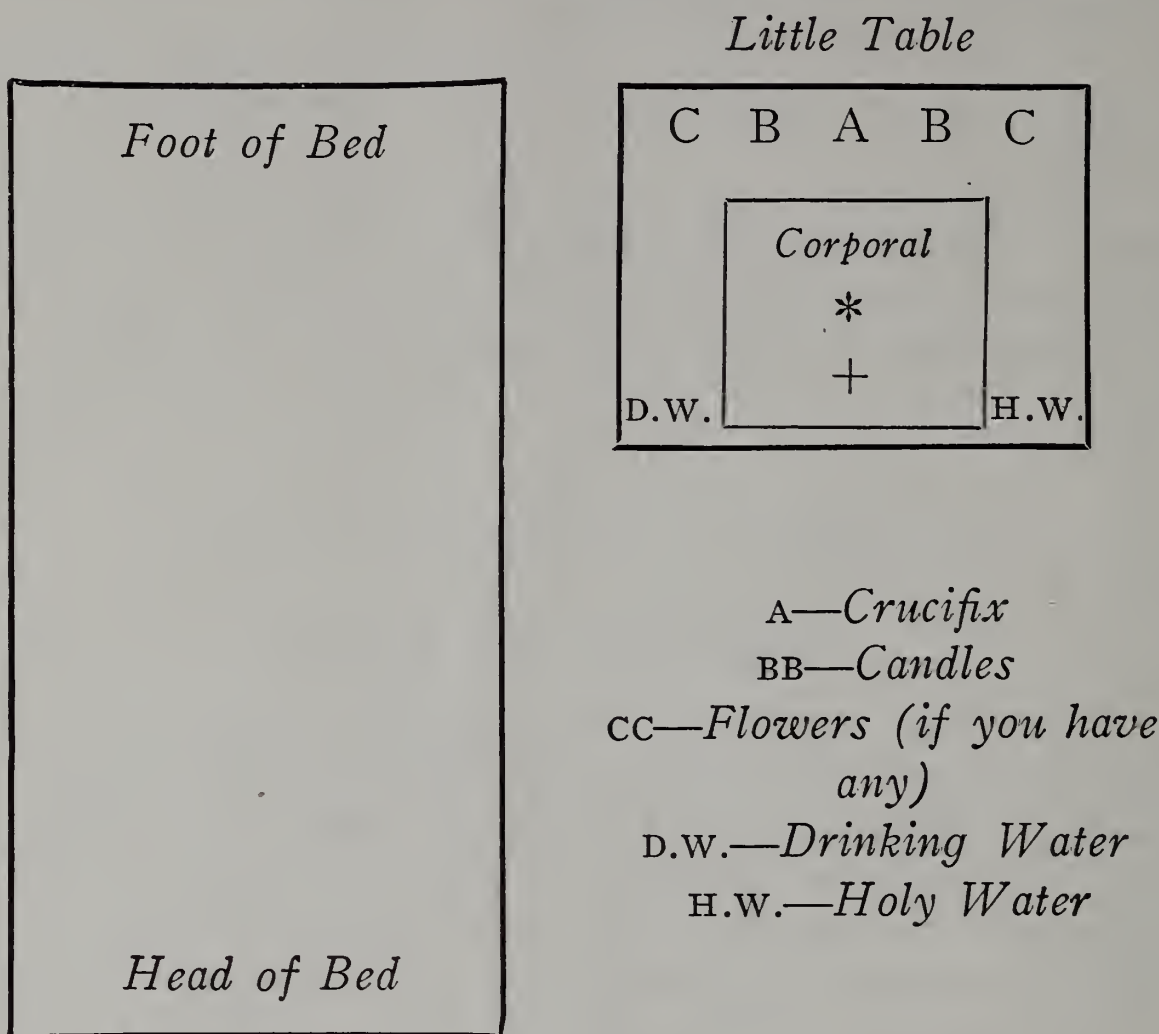
2.—Provide a small table, covered with a clean cloth. Set upon it a Crucifix, with a candle at each side; also a wineglass, or other small vessel (not a basin nor a deep tumbler) containing a little clean water,<sup>1</sup> another vessel with Holy Water, and a spoon. Lay a clean white cloth or napkin on the breast of the communicant.

3.—Place the table towards the foot of the bed, on the patient's right hand, in such a position that it will not be in the priest's way when giving Holy Communion or Extreme Unction, and that the sick person may be able to see Our Lord on the Cross.

N. B.—*All these arrangements must be made before the arrival of the priest.*

<sup>1</sup>This water is for the priest to wash from the tips of his fingers any particles of the Blessed Sacrament that may be adhering, after he has given Holy Communion. When he has done so, he gives the water to the communicant to drink.

## DIAGRAM FOR CATHOLIC SICK ROOM

*The Arrival of the Priest*

1.—Be on the lookout for the approach of the priest, so as not to keep Our Lord waiting at the door.

2.—When the priest comes, receive him in silence and lead the way to the bedside, carrying in your hand a lighted candle or taper; with this light the candles on the little table as soon as you enter the room, and do not extinguish your own.

3.—Kneel down at a convenient distance, with your face turned towards the Blessed Sacrament,<sup>2</sup> praying for God's merciful help, and there remain until the priest has finished the *Asperges* and prayer.

<sup>2</sup>This is not a useless admonition. Not infrequently people will turn to chairs and kneel in front of them, with their backs to the Blessed Sacrament.

NOTE 1.—Here, if the sick person wishes to confess, you leave the room, closing the door after you but keeping within easy call, so that, at a given signal, you may return and kneel as before.

4.—The next thing is to say the *Confiteor*—in Latin if you can, but English will do—and after the *Misereatur*, as also after the *Indulgentiam*, say *Amen*, as the servers do just before Holy Communion in Mass.

5.—At the third repetition of the *Domine non sum dignus*, rise and see that the napkin, or Communion cloth, is in its proper place, and, if the room be at all dark, hold your taper so as to throw light on the patient's face while the priest is giving Holy Communion; after which return again to your former position.

NOTE 2.—If you have not a taper in your hand, take a candle off the table, and restore it to its place before you kneel down again.

NOTE 3.—This is the place for *Extreme Unction*, if the priest intends to give it at this visit. For the manner of assisting at it see p. 9.

6.—When the priest is about to depart, take notice whether he makes the sign of the cross or not over the sick, holding the pyx-burse in his hands; if he does, that is a sign that he is still carrying the Blessed Sacrament, and you must escort him to the door, keeping your candle burning: otherwise you extinguish it as soon as you get out of the sick room, not before, and precede the priest to the door, which you open for him.

7.—Now return to the room, rinse out the small vessel used in giving Holy Communion, and throw the water on the fire, or in some respectful place. Put out the candles carefully, so as not to make a smell, but leave the Crucifix and the Holy Water. Lastly, if the patient would like it, kneel at the table and say a few short prayers with him, such as short acts of hope, charity, contrition, and resignation.<sup>3</sup> But beware of wearying the weary. Rather encourage him to sleep after his exertion, and help him to pray later on when he is refreshed.

<sup>3</sup>See page 22.



Say morning and night prayers kneeling by the bedside, such as the Our Father, Hail Mary, and short Acts of Faith, Hope, Charity and Contrition.<sup>3</sup> Once or twice a day you might also read an appropriate prayer, chosen out of the Devotions for the Sick, especially an Act of Resignation, adding invocations of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, the Angel Guardian, Patron Saints, etc., and this even though the patient shows no sign of consciousness. He may be quite alive to what is going on, though unable to speak or move. But beware of pestering. Father Anderledy used to tell a story of a good priest who, on his deathbed, was ceaselessly plied with this kind of spiritual food by his overzealous confessor, till at last the dying man mustered all his strength into his lips, and said: "Are you nearly done? Will you never cease bothering?" Let us remember that a man just before leaving this life may easily want a little private talk, so to speak, with Our Lord; and we must not deprive him of the opportunity by telling him what *we* would say. When the agony begins, let the departing soul be comforted by the voices of friends interceding for it with God.

#### *Observations*

1.--There may be more candles than two, but, if possible, there ought not to be less.

2.—Flowers may also be added, but, as they are meant for Our Lord, they ought not to be faded; care must be taken not to crowd the table, but to leave plenty of room in front of the Crucifix to spread the corporal, or linen cloth, which the priest always brings with him.

3.—Sometimes the clean water is supplied in a small jug, which is all right, provided a wineglass or other small vessel is provided, too.

4.—For Holy Water little vials are sold, with perforated stoppers, through which the water may be sprinkled. But it is sufficient if the Holy Water be placed in a small open vessel of any kind; a sprig of some small-leaved plant, or a stiff feather, may be left in it, to be used as an asperges brush.

<sup>3</sup>See page 22.



5.—If there is no small table to be had, at least clear some part of a larger one, removing all medicine bottles and so forth and making it as decent as possible.

6.—In large houses, where it can be conveniently done, the various members of the household are sometimes arranged at distances along the passages and up the stairs, kneeling with lighted candles in their hands, to receive the Blessed Sacrament; each one, as the priest passes, rises and follows him, some few entering the room and the rest staying outside the door, all on their knees; and so they remain until the priest is about to depart, when they observe Rule 6, given above (p. 5), keeping their lights burning till the Blessed Sacrament has left the house. If, however, the priest does not give the blessing with the veiled pyx, make way for him to leave the room, one person accompanying him to the door; in the meantime the candles are collected and carried away, to be extinguished where the smell cannot reach the patient.

7.—This ceremony cannot always be carried out fully, nor is it necessary; but, at any rate, the priest ought never to be left to shift for himself. Somebody ought always to be in attendance, as there is no knowing what help he may want when engaged about the sick.

8.—The majority, even of Catholics, never realize the difficulties that face the priest in taking Holy Communion to the very poor. We do not mention it as a reproach to the poor, for things that seem to us so easy and so common are very different to those who are born and bred in squalid misery. They are improvident, it is true; but then, what have they got to be provident about? They do not possess anything to provide. How can they prepare a small table, and a clean cloth, and candles, and a Crucifix, when they possess nothing of the kind? The writer has, before now, had to make shift with his own hat, set upon the floor, as the only available place to rest the pyx. This is not, we may hope, a common occurrence; but it is common to have no Crucifix unless the priest takes one with him, no clean vessel to hold water, and only one bit of candle, held perhaps in a bottle neck or made to stand in

a jar, or stuck to the table by melting it at the lower end. To remedy this state of things, charitable people sometimes provide themselves with a case containing all necessaries (Crucifix, two small candlesticks and candles, pair of small flower vases, asperges brush, bottle of Holy Water, small open vessel to pour it into, vial to contain two or three tablespoonfuls of water, wineglass or a very small tumbler, for the ablutions, a little white table cloth, and a white napkin, or Communion cloth), which they lend to anybody who is willing to carry it to the sick room, and lay the things out, when Our Lord is expected in the houses of the very poor. The case need not be larger than a lady's reticule.

This is a duty of love, worthy of the Confraternity of the Sacred Heart, the Children of Mary, or the Brothers of St. Vincent de Paul; it is a wonder that so few of the many devout Confraternities that exist among us have yet taken it up. Where the Confraternity of the Most Blessed Sacrament is established, this work ought to be considered one of its special privileges.

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### III.—EXTREME UNCTION

NOTE 1.—*This Sacrament is usually given immediately after Holy Communion, or Viaticum, and then the preliminary arrangements given above, p. 4, will suffice for both.*

NOTE 2.—*The precise point at which the Extreme Unction begins is indicated in Note 3, p. 5. You may observe the priest producing a case in which are some raw cotton and a gold or silver cylinder or box containing the Holy Oil. If the room is at all dark, provide also at least one candle. If, however, Extreme Unction is not administered just after Holy Communion, but at some other time and by itself, the preparation will be as follows:*

1.—Provide a small table, or some part of a larger table, with a clean cloth of any color; set upon it a Crucifix and a vessel of Holy Water; see that any head-dress that may be worn by the patient is so arranged that it may be easily removed from the ears; take care that the feet are clean, and the stockings off.

2.—You meet the priest at the door, without lights, and conduct him to the sick chamber.

3.—Arrived in the room, kneel in a convenient place, with your face towards the Crucifix, while the *Asperges* is being given. When the priest pronounces the word *Confiteor*, you continue it either in Latin or in English, and after the *Misereatur*, and also after the *Indulgentiam*, answer *Amen*.

4.—The priest will then make the sign of the Cross over the sick person three times, saying the words: *In nomine ✠ Patris, et ✠ Filii, et ✠ Spiritus Sancti*, and he will afterwards take the oil stock and some raw cotton off the table.

5.—While he is doing that, you rise, go to the head of the bed. If necessary, carry with you a candle off the table, so that the priest may see what he is doing, and, as soon as he has anointed the eyes, assist him by uncovering first one ear and then the other, at the same time turning the head a little to either side, so that he may reach the organ conveniently.

6.—After he has anointed the lips, uncover first one hand and then the other, and (except in the case of priests, who are anointed on the backs of the hands) present to him the open palm.

7.—Lastly, uncover the feet sufficiently for him to get at the instep, not at the sole, and then cover up both feet and hands, adjust the head-dress, and kneel as before while the concluding prayers are being said.

8.—If the priest now prepares to leave the house, you lead the way and open the door for him. But he may think it advisable to give the Last Blessing at once. For this, see Sect. IV. below.



*Observations*

1.—The ceremonies described under numbers 1-7, pp. 5, 6, and number 6, p. 7, are, of course, omitted when Extreme Unction is given by itself; but Christian charity and natural affection alike suggest that all the family or household should be ready, when the priest reaches the sick room, to follow him in, without lights, and kneel round the bed, praying for the sick person. There they should remain until the priest leaves. But in all this remember that it is most injurious to the patient to overcrowd the sick room, especially when lights are carried; and, of course, when the sickness is infectious, nobody ought to be allowed near such a place, except for duty.

2.—On Candlemas Day, every Catholic who can afford it ought to provide himself with one or two blessed wax candles, to be used on occasions like the above.

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 IV.—THE LAST BLESSING

This ceremony often follows immediately after Extreme Unction, and then no additional preparation is necessary. If it is given by itself, nothing is necessary except the Holy Water and a Crucifix, which last can be hung on the rail at the foot of the bed, or, better still, placed in the hands of the dying man.

But, in all cases, remind the sick person beforehand that he must, in words or at least in his heart, while the Blessing is being given, call upon Jesus to have mercy on him. If there be danger of delirium coming on, get him to make the ejaculation with this intention, while still in his senses; for this is a necessary condition, when possible, for gaining the Indulgence. He ought also to resign himself to God's will, and accept his sickness from His hands, saying the words: *Thy will be done.*

Be ready to say the *Confiteor*, in Latin or in English, if the priest tells you to do so and answer *Amen* after the *Misereatur* and after the *Indulgentiam*.

The blessing over, you precede the priest to the door and open it for him.

V.—NEWLY-BORN INFANTS

If a child at its birth seems to be already in danger of death, send without delay for a priest. In the meantime, be on the watch; and if you think it is actually dying, take some water, cold or warm, and *while pouring* a few spoonfuls on its head, say the words: *I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

This is sufficient, but it is more correct to pour the water in the shape of a cross three times, at the words *Father, Son, Holy Ghost.*

As this is a very important matter, every Catholic, especially every Catholic woman, ought to learn from some qualified persons how to do it properly.<sup>4</sup>

In cases of miscarriage, even in the early stages of conception, Baptism ought to be conferred by the nurse, if neither a priest nor a Catholic doctor is at hand. When it is doubtful whether the subject is alive or not, make a reservation in your own mind to the effect that you have no intention of baptizing anything but a living human being,

Here we make a serious protest against delaying Baptism, no matter how healthy the child may be. Some people think nothing of putting it off for a week or a fortnight. It ought not to be put off a single day. Babies are flimsy things, and the first care of a mother or father should be to secure for it eternal life in heaven. If the god-parents live at a distance, or cannot come at once, never mind—get a proxy.

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VI.—THE CHAMBER OF DEATH

1.—When the body is laid out, place the Crucifix on the breast, and set one or two candles burning at each side of the coffin. The Holy Water ought to be at hand, so that friends coming in may sprinkle the corpse, and then

<sup>4</sup>Those who have had experience in teaching children will understand that, to teach them to baptize properly, the best plan is to practice them on a lay figure.

kneel down to say a prayer for the departed soul. The custom of laying on the body plates containing salt, tobacco, and pipes is, perhaps, a relic of paganism.

In country districts, where communication is difficult and people have to travel long distances, sometimes on foot, to be present at a funeral, and there is little accommodation in the house, it is necessary for them to sit up all night, and they must be provided with refreshments. But this necessity seldom arises nowadays amongst us. Friends can easily assemble on the very day of the funeral, and there is no excuse for spending the night, still less several nights, crowded together, eating, drinking, and smoking, in presence of the corpse. Not to mention the danger to health arising from such a practice, it is, in itself, opposed to all Christian feeling, and it often ends in horrible orgies.

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#### VII.—AT THE GRAVE

The priest's place is at the foot of the grave, therefore leave that end clear for him and his servers. Do not rudely mount on to the boards in front of him. When the service is ended he will throw a little earth upon the coffin. If you happen to be near him, hand him the earth, so that he may not have to stoop at the risk of soiling his vestments, and after he has thrown some, do the same yourself, but not before him.

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#### VIII.—DRINKING AT FUNERALS

This is the proper place to mention a matter which, though not, perhaps, of every-day occurrence, is yet, alas, too common to be passed over in absolute silence. There is a class of "mourners" for whom the dangerous time begins now in earnest. Sometimes with pre-Volstead stock, sometimes with homebrew or the help of bootleggers, sit-



ting up with a corpse develops into a drinking bout. And after the burial the debauch is continued, in the house from which the dead body has just been carried, in the very room that still smells of the coffin—a hideous scene, the devil's holiday. Sometimes it is prolonged for several days and nights, as long, indeed, as the "insurance money" lasts, and you may hear children boasting to each other of the gallons of beer and bottles of whiskey that were drunk when their father was buried. Do not suppose this is exaggeration; *it is from life*, and we could enlarge on the subject; but the ghastly details of what we have seen, or known of, at wakes and funerals are too shocking, too revolting, too sickening, to be printed. What must be the thoughts of the departed soul, fresh from the Judgment Seat and plunged in the flames of Purgatory, as the weary days pass painfully on, and it realizes that it is forgotten by its friends on earth already; and that, instead of trying to temper for it that awful fire by a prayer, or an alms, or a Holy Communion, or a Mass, they are outraging the image of God in themselves by spending what may be called blood-money—money paid for his victim by Death, in excesses which to call brutish would be a libel on the brute creation.

Who will have the courage to help, by their example, to put an end to this shameful sin? Who will lend a hand to deliver the world from this disgrace, and human nature from this degradation, by refusing absolutely to bring intoxicating drinks—in short, to bring the devil—into their houses at these times of bereavement and sorrow?

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#### IX.—USE OF FLOWERS AT FUNERALS

In some countries it is the custom to bury with the dead the bows and arrows they used while on earth, and some food for the journey they are supposed to have begun. The corresponding practice among us is to load the hearse and coffin with flower wreaths, some of which are lowered into the grave to be presently covered up by the gravedigger's spade, while others are left to rot out-

side on top. The custom is of modern growth and not a Catholic one. It is a very good thing for florists. It is a thing easy to understand in the case of those who sit in darkness, and whose ideas of the future world are of the vaguest; but how it can give consolation to survivors, living in the light of Christianity, it is difficult to imagine; especially when one considers that these wreaths cost much money, which, if given in charity, would purchase for the dead the prayers and the blessings of the grateful poor in Christ.

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#### X.—HELPING A NON-CATHOLIC IN DANGER OF DEATH

Even well-instructed Catholics are sometimes apt to imagine, or to take for granted, that they can do nothing for the soul of a dying person who is not a Catholic. This is a very serious mistake. Let us suppose what we may hope is almost an impossibility,—that a man, dying in full possession of his senses, absolutely refuses to turn to God. Of course to him we can bring no help; he chooses to damn himself, and deliberately goes down to hell. But, short of this hardly conceivable wickedness, however bad a man may have been, however desperate his case may seem to be, we must not look upon it as absolutely hopeless. On the one hand, men who have been rebels against God all their lives often surrender at the approach of death; and, on the other, St. Paul writes to St. Timothy that God our Savior “will have all men to be saved” (1 Tim. ii. 4). Putting these two truths together, we see that, except in the case supposed above, there is always at least some little room for hope; and although, by the time the sinner’s heart has begun to soften, he may be so far gone as to be incapable of giving any external sign of sorrow, yet we have no right to take upon ourselves to pronounce him reprobate. To us his heart is unknown; only God can read it. Therefore, as we are bound in charity to restore breathing, if possible, to the suicide’s helpless body rescued from the water, much more are we bound, while there is a glimpse of



hope, to do our best to bring back life to the perishing soul. "It is far better to give a Sacrament accidentally to one who is unwilling to receive, than to run a risk of refusing it to one who wishes for it," said SS. Antoninus and Augustine, as quoted by St. Alphonsus Liguori.

1.—Remember that the hour of death is not the time, nor is the deathbed the place, for controversy. When a man is preparing to leave this world it is too late to set before him proofs, arguments, and refutations. Leave them all out. We suppose he believes in God. Start with that.

2.—Speak to him of God's mercy. Kindle a little flame of hope by putting before him the pictures Christ has drawn of Himself as a loving father going out on the road to meet his repentant son, or the Good Shepherd, leaving the rest of his flock while he went in search of the one that was lost. The sheep that had strayed was in danger of being devoured by the lion of the wilderness; the prodigal had so wasted his substance that he had to eat the food of swine to keep himself from starving; but what was the danger from lions, or the taste of bad food, compared with the punishments awaiting the dying sinner? Then would not the same merciful Jesus that helped them help him? Let us turn to Him and pray. Read slowly Psalm cii.

When the dying man has come to this he is in a state of *attrition*, or sorrow for sin on account of the chastisements it entails. He is sufficiently advanced now for Baptism, but of that we shall speak later. For the present let us go on with what we were saying.

The hope that leads the dying man to pray implies a belief that Jesus loves him. But love begets love; and so, in the heart of the repentant sinner, a true charity begins to appear, like a reflection or an echo of the charity that is in God; and sins of the past become hateful to him now, not so much from fear of hell as from sorrow at having, so far as in him lay, injured so true a Friend. Thus *attrition* becomes *contrition*, and imperfect sorrow is made perfect.

3.—If at any time, either during or after your char-



itable work, he should show signs of willingness to receive the ministrations of a priest, of course send for one without delay. But if there is no chance of that, feel your way with him. Pray with him that God would grant him all the help He has provided, in this world, for man in his last extremity, and not allow death to come for him until he has done whatever is necessary to prepare him for his last journey.

At this point it is well to reflect on something that occasionally may take place in another sphere of action—I mean in the cure of the body.

A doctor who has been told by a patient to do *whatever is necessary* to effect a cure does not consider himself bound to consult him afterwards every time he exhibits a new medicine. He goes straight ahead, doing what he knows is best, and asking no questions. The sick person has not declared explicitly his willingness with regard to each particular medicine; but the words, *do whatever is necessary*, are fairly interpreted to include that willingness, and the doctor might rightly, if it were necessary, administer a drug which he was sure the patient, were he told of it, would certainly refuse; because he would fairly interpret that refusal to mean, not a withdrawal of his first instructions to do *whatever was necessary*, but only his impression that the particular drug in question was *not necessary*. His impression is wrong, therefore the doctor disregards it. He says to himself: "The man does not know what he is talking about, or else he would sing a different song. Say what he will, he really wishes me to give him the very thing he is refusing." Therefore he prescribes the objectionable drug; and the patient himself, when restored by it to health, would readily endorse his action as being quite in accordance with his own real wishes, and acknowledge that any protest he might have made would have been simply a mistake. The fact is he had what theologians call *an interpretative will* to receive the medicine, which, had he been consulted about it, he would have absolutely refused. What the prudent doctor does for the ailing body, we must do for the sick soul.

Carrying this thought with us, let us return now to where we left our dying man, and see how this illustration applies to him. He, like the sick man with the doctor, has been begging God to give him *whatever is necessary*; he wants to have all the help God has provided in this world for men in his position. Yet if he were asked about this or that Sacrament, old prejudices might assert themselves, and drive him to refuse them—not that he withdrew his prayer for what was necessary, but that he thought those Sacraments were unnecessary. Therefore, take a leaf out of the doctor's book, and go on without consulting the patient. He has at least attrition, and he desires *whatever is necessary* to save his soul; therefore he is sufficiently advanced for Baptism, and, in the absence of a priest, you must confer it upon him if you can. You might say in reply: "But his friends if they heard of it would be annoyed." Yes, there are some such extravagant people, and if they choose they can hinder you. But the sick man is supposed to be leaving this world. Whither is he bound? If to a *better*, your Baptism, even supposing it to be unnecessary, cannot stop him. But supposing the Sacrament were necessary, then, whatever others may say or think he at any rate, if you give it, will after death be grateful to you for ever.

All this would apply to a mere pagan, who had only some general and vague idea of a Supreme Ruler, the rewarder of good and the avenger of evil. But in a Christian land like ours, it must be rarely indeed that a man is met with who never in his life had a desire of salvation, and an implied desire of the necessary means, accompanied by a feeling of regret for sin. And if this ever happened to him, it would happen to him more than ever in presence of death, no matter how great a sinner he might have been; Divine mercy will go out to meet the prodigal, nor may we allow our restricted views to set bounds or barriers to the wide-stretching charity of God. The man may seem to be unconscious, but he may simply be unable to reveal what is passing in his heart. Follow the advice of the Saints; give him the benefit of the doubt. It is bet-



ter that the Sacrament should be abortive through his fault than that he should miss eternal life through years.

4.—If the person has certainly never been baptized, you baptize him as described above for infants. If there is any doubt about it, you merely prefix to the form the words, *If thou art not baptized*, or make a mental reservation to that effect, because Baptism cannot be conferred twice. There are exceptions, but the rule is to baptize people, either absolutely or conditionally, when receiving them into the Church.

5.—And what if, after doing your best, you are prevented from baptizing him? Well, after all, it is only a matter of a spoonful of water; but if you can find no opportunity of pouring it, then what we have said about contrition or perfect sorrow (p. 15) becomes all the more important. Do not fatigue the sufferer, but say by his side short acts of love and of contrition (see p. 3) for having offended so good a God, and leave him in God's hands.

NOTE 1.—As Baptism conferred under the circumstances detailed above would usually be of doubtful validity, it would have to be repeated conditionally if the person recovered and was then willing to be baptized.

NOTE 2.—It is to be understood that Mass may be offered up for non-Catholics, living or dead. This is an answer to the calumny that Catholics think everybody will be damned except themselves.

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## XI.—PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE SICK ROOM

1.—Do not go into the sick room fasting, nor exhausted. If there be any draught, or movement of the air in the room, take, if possible, such a position that it shall be from you towards the patient, not from the patient towards you. Breathe rather through the nostrils than through the mouth. If death be not imminent, and there be any time to spare, try first to give the patient some ease of body. That will help him to pray.

2.—Request all visitors to withdraw. As a rule, it is



but ill-judged civility on the part of inquirers to keep the bell and knocker going at a sick house, or to ask to see the patient. Let in some fresh air: this is most important. A simple way of ventilating a room is to raise the lower sash a few inches and stop the opening along the bottom with a bit of board cut to fit; the air will then come in along the top, without causing any perceptible draught. The bed ought to be placed so that you can get to either side of it, and that no light, either from the windows, or the gas, shall fall directly on the patient's eyes. Arrange the pillows and bed clothes. The room ought to be kept at a temperature of about 60° F., night and day. If the head is feverish, take a strip of lint, or calico, steep it in vinegar and water, or diluted Eau-de-Cologne or Florida water, and lay it across the forehead, temples, ears, and eyelids, taking care it does not run into the eyes.

3.—Remove unnecessary furniture from the room, curtains from bed, windows, etc., and carpets from the floor. Slops and excrements ought to be covered with a cloth, damped with some disinfectant, and carried without delay to the w.c. and there emptied, the pans well washed, the window left open, and the door shut. This rule is specially, but not exclusively, applicable to infectious cases.

4.—If the patient be very heavy, and it be necessary to move him, pass a strong towel, or a sheet doubled lengthwise, under his body, and let two persons catch hold, one at each side of the bed, and lift or roll him along.

5.—Medicines should not be kept in the sick room, still less food, drinks, and fruit. Bring in such things fresh from time to time, tempting the sick person. If they are always before his eyes he grows sick at the sight of them. Do not ask him what he would like, but use your own judgment, and take him by surprise with something very clean and appetizing, and only a little at a time; if he asks for some particular food, consult the doctor, and, if he approves of it, give it, but in small portions, so as not to disgust. Make as much variety as you can with your restricted bill of fare, and never prepare food in the sick

room. On no account allow anybody to bring eatables or drinkables to the patient without the doctor's leave. Sometimes even a few grapes would be sufficient—*e. g.*, when recovering from typhoid fever—to make recovery impossible.

6.—Avoid noise—*e. g.*, the clatter of crockery-ware, poking the fire, digging into the coals with a shovel, throwing them on from a coal scuttle, instead of laying them on with the fingers or a pair of tongues. Even a cinder falling on the fender is often torture to the sick. Use a stick instead of an iron poker. Creaky boots are an abomination. Do not whisper. Talk quietly, cheerfully, and distinctly, so that the patient may hear if he likes. If you wish to say anything which he ought not to hear, take an opportunity of doing so when you are out of the room, but do not leave the room making mysterious nods and winks to each other. All this sort of work is distressing to the patient. One thing not to be spoken about in his presence is his ailments. Try to read his wants in his slightest sign. If the room be lighted by gas, turn it down and use only one burner; burning gas poisons the air. Remove clocks that strike or tick loudly.

7.—Infectious cases ought to be removed to the top story, so that the heated air, in rising, may not pass through the other rooms in the house. Hang against the door of the room a cloth kept moist with a disinfectant. All clothes, bed linen, towels, etc., used about the patient must be washed by themselves in the house—not with other clothes, nor at a public laundry—and the water must be carefully emptied into the w.c., and the vessels scoured. Carbolic acid is a good disinfectant; but the most effective, in the hands of non-professional people, is soap and water. When a room has been used for an infectious case, the paper ought to be stripped off, and all paintwork well washed.

8.—A simple application to prevent bed-sores is made by mixing together the white of an egg and a tablespoonful of whiskey; but this must not be used when the skin is cracked; in that case lay a piece of lint smeared with



vaseline over the wound, and strap it on with strips of sticking plaster laid right across. Air beds and water beds are very good for the same purpose, but take care not to prick them.

9.—Give no medicine except what is ordered by the doctor, and give it punctually at the time prescribed. Do not put liniments, which may be poisonous, among medicines, keep them quite apart.

10.—If it be necessary to remove the patient to a hospital or infirmary, see that the priest is informed *immediately*, so that he may administer the Sacraments beforehand.

11.—It will of course be understood that we do not mean to detract in the least from the value of good medical advice; it is always useful, and sometimes indispensable. But ultimately the cure depends, humanly speaking, on the nurse. Advice is no good if it be not carried out intelligently and carefully. Get a good experienced nurse.

12.—Urge everybody who has anything to leave to make his will carefully and execute it properly. A good lawyer or trust company should be consulted, unless he has already done so. Many quarrels and family feuds would be prevented if this important duty were always attended to. It is easy enough to change the will afterwards, if the testator survives and wishes to do so.

13.—Remind the sick man also to pay all his debts.

NOTE.—In hospitals, Protestants, chiefly ladies, are very diligent in distributing tracts. Catholics often find fault with this: it would be more to the purpose if they themselves would do the same: in most places they can easily obtain admission, and plenty of tracts can be had from the Paulist Press. It is hardly fair to grumble at others while doing nothing ourselves. Convalescents and patients in the surgical wards are delighted to have something in the way of a story to while away the time; when they can get no Catholic literature, they are sorely tempted to take up books and periodicals in which anti-Catholic principles are insidiously conveyed under an artless and inoffensive exterior.



## XII.—SHORT ACTS

TO BE READ FOR THE SICK PERSON SLOWLY

*An Act of Faith*

I believe in God. I believe that in God there are three Persons, and that Jesus Christ, the second Person, was made man for me, and born of the Blessed Virgin; that He died for me on a Cross; that He rose from the dead; that He ascended into heaven; and that He will come again to judge all men. I also believe whatever else the Catholic Church teaches, because it is the teaching of the Holy Ghost, Who is Truth itself and Who speaks through her.

*An Act of Hope*

O God, I hope and trust that, in Thy mercy, Thou wilt pardon me my sins, for the sake of Christ's Passion, and that Thou wilt give me grace to die in this hope.

*An Act of Charity*

My God, I so love Thee that I would not give Thee up for all the world, because Thou art infinitely good, and the source of all good; and, for Thy sake, I love all men, and pray Thee to bestow on them Thy blessing.

*An Act of Contrition*

My God, I am sorry from my heart for having offended Thee, not only because I have thereby deserved punishment, but still more because of my ingratitude to Thy infinite goodness; and I resolve to avoid in future, by the help of Thy grace, not only all sin, but also as far as possible all occasions of sin.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Other prayers may be found in the *Garden of the Soul*, under the heading "Devotions for the Sick," but do not read them all at one time to the sick person. Choose one or two, especially such as express resignation to God's will and the acceptance of sickness as an atonement for past sins. *A Little Book for the Sick* (C. T. S., 2 d.) will also be found useful; being light in the hand and in good print, the sick may like to read it themselves.

XIII.—READING FROM SCRIPTURE<sup>6</sup>

In long illness it will console the patient to read to him passages from Scripture, such as the parable of the Lost Sheep and the Prodigal Son, St. Luke xv., or the Story of Magdalen, St. Luke vii. 36-50, or that of Lazarus, St. John xi. 1-45. Also Christ's discourse on humility, charity, and forgiveness, St. Matthew xviii.; and instances of His compassion for our sufferings, as St. Matthew viii. 1-17; ix.; xiv. 14-36; xv. 21-39; xx. 29-34; the stories of the Centurion and the Widow of Nain, St. Luke vii. 11-23, and of His weeping over Jerusalem, St. Luke xix. 28. Also His discourse to His disciples and His prayer for them, St. John xiv., xv., xvi., and xvii.; and the history of the Passion, St. Matthew xxvi.-xxviii., St. Mark xiv., xv., St. Luke xxii., xxiii., and St. John xviii., xix.

Any of the Seven Penitential Psalms may likewise be read with profit.

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XIV.—READING FROM THE "IMITATION OF CHRIST"

The *Imitation of Christ* is an inexhaustible mine of useful matter, *e. g.*, in Book I., chapters 12, 13, 18; Book II., chapters 1, 2, 6, 7, 12; Book III., chapters 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 15, 16, 17, etc., etc. Choose what is appropriate. The Fourth Book will furnish many beautiful reflections and prayers before and after Holy Communion.

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XV.—PRAYERS FOR THE DEPARTED

*De Profundis. Psalm cxxix.*

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

Let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.

<sup>6</sup>The utmost care must be taken not to tire the patient. The reading is meant to soothe, not to weary; better give a yard too little than an inch too much.

If Thou, O Lord, shalt observe iniquities, Lord, who shall endure it?

For with Thee there is merciful forgiveness: and by reason of Thy law I have waited for Thee, O Lord.

My soul hath relied on His word; my soul hath hoped in the Lord.

From the morning watch even unto night, let Israel hope in the Lord.

Because with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him plenteous redemption.

And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

*V.* Eternal rest give unto them, O Lord.

*R.* And let perpetual light shine upon them.

*V.* May they rest in peace.

*R.* Amen.

O God, the Creator and Redeemer of all the faithful, grant to the souls of Thy servants departed the remission of all their sins, that through pious supplications they may obtain that pardon which they have always desired, who livest and reignest world without end.

Absolve, I beseech Thee, O Lord, the souls of Thy servants from every stain of sin, that in the glory of the Resurrection they may rise and breathe again in the company of Thy saints and elect, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Eternal rest give to them, O Lord, and let everlasting light shine upon them. May they rest in peace. Amen.

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A PRAYER FOR ONESELF

Deliver me, O Lord, from eternal death, in that terrible day when the heavens and the earth shall be moved, when Thou shalt come to judge the world by fire.

PRAYER TO ST. JOSEPH FOR A HAPPY DEATH

O blessed Father St. Joseph, who didst breathe out thy soul in the arms of Jesus, and of Mary thy most sweet



spouse; come to my help, especially in that hour in which it is decreed that I shall die, and obtain for me the consolation of expiring in the same holy embrace, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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PRAYERS FROM THE ROMAN RITUAL  
COMMUNION

*The Priest, on entering the sick person's room with the Blessed Sacrament, says:*

Peace be unto this house.

R. And unto all who dwell therein.

*Then, placing the Holy Sacrament, with the corporal, on a table, when the candles have been lighted, he adores upon his knees, all present doing likewise; after which he takes holy water, and sprinkles the sick person and the bed, saying:*

Thou shalt sprinkle me, O Lord, with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed: Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow.

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy great mercy.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

*Then is repeated the Antiphon, Thou shalt sprinkle me, etc. Afterwards:*

Our help is in the name of the Lord.

R. Who hath made heaven and earth.

V. O Lord, hear my prayer.

R. And let my cry come unto Thee.

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with thy spirit.

*Let us pray*

Hear us, O Holy Lord, Father Almighty, Everlasting God; and vouchsafe to send Thy holy Angel from heaven, to guard, cherish, protect, visit, and defend all those that dwell in this house. Through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

*The Priest then approaches the sick person, to learn if he be properly disposed to receive the Holy Viaticum, and whether he wishes to make a confession of any sin. If so, he hears the confession and gives absolution. (The confession should, however, have been made beforehand, unless necessity demanded otherwise.) Then, the Confiteor having been recited by the sick person, or by another in his name, the Priest says:*

May Almighty God have mercy upon thee, and forgive thee thy sins, and bring thee unto life everlasting.

R. Amen.

May the Almighty and Merciful Lord grant thee pardon, ✠ absolution, and remission of thy sins.

R. Amen.

*Then, making a genuflection, he takes the Blessed Sacrament from the Pyx, and, raising it, shows it to the sick person, saying:*

Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him Who taketh away the sins of the world.

*And thrice in the accustomed manner:*

Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof; but only say the word, and my soul shall be healed.

*And the sick person should at least once, in a low tone, say the same words together with the Priest; then the Priest, giving the Holy Eucharist to the sick person, says:*

Receive, *brother*, the Viaticum of the Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ; may He preserve thee from the wicked enemy, and bring thee unto life everlasting. Amen.

*[But if Communion is not given in the way of Viaticum, he says the ordinary words:*

The Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy soul unto life everlasting. Amen.]

*If death be imminent and there be danger in delay, then all the other prayers are partly or wholly omitted; and, the Confiteor being said, the Viaticum is administered at once.*

*The Priest then washes his fingers in silence, and the ablution is given to the sick person; after which the Priest says:*

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with thy spirit.



*Let us pray*

O Holy Lord, Father Almighty, Eternal God, we earnestly beseech Thee that the most sacred Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, which our *brother* hath now received, may be to *him* an eternal remedy both of body and soul. Who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end.

R. Amen.

*After this prayer, if any particle of the Blessed Sacrament remains, the Priest genuflects, rises, and, taking the Blessed Sacrament in Its receptacle, he makes with It the sign of the Cross over the sick person, in silence. If no particle remains, the Priest blesses with his hand, in the usual manner.*

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EXTREME UNCTION

*On arriving at the place where the sick man lies, the Priest, with the holy oil, entering the chamber, says:*

Peace be unto this house.

R. And unto all who dwell therein.

*Then, after placing the oil on a table, being vested in a surplice and violet stole, he offers the sick man a crucifix piously to kiss; after which he sprinkles both the chamber and the bystanders with holy water in the form of a cross, saying the Asperges as at p. 25. Then he says:*

Our help is in the name of the Lord.

R. Who hath made heaven and earth.

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with thy spirit.

*Let us pray*

May there enter, O Lord Jesus Christ, into this house, at the entrance of our lowliness, everlasting happiness, heaven-sent prosperity, peaceful gladness, fruitful charity, abiding health: may the devils fear to approach this place, may the angels of peace be present therein, and may all wicked strife depart from this house. Magnify, O Lord, upon us Thy holy name, and bless ✠ our ministry: hallow



the entrance of our lowliness, Thou Who art holy and compassionate, and abidest with the Father and the Holy Ghost world without end. Amen.

Let us pray and beseech Our Lord Jesus Christ, that blessing He may bless ✠ this abode, and all who dwell therein, and give unto them a good angel for their keeper, and make them serve Him, so as to behold wondrous things out of His law. May He ward off from them all adverse powers: may He deliver them from all fear and from all disquiet, and vouchsafe to keep in health them that dwell in this house. Who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, liveth and reigneth God world without end. Amen.

*Let us pray*

Hear us, O Holy Lord, Father Almighty, Everlasting God, and vouchsafe to send Thy holy Angel from heaven, to guard, cherish, protect, visit, and defend all those that dwell in this house. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*(These prayers, if time will not permit, may be either wholly or in part omitted.) After which is said the Confiteor, etc., as at p. 26.*

*(Before the Priest begins to anoint the sick person he admonishes the bystanders to pray for him; and, when it is convenient to do so, they recite for him the Penitential Psalms, with Litanies or other prayers, while the Priest is administering the Sacrament of Extreme Unction.) Then he says:*

In the name of the Father, ✠ and of the Son, ✠ and of the Holy ✠ Ghost, may all the power of the devil be extinguished in thee, by the laying on of our hands, and by the invocation of all holy Angels, Archangels, Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, Virgins, and of the whole company of the Saints. Amen.

*Then, dipping his thumb in the holy oil, he anoints the sick person, in the form of a cross, on the parts mentioned below, using the words of the form as follows:*

*On the eyes*

Through this holy unction ✠ and of His most tender mercy, may the Lord pardon thee whatsoever sins thou hast committed by sight. Amen.

*(With cotton he wipes the anointed parts.)*

*On the ears*

Through this holy unction ✠ and of His most tender mercy, may the Lord pardon thee whatsoever sins thou hast committed by hearing. Amen.

*On the nostrils*

Through this holy unction ✠ and of His most tender mercy, may the Lord pardon thee whatsoever sins thou hast committed by smell. Amen.

*On the mouth, the lips being closed*

Through this holy unction ✠ and of His most tender mercy, may the Lord pardon thee whatsoever sins thou hast committed by taste and speech. Amen.

*On the hands*

Through this holy unction ✠ and of His most tender mercy, may the Lord pardon thee whatsoever sins thou hast committed by touch. Amen.

*On the feet*

Through this holy unction ✠ and of His most tender mercy, may the Lord pardon thee whatsoever sins thou hast committed by thy footsteps. Amen.

*This done, the Priest says:*

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Our Father (*inaudibly*).

And lead us not into temptatiou.

R. But deliver us from evil.

V. Save Thy *servant*.

R. O my God, who putteth *his* trust in Thee.

V. Send *him* help, O Lord, from Thy holy place.

R. And defend *him* out of Sion.

V. Be unto *him*, O Lord, a tower of strength.

R. From the face of the enemy.

V. Let not the enemy prevail against *him*.



- R. Nor the son of iniquity draw nigh to hurt *him*.  
 V. O Lord, hear my prayer.  
 R. And let my cry come unto Thee.  
 V. The Lord be with you.  
 R. And with thy spirit.

*Let us pray*

Lord God, Who hast spoken by Thine Apostle James, saying: Is any man sick among you? Let him call in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him: cure, we beseech Thee, O our Redeemer, by the grace of the Holy Ghost, the ailments of this sick *man*; heal *his* wounds, and forgive *his* sins; drive out from *him* all pains of body and mind, and mercifully restore to *him* full health, both inwardly and outwardly: that, having recovered by the help of Thy loving-kindness, *he* may be enabled to return to *his* former duties. Who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, livest and reignest God, world without end. Amen.

*Let us pray*

Look down, O Lord, we beseech Thee, upon Thy *servant*, N., languishing through bodily ailment, and refresh the soul which Thou hast created, that, being bettered by Thy chastisements, *he* may feel *himself* saved by Thy healing. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Let us pray*

O Holy Lord, Father Almighty, Eternal God, Who by shedding Thy gracious blessing upon our failing bodies dost preserve, by Thy manifold goodness, the work of Thy hands: graciously draw near at the invocation of Thy name, that, having freed Thy *servant* from sickness, and bestowed health upon *him*, Thou mayest raise *him* up by Thy right hand, strengthen *him* by Thy might, defend *him* by Thy power, and restore *him* to Thy holy Church, with



all the prosperity *he* desires. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Lastly, the Priest may add some short and salutary admonitions, according to the condition of the sick person, whereby he may be strengthened to die in the Lord, and to put to flight all the temptations of the Evil One.*

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THE LAST BLESSING

*The Priest having faculties to bestow this Apostolic Blessing enters the house, and says:*

Peace be unto this house.

R. And unto all who dwell therein.

Our help is in the name of the Lord.

R. Who hath made heaven and earth.

*Ant.* Remember not, O Lord, the offences of Thy *servant*, neither take Thou revenge of *his* sins.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Our Father (*inaudibly*).

V. And lead us not into temptation.

R. But deliver us from evil.

V. Save Thy *servant*.

R. O my God, who putteth *his* trust in Thee.

V. O Lord, hear my prayer.

R. And let my cry come unto Thee.

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with thy spirit.

*Let us pray.*

O most gracious God, Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who wouldest not that any should perish who believeth and trusteth in Thee; according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies, look favorably upon Thy *servant* N., whom the true Faith and Hope of Christ do commend unto Thee. Visit *him* in Thy saving power;

and through the Passion and Death of Thine Only-begotten, graciously grant unto *him* pardon and remission of all *his* sins; that *his* soul at the hour of its departure may find Thee a most merciful Judge; and, cleansed from every stain in the Blood of the same, Thy Son, may be found worthy to pass to life everlasting. Through the same Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

*Then the Confiteor being repeated by an attendant clergyman, or by the Priest himself, the Priest says the Misereatur, etc., and then proceeds thus:*

May Our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, Who gave to His blessed Apostle Peter the power of binding and loosing; of His most tender mercy receive thy confession, and restore unto thee that first robe which thou didst receive in Baptism; and I, by the power committed to me by the Apostolic See, grant thee a Plenary Indulgence and remission of all thy sins. In the name of the Father, ✠ and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Through the most sacred mysteries of man's redemption may God Almighty remit unto thee the pains of the present and the future life, open to thee the gates of Paradise, and bring thee to everlasting joys. Amen.

May God Almighty bless thee; the Father, ✠ the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen.

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