



Prayer Anthology

Part Four: Living with Death

**The Art of
Dying Well**

Prayer Anthology

Part Four is for people living with the prospect of death.

[Our Lady of Guadalupe to Saint Juan Diego](#)

“Listen, put it into your heart, my youngest and dearest son, that the thing that frightens you, the thing that afflicts you, is nothing: do not let it disturb you. Am I not here, I who am your Mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Am I not the source of your joy? Are you not in the hollow of my mantle, in the crossing of my arms? Do you need something more? Let nothing worry you or disturb you.”

[Romanos The Melodist](#)

“Curb your tears; accept me as your Mediatrix in the presence of Him Who was born from me, because the Author of Joy is the God generated before all ages. Remain calm; be trouble no longer: I come from Him, full of grace.”

[Our Blessed Lady speaking in a hymn](#)

[John Powell SJ](#)

God is Love – all God does is love... God only loves; conferring His light and warmth on those who stand ready to receive them. God does not have anger in Him. He does not punish. When we separate ourselves from God and His love by sin, all the change takes place in us, never in Him. He is unchangeable in His loving. God’s intention in creating us in this world was to share Himself and His life with us...

You are love unconditionally by God. Your name is inscribed indelibly in His Heart, carved in the palms of His hands. You do not have to win or earn or be worthy of His love: it is a ‘given’. Of course you can refuse to accept it. You can separate yourself from God’s love for a while or even for eternity. Whatever your response, He will be there offering His love to you.

Wherever you are in your development, whatever you are doing, with a strong affirmation of all your goodness and good deeds, and with a gentle understanding of your weakness, God is forever loving you.

This world, the course of human history and human destiny is in His hands. He is in charge of this world. He alone has the plan, total knowledge of the human situation and the power to turn things around completely...

“I will be with you”. God says: I am covenanted, committed forever to love you; to do whatever is best for you. I will be kind, encouraging and enabling. But I will also be



Read and Pray

These prayerful reflections which have been chosen to help you hear God speaking to you.

challenging. At times I will comfort you in your affliction. At other times I will afflict you in your comfort. Whatever I do, it will always be an act of love, an invitation to growth.

In: [Fully Human Fully Alive](#)

Saint Catherine of Siena

From the thorns of tribulation let us pluck the rose of peace and quiet.

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux

“Death will come to fetch you,” one sister had remarked some time earlier. Therese replied, No not death but God! I am at the door of eternity.

Cited in: [Everything is Grace – The Life And Way of Therese of Lisieux by Joseph F. Schmidt FSC](#)

Saint Faustina

O my Lord, inflame my heart with love for You, that my spirit may not grow weary amidst the storms, the sufferings and the trials. You see how weak I am. Love can do all.

[Notebook 1 \(94\)](#)

Donald Nicholl

The only people who might teach one about death are those who have died, and who in some way have witnessed to the experience. It is the martyrs (witnesses) who have at least to show us how to die. We call upon them and upon the ancestors to take us into their company. What they teach us, above all, is to go into death wholeheartedly, to embrace the experience with one’s whole heart and in joy.

[The Testing of Hearts – Part III: Testing Unto Death](#)

Blessed Margaret Clitherow

“We, looking back after four hundred years, may marvel at her [Blessed Margaret Clitherow] steadfastness. She herself, living minute by minute through those terrible ten days [before she was put to death], felt herself shaking and shaken in mind and body. From the outside, we can see that it was just this sense of her weakness which was her real strength, for it drove her to put all her trust in God. From the inside, what she herself was aware of was her own quailing insufficiency.

Besides the insistent onslaught on her firmness of mind – promises, threats, slanders, the love of husband and children – Margaret had to reckon with the fierce desire for life of her young, beautiful body. She was intensely alive, vital, vivid, a woman in the prime of her

strength, bound to this world by all the chains of life. Death seemed to have no lot in her; all her youth and vitality cried out against it. It cannot surprise us that she was sometimes overwhelmed with fear...

Various small indications show how carefully she had thought over the manner of her death, as if she did not wish to be again surprised by some unexpected detail... The sheriffs came to announce the time of her death... When they had gone, she turned to a friend and said: "The sheriffs have told me that I shall die on Friday next; and now I feel the frailty of mine own flesh, which trembleth greatly at the these news, although my spirit greatly rejoiceth. Therefore for God's sake pray for me, and desire all good folk to do the same." She herself then knelt down, and "praying a little, the fear and horror of death presently [immediately] departed, as she said herself".

In: *Blessed Margaret Clitherow* by Margaret T. Monro

Carlos G. Valles

Bring the wisdom that the end will bring to the present moment as we live it, to remove the sting of suffering by realizing that it cannot last forever, and calm down the thrill of enthusiasm by reminding ourselves that the high tide will turn as surely as the low. Death reveals past and future, says the poet, and that is the best help to living the present. Instead of putting aside the thought of death as something unpleasant and impolite, we would be better advised to invite it to our consideration and welcome it to our memory as a living part of our present moment.

Do not be afraid of death if you want to enjoy life. Take death for granted, accept it, welcome it, and then be free to obtain the best of each moment, all the more valuable because it can be the last.

In: *Let go of Fear*

Caryll Houselander

There is no hope of suffering without feeling it. It's only when we try not to experience our special suffering that it can really break us.

As regards fearful worry – I find the Rosary is of huge help. Even just holding it helps... It somehow gives one the sense of real contact with God, when one can't get it from any words or acts of one's own, and yet cannot bear to be passive.

Letters

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

By willing endurance we can cause suffering to pass. Anxiety is always directed to the morrow, whereas goods are in the strictest sense meant to be used only for today. By trying to ensure for the next day we are only creating uncertainty today.



Reflections

Some of the reflections are from the Bible, others come from experts in spiritual matters, like the saints or great spiritual writers. Yet others are from people who are experts in suffering.

Romano Guardini

The shape of a man's life is not a growth and unfolding from within, culminating in a return upon itself; its figure, its symbol, is not the self-enclosed circle, but an arch that reaches out toward something that in turn comes to meet it. [With the Fall, man] did not will to span his arch over to the side of God. He willed, that is, to live out from himself, and back to himself. As a result the arch broke, and the term of the break was death. Christ carries man's nature to God and back again from God to man. In Christ the arch reaches out to the side of God for each of us. Death is the darkness which the arch has to span...

With Christ's death and resurrection something happened to death. It ceased to be the mere executing of God's justice, the bitter end with beyond it only the "indestructibility of the soul." Christ's death has given it a new character, which does not change its form but does alter its meaning and restore it to what it should have been for the first man – the passage into a new, eternally human life.

The death of Christ, suffered for our sakes, is a fact and together with His incarnation and resurrection it is simply the fact whether the world wishes it or not. In this fact, which changes everything radically, a man may believe, and by believing share in it.

Death is our last venture, with Christ at hand, toward that great promise. In the anguish, dissolution, helplessness, and torturing pain that death may bring, Christ's death is contained. This, however, is only one side, the side turned toward us, of a single whole, of which the other side is the resurrection.

In: [The Last Things](#)

Fr Peter Fransen SJ

Holiness is, with the help of grace, accepting unconditionally one's situation in life as foreseen for us at every moment by Providence.

Fr Michael Casey

To be reconciled to a life-threatening disease and the prospect of death is a great advance, but there still remains the pain resulting from the illness itself and from the attempts to provide a remedy. A "theological" patience does not exempt us from the agony and anguish that must necessarily be endured.

Saint Anselm

Out of the body's infirmity springs the soul's health.

Teilhard de Chardin

The apprehension [of death] I believe is worse than the reality - for all whom I have seen die so simply!

[Letters from the Front, 1916](#)

Blessed Columba Marmion OSB

God will care for you just insofar as you cast yourself and your cares on the bosom of His paternal love and providence.

Union with God

My Divine Master, I unite myself to Thy Sacred Heart in Its perfect submission and entire abandonment to the Father's will. May the virtue of Thine grace produce in my soul that spirit of submission which will yield me unreservedly and without murmuring to the Divine good pleasure and to all that it shall please Thee to send me at the hour when I must leave this world.

Christ in His Mysteries

My Jesus, I accept all the crosses, all the contradictions, all the adversities that the Father has destined for me. May the unction of Thine grace give me strength to bear these crosses with the submission of which Thou gavest us the example in receiving Thine for us. May I never seek my glory save in the sharing of Thine sufferings!

Christ in His Mysteries

To put our confidence in God, is it not indeed to believe in His word? to be assured that in listening to Him we shall attain to holiness, that in abandoning ourselves to Him, He will bring us to beatitude? This faith is easy when we meet with no difficulty, and walk in a way of light and consolation: it is a little like the case of those who read the account of expeditions to the North Pole while comfortably sitting by the fireside. But when we are struggling with temptation, with suffering and trial, when we are in dryness of heart and spiritual darkness, then it needs a strong faith to abandon ourselves to God and remain entirely united to His holy will. The more difficult the exercise of this faith is for us, the more pleasing to God is the homage that flows from it.

From *Christ, the Ideal of the Monk*



Acknowledgement

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