



League of the Immaculate Heart *Newsletter*

"MY IMMACULATE HEART WILL TRIUMPH"

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Discouragement from Impossible Goals

Adapted from an essay by Francis L. Filas, S.J.

"Holiness is proportionate to the love of God, the degree of sanctifying grace in one's soul."

a *m I a failure spiritually because I have done nothing extraordinary? I am not a mystic, and I don't know if I want to be, even if I could.*

How easily we can be discouraged in the spiritual life if we have a misunderstanding such as this! We must remember that **love of God** is holiness, and it is the one thing necessary. Holiness means at its roots "to be set apart for God." In other words, it is the quality of being Godlike. But since we are creatures with free will, we have the choice of determining how much our own wills are to be conformed to the divine will, the one and only absolute norm and source of good. To subordinate our individual desires to the law of God requires some degree of sacrifice. The generosity with which we give God this sacrifice will indicate the degree in which we love Him.

So often we tend to confuse the love of God as it really should be, with a caricature of the love of God as we think it is. It is certainly not the soft, sweet, emotional reaction of having the "feeling" that we love God.

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The emotions can come or go, sometimes with little or no control on our part. It is true that they may *also* be present *together* with our love of God, but the point is that these feelings do not mean in themselves that the love of God is (or is not) in our heart. We may have them at

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The Sacred Heart of Jesus is the Symbol of Christ's Divine Love

"Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the Church, and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up."

Many people fear to call in a priest to the bedside of someone who is sick or in danger of death. Some are afraid that it will scare the dying person. Some shrug their shoulders, saying, '(S)he was never very religious in life.' Alas for the dying person that such misguided souls should be their sentinels!

Rather than defer a priest's visit until the dying person is *in extremis* or incoherent, it is better to call the priest to the bedside when the person is still alert. The prescriptions of the traditional Ritual for the administration of this sacrament make clear that the Church does not expect this sacrament to be delayed until the last moments before death. A priest racing to get to the bedside of a dying Catholic is far different from the procession from church to home that the Roman Ritual describes. This formal procession is almost always omitted in many countries, yet it should serve at least as a reminder that Extreme Unction is to

be administered ordinarily to one "in danger of death", and before one is actually at the point of death and is breathing his last.

Customary Preparations:

For the Blessed Sacrament: It is not necessary for the sick person to be fasting.

If a priest is to bring the Blessed Sacrament to your house, prepare for the holy Guest he brings in this way. Try to clean the room. Dress a table for the priest's use with a clean linen cloth, atop which is placed two lit candles, and a little bowl of holy water for the priest to purify his fingers. The mouth of the communicant may be very dry from his or her illness. Therefore, set out also some water and a spoon, which the priest may use to assist the sick person. Place a white linen cloth on the communicant.

(We would note here that many patients now have oxygen in the home: lit candles may present a genuine hazard. Ask your priest beforehand what he would have you do!)

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times when we are denying God the obedience He asks and deserves. On the other hand, they may be absent when our will is wholly devoted to what God wants.

Jesus gave us a reliable answer to this question of determining how much we love God. "If you love Me, observe My commandments." (Jn. 14:15) Our actions, then, are the touchstones of our intentions. They reveal what goes on inside us.

Would [my love for God] not show itself more strongly if it were genuinely in my heart?"

The solution here is to distinguish between what is essential and what is not. The essential consists in the avoidance of mortal sin by the proper performance of the duties of our state of life, as dictated by the Commandments and the teachings of the Church. True, to say that this minimum indicates a love of God does not sound very inspiring or very generous. None the less, the fact always remains that this *is* the required minimum, and therefore it does indicate some love of God.

A desire to root out deliberate faults which

would endanger this essential minimum represents love at a higher level. Such is the will on our part to keep deliberate venial sin out of our lives and, as far as possible, to reduce semideliberate venial sin as well. Gauged by Our Lord's own words, the keeping of His commandments to the extent of avoiding venial sin clearly indicates that a much more generous love exists.

But if my love of God were actually strong, would I not be completely free from all sin?"

The answer to this question is a decided "No, you would not be necessarily free from your faults." There are degrees upon degrees of loving God. We must keep in mind two apparently opposing facts. On the one hand, if we love God, we will avoid serious sin and, in general, deliberate venial sin, but unless our love be heroic, it is likely that our faults will remain. On the other hand, this reminder of our weakness keeps us spiritually humble and spurs us on to purify the love already energizing us. We ought not forget the explicit Catholic doctrine concerning venial sin. The Council of Trent defined that the just man cannot avoid all venial

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the Last Sacraments

Let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. up, and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him.” James 5:14-15

It has been customary (and prescribed) to meet the priest at the door carrying a lit candle. Escort the priest to the patient.

For Extreme Unction: If the priest is to administer Extreme Unction, also set up a crucifix – such as a sick call crucifix, which can stand on the table, but which the priest can detach. He will also need a plate with at least six cotton balls, and another plate onto which he can place the cotton balls after he has used them. Also have a piece of bread, water, a basin and a napkin for the priest to wash his fingers.

The utility of the sacrament to the soul depends upon the contrition and devotion with which it is received. Extreme Unction strengthens the sick because it confers on him grace to bear more easily the inconveniences and pains of sickness, and enables him more readily to resist temptation of all kinds. Sometimes a complete change in temperament is wrought in the patient: irascibility and dread give way to tranquility and patient resignation.

On the other hand, even as it is a sacrament for the healing of the soul, it often obtains bodily health, which is expedient for the welfare of the soul, if only to allow it more time to prepare for a good death. This beautiful sacrament compensates for all that the sick person left undone in the Sacrament of Penance. Therefore, the Church commends them to the mercy of God through this unction. First, it cleanses away sin. It also cancels a part of the penalty of sin in proportion to the contrition and devotion with which the sacrament is received.

Sometimes the reason a soul has spoken harshly against the Church for years is that it has borne a sin it was afraid to confess, but now yearns to do so. Do not deprive Our Lady of the priest She wishes to aid this soul. Even if the patient has not been a practicing Catholic for many years, do not underestimate the graces conveyed by a priest's visit. The priest, who alone may absolve sin and administer the Last Sacraments, has been given a special charism through Holy Orders.

I have written above the customary instructions



for these priestly visits. But one might suggest that one ought also to have with the sick call crucifix a Brown Scapular and the formula for enrollment (available from the Fatima Center).

Not long ago, a family called the Fatima Center from the hospital room where the mother was. Although the mother had been wearing the Brown Scapular for a while, she was not sure whether she had ever been enrolled. Our representative read the scapular formula to the priest who was there. He enrolled the woman, who died later that same day. How joyful the family was that this grace had been obtained!

Likewise, a priest may come to administer confession and last sacraments to a reluctant or belligerent soul. Even if the patient refuses to confess, if that soul accepts a Brown Scapular and wears it, Our Lady will obtain for him the promise attached to it: “Whosoever dies wearing this scapular will not suffer the punishment of eternal fire.” One has witnessed first-hand the miraculous effects obtained by the wearing of this scapular, even in a patient's final days. Alas, however, that one did not think to have the patient enrolled after he recanted all his errors! How much more could have been obtained to comfort that soul. †



We cannot help but recall the gratitude expressed by priests and bishops who attended last October's conference in Tuy, Spain and Fatima, Portugal. Over and over again, we read attendees' notes to us, 'God bless all those who made it possible for me to come to this conference. I will consecrate myself/my parish/my work to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.' Others begged us, 'Please have a conference in India' or 'please have a conference in Africa' and other places. Through your generosity, the Fatima Center has already hosted the Brazil conference, this past August! God willing, we will travel to India in 2008.

Attendees in Brazil were as eager to thank their sponsors, and to pledge their support to the cause of spreading the Message. Some

have pledged to preach reparation, others to spread devotion to the scapular and the Holy Rosary, others to speak to their bishops.

Please pray for all our priestly alumni that the Truth take vigorous root in their hearts. †



Father Gruner, center, speaks with a bishop from Chile at the recent *The Only Way to World Peace* conference in Brazil. Next conference is slated for India in 2008.

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sin throughout this entire life without receiving a special privilege of grace from God.

The question here does not ask whether or not we are able to avoid each venial sin, taken individually, for the answer to that is an unqualified "Yes." God gives us the necessary grace. If we have a true will to do so, we can cooperate with this grace and faithfully avoid each venial sin. But how will we have this true will?

The Trent definition refers to a fact well known from daily experience. Repeatedly we find that we have the power to perform individual actions. When we add up these actions, however, new difficulties arise because now a series is to be performed. We get lazy, disgusted, tired, or perhaps our attention is distracted or monotony sets in, all in such a way that somewhere along the line we will fall into a venial sin. God gives us the grace to avoid, so to speak, venial sin #1, #2, #3, #4, etc. Yet even though He is helping us in each individual case, the "strain" of being "so good" catches up with us, so to speak, somewhere along the line.

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Thus, we need an added extraordinary help from God if we are to commit absolutely no faults during our life.

The existence of this specially rare gift of God does not afford us any excuse for the venial sins which remain in our life. Such faults simply point out a limitation to our generosity which still persists in us. Yet, always in the interests of truth and peace of heart, we *must* insist with ourselves that our venial failings do *not* mean a lack of essential and reasonably generous love of God. †

**We'd like to hear from YOU!
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