

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

From time to time I make an effort to write to you about end of life issues. It is not a topic we like to think about, but it is necessary to be responsible both for ourselves, and our families, to think carefully about dealing with terminal illness and our passing.

The most important aspect, of course, is to ensure that our soul is prepared for the end of this earthly life. The church teaches that at the point of death every soul receives what is called the “particular judgement.” This means that at the point of death our eternal destiny is presented to us. Those who are in a state of grace will enter into life. Those who are in a state of enmity against God and his mercy will enter into eternal punishment.

Therefore, we need to daily ask ourselves whether our hearts are oriented toward God, whether we have repented of our sins and opened our whole selves to God’s mercy and forgiveness. If we are in a state of mortal sin we had better get right with God! For a sin to be mortal the action must be a serious sin that separates us from God’s love. In addition, the sin must have an element of pre-meditation. We must have stopped to consider what we were going to do. Thirdly, it must be intentional. We decided to do this thing even though we knew it was against God’s will. Finally, we must continue in the sin without remorse or repentance.

The church teaching is clear that if we die in a state of rebellion against God we will be separated from Him eternally. The way to put this right is to make a good confession, amend our lives and turn away from our mortal sin. If you have further concerns and if you worry about this, then you should talk to your priest who will give you counsel on the matter.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says we should make use of the sacrament of confession at least once a year. Have you done so? We should also go to confession if we feel that we are in a state of mortal sin.

We receive forgiveness for venial sins through an act of contrition and the confession at the beginning of Mass. Venial sins are those sins that are simply part of the rough and tumble of life which are not serious, in which there was no pre-meditation or intention on our part.

The first step, therefore, in preparation for death is to make sure we are spiritually prepared. Each one of us needs to get right with God and stay right with God!

In preparation for death we should also receive the sacrament of healing, but I will write about that next week.

Your Pastor,
Fr. Longenecker

