

be convinced of this salutary truth. See if there still be any obstacle in you to this perfect state of preparation, in which you should be, to find favour with God, when you shall appear before him, for this obstacle alone would be sufficient to condemn you to the unhappy lot of the foolish virgins in the gospel.

VII. But the principal use you should make of the thought of death, and the preparation for it is, to apply it as a remedy to the disorder you have most to fear, which is tepidity and lukewarmness in your religious exercises.* Now this is not only a sovereign, but an easy remedy; for you have only to place yourself in the dispositions you would wish to be found at the hour of death: for instance, never to approach the Sacrament of Penance, unless with the same contrition you would wish to have at the hour of death—never to communicate but with the same faith and the same zeal which you would desire to possess at the hour of death. And is not this both reasonable and just? This view of death will diffuse over your actions a spirit of fervour, whose impression you will speedily feel: these duties performed in this spirit will sanctify your life, and you will

not be exposed to the malediction of those souls who do the work of the Lord negligently. One of these actions will obtain for you more grace than a hundred others, and it is thus our life may become a continual preparation for a happy and precious death.

VIII. Make use of the thought of death to fix and determine your resolutions in all the difficulties which you may meet during life.—There is no rule more certain than this: *What shall I think at the hour of my death of the action I am now about to perform?* This view of death will be a light and guide, so that you may never follow what is dangerous, and never have to repent of what you have done. Nothing can better resolve your doubts, nor throw a brighter light over those things that may seem obscure; and in the absence of him whom you have chosen for your guide in the way of eternal salvation, you will always possess in yourself a faithful counsellor, who will neither flatter nor deceive you. In this manner also, you will prepare yourself more efficaciously for death: because at the hour of death your conscience will have to reproach you with nothing, for which you will not have already provided by the anticipation of death itself. Happy condition, which ensures us, as far as is possible, a holy life, and a peaceful death!

* Each Christian should apply this thought of Death, and the preparation for that awful change, to his own predominant faults.—Translator.