

The writer's conclusion, therefore, is that there can be no hope for the future except in restoring to the world the lost sense of right and wrong.—America.

GENERAL INTENTION FOR JULY

RECOMMENDED AND BLESSED
BY HIS HOLINESS POPE
BENEDICT XV.

THE PRAYERS OF CHILDREN

Saint Matthew tells us that the disciples asked our Lord one day "who would be the greater in the Kingdom of Heaven?" The question was a simple one and the Master answered it in a simple way. A little child was standing near. Calling it to Him and placing it in the midst of the questioning disciples. He replied: "Unless you be converted and become as little children you shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child he is the greater in the Kingdom of Heaven." (Matt. xvii.) On another occasion the disciples rebuked some Jewish mothers who had brought their children to be touched by Him, but the kind Master chided His followers for their untimely zeal. "Suffer little children to come unto me," He said, "and forbid them not, for such is the Kingdom of God." (Luc. xvi.) These kindly words of our Lord simply emphasized the sentiments of the saints and sages of the Old Testament. "The innocent and the upright have adhered to me," exclaimed the Psalmist; and the whole man Job asked in his turn, "Whoever perished, being innocent?" The Divine Saviour put a fresh mark of approval on innocence, whether in old or young; in illustrating it in children He taught mankind again its value in the eyes of God His Father.

Evidently our Blessed Lord loved innocent little children, and from what we know of His life we are ready to believe that, if He were again with us on earth, He would be often seen as He was seen in Judea, and as artists delight in picturing Him for us, surrounded by groups of little ones, caressing them, and giving ear to their childish conversations. And is it not reasonable to believe that He would be as ready to hear their prayers as he would be to listen to their chattering? "He will not deprive of good things them that walk in innocence," asserts the Psalmist. Children are dear to our Lord; they are His little friends; and because their innocence gives them a claim to His intimate friendship, we have a perfect right to believe that He will listen to their supplications and grant them anything they ask for.

What gives us this confidence? The answer is, because the prayers of children are simple, direct, sincere, supplicant; they ask what they need without afterthought; their prayers come from their hearts and go straight to the heart of Him who is the Lover of innocence and simplicity. What a rich source of supplication and intercession there is in every home that is blessed with children! And how anxious parents should be to teach their little ones how to pray and to encourage in them a spirit of prayer!

Long before reason begins to dawn in their souls, children should be taught to raise their hearts to God in prayer. Their immature minds, slowly developing, are flowers in the springtime, should find ample nourishment in the dew of prayer. The first impression their awakening faculties should receive should be that of a kind and merciful God who was once a little child like themselves, in His manger at Bethlehem or in His home at Nazareth. This may be only an impression made on a tender, flowering soul, but it will be lasting. It is an easy thing for children to seize the idea of the childhood of our Lord and associate it with their own state. It excites their love for Him and their desire to confide in Him, as children are wont to confide in each other.

When the age of reason and responsibility arrives and children become conscious of their acts, the lessons they receive should correspond with their age. They should be taught to know how much they owe to God, how dependent they are on Him for all that they are and all that they have, how much they shall need Him at every moment of their lives. This knowledge will encourage in them that prayerful spirit of which instinct had previously given them merely a hazy glance. Education and the grace of the sacraments will, in due time, complete their spiritual training, will give them a love of prayer, will bring out a latent desire to correspond with God, and make them agents of intercession near Him both for themselves and for others.

It was to encourage a prayerful spirit in children and to make its acquisition and practice easier, that the late Sovereign Pontiff Pius X. insisted on their receiving Holy Communion at an early age. This venerable friend of children was aware that the more innocent the hearts that received the Body and Blood of our Lord, the more efficacious would be the prayers that should issue from them; and he directed that children's souls should be nourished with the Bread of Angels as soon as they could distinguish this Food even vaguely, in the august Sacrament of the Altar. The Holy Father's one desire was to help parents in the noble task

that is theirs by right of parenthood, namely, to preserve their children's innocence and thereby give efficacy to their children's prayers. When parents are not able to fulfill this duty, or when they neglect it, our teachers supply the deficiency. Catholic schools are not merely places where immature minds are developed by knowledge but also where uncultivated hearts are formed to virtue. Teachers are not accomplishing their whole work if they fill the heads of children with facts, even religious facts, and do little or nothing to train their wills. The catechism tells children what prayer is, but the catechism will not make them prayerful. Children must learn to know, but they must at the same time learn to do; they must put their knowledge into practice in their daily lives; their wills must not be allowed to run wild. Habits of piety should be planted in their hearts; they should be taught how to pray and to pray efficaciously.

One of the most important duties children should learn, either at home or in school, is how to turn their daily actions into prayer. It is a poor training for the future which teaches children to be satisfied with a few prayers hurriedly and inattentively said night and morning. It is to be feared that these parrot-like operations will soon cease unless their hearts are won over. Children should be taught in the way adapted to their needs, to turn their whole lives into vital prayer, and there is no agency that can do this more promptly than the League of the Sacred Heart. The object of the League is to sanctify human souls, even the souls of little children, by spiritualizing every act of the day. For this reason alone it should be introduced into all Catholic schools, and children taught as soon as possible the efficacy of the Morning Offering, so that they may incorporate this little prayer into their daily lives. The Morning Offering turns all the actions of each day into one continual vital prayer in union with the Sacred Heart. And once the habit of making this Morning Offering has been acquired it will have an enormous influence on their lives. The daily offering of their deeds and sufferings to God will give children a keener perception of the continual presence of God; they will live their lives in greater innocence, and their prayers will have greater efficacy.

No devotion appeals to children's minds and hearts so readily or so persuasively as devotion to the Sacred Heart. When children are told that our Lord loved them, that He suffered and died out of love for them, and that His Sacred Heart is the symbol of that love, they are drawn to give Him love for love. As their minds were made to receive those truths, and their hearts were made to love Him whom those truths concern, it should not be a very serious task for parents or others to teach children to spiritualize their daily doings or to direct their lives into prayerful channels.

Needless to say, the prayers of our millions of Catholic children form an asset in the Catholic world which cannot well be overlooked. The interests of the Church, her general welfare, her relations with States and governments, her action on human souls, her spread and her influence, all call for prayer. Our missionaries working abroad among pagan nations, as well as those in the vineyard at home, are continually clamoring for prayer to assure the success of their ministry. Although the Holy Father does not specifically mention this detail in the present intention, we are quite convinced that he relies on the prayers rising from the hearts of millions of his little children throughout the world to aid him in the government of the Church. Let parents, teachers, and all those who have any hand in the formation of children, do all in their power to cultivate in them the habit of prayer. It will be the best service they can render to the children themselves and to the Church of which those children will in a few years be active members.

E. J. DEVINE, S. J.

OUR HEROIC DEAD

COMMEMORATED BY CARDINAL
O'CONNELL

In his recent address at the Solemn Requiem Mass for the members of the United States Marine Corps, Cardinal O'Connell delivered the following touching tribute to our heroic dead:

One of the fundamental principles of the Christian faith is that man is made for God. This brief span, which we call life, is a period during which man is afforded opportunity to demonstrate his faith and love and service to the Creator, and after which he passes on to eternity.

In this is summed up the entire purpose and scope of human existence. We come from God, we spend a few years among the things of earth, we show our desire to work in God's service, and then we return to Him who sent us here. This indicates not only the purpose of life but also the hope that underlies it. It enables us to realize that this world is only a drama in which we figure; that pain, poverty, anxiety, health, wealth and worldly honor are insignificant in comparison with the paramount fact that we are the children of God made to His "image and likeness," as St. Paul expresses it in the Holy epigram: "I reckon that the sufferings of this time are



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not worthy to be compared with the glory to come.

Without taking this principle into account it is impossible to see any purpose in life at all. It is no wonder that people deprived of this vivifying truth, blinded by their own passions, their own desires, their small, selfish purposes—scarcely ever fulfilled—come to the sad conclusion that life is not worth living.

LIFE BELONGS TO GOD

It is only by the clear recognition of the fact that we are the children of God that we can visualize Heaven which we are to deserve and inherit by a life well lived and by a death that is full of hope in the Lord. Because the Christian understands this, though in his weakness he may not be able to follow up his understanding thoroughly, at the bottom of his soul and permeating his very being, there is always this fundamental maxim: My life really belongs to God and His service and whenever He calls I must be ready to obey.

It is this sanctification of life that makes the Christian's existence so simple, unselfish and sublime and prepares him to be ready to give up anything merely personal for the high purpose which God indicates by the condition of the times.

God indicated clearly by the voice of the nation and the call of militant patriots that they must go forth and offer their lives in defense of their country, in defense of the principles for which their country stands and how nobly, how gloriously they obeyed!

Can we of this generation ever forget how splendidly the youth of the land rose to that call? Had not these things been enacted before our eyes, we could scarcely imagine that such deeds were possible in our time, times so filled with luxury, self-gratification, given over to a modern paganism. Few would have dreamed that underneath a repellent superficial exterior was this potentiality of sterling manhood that saved the nation, saved Europe, saved civilization.

Well, it was there, not so much because the times, the spirit of the times inculcated it, but, I think, because first of all it was in their blood, but principally because when a call comes from God He gives the strength to respond adequately to it. Conspicuous among all those who went forth was the splendid body of Marines, who from the beginning to the end of the War manifested such heroic courage. They were among the first, and the highest on record for their patriotism, their daring, their energy and endurance.

Many of them have left their lifeless forms on the fields of France. There they lie, a glorious token of the spirit of man, unselfish, unwavering, rising to the heights when duty calls. These lives were full of promise; the world could not have spared them, but the entirety, the eagerness, of their sacrifice were a clarion call to the best that is in the world—an inspiration to humanity everywhere.

What does this signify? It emphasizes the fact that it is the noblest and the best who rise to the heights of Christian and patriotic duty, who heed the great call, who lay down their lives without a moment's hesitation. In every great call this is the rule. A great cause will be satisfied with nothing but the best that man can give.

As in every other great crisis of Christian history Holy Mother Church came in with her sacred consolations with her maternal care, with her abiding love to console the dying, to help the dead, to encourage the living, so this Holy Mass is offered here today first of all as a memorial of the death of Christ on the Cross, that death that typifies every death to the end of time, illustrating the sacrifice of everything for a great cause, the unselfishness of the great soul, the willingness to give one's self and all one has or is for God and for duty.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass has a particular application to such an occasion as this. Christ was the great soldier who gave His life for mankind, for truth, for right. He died for us, exemplifying on the Cross what He had said long before: "Greater love than this no man hath that he lay down his life for his friends."

Calvary, the Crucifixion of our Lord, bodies forth the highest type of love. The Holy Mass, the unbloody Sacrifice of the New Law, teaches the same lesson, and in its prayers and canticles keeps on reminding us that we must be ready to die for Christ because He died for us.

Every day, every hour, throughout the world that saving oblation is made. The chant of the Requiem is never stilled for the ranks of death are always being filled, and besides all this there is the ineffable

consolation and grace that the Mass brings to the living, to the lonely, to the weak. It is a constant witness of the fact that death does not end all, that in reality it ends nothing worth while.

Death does put an end to the momentary consolations and pleasures of this mortal life. It stills dangerous joys, it quells some hopes that might or might not have been helpful, but it also ends numberless difficulties, numerous possibilities for evil, countless possibilities for wrong. But as a compensation for these small losses it brings to us the certainty that if we have served God well eternal bliss will be ours.

These young men whose memorial we celebrate went into battle against terrible odds, they braved every diabolical invention of modern war, but when they went out to die they did not go alone, for side by side with them marched the blessed Lord who had died for them. They were far from home, from kindred, from friends, but they were not forsaken; they were in every crisis of dread battle guarded and guided. They felt it they wrote it to me, they wrote it no doubt to you.

Now they have gone to their reward and though death has separated them from us in a material way, faith enables us to realize that in a certain sense they are nearer to us than ever. Anyone who thoroughly and profoundly believes in Christ's Church knows that the communion of the Saints, the spiritual union of the blessed in Heaven, the suffering in Purgatory and the living upon earth are a part of his life.

There is a mystery in all this. God so intended it. Thus He tests our faith. We must put our trust in Him; that is the basis of the spiritual life. In God's good time the mystery will be revealed and knowledge will take the place of faith. Meanwhile we have God's word for it that the soul is immortal, that death changes merely the material temple of the soul, that they who have departed this life are only waiting for us beyond the grave and that their eternal destiny, like ours, depends on the service given to Him who is not only the all-just and all-seeing Judge, but also the loving God and Father.

The Church neither allows nor encourages any morbid spirit in mankind about these matters. She has unrivaled knowledge and experience of human hearts. She appreciates profoundly the fact that those living in this world must go on with their work and appear to forget even the deepest wounds of sorrow. Hence, while she admits the grief that death brings, she also assures that grief by the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the blessings that come from fervent prayers. Then she bids us put our trust in God and leave the settlement of these great problems in His hands. She heals the wounds of mortal life and infuses faith and hope and love.

There is abroad a terrible deception that holds our foolish hopes to the grief-stricken for mercenary reasons, and there are, alas, only too many who allow themselves to be duped by this deception. Whatever success this imposture obtains is based on the natural desire of the bereft to know something about those who have gone before, to establish some sort of communication with them.

The only communication with the departed is that which the Church reveals to us in the doctrine of the Communion of the Saints. There is nothing material in this; it depends on faith and on the immortality of the soul. Unfortunately, however, the very ignorance of revealed truth has in many cases rendered people outside the Church singularly exposed to credulity in regard to the dead. By trickery, by sorcery, by necromancy and a mixture of all three the bereft have been imposed upon by attempts to enter into communication with the departed. These frauds have been exposed countless times, yet so great is the grief at the human heart at the stroke of death that hundreds are willing to deceive themselves and submit to the basest impostures in hope of consolation. Yielding to such practices is not merely folly; it is not merely ministering to mercenary deception; it is a fearful danger which the Church has condemned as sinful cooperation in deceptions and snares.

There is but one course for Christians to follow: to accept the law of nature, which includes death, if not in thorough consolation and bowing to the will of God, at least in patience to be strengthened by prayer. God gives us children, relatives, friends and in His own time takes them back to Himself. Why, therefore, waste our time and become morbid about a universal law? Let us accept the divine decree, follow our loved ones with prayers and wait in the spirit of faith for what will come in God's own time.

I am sure you will be interested to know the occasion of this Mass of Requiem. Recently, the mother of a Catholic soldier requested that a Requiem be celebrated in this Cathedral for the repose of the souls of all those Marines who had given their lives for their country and for the consolation of all the sorrowing mothers. We have had that Requiem Mass celebrated this morning.

Now to you all; to those of you who have fought the good fight, to those who are lamenting the taking away of those you love so well, I say: be consoled. Take to heart the words of our blessed Lord, realize the feelings of the Church as she sorrow and sympathize with you. These boys were given to you that

they might serve God and their country. They have fulfilled their duty; they are resting in peace. Weep no more. Rejoice in the Lord who has enabled you and your sons to render such high service. Though their bodies lie in the crimson fields of France you know that God has taken their souls to Himself, that He will console and reward you for the sacrifices you have made for their Creator and their native land. May God grant to them all eternal peace and rest!—The Monitor.

Thou hast wept, then, O my Jesus! Thy tears have flowed, and these blessed souls have without doubt been gathered by the angels. . . . Thou hast wept, O good Master! and this thought alone says more than volumes to my heart.—Megr. Bandry.

Unkind words do so much harm as unkind deeds. Many a heart has been stabbed to death by a few little words. There is a charity which consists in withholding words, in keeping back harsh judgments, in abstaining from speech, if to speak is to condemn. Such charity hears the tale of slander, but does not repeat it; listens in silence, but forms no comment; then locks up the unpleasant secret in the very depths of the heart.

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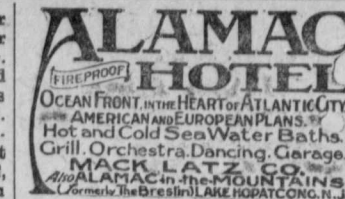
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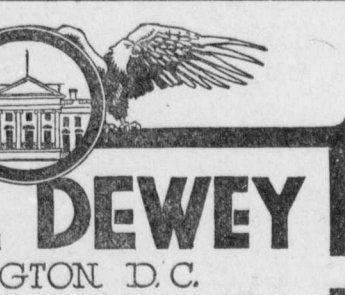


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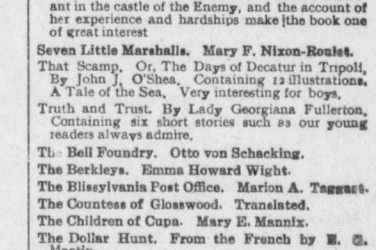
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