

for me upon earth. There is no sin, no sorrow, no sickness where I am going. Nothing but peace and joy and the sight of God in that better land where the blessed are expecting me. I must not make you weep. I will not have you grieve. Rejoice with your child; for I see them even now, my holy advocates, St. Anthony and St. Vauplerius. They are coming to fetch me away. Dearest mother, I will pray for you. Evangelista will love you in heaven as he has loved you on earth, and you will come to him there.'

The dying boy then remained silent for a few moments. Then a sudden light illumined his face; his features seemed transformed. Raising his eyes with a look of rapture, he exclaimed, "Here are the angels come to take me away. Give me your blessing, my mother. Do not be afraid. I shall never forget you. God bless you and my dear father, and all who belong to this house. Blessed be the name of the Lord." Then crossing his little arms on his chest, he bowed down his head, a last smile passed over his face—"she had her meed, that smile in death," and his young spirit passed to the regions of endless bliss.

A touching prodigy, well adopted to cheer the heart of our saint, took place that very day in the house adjoining her own. A little girl, who had completely lost the power of speech, at the very moment that Francesca's son had expired suddenly raised herself up in her bed, and exclaimed several times in a loud voice, and in a state of evident rapture, "See, see! how beautiful! Evangelista Ponziano is going up into heaven, and two angels with him!"

Francesca wept over the loss of her dearly-beloved child, but did not grieve for him. How could she have done so? He was in bliss; and had only preceded to that heaven for which she was day by day preparing. Nor was it a time for the idle indulgence of sorrow. Want and sickness were turning Rome into a charnel house. Wild voices were screaming for bread on every side. The streets were encumbered by the victims of contagious disease; their frantic cries and piteous moanings re-echoed in each piazza and under every portico. Old men were dying surrounded by the corpses of their children; mothers pressed to their milkless bosoms their starving infants. Others crept about bereft of their family, and haunting like pale ghosts the scenes of their past happiness. No carriages shook the public ways. The grass grew in the deserted streets; one mournful equipage alone slowly pursued its course through the doomed city, gathering as it passed the dead at every door;