



Boston Catholic Journal

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The Little Apostolate — for All

"Numquid apertae sunt tibi portae mortis, et ostia tenebrosa vidisti?"
"Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? Or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?" (Job 38.17)



Many seek some form of active Apostolate to serve Christ and the Church, especially in the way of helping those poor souls most in need of assistance ... they seek to assist, to be actively involved in the lives of others who *desperately* need help — and it has nothing to do with money. Most of us do not have money, and even if we did, it would be of no avail whatever — although it involves the gravest, the most vital act of charity possible. What is more, you do not have to go anywhere. It will come to you.

What, then, is this most needful act of charity, and in the direst need possible in any person's entire life?

It is this: **Whenever you read of or hear about another's death — in the news, in your town, in another and remote part of the world ... no matter who it is ... you should immediately make the Sign of the Cross and beg God's mercy on the person who has died, and His pardon for their sins, and to bring that soul to final repentance and everlasting life in God's presence.**

He alone is the just Judge. It matters not to us who it is that has died: not his faith or his lack of it; that soul is in *dire* need of God's mercy and forgiveness ... and so often has no one else to pray for them.

Stop what you are doing for the moment, even if it is within yourself, and pray for them. It will take a few seconds ... but could mean the salvation of a soul in and through the immeasurable mercy of Christ Jesus.

You will be surprised how active — even demanding — you will find this quiet and hidden apostolate to be.

What is more, carry it a step further: when you hear the wail of an ambulance, do likewise, and pray for the healing of the soul to whose need it is going. If they are in peril of death (and you know not!) pray for God's mercy and forgiveness.

This way, you will accompany so many souls on their last and often most perilous journey: from this life to the next; from this world to Heaven, despite the very real danger of Hell.

One day *you* will need the prayers of others — and perhaps *one single person's prayer* will open the gates of Heaven ... and shut the gates of Hell. Your prayer to our merciful God may be the one that makes the difference.

Remember this the next time you read the news or browse the Internet. Especially in these evil days.

Further Reflections

"I am house-bound — what can I do"?

"I am at work all day — what can I do"?

"I am old and alone — what can I do"?

What clarion is needed to remind you of what *only you* can give in a way and measure that is yours alone, and of inestimable value?

Allow me to suggest a few:



- **when you hear a siren.**
- **when you see a racing fire truck.**
- **when you see a speeding ambulance.**
- **when you watch a hearse pass.**
- **when you hear the screeching tires.**
- **when you see tears in the face of another.**

Each of these is a clarion, a loud call, to *stop* whatever you are doing ... *and to pray* for someone in *desperate need*; in the case of an ambulance, urgent, even critical need; and upon observing a hearse, an even greater need for mercy that extends to eternity.

"Wonderful idea!" you say. Yes — but to put this into practice is difficult: it requires sacrifice (of time) and discipline (lest you become callous and indifferent through negligence) and most of all, the realization that it is a genuine Apostolate ... an Apostolate of Prayer. It requires your believing that God hears our prayers, and that God answers our prayers. It is a realization that we are, for that time in prayer, *intimately* united with those who suffer and die. Our prayers can help them! **But ONLY if we pray.**

"But" you further protest, "I would be praying practically all day!". Yes ... you would. And some day — absolutely for certain — you will be that person in need of the prayers of others who prostrate themselves (inwardly or outwardly) before God Who can do all things. "Whatever you ask in My Name will be given you", Christ told us. Yes, but what if no one invokes that Most Holy Name? What if we leave it to others? To the children of a dying father, children who have not yet learned to pray or who do not know God? To the rescue workers at a suicide bomber site in some remote part of the world ... that may come to your own doorstep so much sooner than you imagine? To the mother who alone survived the car crash that killed her husband and all her children. Your reading or hearing in the news of a tragedy that has afflicted some unfortunate soul, or perhaps many hundreds.

Our circumstances, it seems, always limit us. We never seem to be where we feel that we could be able help others in their desperate need ... even in their last need. Perhaps we even feel that we seldom encounter the need by others for our prayers at all: everyone we know and care about is well and there is no impending crisis at hand.

What will call us to prayer? What will remind us of our desperately needed prayers? How can we help those of whom we know little or nothing ... and yet need our prayers? Perhaps we will be the only ones praying for them!

People do not need your "*thoughts*"!

The currently senseless and terribly monotonous — as well as utterly pointless and useless — "sound-bite" that we ever hear upon some calamity is this: "*You are in our thoughts*".

What on earth is that supposed to mean, apart from a clear and "correct" aversion to the word "prayers"? What is the point of these self-inflating words? *Do your "thoughts" somehow magically help others?* Do your "thoughts" really comfort anyone? Among my *many* "thoughts", are spontaneous and unrelated things such as, "*Where is that pen I just had?*" Or, "*Imagine! Researchers have found what appear to be the remains of a three-toed crustacean! Hmmm ...*"

Your thoughts are an endless train of related and unrelated events, ideas, or intuitions. They all have this in common: they are only thoughts ... and nothing more. They will pass or soon (as in "within seconds") be replaced by *other* thoughts, and you are invested in them only fractionally, momentarily. Some thoughts will result in actions (most of them not memorable), but most do not. We are most often simply passive spectators of our own thoughts — if we are aware of them at all!

Our prominent political leaders are extremely adept at keeping unfortunate people and their families "*in their thoughts*" following some tragedy, and this is to say that they will forget them as soon as they leave the press conference hastily assembled to demonstrate their supposed solidarity with the sufferers — and because they have more pressing issues that are (surprise!) "*in their thoughts*" also. Especially when on the links immediately following the press conference

Pray for the dead every time you hear or read of someone's death

Pray every time you hear a siren — fire, ambulance, police — and pray when you witness a somber funeral cortege (which will one day be your own)

Pray for the sick

Pray for the dying

They do not want or need your "thoughts" — but seriously desire your prayers ... to One Who *can* help them and deliver them.

Editor



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