



Boston Catholic Journal



NIHIL NISI IESUM

Dedicated to Mary, Mother of God

Salus Animarum Suprema Lex Esto (Canon Law 175)

The Salvation of Souls is the Supreme Law in the Church

Lamps Lit



“Be ready, dressed for service, and keep your lamps lit” (Saint Luke 12.35)

Preparing for death

by a Cloistered Poor Clare Colettine Nun

“Happy are those servants if he finds them awake when he comes at midnight or daybreak” (St. Luke 12.38)

It is a Poor Clare tradition, and in keeping with the spirit and exhortations of the Holy Gospel, that a Poor Clare sister retires to bed at night fully

attired. The Sister wears her habit, Rosary, cord, and a night veil, so she is ready and prepared should her Lord and Master call at any hour.

At the sound of the Matins bell, she arises and makes haste to the choir, there to sing her Lord's praises.

The opening call of the hour of Matins being, "*Light your lamps for the Bridegroom is here, go out to meet Christ the Lord, Lord open my lips and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.*"

There is a terribly moving account of Saint Francis and Sister Death that I strongly encourage you to read at [Catholic Stand](#). I will only include a few lines:

"...when [St. Francis] knew that 'Sister Death' was about to arrive he asked the doctor to announce her arrival and he opened his arms to welcome her and welcome her with joy because it was she who was going to lead him to the gates of Eternal Life. ... Francis was stripped and laid down on the ground as naked as Brother Jesus had been when he was born into poverty and as naked as he had been when he died on the cross. Then, according to his wishes dust and ashes were sprinkled over him as in no more than a whisper he intoned psalm forty-one – "Voce mea ad Dominum clamavi" – "With my voice, I cry out to the Lord." When his brothers bent over him at the end of the psalm it was to see that his prayer had been answered; 'Sister Death' had indeed led him to the gates of Eternal Life. The silence that followed was only broken by his favourite birds – a flock of larks which descended on the roof of his hut. They sang like larks ascending, half in sadness half in joy, as their brother ascended to the place whence they had all ultimately been conceived and into the one who he had called Brother Jesus in whom they had all been created."

None of us knows the hour at which the Lord will call. Our hearts should always be prepared, by striving, as St. Francis had done, to live in His grace and favor, eager only to do His will in all things, always, and everywhere.

Illness, suffering, diminishment — how much can touch us at an unexpected hour ... in an instant, all things change ... or vanish! Every person who has ever lived ... and died ... had planned for “tomorrow;” virtually *certain* that, unlike for the countless many in the graveyards they pass on the way, it would come. As you read this and scoff, the traveler before you had also come, passed without thought, and gone the way of her forbears — as one day, perhaps this day, you will, too. Could you but hear them once: “*Take heed of the day and the hour! It passes quickly And this time, it will pass no more!*”

The obituaries are filled with tomorrows that never came.

Realizing this, we come to see that most things in our lives are terribly transitory, often elusive, and even if obtained become tiresome, and that we hasten to “prepare for” every inevitability except the inevitable. Think of the magnitude of this folly!

In a dream of endless day, we never bother to light our lamps for the looming night, and, because we are unprepared, we are terrified at the prospect that it will come upon us — even as we know that it must!

It need not be so. When you are uncertain of which guest will greet you at the door, you would do well to keep a lamp lit that you may recognize who is in the vestibule before she rings at the door.

Your Little Poor Clare Sister in Christ
for the Boston Catholic Journal

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