

■ PRAYER SERVICE ■

"Now and at the Hour of Our Death"

CALL TO PRAYER

Leader God of life and light, of power and mercy, you have given us the gift of life and made death itself the gateway to eternal life. Surround with love, care, and tenderness our sisters and brothers who are dying. Make them one with your Son in his suffering and death, so that they may soon be united with you in spirit and in truth.

All Amen.

READING

A reading from the first letter of John: "We ourselves have known and put our faith in God's love toward ourselves. God is love, and anyone who lives in love lives in God, and God lives in him" (1 Jn 4:16).

REFLECTION

Each time we pray the "Hail Mary" we ask the Mother of God to intercede for us, sinners, "now and at the hour of our death." This familiar prayer reminds us that each one of us will one day face death. For health care givers the phrase has particular poignancy, for we are often privileged to accompany persons as they enter into eternal life.

Prayers for a happy or holy death have been part of the Christian tradition from its beginning. They frequently speak of a desire for forgiveness of sins, spirituality, and strength, ability to remember God's gifts, and deliverance of evil.

When the community assembles to pray for a dying person, he or she draws sustenance from the love and support of the faithful, even as those present draw consolation from the prayers and come to understand more deeply the Paschal reality of Christian death.

PETITIONS

Leader Lord God, we gather to pray for those persons who are dying, for their families, loved ones, and caregivers. Through the death of your Son, Jesus, you have shown us the way to life everlasting. Be with us as we pray.

Response Lord God, hear our prayer:

For those in our hospitals and nursing homes who are dying, that they may know peace and comfort, let us pray . . .

That the families and loved ones who care for and suffer with the dying may experience consolation in the promise of everlasting life, let us pray . . .

That those who care for the dying—physicians, nurses, aides, chaplains, social workers, and countless others—may reap joy and blessings for their services, let us pray . . .

For those persons you would like to name, let us pray . . .

Leader Lord God, as we gather our prayers together, we are mindful of the fact that each one of us will one day face You, our Creator in death. We pray the words of Cardinal Newman:

Pray Together:

May He support us all the day long,
till the shadows lengthen
and the evening comes
and the busy world is hushed
and the fever of life is over
and our work is done—
then in His mercy—
may He give us safe lodging
and a holy rest
and peace at the last.
Amen.

—Venerable John Henry Newman



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