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"The Mercy of the Lord Endureth Forever."

Secular minds miss the significance of spiritual lessons, particularly the lesson of death; and since there is so much secular thought in the atmosphere we breathe, it is well for us to draw a spiritual lesson now and then from some event in Divine Providence, in order to freshen our Catholic spirit.

Two weeks ago a young man was instantly killed in an automobile accident at an Eastern university. He was the eighth such victim at that school during this school year. He happened to be a Catholic. Some of his classmates brought the body home to his parents, a few platitudes were said, and the body was consigned to the grave amid bank of flowers. There was no one to say that while this boy was taken suddenly he was not unprepared to meet God; there was no one to tell his grief-stricken parents that he was devoted to the Blessed Sacrament, faithful to his religious duties, constant in his affection for the Mother of God, a good Catholic at school as well as at home.

The world said of him: "What a pity! A young man so full of promise, with such good prospects; he would have inherited a large fortune; he had a good home, and everything that money could buy. What a queer world this is!" The world said this, and then passed on. It has already forgotten his existence.

How different is the Christian view of death. Life is a trial to be endured, an exile from the true home of the soul. It is a battle to be fought, with an inestimable prize for the winner. It holds nothing that can truly satisfy the craving of the heart for happiness, yet its proper living holds the key to true and everlasting happiness. There is one moment that is of supreme importance in it -- the moment of its close. If that moment is lived in the friendship of God, all is well. Promise, prospects, fortune, fame, family -- nothing matters for eternity if one passes from life an enemy of God.

Patriarch, priest, and prophet have preached this doctrine, but their words have fallen on deaf ears. Christ taught it in solemn words: "At what hour you know not, the Son of Man shall come..... Watch ye therefore and pray;" "The Son of Man shall come like a thief in the night;" "Lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven;" "What can a man give in exchange for his soul?" And the words of Christ are soon choked by the cares and pleasures of the world.

If we would prepare for death, we must remember death, we must often reflect upon it. But we are too silly for solemn thoughts. We see and we hear and we heed the ways of the world: "Eat, drink, and be merry." A Mission makes a profound impression -- for a week. A reverse brings us to our knees -- for a moment. A shameful fall makes us hang our heads -- until the next temptation comes. The purple shrouds of Lent and the ashes of repentance make us good -- for three days.

Only death can make us mindful of death. When we stray too far from the end God has given our existence, He in His Mercy brings us back to Himself. He must bring death for our sakes, to save us from our foolish selves, but He brings it so mercifully; He chooses those who are so well prepared to go.

We don't say, "Poor Bill; what a pity!" We say, "How I envy him his beautiful death! If I could only be assured that my death would be as satisfactory, that I would be so well prepared!" We feel the greatest sympathy for his parents, who are left alone; but we know also that God Who gave them their son can console them in His own way. We also miss him, but we thank God for the lesson his death has given us; we resolve to right whatever is wrong in our lives, that when our time comes we may also be ready. And in our prayers for the repose of his soul and the consolation of his parents we learn the lesson of charity.