

Jesus † Mary † Joseph
Part One - Conversion
B. The Four Last Things

Few things in this earthly life are absolutely certain. The most undebatable of these is death. Every man, even the atheist, will admit this much. Death, however, is not the very last event in this life of ours. Right after death, we shall be judged. Our private judgment will be repeated on the Day of Judgment, when all men will know us for what we are.

Our judgment will depend on how we live this earthly life of ours. If we have honestly done our best and followed the commandments of Christ, we shall be rewarded with the perfect life of Heaven. If, however, we have disregarded His loving directions and refused to make use of His generous help, we shall be condemned to hell.

Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell – these are the four last things toward which we are moving each hour of the day and night. They will never frighten us if our conscience is clear. If we love God in our daily life, that is, if we are sincerely trying to know and follow His holy Will, we have no reason to fear.

By keeping this eternal goal ever before us, we shall think straight when life's problems and difficulties face us. In making the following meditations, we must strive to become eternity-minded. We must seek to guarantee to ourselves, as far as is in our power, the unending success and unmarred happiness of Heaven.

November 8th
Saint Godfrey (or Geoffroy)
Bishop of Amiens (ca. 1066 - 1115)

Saint Godfrey was born about 1066 at Molincourt in France of a distinguished Christian family. He arrived late in the lives of his parents, who had begged the prayers of the holy abbot of Mount Saint Quentin, desiring to have a child they could consecrate to God. Their prayers and those of the religious of the monastery of Mount Saint Quentin were answered in the same year. The child was baptized by the Abbot and later confided to him to be educated. Eventually Godfrey's father entered a monastery of Our Lady which he had enriched by his alms; and his mother spent her declining years in various good works.

Godfrey was given the charge of taking care of the sick, and exercised it with such great charity that he was also named hospitaller, to receive the poor at the gate. For assistance in that second duty he had his older brother Odon, who after many years in the military career had come to join him in the religious life. His brother would later die a holy death in the same abbey of Mount Saint Quentin.

When Saint Godfrey was 25 years old his abbot told him to prepare for the priesthood. He received the Sacrament of Holy Orders from the bishop of Noyon, in which diocese the abbey of Mount Saint Quentin is situated. Not long afterwards, the abbey of Our Lady of Nogent, whose abbot was incapacitated by illness, voted to obtain Godfrey in that office, and the abbot of Mount Saint Quentin consented to the sacrifice of his dear spiritual son for that purpose. The pleas of the disciple based on his youth and inexperience were not heeded, and in 1095 he became Abbot of Nogent, where the buildings were crumbling and only six monks and two young novices remained. He renovated the edifices and built a hostelry for pilgrims and the sick poor; and in this hostelry he himself continued to labor on their behalf. Soon the monastery filled up with vocations, drawing even two illustrious abbots from elsewhere, who desired to serve under this master.

When a severe drought was devastating the fields and flocks of the region, the bishop of Soissons, Hugh de Pierrefonds, went to Godfrey to ask his counsel; the holy abbot prescribed a fast in the manner of Ninevah — even the animals were to participate. On the first day of the fast, when the abbot rose to preach in the vast Church of Saint Steven, before the assembled people, the sky suddenly darkened, and so heavy a rain fell that the people were not a little inconvenienced on returning home.

When the aged bishop of Amiens died soon afterwards, its residents chose Godfrey to be their bishop, and went to a legate of the Holy See to ask him to intercede with the abbot to obtain his consent. When this decision was related to Godfrey he would have fled, but the order of the legate prevented his flight. Moreover, he had already had a vision of Saint Firmin, first Bishop of Amiens and martyr, advising him of this forthcoming new responsibility. He therefore submitted to the clear designs of Providence. After Saint Godfrey obtained a beautiful new reliquary for the relics of Amiens' first bishop, the confidence of the people in their patron, Saint Firmin, redoubled. A prayer to him by Saint Godfrey, asking for sunshine on the day of the translation of the relics, was the occasion; a fog so heavy one could scarcely see, lifted, and the sun at once shone brilliantly in the sanctuary.

As bishop he did not cease to take care of the poor and the sick. When some lepers came to him he commanded his cook to prepare food for them; four hours later nothing had yet been done, and he himself went to the kitchen and found a large, prepared salmon which he took to the famished lepers. The cook remonstrated with him, and the Saint told him that it was injustice to allow the poor to die of hunger while unworthy bishops enjoyed food that was too succulent.

When troubles occasioned by the contemporary quarrel over investitures devastated the city of Amiens, the holy bishop thought it well to resign his office and retire to the Grand Chartreuse, and did so. The archbishop of Rheims, however, could not approve such an action, and reproached the residents of Amiens when they brought up the question of a successor. The affair was referred to a Council to be held at Soissons in January of 1115. A letter was sent by the Council to the religious of Saint Bruno, begging them not to retain the bishop of Amiens, but to send him back to his see; and Godfrey with tears resigned himself to obeying the orders of the king and the Council. His declining years were not exempt from sufferings; the city of Amiens was decimated by a fire which spared only the church of Saint Firmin, the episcopal palace and a few houses of the poor. The people had not listened to the exhortations of their bishop when their prevarications enkindled the wrath of God.

Saint Godfrey died on November 8, 1115, in perfect serenity, having given his farewell blessing to the religious of the monastery of Soissons, where he had been taken, after falling ill during a journey there. His tomb was illustrated by many miracles.

Source: Les Petits Bollandistes: Vies des Saints, by Msgr. Paul Guérin (Bloud et Barral: Paris, 1882), Vol. 13.

Daily Thoughts and Prayers For Our Beloved Dead Eighth Day

Despite the sorrowful farewells and vows of undying remembrance, the dead are all too soon universally forgotten.

“Forgotten is all my life, which never a word recalls; forgotten is my name which no one utters; forgotten is my tomb, which no one visits; forgotten is my death, which no one mourns.”

Prayer: Our Father. 3 Hail Marys. Glory Be. De Profundis.

O God, who hast commanded us to honor our father and our mother, in Thy loving kindness have mercy on the souls of my parents. Forgive them their sins, and grant that I may see them face to face amid the joys of life everlasting. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Ejaculation: My Mother, my hope! (300 days)
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