

Most important of all is prayer, and the recitation of the Holy Rosary is one of the very best. However if the whole Rosary proves burdensome to the dying person, simply recite individual Our Fathers and Hail Marys. The Act of Contrition, the prayer to one's Guardian Angel, the Blessed Mother, St. Joseph, and other favorite saints of the person are also good. When it is seen that the last moments are approaching, the prayers of the dying should be recited and - for goodness sake - in the vernacular. Especially in the mind-set of our times, what good will prayers said in mumbled Latin be to the dying person who cannot understand them. The final words to reach the soul of the dying person should be a source of edification, courage, strength, hope, and help. The prayers should be recited in a clear tone of voice. They should not be recited in a plaintive, grief-stricken, tear-stained tone of voice. The tone of voice is important and contagious, either increasing or decreasing the feeling of fear and uncertainty. The moment of death is the most important moment in any person's life, and large quantities of courage and strength are required for the step across the line which stretches between life and death. We for our part, while life is still in evidence, must do as best as we know, when finally that step is taken, leaving the rest up to God and our Blessed Mother and the Holy Angels and Saints.

In summation, the following brief rules should always be conscientiously observed:

- 1) Never whisper around the deathbed or in the room. The normal tone of voice should always be in use, and the conversation should be kept as normal and as pleasant as always, with every word hearable to the sick person, but never raucous or disrespectfully loud. Music would not be appropriate as it could be a source of disedification.
- 2) Never give in to the baneful and useless practice of using clichés. Clichés mean absolutely nothing, and must be carefully avoided. If the attending and visiting person cannot speak from the heart and speak in tones of true love, they should stay away from the dying person. NO JOKES!
- 3) Whenever possible and convenient, hold the person's hand and give reassurances of love and physical presence, but without being a pest. Never approach the person if you are in a tearful condition, and never speak of how much he or she will be missed after their death. The dying person has enough to contend with without the added burden of the afflictions and sorrow of those in attendance.
- 4) Prayer: well said, well spoken, well chosen, seriously recited, and with reassurance in the speaking voice. The use of Holy Water is most strongly recommended. The Sacrament of Extreme Unction should be truly and correctly administered as soon as it is evident that death is certain. Do not wait until the very last moment out of fear of upsetting the sick person.
- 5) It is the serious responsibility of those in attendance that the mind of the dying person be kept filled with the magnificence and beauty of that awesome moment - often repeating "Do not be afraid." The physical and spiritual comfort and serenity of that person are most important during the final moments of his or her life in this present existence. □

