

-Each day, pray to the Blessed Virgin Mary: e.g. the Angelus, the Rosary, the Memorare, etc.

4. Keep in mind that by dying to yourself – in some of the ways just indicated- you will:

-become more like Christ, who sacrificed himself in so many ways, for you.

-become a better Christian, a true follower of Christ.

-become a more perfect man or woman, as God planned you to be.

-grow in virtue. (Think of how mortification will help you acquire the different virtues.)

-have a strong will and consequently greater self-control.

-be better able to serve others and contribute to their happiness.

-be doing God's will, for he wants us to die to ourselves so that we might live more in him.

5. Penance is something we do to try to make up to God for the sins we commit against him. We can and should offer penance not only for our own sins but also for the sins others commit. Our God has been ignored, abused and hated by so many men and women in the course of history and still now. We can do penance in many ways:

-By offering as penance –and with a good attitude- what we already do each day: our every thought, word and deed.

-By being more specific and offering as penance: special prayers (any prayers), special mortifications and sacrifices (as seen above), and our daily works whether they are easy or hard.

-By accepting without complaint the unpleasant surprises and the unexpected tasks that come our way and the things that we like least.

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## **Mortification and Penance for Children**

Rev. Rene J. Schatteman

1. Mortification is a big word that come from the Latin word meaning death. Mortification means that we are ready to die to ourselves, that we are ready to say no to some of the things we find enjoyable, pleasurable. It means that we try hard to control our appetites, our desires, so that we do not go astray, taking a wrong road. It means saying NO to some pleasures, but because there are more important things to which we want to say YES.

2. Mortification is expressed in Our Lord's words: "The Son of Man has not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mt. 20:28) "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For he would save his life will lose it; but he who loses his life for my sake will save it." (Luke 9:23-24) St. Paul says: "I die daily," (1 Cor. 15:31) "always bearing about in our body the dying of Jesus, so that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodily frame." (2 Cor. 4:10)

St. Josemaria Escriva writes: "No ideal becomes a reality without sacrifice. Deny yourself. It is so beautiful to be a victim!" (St. Josemaria Escriva, *The Way*, n. 175)

Christians of all times have understood the need to deny themselves, to forego certain

pleasures and comforts in this world, to sacrifice some good things in order to possess even better things.

3. Here are some of the ways we can practice mortification in our daily life. Some people are already making many of these sacrifices/ mortifications. Others may see now that God is asking them to offer some of them. Not everyone is called to live all of these mortifications but most Christians will feel the need to practice at least some of them. Keep in mind the generous sacrifices offered by the three young children, seers of Fatima: Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta.

a. Mortifications to start the day:

-Get up on the dot, even on cold mornings.

-Sprinkle some cold water in your face (but not in your sister's or brother's face!).

b. Mortification at meals:

-Don't grab for the food at the table. (Don't grab for food on the counter! Don't ever grab for food.)

-Always observe good manners when eating... at home, at school, at a ball game, at a restaurant.

-Offer to let others serve themselves first.

-Don't eat too fast or too slow.

-Don't take more food on your plate than you can eat. Finish what's on your plate. Don't waste food.

-Don't complain about the food. (Food is to be eaten!)

c. Mortification in living the schedule:

-Try to acquire the good habit of being on time: to get up, to get to breakfast, to catch the bus, to arrive at school, to begin each class, to begin your homework, to get to the dinner table, to get to bed.

-“Do you really want to be a saint? Carry out the little duty of each moment: do what you ought and put yourself into what you are doing.”(St. Josemaria Escriva, *The Way*, n. 815).

-First things first! Have you learned what this means?

-Don't put off till later what can be done now. Don't put off till later what should be done now.

-Don't let your mind run wild. Pay attention in class, push aside distractions, and concentrate on the task at hand. Lord, may I put greater effort in everything!

-Don't let your imagination run wild. Don't let yourself get down. Don't feel sorry for yourself: God made you to be the best you. Focus on being your best self: you can do it!

d. Mortification in charity:

-Mortify your thoughts. Don't think ill of others.

-Don't allow yourself to judge others: your classmates, brothers and sisters and cousins...

-Mortify your words: say only nice things. Tell the truth always. If you cannot say anything good, say nothing at all. Words are meant to convey the truth and to share our good impressions with others.

-Keep quiet and listen to the others: give them a chance to speak.

-Fight selfishness and go out of your way to be nice to someone.

-Do a favor that you have been asked to do. Do a favor that you have not been asked to do.

-Obey your parents and teachers always, right away and with a cheerful willingness.

-Control that tongue: no wise cracks, no sassy remarks, no mean jabs.

e. Mortification in prayer:

-Make time for prayer at the start of the day and at the end of the day, before and after meals, and throughout the day.

-Don't let idle thoughts distract you in prayer: fix your attention on God; ask him to help you pray well.

-Make the effort to pay attention at Mass. Try never to talk unnecessarily once you enter the church or the chapel: this, after all, is God's house and we go to talk with him.