

## HOLY SOULS

*O Lord, come to our aid,  
O Lord make haste to help us.*

The night before he died, after sharing a meal with his disciples and being a servant to them, Jesus went to the garden of Gethsemane to pray. He knew what was going to happen to him and he anticipated the torturous and agonising pain he would have to endure. He, in his humanity, did not want to experience such a humiliating and terrifying death and he asked his heavenly father to “take this cup away” but he finished his prayer saying, “not my will but thine be done.” As he hung on the cross, his agony was so overwhelming he called out, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” Jesus was divine. He did not have to humble himself to share in our humanity nor did he have to suffer and die for us but he chose to do so out of his infinite love for us. He lived, suffered and died so that we could have a life after death with him.

I have lost three sisters and a brother who were exceptionally good people. They each had serious health problems before they died. My sister Therese was a member of a religious order which cared for orphaned and disadvantaged children. She died at quite an early age with Hodgkin’s disease. As she had always been a very active and joyful person, it was distressing to see her body gradually deteriorating and watching her dying slowly and painfully but she was well cared for by her community. My brother Gerard was well known throughout the Shrewsbury and Liverpool dioceses. I was often approached by people who introduced themselves as a friend of Gerry and who had recognised me as being so like him. He died after being exposed to asbestos during his life as an electrician. He, too, suffered a slow and painful death. He was also well cared for and I visited him as often as I could. I have treasured that time I was able to spend with him before the end. To me, all the circumstances of the deaths of my immediate family members, my parents, sisters and brother have been a source of inspiration; the way they were cared for and the courageous way they accepted their conditions.

There is a debate taking place in parliament and throughout the country as to whether we should bring in a law to legalise assisted suicide. It is a movement that is spreading around the world. I believe it is a negative one for it denies the existence of God and the promise of a life with him after death. If we truly believe in God then we must believe in an after-life. When a person dies, the soul leaves the body and, I believe, it then goes through a process of purification. The mortal body of that person is lifeless and can no longer feel pain but the soul is still alive and can certainly still suffer. Therefore, ending a life prematurely may not end that person’s suffering and, depending on the choices that person has made throughout its life, may even increase the suffering. For those who have helped or encouraged that person to end that life, their loss and bereavement will be no less and there may even be added to it, a sense of guilt.

I have much sympathy for those who are suffering with a terminal illness and I understand the heartache of those loved ones who have to observe it but I think that bringing in a law to legalise assisted suicide would be dangerous and wrong. I pray that members of parliament will think hard about it and will vote with their consciences.

*May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ  
enlighten the eyes of our minds,  
so that we can see what hope his call holds for us.*