

**Monday, November 5, 2012**

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### **How to Conduct Ourselves in Illness**

We can expect illness and troubles as we live in a fallen world. But, what are we to do when we become ill? Metropolitan Gregory of St. Petersburg gives us some excellent advice from his classic book, *How to Live a Holy Life*.

1. His first point is that when we become ill we should thank God, knowing that illness is intended for our salvation. It humbles us, makes us aware of our immorality and the limits of our own powers. This is the time when most of us seek help from God. Illness is a great motivator to seek God and to contemplate the eternal life we truly seek. In illness we are forced to leave the sinful life we have been leading. We are separated from our neighbors so we are harmless to them and now able to spend time in quiet solitude with God. Metropolitan Gregory says, "*So, thank God that He is not depriving you of His grace and is using one of His most powerful tools in that cause of your salvation.*"
2. Secondly, this is a time to reflect on how you have sinned in your life and how you have been unrepentant, how you may have avoided confession, failed to participate regularly in the Sacraments, or avoided daily prayer and the fasting guidelines of the Church. Remember that none of us are without sin. As Saint John says, "*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*" (1John 1:8).
3. Think that this illness may be your last. Make yourself aware of the reality of death. We do not know when death will come upon us. Frequently it comes with illness unexpectedly. Make a confession and ask to receive Holy Communion. Be prepared for the next life, especially during time of illness.
4. When you examine your conscience and you find you are in debt to any one in any way, give instructions to repay and to make things right.
5. Make sure your legal provisions for you property are all in good

order. You want to free your soul in case you will be called to spend the last minutes of your life. You do not want to spend them on worldly cares, but for the eternal life of your soul.

6. Make sure you have called upon a physician and are taking all the medicines for your healing. God has provided all these things for our benefit. Remember, though, that it is God who heals.

7. Try to use this time for the benefit of your soul. Use the time for prayer, reading spiritual books, or seek conversations with pious individuals. Avoid TV or idle conversation. Ask for Icons in your room and make the sign of the Cross on yourself regularly. Use this quiet time you have for your spiritual growth.

8. Surrender yourself to God's will. Do not pray importunately for recovery. God knows what is best for your salvation. Remember illness is a tool for our salvation. Thank God for everything.

9. Do not become impatient if your illness becomes prolonged. Impatience, grumbling, or bad temper will not help your recovery. Metropolitan Gregory says, *"Be as patient as possible and pray thus: O Lord, I have sinned much and am worthy of eternal torment, but in Your boundless love, You do not want me to suffer eternally but have subjected me to a temporal punishment, so that I may come to myself, repent, and reform. How great is thy mercy. Multiply my patience; grant me such grace that I may endure my illness in good spirits and with love for Thee...."*

10. When you are feeling that you are regaining your health, Metropolitan Gregory says, *"pray to the Lord God that , after the return of your health, He will be pleased to keep you from every sin and will give you a firm memory of those sensations and thoughts that you had during your illness, for very many sick people after the return of their health forget the sensations that they had during their illness."*

11. If you feel that your health is worsening, ask for the Mystery of Holy Unction. If the Lord does not will to heal your body, He will certainly heal your soul.

12. Finally, he writes, *"entrust yourself completely to the will of God and do*

*not wish for anything other than that the Lord God do with you whatever is pleasing to Him. This is the best attitude for every person, whatever his condition. Because whoever entrusts himself to the Lord God is God's, and such a one can never perish."*

Reference: *How to Live a Holy Life*, pp 58-64.

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