

### *Prepare to Die*

“Hello. My name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die.”

Fans of the movie, *The Princess Bride*, will instantly recognize those words as the skilled swordsman’s long-planned promise of revenge against the six-fingered man. And did the six-fingered man, Count Rugen, expect to die? Not at all. He didn’t even expect to see the ‘young brat’ ever again. But then again, things often do not turn out as we expect.

Death may seem a sad and morbid topic for this time of year, but is there a more or less appropriate time of year to talk about it? The motorcyclist enjoying a summer’s ride down a county highway or the youngster swimming in a lake probably doesn’t expect to die, but that’s why we call crashes and drownings and other such tragedies “accidents.” They are unexpected, unplanned happenings.

So no, you may not *expect* to die, or *plan* to die, or even *want* to die. But are you *prepared* to die?

Yes, you can plan your funeral arrangements and make sure your finances are in order. You can even settle old disputes and disagreements you’ve had with people. Those are good things to do, but those preparations take care of your family and your friends after you die. Even hospice, which is a wonderful tool to help the terminally ill through the process of dying, does not prepare *you* to die.

How, then, does one prepare to die?

Preparing to die begins with remembering that we are mortal, that unless Jesus comes again before we die, each one of us is going to die. That’s a tough thing to think about in this age that wants to forget about death, that ignores issues of mortality. Most of us are more concerned with taking care of our stuff than we are with taking care of the most valuable thing we have: our souls!

Preparing to die involves attending to the health and welfare of our souls each and every day. This is not an issue that can wait until the last minute, for death may come so quickly that we will have no time to deal with it. Our faith in Christ needs to be fed constantly with God’s Word and Sacraments, through which the Holy Spirit sanctifies us and keeps us in the one true faith.

In short: go to church every week, read the Bible and confess your sins every day. Instead of obsessing on your stuff, as Johann Starck wrote, “Sincere Christians should rather commend their souls as well as their bodies each night when they go to bed and each morning when they rise to the protection of God because they do not know what God will decree concerning them during that day or night” (*Starck’s Prayer Book*, 292).

Preparing to die may lead to a more sober way of living, but it need not be somber or sad. Those who live their lives constantly preparing to die are those who live trusting in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for forgiveness, life, and salvation. Such people can claim St Paul’s words as their own: *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain* (Philippians 1:21). We see that time on this earth may be short, and we rejoice in and make the best use of the gifts God has given us, all the while knowing that greater gifts are yet to come.

So prepare to die. In so doing, you will learn to live!