

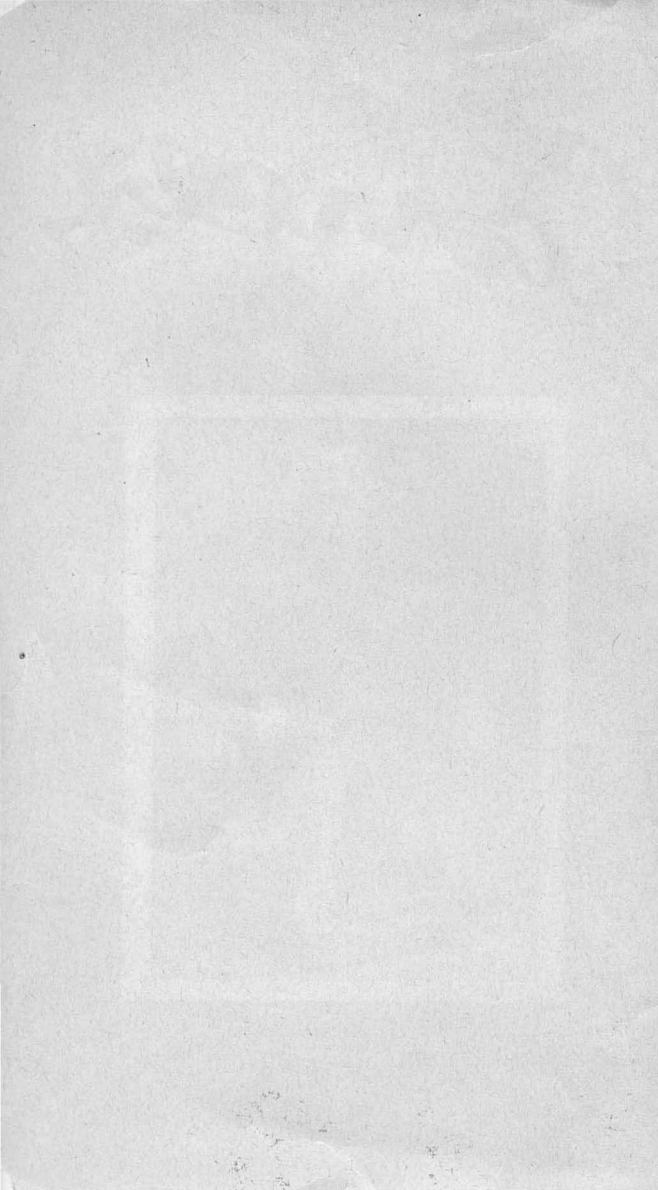
Lovesik, Lawrence G
— The Cancer Saint
ADT 8088

The Cancer Saint



ST. PEREGRINE

Price 5 cts



THE CANCER SAINT

St. Peregrine, O.S.M.



By

REV. LAWRENCE G. LOVASIK, S.V.D.



1 9 5 1

MISSION PRESS, S.V.D.
Techny, Illinois

IMPRIMI POTEST

Robert Hunter, S.V. D.
Provincial, Girard, Pa.

NIHIL OBSTAT

A. H. Wiersbinski, LL.D.
Censor Librorum

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Bishop of Erie

April 27, 1950

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PRINTED IN U.S.A.

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FOREWORD

It is hoped that this booklet will participate in some way in the nationwide war against America's second biggest killer — CANCER! More effective than any earthly cure is PRAYER! Prayer enlists the support of God's almighty power.

May the story of St. Peregrine, the "Cancer Saint," give faith to those fearing or suffering from cancer or any form of running sores. May they turn in earnest prayer to him who has rightly been named by the Church as Patron of those suffering from Running Sores and Cancer.

These pages are dedicated to Our Heavenly Mother, whom St. Peregrine loved so tenderly — Mary, the Health of the Sick.

Father Lawrence G. Lovasik, S.V.D.

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I. CANCER

The Incurable Killer

Cancer has risen from seventh place 25 years ago among fatal diseases to second. Approximately 350,000 Americans have it. A lot of people in this country have learned much about cancer in the past few years, chiefly as a result of educational campaigns. Much that they have learned has not been particularly encouraging. The number of deaths from cancer is increasing, and in the face of this, despite millions spent for research, science has not yet found the cause, or final cure, for the disease.

But this we do know. The three accepted treatments for cancer — surgery, X ray, and radium — are effective **only** if the disease is caught early enough. That means people must learn signs and symptoms; clinics must be set up, doctors trained to diagnose the illness correctly, and support given for cancer research. Of every four persons who have cancer, one is saved by treatment; one dies because cancer was discovered too late; two die in the absence of new discoveries.

In spite of all that is being done to prevent it, cancer is becoming a bigger problem every year. Like heart disease, it is primarily a disease that strikes middle-aged and older people. The death rate rises sharply after 45. Every year cancer takes more women between the ages of 30 and 54 than any other disease. At the age of 60 and over, it claims proportionately more men than women. More than one-fifth of babies born today will get cancer sometime before they die.

Traitor Within

Cancer is picturesquely described as "the lawless traitor arising from within, not an external gangster striking from without." Digestive organs alone account for about 46 per cent of cancer deaths. Apparently it is not the usual kind of disease, caught from somebody or something else and coming into the body as a germ. Cancer is simply the uncontrolled growth of cells.

There is a law of life that regulates growth. One cell splits into two cells, which in turn divide to make four cells, and as this goes on, various types of tissues and organs, each with a definite structure and use, develop. This dividing of cells continues until a child grows up. When adult size is reached, natural "brakes" are silently and effectively applied, and the cells stop dividing except to patch up wounds, replace cells that are worn-out, and otherwise keep the body in good repair.

This is what happens if everything goes as it should. But sometimes the natural brakes fail and cells get out of control and start dividing rapidly to no apparent purpose. Nobody is quite sure what causes this to happen, although chronic irritation or inflammation appears to have something to do with it in many cases. The rapidly growing abnormal cells are different enough from normal cells to be recognizable under a microscope. Soon there is a clump of cells living at the expense of the body, crowding other tissues and organs out of space that rightfully belongs to them, taking the nourishment meant for other cells, and contributing nothing.

Sometimes these clumps of cells grow slow-

ly and in a limited area, and when this happens they are called **benign** tumors. Benign tumors are harmful only when they press against other organs and interfere with their work. When the clump of cells is not confined within a given area but invades surrounding tissue or spreads to other parts of the body, it is known as a **malignant** tumor — or cancer. The danger of cancer is that it does not stop growing. It not only infiltrates between normal cells but destroys them.

Sometimes it spreads slowly, but what usually happens is that living bits of the cancer are broken off and carried through the blood vessels and lymph channels to other parts of the body. When a cancer grows to such a size that the blood vessels cannot bring it enough nourishment, parts of it deteriorates and produces poisonous effects. Or the cancer breaks through an artery and causes internal hemorrhage. Or it interferes with some important functions, or obstructs some vital passageway. At any rate, it kills because it occurs in an organ of the body where the capacity to feed and contain such a cell population is limited. There can be just so much growth. After that there is no place for it to go. The body cannot afford to feed and house such an undesirable tenant. The rule that saves countless cancer victims and that could save countless more is "Get it early." Yet first symptoms usually come some time after the disease has gotten a start. Pain and fever do not appear until much later in most cancer. The only way to be on the safe side is to go at regular intervals for a complete checkup for cancer — without waiting for suspicious symptoms.

II. THE CANCER SAINT

From Sinner to Saint

It will be encouraging and helpful for people to know that there is a patron of America's most deadly disease. He is St. Peregrine, O.S.M., a priest of the Order of the Servants of Mary. This is his story.

The only son of well-to-do and noble parents, St. Peregrine was born in 1260 at Forli, Italy. As a young man of eighteen he took an active part in the politics of his native city, which belonged to the anti-papal party that disturbed the peace of Italy. On the occasion of a popular rising, St. Philip Benizi, who had been sent by Pope Martin IV to act as a mediator and preach peace at Forli, was severely mishandled by the popular leaders. Peregrine himself, hot-headed and impetuous, with a gang of followers met the Saint at the gates of the city. The gentle words of St. Philip in behalf of peace were met with abusive language, rocks and clubs. To prove his leadership, the proud Peregrine went far as to strike the holy man on the face with his fist, knocking him down. The saintly Servite's only reply was to offer the other cheek and to pray for this misguided youth. This heroic meekness deeply impressed Peregrine. He soon realized what a fool he had made of himself and how rude he had been, so he ran three miles to catch up to the retreating Saint. With tears he confessed his guilt and begged forgiveness on his knees and promised to change his way of living. St. Philip consoled his penitent, exhorting him at the same time to amend his life and to cultivate a childlike devotion to the Mother of God.

This incident was God's way of calling Peregrine from the world, to dedicate himself to the service of Christ and the souls for whom He died. He spent long hours upon his knees in the Chapel of Our Lady in the Cathedral. It was the Blessed Mother who led him closer to her loving Son. One day she appeared to him in the Cathedral and said to him: "Go to Siena. There you will find the devout men who call themselves my servants. Join them." Peregrine being deeply touched by this tender consideration of the Mother of God, obeyed her command at once.

Having reached Siena, he was received into the Order of the Servants of Mary by the same St. Philip. He set about following with zeal the path of perfection. Only because of the vow of obedience did he consent to be ordained a priest. For sixty-two years he lived a life of austere penance and prolonged prayer. It is said that for thirty years he never sat down, and when forced to sleep, it was most often on the bare ground with a stone for a pillow or leaning against a wall. As far as he could, he observed silence and solitude, for he considered this a most necessary aid in fostering the spiritual life. He was a fervent priest and displayed his fervor above all in the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. He was untiring in preaching and bringing sinners back to God. After having spent some years in Siena, his superiors sent him to Forli to found a new house for the Order. The grace of God had worked wonders in transforming this sinful, misguided youth into a Saint.

The Test by Cancer

The genuine worth of Peregrine's sanctity was tested by a great affliction which befell him in the form of a

loathsome cancer of the foot. Besides being very painful, it made him repulsive to his associates. The gangrenous stench from the wound was so foul that no one dared approach him. He bore this trial without a murmur. At last the surgeon decided that the only thing to do was to cut off the foot. But that would never do. Peregrine had great dreams for the future. Constant meditation on the Passion of Christ and the Sorrows of Mary had made him realize the infinite value of souls — the great price Mother and Son had paid to save them from Hell. Amputation of his leg would mean he would lose a golden opportunity to suffer with the Queen of Sorrows.

How well Peregrine understood that souls are saved by sacrifice and prayer! This was entirely in keeping with the spirit of the Blessed Mother. Did she not emphasize the need of penance and prayer both at Lourdes and Fatima? She wants the world to make reparation to the good God and to her Immaculate Heart in order that souls may be saved from eternal damnation. How earnestly she pleaded at Fatima: "Pray, pray very much; and make sacrifices for sinners. Many souls are lost, because there are none to make sacrifices for them." Devoted child of Mary that he was, Peregrine wished to carry out her desires. He, too, wanted to sacrifice and pray for sinners.

Peregrine spent the night before the operation in trustful prayer to God. He even crawled into the monastery chapel and offered a prayer of resignation, mixed with the plea, that his leg would not be amputated. He fell asleep before the image of the Crucified Savior. In a dream Christ seemed to stretch out His hand from the Cross and touched his diseased foot. On awakening he discovered that it was more than a mere dream — he

was completely cured! The doctors were amazed and they testified that they could no longer detect any trace of the disease.

This miracle greatly enhanced the reputation which the holy man had already acquired by his exemplary life. It gave faith to those fearing cancer or suffering from it or any form of running sores. But most of all, his personal sanctity bore fruit in countless miracles. He multiplied bread for the poor, breathed the name of Jesus over the sick and they were cured. By prayer and fasting he brought hardened sinners to repentance and at one time brought to God's side forty outlaws who had been the terror of the country.

Wonder Working St. Peregrine

St. Peregrine lived to be eighty years of age. He died in the year 1345. So great was the number of miracles at his death and later at his tomb, that he was beatified by the Church in 1609. The Apostolic Delegate to Spain remarked: "What St. Anthony with his signs and miracles is to Italy, St. Peregrine is to Spain." He was once solemnly declared Universal Patron of Spain. Vienna considers him her most popular saint. He is invoked and well known in Austria, Hungary, Bavaria, and Italy.

Spain especially was the scene of many miracles. In one city alone, Citta de Castello, from the year 1694 to 1726 more than 300 cures were authenticated by ecclesiastical authorities. In Barcelona, Catholics speak of him as "the Mighty," "the Marvelous," the "wonder working St. Peregrine." It will suffice to mention but two of these cures. Rev. Isidore Costa, S.J., Rector of the Seminary of the Society of Jesus in Barcelona, had been long afflicted with a painful, cancerous growth

on his leg. Physicians held no hope for him. Father Isidore then prayed with confidence to St. Peregrine. The pain and stench stopped. The wound was instantly cured. This Father attested to it under oath.

The body of a seven-year-old Italian boy was completely covered with ulcers. On the advice of his physician, the child's mother went to the Church of the Servite Fathers at Forli and had a Mass offered in honor of St. Peregrine. When she returned home, her child was completely cured of the terrible disease.

Pope Benedict XIII solemnly canonized St. Peregrine in 1726. His feast is celebrated May 2. His body was exhumed and found incorrupt. In contrast to the onetime cancerous foul stench, it emitted a heavenly odor which men and women found impossible to describe by comparison to earthly flowers. His body is still preserved intact.

The Cancer Saint

St. Peregrine of the Servite Order has been picked by the Church as Patron of those suffering from Running Sores and Cancer. Certain saints, because of events in their lives, seem to specialize in interceding for definite types of peoples. As St. Joseph is patron of a happy death, St. Christopher, guardian of travel, so, too, St. Peregrine, because of the miraculous cure of his cancerous growth, is known as "the Cancer Saint."

St. Peregrine is not well known in America. And yet, the most dread disease in America is Cancer. It takes second place among fatal diseases in our country. Of the American children born this year, about 20 per cent of the boys and 22 per cent of the girls will become its victims sometime during

their lives. Though millions of dollars are being spent by the government and private agencies on research and care, and thousands spending themselves, cancer is still the nation's second biggest killer.

But there is still one hope, and that lies in confident and persevering prayer. God who created the world and fashioned the human body with all its mysterious functions, is Master of His own creation. He can and does suspend the laws of nature for those who have faith in His goodness. Prayer is omnipotent. It can also take away impossible-to-cure diseases. We have but to remember the solemn promise of the Savior: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it shall be opened" (Matt. 7, 7-8).

Furthermore, the saints are our friends in heaven. They favor no special nationalities, for the Church is Universal. They intercede for all who pray to them with confidence. Since St. Peregrine is the "Cancer Saint," why should not people who fear or who suffer from cancer or any form of running sores pray to him, when there is so little hope in the natural powers of men to cure? The fact that thousands of miraculous cures were already reported — and many thousands more that were never made known to the public — should inspire confidence in St. Peregrine's prayers before God and the Virgin Mary. If it is God's Will, these prayers will be answered, that God may reward our confidence and that He may be glorified in His Saints!

Various Prayers

Prayer to St. Peregrine

O St. Peregrine, whom Holy Mother Church has declared Patron of those suffering from Running Sores and Cancer, I confidently turn to you for aid in my present sickness. (*Mention it*)

Behold how much I am afflicted in body as well as in soul. Lest my courage begin to fail, and impatience and sadness oppress me, I beg your kind intercession. Good St. Peregrine, ask God to relieve me of this sickness, if it be His Holy Will. Plead with the Blessed Virgin, the Mother of Sorrows, whom you loved so tenderly and in union with whom you have suffered the pains of cancer, that she may help me with her all-powerful prayers and sweet consolation.

But if it should be God's Holy Will that I bear this sickness, obtain for me courage and strength to accept all these trials from the loving hand of God with patience and resignation. May suffering lead me to a better life and enable me to atone for my own sins and the sins of the world.

O good St. Peregrine, help me to imitate you in your suffering, unite myself with Jesus Crucified and the Mother of Sorrows, and offer my pains to God with all the love of my heart, for His glory and the salvation of souls, especially my own. Amen.

Say one *Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be to the Father*, with the invocation: "*St. Peregrine, pray for us!*"

Prayer to the Mother of Sorrows Through the Intercession of St. Peregrine

O my dearest Mother Mary, Mother of Sorrows, behold me, your child, in prayer at your feet. I have come to plead for this special favor through the intercession of your faithful servant, St. Peregrine. (*Mention your favor.*)

O Sorrowful Mother, I beg you to present my petition to your Divine Son. If you will pray for me, I cannot be refused. I know, dearest Mother, that you want me to seek God's Will in all things. Therefore, with child-like trust I abandon myself to God's Holy Will concerning my request. If what I ask for should not be granted, pray that I may receive that which will be of greater benefit to my soul.

Sweet Mother of Sorrows, I love you! I put all my confidence in you, because your prayers before God are most powerful. For the greater glory of God and for the sake of Jesus, through the intercession of St. Peregrine, whom you have led to sainthood, hear and grant my prayer. Amen.

In Honor of Our Lady, Health of the Sick

Grant us, Thy servants, we beseech Thee, O Lord God, that we may be blessed with health of soul and body, and by the glorious intercession of the Blessed Vrrgin Mary, be freed from the sorrows of this present life and en-

joy everlasting bliss. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

In Honor of St. Peregrine

O God, who gavest to St. Peregrine an angel for his companion, the Mother of God for his teacher, and Jesus for the physician of his malady, grant we beseech Thee, through his merits, that we may on earth intensely love our holy Angel, the Blessed Virgin, and our Savior, and in heaven bless them forever. Grant that we may receive the favor for which we now petition. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer to Jesus, the Divine Physician

Jesus, Divine Physician, You have created nature and all the wondrous functions of the human body. You are the Master of Your creation. You can and do suspend the laws of nature for those who have faith in Your goodness and entreat You in fervent prayer. You promised that my prayers would be heard when You said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it shall be opened" (Matt. 7, 7). You also said, "All things whatsoever you ask in prayer, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come to you" (Mark 11, 24). Full of confidence in these promises, I beg You to help me in my present affliction. (*Here mention your request.*)

Jesus, Divine Physician, during Your lifetime You have cured sickness and disease, and even raised the dead to life, because

people asked You to do so in prayer. You stretched out Your hand from the Cross and touched the diseased leg of St. Peregrine and completely cured him because he prayed that his leg might not be amputated. I firmly believe that You will hear my prayer also, if this should be the Will of God.

Through the intercession of St. Peregrine, who was so devoted to Your holy Passion and to Your Mother of Sorrows, I ask for the grace to understand more and more the infinite love of Your Sacred Heart for me. I firmly believe that You love me with a love that ordains all things for my own good even though this should be difficult for my nature to bear; a love that would turn to good all that I may at the moment consider evil. I love Your Heart that loves me so much.

Jesus, Divine Physician, I thank You for being my best Friend in my illness and my Companion in suffering, loving me with a Heart human like my own; a Heart that can understand my sorrows and problems since It has experienced all that I must bear; a Heart that can sympathize with me and befriend me in my hour of need; a Heart that can love me with the love of the best of friends. Like a real furnace of fire Your Heart burns all for me with a love that knows no end because It has its source in the depths of the Godhead — all for me, as if there were no other to share its infinite warmth. Not all the affection You pour out upon countless other souls lessens Your love for me. Even when I forget You and begin to complain in my illness, You pray for me. Even when I disappoint You by trying to shake off the cross You have placed upon my shoulders, You sacrifice Your-

self for me at Holy Mass. When I have pain, You are ready to console and strengthen me, for Your Sacred Heart ever calls to me, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11, 29). Dearest Jesus, Divine Physician, behold how I am burdened with this cross of illness. I come to You and beg You to give me rest.

Jesus, Divine Physician, help me to realize that it is only through the cross that I can attain to glory; that it is only through suffering that I can possess the kingdom of heaven. Before Your own dear Mother was crowned Queen of heaven, she became the Mother of Sorrows. All the saints suffered during their lifetime. Good Saint Peregrine has spent sixty-two years in penance and prayer. A cancerous growth on his leg consumed his flesh to the bone and he suffered intensely. I, too, have been blessed with suffering. This is the only way I can follow You, for You said, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me" (Matt. 16, 24).

Jesus, Divine Physician, I unite myself with You as You offer Yourself during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and renew Your Sacrifice of Calvary. Give my heart sentiments like Your own, so that through frequent Holy Communion and prayer I may become a worthy co-victim with You, holy and pleasing to God, and that all the actions, sufferings, tears, and disappointments of my life may be thus consecrated to You as a sacrifice for the glory of God. Everything that You send me, or permit in my life, whether favorable or un-

favorable, sweet or bitter — even this illness which I must bear, is acceptable to me, for I have resolved to conform myself to the Divine Will in all things. You invite me to do so, for You said, "Take my yoke upon you . . . My yoke is easy and My burden light" (Matt. 11, 29). May God's Will always be my will! Jesus, Divine Physician, cure me! Amen.

Our Father. . . . Hail Mary. . . . Glory be. . . .
Jesus, Divine Physician, have mercy on us.
Mother of Sorrows, pray for us.
St. Peregrine, the cancer saint, pray for us.

Litany in Honor of St. Peregrine

(FOR PRIVATE USE ONLY)

Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, hear us.
Christ, graciously hear us.
God, the Father of heaven,
Have mercy on us.
God the Son, Redeemer of the world,
Have mercy, etc.
God the Holy Ghost,
Holy Trinity, one God,
Holy Mary, Mother of God, *pray for us.*
Mother of Sorrows, *pray, etc.*
Health of the sick,
Comforter of the afflicted,
Help of Christians,
St. Peregrine,
Converted by the prayers of St. Philip,
Afflicted with a cancerous growth,
Completely cured by the outstretched hand of
Jesus Crucified,

Who performed many miracles in your life-
time,
Who multiplied food and drink,
Who cured the sick by the power of the
Name of Jesus,
Who converted hardened sinners by prayer
and fasting,
Who received every favor you ask of God,
Most confident in prayer,
Most austere in penance,
Most patient in suffering,
Most humble in the Holy Priesthood,
Most zealous for souls,
Most kind toward the afflicted,
Most devoted to the Passion of Jesus and the
Sorrows of Mary,
Victim with Jesus and Mary for the salvation
of souls,
Wonder-worker for the sick and diseased,
Hope of incurable cases,
Universal patron of those afflicted with cancer
and running sores,
Beloved Patron of Spain,
Glory of the Order of the Servants of Mary,
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the
world, *Spare us, O Lord.*
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the
world, *Graciously hear us, O Lord.*
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the
world, *Have mercy on us.*
V. Pray for us O glorious Saint Peregrine,
R. That we may be made worthy of the
promises of Christ.

Let us pray

O God, graciously hear the prayers which
we present to You in honor of Saint Peregrine,

Your beloved servant and Patron of Cancer patients, so that we, who do not rely on our own merits, may receive help in our needs through the intercession of him whose life had been so pleasing to You. Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.



