

*Make us know the shortness of our life, that we may gain wisdom of heart.* Every one of us knows intellectually that death like taxes is certain. We tend to regard with pity those who have had this fact visited on them personally; but indeed the wisdom of living properly demands that we should know and acknowledge the fact of our own death, and the sooner the better.

Looking forward to our passage out of this world does us many favours, not least the putting in perspective of its suffering and frustration. If we try to pretend that we shall live for ever in these limitations, the prospect can be dire and crippling. Knowing that in the Italian phrase *tutto passa*, everything goes in the end, is therefore a liberation from all those things which we would like to see the back of; and they are not only many, they are also increasing as we get older.

In another sense, knowing that our life is short, we can gain a wonderful sense of its preciousness, its worthiness to be treasured for the good and great things that come to us in its brief transitory sense. The biblical analogy is that of a flower, brief but unspeakably beautiful. These things too speak to us of God's love for our own transience, and his willingness to share with us his eternity, in which we shall behold and hear and taste and scent and feel the true joy for which our earthly apprenticeship makes us thirst and long.

Lord, teach us the shortness of our life, that we may long more deeply and wholeheartedly for the life where true joy will be ours.