

J A C Q U E S - J O S E P H   H A R M E L

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**Testament of the Good Father**  
**Jacques-Joseph Harmel**

Pap.-Lib. J. Winling et L. Cosset

1884

## THIS EDITION

This is an English translation of the original French text, made for the website [leonharmel.com](http://leonharmel.com) in 2026. It follows the original sentence by sentence, without cuts or additions.

The text is given in full, translated from the 1884 edition. It has been typeset in the spirit of the original: title pages and headings follow the layout of the book; the illustration has been cut out of the digitised document and restored.

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**Léon Harmel, le Bon Père du Val-des-Bois**

[leonharmel.com](http://leonharmel.com)

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# TESTAMENT

## OF THE GOOD FATHER

### Jacques-Joseph HARMEL

*Born on 23 May 1795, piously fallen asleep in the Lord on Monday 3 March 1884, at five o'clock in the evening, at Val-des-Bois, surrounded by his Children, Grandchildren and Great-Grandchildren.*

*He died as he had lived, in peace, in faith and in love of his neighbour.*

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My dear and beloved Children and Grandchildren,

I wish to die in the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Faith. I offer my death in atonement for my past faults, and I pray Our Lord Jesus Christ to bless you as I myself bless you with love.

When you read these lines, I shall no longer be among you. You know how much I have loved you; I lived only for you and through you, and all my earthly happiness lay in the love with which you surrounded me.

The last thought of my life will still be for you, and I want this testament to be its last expression for you all.

Engrave, then, in your hearts the last wishes of your father, and may the remembrance of them never fade from your memory.

When I am gone, your first care will be to pray and to have prayers said for me. The God before whom I shall have appeared, when

you read these lines, is an infinitely holy God, for whom the slightest defilement is a stain. I desire that for three months you have at least three Masses said for me each day. During the two years that follow, you will have one Mass said each day for the same intention.

In praying for me, I want prayers to be said at the same time for your mother, who may still have need of them. The memory of your father and of your mother must never be separated in your thoughts. Remember also my parents and those of your mother, and if God, in his merciful justice, has left them something still to atone for, may your prayers complete their deliverance.

Often remind your children that my fathers handed down to me an unblemished name: may they in their turn hand it down in its integrity to their descendants. May the most scrupulous honesty always govern your dealings: it is better to lose honestly than to gain by compromising with one's conscience.

Help one another; support with your counsel any one of you who might be on a wrong path, and with your fortune any one of you who might fall on hard times.

Treasure the heritage of simplicity that I have left you. Luxury ruins families, often divides them, and offends God. Do not, therefore, take as your example people of the world, for whom success is the beginning of a life of ostentation, in which their vanity seeks an empty satisfaction. Let the style of your household and of your habits be simple, and always well below your station. Let a certain austerity, which better becomes Christians, reign in your life and in your furnishings. I cannot insist too strongly on this point: by acting thus, *you will accustom your children to that simple life which is the safeguard of good morals and of prosperity.* Children imitate everything they see, and if their parents live simply, they imitate them.

In our time, luxury is a slope that carries us down, even without our knowing it. It is a current of ideas, an atmosphere one breathes, with which one becomes imbued little by little. Everything in the

world preaches luxury to us and draws us towards it; it has almost been made into a virtue. And so, my dear children, I want you to stand firm against this baneful current, and you will have the measure of your simplicity if the world finds that you are too simple.

By acting thus, you will always be comfortably off, *your children will acquire better habits*, and you will not forget the poor.

Work energetically and prudently to preserve and increase the patrimony that I had so much trouble in acquiring. Remember that when one is in business, one must give oneself to it entirely and not by halves. Do not undertake anything beyond your strength; your establishment is already very large, and success sometimes leads to rash ventures that weigh on the family for a long time and can ruin it. Great establishments suffer great losses when there are difficult times or a little slackness in supervision. Keep, then, within proper bounds, and work courageously to make what you have bear fruit.

But at the same time, never forget that salvation is your chief business, the only one whose success is necessary. The goods of this world are mere nothingness; the possession of God is the only good that does not deceive. Place, then, all your industrial and commercial affairs under the protection of our Father who is in heaven; do everything in your power, and expect everything from his hand. It is He who makes labour fruitful, as it is He also who sends reverses and sufferings.

If He makes your labour fruitful, do not become vain about it, and let your thoughts and your words not be puffed up by it; for pride is the source of every fall, even on this earth, and it is the great cause of the frequent vicissitudes that mark our time. If, on the contrary, despite your work and your thrift, He sends you reverses, accept his holy will without murmuring, for his will is always a will of love. If He grants you success, it is so that you may make Him known around you by your good works. If He sends you reverses, it is so that you may humble yourselves under his hand and bless Him in misfortune.

Lastly, if He sends you afflictions, it is so that you may unite your sufferings with the sufferings of his Passion, and thus acquire inestimable treasures.

For to God, who is eternal, what is our life? And what does it matter whether it has been happy or unhappy, if we win heaven for Eternity? Even in the eyes of men, my dear children, how short life is! I have lived more days than many others, and yet my life has passed like a shadow. On the threshold of Eternity, I have only one regret: that I did not suffer more for Jesus Christ.

Whatever your position may be, love the poor. If your fortune increases, give back a part of what has been given to you. If you are less fortunate, give less. But, fortunate or unfortunate, give yourselves to your suffering brethren. The gift of money is nothing if you do not give your heart. Charity will be a powerful advocate before the God of charity, and He will not allow those who have practised it to fall into the abysses of hell.

Let your heart never be poisoned by hatred or envy. Forgive your enemies, certain beforehand that you will always forgive far less than God has forgiven you yourselves.

But if it were your brother who had offended you, let that be a reason for you to be more affectionate, more tender towards him. Woe to him who bears a grudge against his brother.

May the children of my children be brothers to one another, and may unity and affection prevail in all their relations.

Carefully maintain the unity of the family; never regret the sacrifices you make to that end. In the family alone can true affection be found. Remember the value that your mother and I always set on this unity.

Return to all those who loved me the affection they gave me.

Love our dear workers; they were my children; you will take up my paternity; you will continue to lead them towards God and to do them good.

Such, my dear children and grandchildren, are my last recommendations; your love is a pledge to me that they will not be in vain for you. You will reread them from time to time; in rereading them, you will think that your father and your mother are waiting for you in another fatherland, and that their arms are open to receive in turn their children, their grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

May the heavenly Father always look upon you with favour. May Jesus Christ, coming down often into your souls, establish piety and purity there. May the Holy Spirit set your hearts aflame with love for God. I beseech the most Holy Trinity to bless you as I bless you once again.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

HARMEL-TRANCHART.

