

CARING FOR LOVED ONES AT LIFE'S END

Surround them with love, support, and companionship that are "anchored in unconditional respect for their human dignity, beginning with respect for the inherent value of their lives."

To Live Each Day with Dignity,
USCCB

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UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF
CATHOLIC BISHOPS

Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities

www.usccb.org/repectlife

Accompanying a loved one in his or her last days is enormously important work, but we do not need to fear our own limitations. Pope Francis tells us, "[God] comes to assist us in our weakness. And his help consists in helping us accept his presence and closeness to us. Day after day, touched by his compassion, we also can become compassionate towards others."⁵



An old Irish proverb says, "It is in the shelter of each other that the people live." Indeed, we are created to depend upon one another and walk together in suffering. But when family members or friends approach life's end, we may not know how best to "shelter" them. Here are some concrete ways we can compassionately care for them.

Invite God In

Pope Francis has said that "praying in difficult situations is like opening the door to the Lord, in order that he might enter."¹ The dying process is a sacred time—a final season to seek closure in this life and prepare for the next in the hope of sharing in Christ's Resurrection. As you enter into this season with your friend or family member, ask God to accompany both of you.

Listen

Try to discover your loved one's values and how best to honor his or her wishes. This requires true empathy. It can be hard not to assume he or she wants the same thing you *think* you would want if you were in the same situation. Listen with a non-judgmental ear so your loved one feels free to speak openly.

Inform Yourself

Be aware that wishes for refusing ordinary or proportionate treatment²—or for pursuing assisted suicide—are usually rooted in fears of dependency, helplessness, or pain. Make yourself available to discuss these or any concerns. Know that hospice care focuses on alleviating pain and other symptoms, meeting basic needs, and providing comfort. Seek to understand the Catholic Church's teaching on end-of-life care, which can help you provide authentically loving support that respects life.*

Be Steadfast in Compassion

As Pope Francis reminds us, "Compassion means 'suffer with.'"³ Your friend or family member will likely face ups and downs. Recognize these as part of a natural process. Surround him or her with love, support, and companionship that are "anchored in unconditional respect for their human dignity, beginning with respect for the inherent value of their lives."⁴ The patient's suffering can be alleviated by your empathy, as well as by quality hospice care by medical personnel.

Help Them Achieve Closure

Help your family member or friend define the unfinished personal projects, financial concerns, unresolved relationships, or other matters that occupy his or her mind. Due to changing circumstances, some goals may need to be reframed. Creating and accomplishing this list of unfinished business can help the person discover a sense of purpose and feel more at peace.

Provide Opportunities for Resolution

Ira Byock, a hospice medical director, illustrates in his book *The 4 Most Important Things*** how saying "I love you," "I'm sorry," "I forgive you," and "Thank you" can promote much-needed healing during the dying process. You can help ensure a peaceful transition for your loved one by facilitating opportunities for reconciliation with others and for mutual expressions of love and gratitude. Consider offering to invite a priest to hear his or her confession and to administer the Eucharist as viaticum and the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, all of which heal the soul and prepare us to meet the Lord.

Reminisce

Our appetites diminish as our bodies experience a decreased need for food and fluids when we near life's end. Provide smaller amounts of your family member or friend's favorite foods. Even if unable to eat them, he or she may still enjoy the aromas and reminisce with you about special memories they evoke.

Provide a Peaceful Presence

There comes a time of natural withdrawal from surroundings when dying persons may lose interest in many activities that used to be enjoyable. Your own quiet, patient presence can provide important support as your loved one prepares emotionally and spiritually for his or her passing. Hearing can become very acute, so placing the phone in another room, playing favorite music, reading a favorite passage, praying together, or simply sitting quietly with him or her can all be very soothing.

Show Tenderness

Those who are dying remain in need of the tenderness of personal human contact. Ask if you might gently brush your loved one's hair, apply lotion to her hands or feet, or simply hold his hand. Tell stories, laugh, and share memories to reassure the person he or she is a cherished gift, not a burden in any way.

Bear Their Transition Patiently

Transition, the time immediately preceding death, may bring rapid physical changes, such as in breathing patterns, as well as changes in mental or emotional states. Try to be patient, and allow the "how" and "when" of death to be between God and your loved one. Ask God for the wisdom to know what final words to say—and when. As you are able, give your loved one permission to make the transition. For example, you might say, "I love you. It's okay to go home now."

*As our bishops teach, "Respect for life does not demand that we attempt to prolong life by using medical treatments that are ineffective or unduly burdensome."⁶ At the same time, intentionally hastening death—whether through drugs or deliberate neglect of basic care—offends our God-given dignity and is never morally permissible. **More information:** www.usccb.org/ToLiveEachDay

**References do not indicate endorsement.

1 Pope Francis, Morning Meditation in the Chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae: Choosing the Better Part, 8 October 2013, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2013).

2 More information: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services, 5th ed, (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2009). United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, To Live Each Day with Dignity: A Statement on Physician-Assisted Suicide (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011).

3 Pope Francis, General Audience, Wednesday, April 27, 2016, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2016).

4 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, To Live Each Day with Dignity: A Statement on Physician-Assisted Suicide, 10.

5 Pope Francis, Misericordiae vultus, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015), no. 14.

6 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, To Live Each Day with Dignity: A Statement on Physician-Assisted Suicide, 10.

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THOUGHTS FROM YOUR PASTOR: Veterans' Day....and Month of the Dead

Today, in the civic life of our nation, we observe **Veterans' Day**, and we give thanks to all who have served our great Republic by defending our country. Our veterans have risked their lives to ensure that our liberties are secure, and they have made many sacrifices in so doing. During our time on this Earth as disciples of Jesus, we are grateful for living in a country which was founded upon a belief in God and a belief that humans have dignity as made in God's image and likeness, and the belief that we should have the liberty to pursue our relationship with the Lord and the pursuit of holiness without interference or hindrance. Such liberties are not a "given" in many parts of the world, and so we thank our veterans for helping to ensure that our Republic can endure securely for the benefit of generations to come.

As wonderful as it is to be citizens of our earthy nation, the USA, as Catholic we also look forward to being citizens of another realm: the Kingdom of Heaven. As Jesus constantly reminds us, this world is not all there is. As creations of God, we are meant for eternity long beyond the limits of time and space here on Earth. This month of November, which began with All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day, is known as the **Month of the Dead**, and is a chance for us as Catholics to focus even more on our preparation for being citizens of Heaven. We ask for the saints to pray for us in our daily spiritual battle for holiness. We pray for the souls still in purgatory awaiting full entry into Heaven after their final necessary purification from minor sins that were still on their souls at death. We ask Jesus to help us to find comfort in our grief and loss of our loved ones.

But this Month of the Dead can also be a chance for us to learn about the **practical matters relating to our own death or the imminent death of a loved one**. The Catholic Church offers a host of practical wisdom on things like 'end-of-life' medical moral decisions (not all options allowed for by hospitals or doctors are moral or respectful of the dignity of human life); living wills (be very careful about the "templates" that are available, for the same reasons); funeral planning (e.g., cremation is allowed for serious reasons, but not really preferred by the Catholic Church), etc. etc. A great resource for many of these end-of-life questions is the National Catholic Bioethics Center from Philadelphia (www.ncbcenter.org). Or simply come and speak with me, as I have a specific interest in bioethics, and I have many resources here "in-house" that I can share. There is a lot of confusion out there, but the Catholic Church has developed a very consistent, Gospel- and science-based approach to these difficult issues. May we pray for our dead, show compassion to our terminally-ill, and prepare for our own transition to being one day citizens of Heaven with great hope and love!

Fr. Ferguson is available to help you with any questions or concerns you may have; please contact him at hamilton.college@outlook.com or at 419-634-2626.

THOUGHTS FOR OUR PARISH CHILDREN by "Jackie", the Pastor's Cat



Hi boys and girls! My name is "Jackie", and as you know, I am Father Ferguson's cat! Today is a special day! That's right! It is "Veterans' Day"! A veteran is someone who has helped defend our nation from the bad guys around the world who try to take away our freedoms and liberties. It's almost like someone at school who stands up for you and protects you from the mean bullies who try to hurt you! I know what it is like to be bullied....many times I try to go outside, and other cats try to fight me and meow mean things at me! It's no fun! I like to be able to walk around my backyard in freedom. A veteran helps fight the bad guys around the world, so we can safely walk around our great nation in peace.....to be able to live where you want and serve God in your life and play with your friends and eat ice cream and tuna fish and nap in the sun without some terrorist (a bad guy!) hurting you! This week, ask your dad or mom if they know a veteran, and thank them for their service to our nation! Have a "purr"-fect week!

A small token of our appreciation of the men and women who have served or are serving in the military is to have dessert free when they come to our Parish Bazaar on Monday. See reverse for Bazaar flier.

Our Lady of Lourdes' Annual Holiday Bazaar

Monday, November 12~ 11 am – 7 pm

Lunch: 11 am – 1 pm

Chicken Salad, Egg Salad, or Ham & Swiss Croissant (\$2)

Chicken Noodle Soup or Chili (\$2)

Beverage/Coffee, Pop, or Water (\$1)

Dessert (\$1)

Dessert Free for Military & Veterans

Theme

Baskets



*50/50
Raffle*

Supper 4:30 – 6:30 p

Pot Roast

Mashed Potatoes

Corn or Carrots

Roll

\$6.00

Half Portions/Half Price

\$3.00

Still have some openings for workers!

Talk to Ann Hood or just show up
Monday ready to be put to work!

**Students Grades 5 through college
age: come and help!!!**