



CARING FOR LOVED ONES AT LIFE'S END

SCRIPTURE

Psalms 33:20-22 | Isaiah 41:10 | Romans 8:18, 38-39 | Romans 12:15 | 2 Corinthians 4:16-17 | Galatians 6:2 | Philippians 1:20-21 | James 5:13-15

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

1004-1014, 1499-1525, 2276-2283

FROM THE POPES

- Pope St. John Paul II. Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris (On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering)*. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1984). 28-30.
- Pope St. John Paul II. *Evangelium vitae (The Gospel of Life)*. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995). 46-47 and 65.
- Pope Francis. Address to Participants in the Plenary of the Pontifical Academy for Life. March 5, 2015. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015).
- Pope Francis. *Amoris laetitia (The Joy of Love)*. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2016). 48.

USCCB RESOURCES

- **Maggie's Story: Living Like Dad**
8-panel brochure. Item #1543.
Spanish Item #1553.

- **Advance Medical Directives: Planning for Your Future**

8-panel brochure. Item #1446.
Spanish Item #1456.

- **Caring for Each Other, Even Unto Death**

8-panel brochure. Item #1042.
Spanish Item #1052.

- **To Live Each Day with Dignity**

www.usccb.org/ToLiveEachDay

- **To Live Each Day with Dignity: A Statement on Physician-Assisted Suicide**

15 pp. Item #1172.

- **Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services**

Booklet. 40 pages. Item #0970.

- **John Paul II: Dying with Dignity**

4 pp. Item #0542.

RELATED SAINTS

- **Our Lady of Lourdes:** Patron saint of bodily ills. St. John Paul II celebrated the first *World Day of the Sick*, declaring that it would be celebrated each year on the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. In the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary, one of the titles by which Our Lady is referred to is "Comfort of the afflicted."
- **St. Joseph, Husband of Mary:** Patron saint of a happy, holy death. Those who are dying have been entrusted to St. Joseph, "since pious tradition holds that he was assisted by Mary and Jesus in his last agony."⁹



REAL PEOPLE, REAL LIFE:

In “Maggie’s Story: Living Like Dad,” Maggie reflected upon accompanying her father in his final days as she faced her own terminal illness years later.

- “Watching anyone suffer, especially a loved one, is one of the hardest human experiences. ... Looking back, I’m convinced that walking through those moments with Dad made both of us different and better people. God loved us enough to allow those moments—even and especially moments of suffering—in order to teach us lessons which helped us to grow spiritually and emotionally. Dad left a legacy. He taught me how to live and die with faith and with dignity marked by patience and grace. He taught me that dignity can’t be diminished by pain or loss of personal control. Regardless of our circumstances and whether people acknowledge it, nothing and no one can take away our God-given dignity.”¹⁰
- “At first it was awkward trying to converse with a father I only knew as ‘Dad,’ the guy who loaned me

the car keys in high school and made sure I could balance my checkbook in college. But eventually, the conversation turned to life’s more significant topics. This was new, but refreshing, and it soon became a time that our family cherished. I learned more about my dad in those last five months than I had ever known. At one point he even remarked how great it was to have the time to just talk together.”¹¹

DID YOU KNOW?

- The worst suffering of seriously ill people “is often not physical pain, which can be alleviated with competent medical care, but feelings of isolation and hopelessness.”¹²
- “Hospice care focuses on alleviating pain and other symptoms, meeting basic needs, and providing comfort.”¹³

INTERCESSIONS

For those nearing the end of life:
May God strengthen their faith and
give them comfort and hope
through the gentle compassion of their caregivers;
We pray to the Lord:

For those diagnosed with a terminal illness:
May each hour of their lives be cherished
with care that honors God’s gift of life;
We pray to the Lord:

RELATED WORKS OF MERCY

Visit the sick.
Feed the hungry.
Give drink to the thirsty.
Counsel the doubtful.
Instruct the ignorant.
Comfort the sorrowful.
Forgive injuries.
Pray for the living and the dead.

⁹ Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, “Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy: Principles and Guidelines”, *The Holy See*, www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20020513_vers-direttorio_en.html (accessed June 10, 2016).

¹⁰ USCCB Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, *Maggie’s Story: Living Like Dad* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2015).

¹¹ USCCB Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, *Maggie’s Story: Living Like Dad* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2015).

¹² USCCB, *To Live Each Day with Dignity: A Statement on Physician-Assisted Suicide* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishop, 2011).

¹³ USCCB Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, *Caring for Loved Ones at Life’s End* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2016).