



***Caring for the sick and dying:
the respect owed to life***

The fragility of life and the reality of death have been brought into sharp focus during the Covid-19 pandemic. In the UK alone, more than 126,000 people have died from Covid-19. Each of these lives is precious and every life matters. Behind each statistic there is a person, with a family, with friends, with a story, with a life of infinite value and worth. Each death has rightly been mourned as a tragedy. This tragedy has been further compounded by the inability to be physically present with loved ones at the end of their life, due to the restrictions of the pandemic. The pain of this separation and the preciousness of a loved one's final moments has been keenly felt by many.

Yet against this bleak backdrop of suffering and separation, we have witnessed the extraordinary dedication of healthcare professionals and their loving care for the sick and dying. Their presence at the side of a dying loved one has been a source of comfort and consolation for many grieving families.

“Jesus is the Good Shepherd who came for the wounded sheep and comforts the sick. He is the Good Samaritan who does not pass by the injured person lying by the roadside, but who, moved to compassion, takes care of and assists him.” (cf. Lk 10:33-34)

Pope Francis

As a nation, we have celebrated the care and commitment of those on the front lines during this pandemic. We too have each played a part in tackling this pandemic through our collective effort and sacrifice to ‘stay home and save lives.’ These acts of heroic love are a powerful testimony to the fundamental dignity of the human person and to the respect owed to each life, particularly through proper care and love in the last moments of life.

However, once again, this gift of life in all its beauty and fragility now faces a profound challenge through attempts to legalise ‘assisted suicide.’ That legislation which proposes hastening death is now being seriously contemplated, is deeply alarming following a year of pandemic which has caused the untimely deaths of millions around the world.

“People who suffer become similar to one another through the analogy of their situation, the trial of their destiny, or through their need for understanding and care, and perhaps above all through the persistent question of the meaning of suffering.”

Pope St John Paul II

Assisted suicide, as Pope Francis reminds us, is a ‘false compassion’ and its remedy is one of true compassion, a patient ‘suffering with’ the vulnerable, sick and dying. A ‘true compassion’, he says, is ‘the just response to the immense value of the sick person.’ This is a compassion which finds expression in treating the dying person with love, with dignity and by making use of appropriate palliative care. Life is a gift to be valued until its last breath and countless people have witnessed to this holistic vision of dying, encompassing the relational, spiritual, emotional and physical dimensions of a person and their family.

We ask all Catholics to pray for a culture where life, in all its vulnerability, is cherished and to work to promote authentic compassion in the treatment of those who are sick or dying.

‘Each life has the same value and dignity for everyone: the respect of the life of another is the same as the respect owed to one’s own life’

Samaritanus Bonus: On the Care of Persons in the Critical and Terminal Phases of Life, CDF

This pandemic has shown us just how much we value life as a society. Please help us to build on this and fight against the legalisation of assisted suicide by donating to Day for Life. Your donations will support the work of pro-life organisations as they seek to promote and protect life from conception until its natural death. You can donate to Day for Life via the QR code on the right.

