

End of Life Issues – Assisting One Another with Spiritual Care

■ Introduction

- *Here's the Challenge:* (1.) Spiritual care for the aging / infirm is needed more now than ever, especially with our growing senior populace. (2.) Lapsed family members don't always know what to do or how to honor the faith of their loved ones. (3.) Priests can be harder to find, fewer in numbers or contacted too late. (4.) Rising health care costs leads to expedited solutions which leave little room for pastoral care. HIPA privacy regulations make it difficult to know who is in a given hospital or care home. And society is changing and experimenting with euthanasia / assisted suicide as well as non-Christian burial practices.
- *Goal:* As we seek to live our Easter faith, how do we assist one another in preparing for death and resurrection? Can we look out for those who live alone or cannot care for themselves readily (e.g., lack the health to call a priest for an anointing) to make sure that they get the timely spiritual care they desire / need.

■ Spiritual Care for the Elderly / Infirm

Remote Preparations:

- Forgiveness & Reconciliation (heal the rifts): seeking Mercy from God first helps us to forgive others and embrace the crosses of life; show mercy to receive mercy (corporal & spiritual works of mercy + almsgiving)
- Try to restore anything you've unfairly taken (or pay it forward)
- Dealing with suffering & loss (offer it up / atonement) + praying for those who share our conditions & sufferings (spiritual solidarity)
- Asking for help: angels, saints, holy souls
- Get our affairs in order / stewardship of our assets & responsibilities
- Plan your will, health care wishes, funeral, purchase a burial place
- Working on our prayer life / sacramental life (confession / anointing / Communion); seek detachment from sin & selfishness.
- Impart your values / life lessons to family & friends (written or recorded)
- Don't be afraid to make plans, talk about this reality. Celebrate All Saints & All Souls, visit cemeteries/family graves, create a culture that isn't afraid of death. Like St. Francis, learn to see Death as a friend ("Sister Death"), a gift of new life.
- Select a friend or friends who will help you to prepare for eternal life.

Proximate Preparations:

- Sacramental Needs – Anointing / Viaticum / Last Rites / Apostolic Pardon
 - Communion to the Homebound / Hospice

- James 5: anointing of the sick, not *extreme unction*
- Don't wait – face up to the facts & seek the graces you need now
- Sacraments are for the living – again, don't wait.
- HIPA: make sure the church knows, help keep them informed.
- Comfort & pray with the dying. Pray for all the dying daily.
- Read Scripture to them. Hearing is the last sense to go.

Dying / After Death:

- A priest may pray the *Commendation of the Dying* or the *Prayers for the Dead* but there are numerous prayers that lay people can pray too: <https://www.ourcatholicprayers.com/prayers-about-death.html>
- Vigil Service, Funeral Liturgy, Burial
- [Praying for the Holy Souls](#) / Mass Intentions & Remembrances
- ***What prayers do we pray when we can't get a priest? How to prepare?***
 - Confess your sins to God privately & forgive all who have hurt you / reconcile with others – pray an [Act of Contrition](#) / pray Psalm 51
 - Read Scripture – especially about the promises of salvation in the Gospels
 - Pray for mercy for yourself & for all the dying ([DVM Chaplet](#) / [Rosary](#))
 - Profess your faith (pray the [Creed](#)) – make Acts of [Faith](#), [Hope](#) & [Love](#)
 - Make an [Act of Spiritual Communion](#) when you cannot receive physically
 - Ask protection of [St. Michael](#), your [guardian angel](#) and patron saints (e.g., St. Joseph, patron of the dying <http://www.piousunionofstjoseph.org>)
 - Pray a [Litany of the Saints](#)
 - Wear the [Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel](#)
 - Know how to conditionally baptize (should you encounter someone desiring Baptism on their death bed)! / Bless yourself with holy water & make the sign of the cross. (Get holy water from church.)

“In case you were never baptized, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

- **Conclusion**

- What other advice / devotions help us to prepare well?
- Questions?