

St. Luke the Evangelist Parish
13 North St., Geneseo, NY



Treating Life with Dignity and Love, Part III

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Treating Life with Dignity and Love, Part III

Opening Prayer



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Treating Life with Dignity and Love, Part III

Webinar Tips

- All participants are muted to reduce background noise
- If slides are not fully visible, check at the top center of your screen for “fit to window” under arrow.
- If you would like to ask a question, at the bottom of your screen you should see a box with the letters “Q & A”. Click it and you can type your question. It will show on my screen.
- In addition to the slides, you should see a video of me. It should appear in the upper right of your screen. It should not block any significant content on the slides. If it does, you can drag it around.

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Treating Life with Dignity and Love, Part III

Review

- Part I
 - Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness
 - With rights comes the duty to ensure others have the same rights (Public Policy Advocacy)
- Part II
 - Abortion and the Death Penalty
 - Question from the evaluations on Part II – “What if you are called to Jury Duty in a case with the death penalty?”

If you missed the first two videos,
you can watch them at

www.renewaloffaith.org/prolife.

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Dignity of Life

“Precisely in an age when the inviolable rights of the person are solemnly proclaimed and the value of life is publicly affirmed, the very right to life is being denied or trampled upon, especially at the more significant moments of existence: the moment of birth and the moment of death” (*Evangelium Vitae* (EV), 18).

- Comment from the evaluations on Part II “Why should we fight so hard to eliminate abortion? Women are going to do it. Let us preach for life and let God judge for those that have had an abortion.”
 - We fight against abortion because life begins at conception. You shall not kill.

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Dignity of Life cont'd

“Within this same cultural climate, the *body* is no longer perceived as a properly personal reality, a sign and place of relations with others, with God and with the world. It is reduced to pure materiality: it is simply a complex of organs” (EV, 23).

→ Thus, when one can no longer take care of oneself, they are no longer valued. Some consider their care as a **burden** and/or an **inconvenience, something to be ended.**

They are wrong!

It may be difficult. Thus, it may seem like a burden or an inconvenience, but the person is worth it.

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God is the Author of Life

Ecclesiastes 3 “*There is an appointed time for everything...a time to give birth, and a time to die.*”

- “Do we accept the Lord’s gift of salvation **or** do we want to live our own way? We think we can have both. We make ourselves the authors of life, determining when it begins and when it ends” (Fr. Jeffrey S. Tunnicliff, “27th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A” Homily given on Respect Life Sunday, 10/4/20”).

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Suicide in General


Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2280

“Everyone is responsible for his life before God who has given it to him. ***It is God who remains the sovereign Master of life.*** We are obliged to accept life gratefully and preserve it for his honor and the salvation of our souls. ***We are stewards, not owners,*** of the life God has entrusted to us. It is not ours to dispose of.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2281

“Suicide contradicts the natural inclination of the human being to preserve and perpetuate his life. It is gravely ***contrary to the just love of self.*** It ***likewise offends love of neighbor*** because it unjustly breaks the ties of solidarity with family, nation, and other human societies to which we continue to have obligations. Suicide is contrary to love for the living God.”


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Suicide in General cont'd

- Funerals in church
 - Corporal Work of Mercy – Bury the Dead
 - Tobit 1:17; 12:12
 - Spiritual Works of Mercy
 - Praying for the Living and the Dead
 - Comforting the sorrowful
 - Isaiah 40:1 – “Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God.”



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Suicide in General cont'd


- Mental health issues
 - Prayer of St. Francis, from despair to hope

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2282
 “Grave psychological disturbances, anguish, or grave fear of hardship, suffering, or torture can diminish the responsibility of the one committing suicide.”



Yes, it is possible for one to commit suicide and enter Heaven. Funeral Masses are now allowed for those who commit suicide.

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Names for Ending Life Prematurely When Death is Approaching

- Euthanasia
 - “Good death”
 - Dignity in dying
 - Mistaken belief - People choosing to die before their dignity is taken away (misplaced compassion)
 - I say thinking this way is what actually takes away their dignity, by mistakenly thinking their value is only defined by what they can do.
 - Active vs. Passive
- Assisted Suicide
 - Patient takes their own life vs. doctor/nurse
 - Yet we have laws to prevent general “suicide”
- Aid in Dying
 - As if “dying” is our goal

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Till Natural Death - Dignity

“A person is not just what they can do. So, when a person grows old or ill and cannot do the things they used to, their value to the rest of us is not over. They are still a human person with dignity given by God. **Rather than hastening death, we are called to accompany them with love in their sufferings**” (Fr. Jeffrey S. Tunnick, “27th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A” Homily given on Respect Life Sunday, 10/4/20”).

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Accompaniment Has Value for the Dying and Those around Them

Pope Francis, "We fail to realize that by isolating the elderly and leaving them in the care of others **without the closeness and concern of family members**, we disfigure and impoverish the family itself. **We also end up depriving young people** of a **necessary connection** to their roots and a wisdom that the young cannot achieve on their own." (*Fratelli Tutti*, 14, my emphasis).

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Accompaniment as an Act of Mercy

- Corporal Work of Mercy – Visit the Sick
 - **Accompanying** those who are dying so they are not alone
 - Lepers were isolated
 - Woman at the well – felt Jesus knew her
 - When our loved one is a nursing home, the staff provides for their physical care. However, the staff are strangers. They still need to be accompanied by those they know (emotional support).

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Accompaniment

- Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter Samaritanus Bonus, On the Care of Persons*
 - “ “Weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15): for blessed is the one whose compassion includes shedding tears with others (cf. Matthew 5:4)” (Section 5.1)
- Stations of the Cross
 - Station 4 – Jesus meets his mother
 - Station 5 – Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry his cross
 - Station 6 – Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

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Reasons Why Someone Might Choose Assisted Suicide

“From a clinical perspective, the factors that largely determine requests for euthanasia and assisted suicide are **unmanaged pain**, and the **loss of human and theological hope**, provoked by the often **inadequate psychological and spiritual human assistance** provided by those who care for the sick” (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter Samaritanus Bonus, On the Care of Persons* , Section 5.1).

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Where Can We Find Hope in Suffering in the Bible?

Question from evaluations of Part II - "Imagine if an individual is in a tremendous amount of pain, just received a terrible cancer diagnosis and is feeling overwhelmingly downcast, what are some scriptures we can point such individuals to so that they don't feel a strong need for euthanasia and can be uplifting?"

- The Book of Job
- Jesus' Passion – Redemptive Suffering – "offer it up"
- Suffering Servant Oracles in Isaiah – 42:1-4; 49:1-7, 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12

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Vitalism, Subjectivism, and a Middle Ground

- Vitalism – "permits no cessation of efforts to prolong life" (Kelly, *Medical Care at the End of Life*, 4-5)
- Subjectivism - "The other extreme position is a totally lax subjectivism that permits cessation of treatment, and even active killing, based only on the subjective choice of an individual. Here the idea that human life is of intrinsic value is rejected. Life is of value only if the individual gives value to it." (Kelly, *Medical Care at the End of Life*, 5)
- "Roman Catholic tradition has rejected both vitalism and subjectivism...life can be let go. This does not mean, however, that a person's life loses its worth, that it ceases to be of intrinsic value" (Kelly, *Medical Care at the End of Life*, 6).

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Each person's
situation needs to
be individually
evaluated before
withdrawing
treatment!

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When is it Time?

It is **never** acceptable to **terminate** a life. When there is a terminal illness, a time may come to **withdraw futile treatment** (Kelly, 139) and **allow** the person to die (Kelly, 155).

Medical Forms

- DNR – Do not resuscitate
- MOLST - Medical Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment
- Health Care Proxy

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When It is Time

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith,
Letter Samaritanus Bonus, On the Care of Persons

“In the specific case of **aggressive** medical treatment, it should be repeated that the **renunciation** of **extraordinary** and/or **disproportionate** means “is **not** the equivalent of suicide or euthanasia; it rather expresses the **acceptance** of the human condition in the face of death” (Section 5.2, quote from EV 65, my emphasis).

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Letting God Choose the Time

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2278

“Discontinuing medical procedures that are burdensome, **dangerous, extraordinary, or disproportionate** to the expected outcome can be legitimate; it is the refusal of **“over-zealous”** treatment. **Here one does not will to cause death; one's inability to impede it is merely accepted.** The decisions should be made by the patient if he is competent and able or, if not, by those legally entitled to act for the patient, whose reasonable will and legitimate interests must always be respected.”

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Pain Medicines and Its Effects

“The Church nonetheless affirms the moral liceity of sedation as part of patient care in order to ensure that the end of life arrives with the greatest possible peace and in the best internal conditions. This holds also for treatments that hasten the moment of death (deep palliative sedation in the terminal stage), always, to the extent possible, with the patient’s informed consent...**The sedation must exclude, as its direct purpose, the intention to kill, even though it may accelerate the inevitable onset of death**” (*Samaritanus Bonus*, Section 5.7).

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Ordinary Care – Food & Hydration Pain Management

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2279

“Even if death is thought imminent, **the ordinary care owed to a sick person cannot be legitimately interrupted.** The use of painkillers to alleviate the sufferings of the dying, even at the risk of shortening their days, can be morally in conformity with human dignity if death is not willed as either an end or a means, but only foreseen and tolerated as inevitable.”

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Ordinary Care cont'd

“It is not lawful to suspend treatments that are required to maintain essential physiological functions, **as long as the body can benefit** from them (such as **hydration, nutrition, thermoregulation,** proportionate **respiratory support,** and the other types of assistance needed to maintain bodily homeostasis and manage systemic and organic pain).” (*Samaritanus Bonus*, Section 5.2, my emphasis).

Feeding tube = gastrostomy tube

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Let's acknowledge
where our emotions are at.

These are not easy decisions.

It's hard to talk about before, during,
and after the critical times.

My mother's final days.

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Why is a feeding tube
required but not a
ventilator?

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Palliative Care

Comfort Care

Hospice

(Hospice homes in Canada are being required to provide assisted suicide. This goes against what hospice is meant to be.)

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What Constitutes Life?

- Coma/persistent vegetative state
- Diseases like ALS, Parkinson's, or Alzheimer's

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Who Makes the Decision?

If we are going to call it “**assisted** suicide” or “**aid** in dying” the person must be choosing it for themselves in sound mind and body

- Proposed laws lack safeguards for the depressed or other mental health issues that can affect one's judgment.
- Outside pressure
 - Cases where insurance won't pay for treatment but offered to pay for assisted suicide “Insurance denied her chemo treatment. But it covered drugs for suicide.” June 6, 2017. <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/insurance-denied-her-chemo-treatment-but-it-covered-drugs-for-suicide-46828>
 - Pressure from others who think the person's life is of no value

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Who Makes the Decision?

- Who decides when it is time to end a life through assisted suicide, especially when person is incapacitated?
 - Involuntary
 - Story of doctor who killed patient who was documented to have said she did NOT want assisted suicide. “Dutch doctor who euthanized woman without final consent defends decision.” June 16, 2020. <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/dutch-doctor-who-euthanized-woman-without-final-consent-defends-decision-30057>
 - Underage patients

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Who Makes the Decision? Cont'd

- Mandatory
 - Government requirements based on financial concerns or other claims of burdens placed on society

Laws must ensure no one is euthanized against their will.

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When is a person "dead"?

- Medical determination
 - Heart/breath
 - Brain
 - other
- Criteria
 - Defining life
 - Philosophically, when does it end

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When Does the Soul Leave the Body?"

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 366

“The Church teaches that every spiritual soul is created immediately by God – it is not “produced” by the parents – and also that it is immortal: it does not perish when it separates from the body **at death**, and it will be reunited with the body at the final Resurrection.”

*We will address organ donation after death and medical research on the body in Part IV.

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Conscientious Objection

We previously discussed problems of MANDATORY abortions and euthanasia.

Health care workers and institutions may be forced to assist in ending a person's life when it goes against their beliefs. (This is also true with other medical operations like sex change surgery)

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter Samaritanus Bonus, On the Care of Persons* Section 5.9 addresses conscientious objection for health care workers and institutions

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Conscientious Objection cont'd

- Those who are against allowing for conscientious objection
 - Claim it is a refusal to “treat.” However, it is not “treatment” to kill a baby or a terminally ill person
 - Claim we are forcing our beliefs on the patient by refusing to treat. Instead, they want to force their beliefs on us
 - In refusing treatment under conscientious objection, one is not denying patient's request. They are free to go someplace else.

Our public policy advocacy efforts need to include conscientious objection clauses.

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St. Joseph – Patron Saint for a Good Death

Prayer for a Happy Death

O Blessed Joseph,
you gave forth your last breath
in the loving embrace of Jesus and Mary.
When the seal of death shall close my life,
come with Jesus and Mary to aid me.
Obtain for me this solace for that hour-
to die with their holy arms around me.
Jesus, Mary, and Joseph,
I commend my soul, living and dying,
into your sacred arms.
Amen.

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After Death

- Even after death we value/respect the body (more in Part IV)
- Preface I for the Dead
“In him the hope of the blessed resurrection has dawned, that those saddened by the certainty of dying might be consoled by the promise of immortality to come. Indeed for your faithful, Lord, life is changed not ended, and, when this earthly dwelling turns to dust, an eternal dwelling is made ready for them in heaven.”

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Future Schedule

- One more webinar in this series
 - April 14th at 6:30 pm
- When you exit this webinar a short evaluation questionnaire should come up to invite your feedback.
- The slides for this presentation will be available online at www.renewaloffaith.org/prolife along with registration information for the next webinar.

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Related Articles on my website

- “Biology Makes Me Pro-Life”, January 31, 2020
<http://blog.renewaloffaith.org/blog/?p=3124>
- On the death penalty - “What About Accountability”, December 7, 2020. <http://blog.renewaloffaith.org/blog/?p=5395>
- For more on the purpose of punishment see my blog article, “Receiving a Penance”, (September 1, 2020)
<http://blog.renewaloffaith.org/blog/?p=4776>
- “What About Accountability?” (December 7, 2020) online at <http://blog.renewaloffaith.org/blog/?p=5395>
- Fr. Jeffrey S. Tunncliff, “Homily for 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A” covering Public Policy weekend on issue of Assisted Suicide. February 8, 2000. <http://blog.renewaloffaith.org/blog/?p=3142>
- Fr. Jeffrey S. Tunncliff, “27th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A” Homily given on Respect Life Sunday, 10/4/20”) <http://blog.renewaloffaith.org/blog/?p=5007>.

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Resources

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Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dignitas Personae: Instruction on Certain Bioethical Questions*. September 8, 2008. Available online at https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20081208_dignitas-personae_en.html

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Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter Samaritanus Bonus, On the Care of Persons in the Critical and Terminal Phases of Life*. June 25, 2020. Available online at [vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20200714_samaritanus-bonus_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20200714_samaritanus-bonus_en.html).

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USCCB, *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*. Washington, DC: USCCB. 2006.

Vatican News, "Pope Francis: 'death penalty inadmissible'" August 2, 2018. Available online at

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2018-08/pope-francis-cdf-ccc-death-penalty-revision-ladaria.html>

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