

Living With Hope ... Confronting Our Fears

A series on death and dying: The Catholic Perspective

Pain and Suffering, Care and Compassion

True compassion does not eliminate the sufferer but seeks to relieve the suffering. While medicine cannot solve every problem, it can help us to provide patients with the best possible support and comfort.

The Church advocates pain management that is effective and, as needed, aggressive. Such pain management may occasionally and unintentionally shorten the life of the patient. In these instances death is not intended or directly sought, but comes more quickly as a side effect of what is intended, namely the alleviation of pain. Further, the cause of death, ethically speaking, is not the medical intervention, but the underlying pathology. This distinction is essential to maintain.



It is not necessary for people to suffer and die in great psychological and physical pain.

Palliative care treatments offer dying people the precious time and physical comfort they need to live the end of their life in peace and dignity. No one needs to die alone, in pain, or afraid. We are born into a family, and live in a community. In the face of death - our own or that of someone we love -- we confront our greatest challenge.

Hospice specializes in palliative care. To learn about hospice in your community, check your local telephone directory, or contact:

Catholic Health Association
314-427-2500
www.chausa.org
or
Ohio Hospice Organization
1-800-776-9513
www.hospiceoh.org

Church teachings affirm that it is acceptable to relieve pain by narcotics even when the result is decreased consciousness and a shortening of life, provided that no other means exist. It is not right to deprive the dying person of consciousness without a serious reason. As people approach death they ought to be able to satisfy their moral, religious, and family duties, and above all they ought to be able to prepare in a fully conscious way for their definitive meeting with God. (*Evangelium Vitae*, par. 65)

Dying is the time for allowing and seeking forgiveness... for offering thanks... for preparing for eternal life... for demonstrating love... and for saying good-bye, assured of greater things to come.

(*Faith unto Life, Hope unto Death, Love unto Eternal Life*, video, Michigan Catholic Conference).

**For More Information
Contact:**

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