

Living With Hope ... Confronting Our Fears

A series on death and dying: The Catholic Perspective

Stewardship of Life

We are creatures who owe our creation to God. Human life is God's gift to us, and our responsibility to God is to cherish it as a sacred trust. We have only a right to the use of human life not dominion over it. Human responsibility for life is one of stewardship, not ownership.

To be stewards means to care for, to foster and nourish the gift of life--our own and that of others--so that our lives might flourish abundantly.

There is also a certain humility about stewardship. Stewardship entails a humble acceptance of the human condition: pain cannot always be eliminated any more than suffering can always be avoided. Stewardship does not claim absolute control over life and death, but accepts limitations to the desire for self-determination, limitations inherent in being "only" co-creators, and not the author of life itself.



We are called to be people of compassion. We try to eliminate pain and ease suffering, but even more so, we must accompany one another in and through pain and suffering. We are our sister's and brother's keepers (Genesis 4:9). We are called to be with one another in pain and to support one another in suffering (Luke 10:29-37). We hold up the hopeful conviction that in and through such compassionate stewardship for life, the compassion of God is revealed.

The conviction of God's presence sustains us to face life's pain and difficulty with hope and confidence that no pain or sorrow - not even death - is the final word.

Questions for Reflection

- *How do I foster care and concern for my own life? And in the lives of others?*
- *How do I deal with suffering?*

"Living to the Lord means recognizing that suffering, while still an evil and a trial in itself, can always become a source of good. It becomes such if it is experienced for love and with love through sharing, by God's gracious gift and one's own personal free choice, in the suffering of Christ Crucified. In this way, the person who lives his suffering in the Lord grows more fully conformed to Him and more closely associated with His redemptive work on behalf of the Church and humanity."

Pope John Paul II,
Evangelium Vitae, par. 67

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