



FOR THE TERMINALLY ILL

FEBRUARY

“Let us pray that the sick who are in the final stages of life, and their families, receive the necessary medical and human care and accompaniment”



PRAYER INTENTION REFLECTION

To participants in the Plenary Session
of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith²
Francis
30 January 2020

[...] When sickness knocks at the door of our life, the need emerges increasingly to have next to us someone who looks at us in the eyes, who holds our hand, who manifests his tenderness and takes care of us, as the Good Samaritan of the evangelical parable (Cf. Message to the 28th World Day of the Sick, February 2020).

The subject of the care of the sick, in the critical and terminal phases of life, calls into question the task of the Church to rewrite the “grammar” of taking charge and taking care of the suffering person. The example of the Good Samaritan teaches that it’s necessary to convert the heart’s gaze, because very often one who looks doesn’t see. Why? Why? — because compassion is lacking. There comes to mind that, many times the Gospel, speaking of Jesus before a suffering person, says: “He took pity on him,” “He took pity on him” . . . A refrain of Jesus’ person. Without compassion, one who looks is not involved in what he observes and moves on. Instead, one who has a compassionate heart is touched and involved, stops and takes care <of the patient>.

It is necessary to create around the sick person a true and proper human platform of relations that, while fostering medical care, open to hope, especially in those limit-situations in which the physical ailment is accompanied by emotional discomfort and spiritual anguish.

² See full message:

<https://zenit.org/2020/01/30/pope-francis-address-to-plenary-of-vaticans-congregation-for-doctrine-of-the-faith-full-text/>

© ZENIT - translation by Virginia M. Forrester



The relational approach — and not merely clinical — with the patient, considered in the uniqueness and totally of his person, imposes the duty never to abandon anyone in the presence of incurable illnesses. Human life, given its eternal destiny, keeps all its value and all its dignity in any condition, also of precariousness and fragility, and, as such, is always worthy of the greatest consideration. Saint Teresa of Calcutta, who lived the style of proximity and sharing, keeping up to the end the recognition and respect of human dignity, and rending dying more human, said thus;“ One who in the path of life has lighted even just one torch in someone’s dark hour has not lived in vain.”

In this connection, I think of how much good hospices do for palliative care, where the terminally sick are accompanied by qualified medical, psychological and spiritual support, so that they can live with dignity, comforted by the closeness of dear persons, the final phase of their earthly life. I hope that such centers will continue to be places in which the “therapy of dignity” is practiced with commitment, thus nourishing love and respect for life. [...]

UDIENZA GENERALE³

Francis

9 febbraio 2022

The Gospel tells us that death comes like a thief. This is what Jesus tells us: it arrives like a thief, and however much we try to keep its arrival under control, perhaps even planning our own death, it remains an event that we must reckon with, and before which we must also make choices.

Two considerations stand for us Christians. The first: we cannot avoid death, and precisely for this reason, after having done everything that is humanly possible to cure the sick, it is immoral to engage in overzealous treatment (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2278). That phrase of the faithful people of God, of the simple people: “Let him die in peace”, “help him to die in peace”: such wisdom! The second consideration instead concerns the quality of death itself, the quality of pain, of suffering. Indeed, we must be grateful for all the help that medicine is striving to give, so that through so-called “palliative care”, every person who is preparing to live the last stretch of their life can do so in the most humane way possible. However, we must be careful not to confuse this help with unacceptable drifts towards killing. We must accompany people towards death, but not provoke death or facilitate any form of suicide. Remember that the right to care and treatment for all must always be prioritised, so that the weakest, particularly the elderly and the sick, are never rejected. Life is a right, not death, which must be welcomed, not administered. And this ethical principle concerns everyone, not just Christians or believers.

I would like to underline a real social problem. That “planning” — I don’t know if it is the right word — but accelerating the death of the elderly. Very often we see in a certain social class that the elderly, since they do not have means, are given fewer medicines than they need, and this is inhuman; this is not helping them, it is driving them towards death earlier. This is neither human nor Christian. The elderly should be cared for as a treasure of humanity: they are our wisdom. Even if they do not speak, or if they do not make sense, they are still

³See full message:

<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2022/documents/20220209-udienza-generale.html>

© Copyright - Libreria Editrice Vaticana



the symbol of human wisdom. They are those who went before us and have left us many beautiful things, many memories, much wisdom. Please, do not isolate the elderly, do not accelerate the death of the elderly. To caress an elderly person has the same hope as caressing a child, because the beginning of life and the end are always a mystery, a mystery that should be respected, accompanied, cared for, loved.

The Pope Video - APRIL 2021:

<https://thepopevideo.org/april-for-health-care-workers/>

- 11 February 2024 - WORLD DAY OF THE SICK