

Day for Life 2015

'Cherishing Life, Accepting Death'

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'How great a lie ...
to make people think
that lives affected
by grave illness
are not worth living!'

POPE FRANCIS



IRISH CATHOLIC
BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

COMHAIRLE EASPAID ÉIREANNACH

Kathleen, a much-loved grandmother, collapsed at home one Saturday morning and was rushed to hospital. Early signs pointed towards a stroke. The doctors talked about the next twenty-four hours being critical; it seemed like Kathleen might not even survive. The priest was called and Kathleen received the anointing of the sick. Doctors were talking about brain damage and whether interventions might be possible. Suddenly the family was faced with big questions. What would Kathleen have wanted and how could the Church help guide any decisions? How do we accept death when it comes and cherish life while we can?

There have been remarkable medical and technological advances so that the chronically ill can receive life-saving treatments. We can be truly thankful for such advances. And yet at some time or other we will all die. These same advances have led to more complex decision-making about appropriate treatment for those who are gravely ill.

At the end of life, there are two thoughts that can help guide us all.

The first is that we love life. Every person is loved by God and every life is a precious gift never to be destroyed or neglected. It is wrong to hasten or bring about death. God will call us in his own good time.

The second is that we accept death. This means there is no obligation to pursue medical treatment when it no longer serves its purpose – that is when treatment is having no effect or indeed harming the patient.

We need to prepare to face life-threatening crises. Ideally these difficult and important decisions need to be faced with others – our spouse, our siblings, our extended family members. The family, after all, should be the privileged place where mutual support and understanding occurs.

Sometimes difficult decisions need to be made and the views of family and experts should be taken into account. In such situations these two basic questions can guide our decisions:

- is this decision loving life?
- is this decision accepting the inevitability of death?

Depending on the situation we should seek ways to answer yes to both, as life itself is a gift from God, and death but the gateway to new life with him.



Day for Life 2015 Prayer

Prayer for a good death, the intercession of St Joseph:
O blessed Joseph,
who breathed your last in the arms of Jesus and Mary,
obtain for me this grace:
that I may breathe forth my soul in praise,
saying in spirit, if I am unable to do so in words:
‘Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I give Thee my heart and my soul.’
Amen.

Day for Life is celebrated yearly by the Catholic Church in Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales. It is a day dedicated to raising awareness about the meaning and value of human life at every stage and in every condition.

