



Homily Helper Whole Person Care Sunday: *Caring for the Sick & Dying*

SUGGESTED OBSERVANCE: October 29, 2017 ([Respect Life Month 2017: Be Not Afraid](#))

[Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time](#) (Lectionary: 148)

Reading 1 [Ex 22:20-26](#)

Reading 2 [1 Thes 1:5c-10](#)

Gospel [Mt 22:34-40](#)

Themes:

- **Be Not Afraid** (Respect Life Month Theme)
- **Compassion**

- **Be Not Afraid**...the Lord hears the cry of the poor...God is compassionate...He suffers with us...He commands us to suffer with others (especially – the poor, the sick and the dying) –
 - **Reading 1:** “You shall not molest or oppress an alien...You shall not wrong any widow or orphan. If ever you wrong them and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry...for I am compassionate.” -
 - **God suffers with us – we are not alone – be not afraid**
 - **God especially with those on the margin**
 - **He invites us to pay special care for the weak and those on the margins**

 - **Reading 2:** Great Commandment "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments."
 - **How can we say that we love God (a God who suffers with those on the margins) if we do love our neighbor?**
 - **How do we overcome the barriers for caring for the sick and dying in our own families? It can be scary. It can be easier to volunteer at the soup kitchen than caring for the sick and dying in our own families.**
 - **Because we are powerless – sometimes all we can do is accompany to suffer with.**
 - **We are invited to accompany to suffer with - Be Not Afraid – God is with us too.**
 - **We are also invited to combat the “throw away culture” that devalues the lives of the unborn, the sick, the disabled, the dying...**
 - **Invitation to reject / combat the “throw away culture”**

Example Reflection “Combating the Throw Away Culture”

Pope Francis’ visit to the United States has everyone talking about his worldview and his encouragement that each person get involved to combat what he calls the “throw-away culture.”

In a throw-away culture, the Pope tells us, we throw things away — we get rid of them — if they aren’t immediately useful or if they have no value to us. That includes people. Especially people who are a burden or an inconvenience — like the sick and the elderly and the disabled.

This mentality of the “throw-away” culture is one of the roots of “euthanasia” and “physician assisted suicide.” With euthanasia and assisted suicide, society basically says that some people’s lives just aren’t worth living and they would be better off dead.

As Catholics, we have a long tradition of helping people — the poor, the old, the sick. And as Catholics, we need to be people of compassion and people of mercy.

Pope Francis tells us: “Human life is always sacred, valuable and inviolable. As such it must be loved, defended and cared for.”

That’s our duty as Catholics and as neighbors and family members. We need to treat every life as sacred and important and valuable. We need to love people — especially those who are poor and sick and who can’t take care of themselves. We need to love these people, defend their dignity and take care of them.

We reject assisted suicide — which tells us that some lives are not important and not worthy of being cared for and which says we should kill patients rather than comfort them and ease their suffering and pain.

We all know that people in chronic pain and people with terminal illness often feel lonely, depressed and feel that they are a burden to their loved ones and friends.

Our reaction can’t be to kill them. And we can’t call that “compassion.” No, instead, we have to walk with them, accompany them.

There are good medical and pastoral solutions available for both chronic pain and depression. Our duty as neighbors and as Catholics is to promote these solutions and to help people to find those solutions. We have to help them to get the treatment, the palliative care they need for their pain.

The recent passage of the assisted suicide bill in California sends the wrong signal— not just to the dying and the chronically ill but also anyone who is weak, dependent, vulnerable or poor that they are a burden and that it would be better if they just went away. We are saying that death is better than compassion to those who cannot defend themselves.

Doctors often report that the “decisions” made by dying patients are not actually their own idea. Often patients are influenced or manipulated by family members, no matter how well meaning.

We have to build a culture of compassion. We have to be more patient, more caring with those who are sick and frail and elderly. Just because people stop being healthy doesn’t mean they lose their dignity or their rights to be helped.

As Catholics, we always have to be witnesses to the God of life and the God of creation. We have to love life and take care of life — especially those lives that need special care and attention.

As Pope Francis reminds us: “A society truly welcomes life when it recognizes that it is also precious in old age, in disability, in serious illness and even when it is fading; when it teaches that the call to human fulfillment does not exclude suffering; indeed, when it teaches its members to see in the sick and suffering a gift for the entire community, a presence that summons them to solidarity and responsibility. This is the Gospel of life which ... you are called to spread.”

“Opportunities for Action”

- Invite to be attentive to suffering in own family
- Invite to accompany / suffer with those who are sick and dying
- You may have someone from one of the ministries to the sick and dying give a brief testimonial about their ministry after the homily
- If you have ministry and info tables in back be sure to remind parishioners to go check them out (Respect Life Ministry, Ministries to the Homebound, St. Vincent de Paul, Grief Ministries)
- For other tips, visit www.scd.org/wpc