

# Justice, Peace and Life

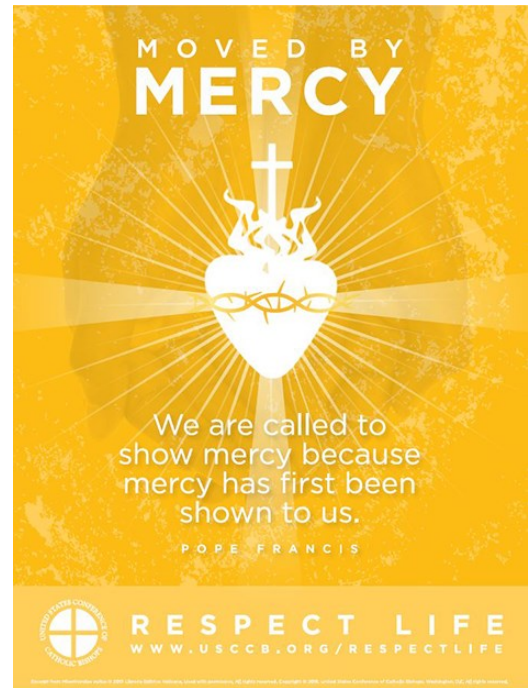
October 2016

## RESPECT LIFE MONTH: *Moved by Mercy*

During Respect Life month, we are called to reflect on the sanctity of human life. We must recognize that **all** people are unconditionally loved by God and made in God's image. Let us recommit ourselves to defending the precious worth of every person.

Take a look at this year's Respect Life materials from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops at [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org). They include:

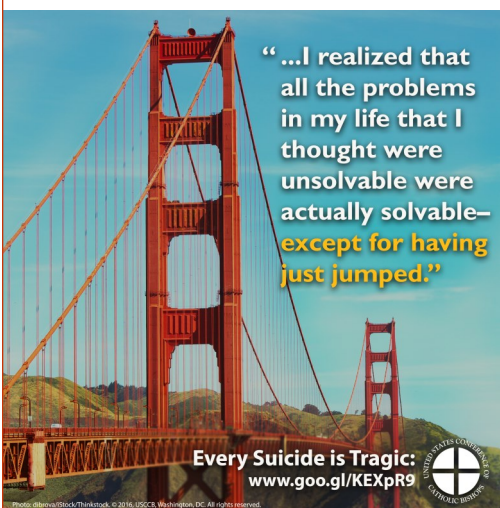
[Bridges of Mercy for Post-Abortion Healing](#)  
[Caring for Loved Ones at Life's End](#)  
[Every Suicide is Tragic](#)  
[Seven Considerations while Navigating Infertility](#)  
[Serene Attentiveness to God's Creation](#)  
[Accompanying Expectant Mothers Considering Adoption](#)



As we continue our diocesan advocacy against legislation to legalize **physician-assisted suicide**, reflect on these insights from the Respect Life Month essay entitled *Every Suicide is Tragic*:

Even among terminally ill patients, a request to die is nearly always a cry for help. This request is a distress signal indicating that something in the patient's condition—at the medical, psychological, or social level—has not been adequately attended to.

Studies show that the desire for death in terminally ill individuals generally correlates with both physical pain and poor social support. When comfort or relief is offered in the form of more adequate treatment for depression, better pain management, or more comprehensive palliative care, the desire for death typically vanishes. In the Netherlands, for example, the request for "hastened death" was withdrawn by 85% of patients when their symptoms were better controlled.



Suicidal individuals—with or without a terminal illness—typically do not want to die; they want to escape what they perceive to be an intolerable situation, and they inaccurately believe that suicide is their only way out. The patient requesting assisted suicide is often asking, "Does anyone want me to be alive, or care enough to talk me out of this request and support me through this difficult time?"...

A journalist tracked down the few dozen individuals who survived jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge... . He asked them what was going through their minds in the four seconds between jumping off the bridge and hitting the water. Every one of them responded that they regretted the decision to jump. One man said, "I realized that all the problems in my life that I thought were unsolvable were actually solvable—except for having just jumped." To abandon individuals who have lost hope—under the guise of "respecting their autonomy"—is irresponsible. Excerpted from *Respect Life Program*,

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## Caring for Loved Ones at Life's End

Here are some concrete ways we can compassionately care for loved ones at the end of their lives:

1. **Invite God In:** The dying process is a sacred time—... As you enter into this season with your friend or family member, ask God to accompany both of you.

2. **Listen:** Try to discover your loved one's values and how best to honor his or her wishes.

3. **Inform Yourself:** Be aware that wishes for refusing ordinary or proportionate treatment—or for pursuing assisted suicide—are usually rooted in fears of dependency, helplessness, or pain. Make yourself available to discuss these or any concerns.

4. **Be Steadfast in Compassion:** Your friend or family member will likely face ups and downs...Recognize these as part of a natural process.

5. **Help Them Achieve Closure:** Help your family member or friend define the unfinished personal projects, financial concerns, unresolved relationships, or other matters ...



6. **Provide Opportunities for Resolution:** Ira Byock... illustrates in his book The 4 Most Important Things how saying "I love you," "I'm sorry," "I forgive you," and "Thank you" can promote much-needed healing during the dying process. You can help ensure a peaceful transition for your loved one by facilitating opportunities for reconciliation with others and for mutual expressions of love and gratitude.

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7. **Reminisce:** Our appetites diminish...when we near life's end. Provide smaller amounts of your family member or friend's favorite foods. Even if unable to eat them, he or she may still enjoy the aromas and reminisce with you about special memories they evoke.

8. **Provide a Peaceful Presence:** Your own quiet, patient presence can provide important support as your loved one prepares emotionally and spiritually for his or her passing.

9. **Show Tenderness:** Those who are dying remain in need of the tenderness of personal human contact... Tell stories, laugh, and share memories to reassure the person he or she is a cherished gift, not a burden in any way.

10. **Bear Their Transition Patiently:** Try to be patient, and allow the "how" and "when" of death to be between God and your loved one. Ask God for the wisdom to know what final words to say—if any—and when.

## Encouraging Faithful Citizenship in Your Parish

In the lead-up to Election Day, please keep encouraging faithful civic engagement in your parish by:

- **Printing bulletin announcements** about forming our consciences for voting found on the Diocesan web site [www.dor.org](http://www.dor.org). Click on "Public Policy" on the left hand side of the home page, and then on "2016 Election Season Resources." Go to [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org) for more materials.

- **Praying and reflecting.** You'll find election-related Prayers of the Faithful for Mass, prayers for individual use, and links to the document Faithful Citizenship at [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org).



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