

## What Can I Do?

- **Become informed:** Explore resources on end-of-life planning. Consult with your physicians and other health care providers, clergy, family members and friends. It is important for you to understand your health care treatment options.
- **Select your health care surrogate:** Choose someone you trust to help make decisions if you are unable. Select someone who will objectively respect your wishes. Your surrogate can be a family member or trusted friend.
- **Decide what matters to you:** Decisions regarding cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), pain management and other concerns should be made following an end-of-life discussion with physicians and other health care providers.
- **Share your medical decisions with others:** State your preferences for medical care in advance. This will relieve your family from making tough decisions during a very difficult time and provide guidance to your surrogate if you are unable to communicate. In your conversations with family members and friends, it is not necessary that they agree with you. These are your decisions and they should be respected.
- **Create a plan:** Document your end-of-life decisions and to share copies with your physicians and other health care providers, your health care surrogate, clergy and family members. Update your plan periodically, especially if there are significant changes in your medical condition. Keep your family members and health care surrogate informed of any changes to your preferences for medical care.
- **Join FLCAN:** Subscribe to the Florida Catholic Advocacy Network at [www.flaccb.org](http://www.flaccb.org) and receive updates and alerts on end-of-life legislation.

## Prayer for the Grace of a Happy Death

*St. Joseph, in the popular piety of the Church, has been considered the patron saint of those dying since he himself had the privilege of dying in the arms of Mary and Jesus. "Since we all must die, we should cherish a special devotion to St. Joseph, that he may obtain for us a happy death." (St. Alphonsus Ligouri)*

**O Blessed Joseph,  
you gave your last breath in the loving  
embrace of Jesus and Mary.  
When the seal of death shall close my life,  
come with Jesus and Mary to aid me.  
Obtain for me this solace for that hour –  
to die with their holy arms around me.  
Jesus, Mary and Joseph,  
I commend my soul, living and dying,  
into your sacred arms.  
Amen.**

Source: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/assisted-suicide/to-live-each-day/upload/prayer-resources.pdf>



## Culture of Life Series

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**This brochure and others in the Culture of Life  
Series are available to view and print at:  
[www.flaccb.org/culture-of-life](http://www.flaccb.org/culture-of-life)**

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*"...I am going to prepare  
a place for you..."*

**John 14:2**

**End-of-Life Planning:  
A Catholic Introduction**

## *Confronting our Death with the Confidence of Faith*

Life is a precious gift from God. Our faith acknowledges the value and inviolable dignity of all life, from its earliest to its final stages.

We are called to confront our mortality with the confidence of faith, uniting our own death with that of Jesus' as a step towards him and an entrance into everlasting life. <sup>1</sup>

*The dignity of this life is linked not only to its beginning, to the fact that it comes from God, but also to its final end, to its destiny of fellowship with God in knowledge and love of him.*

*Evangelium Vitae, No. 38*

When nearing the end of life, many persons are not physically, mentally, or cognitively able to make decisions about their care. Studies demonstrate that the care patients receive is not necessarily the care they want. For example, most Americans prefer to die at home, yet most actually die in institutional settings like hospitals and nursing homes.<sup>2</sup>

The Catholic bishops of Florida encourage the faithful to prepare for the unknown hour of death. The guidance provided here will help to ensure that loved ones know our wishes if communication becomes impossible and that our care will be aligned with the faith we hold dear.

<sup>1</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 1020*

<sup>2</sup> *Dying in America: Improving Quality and Honoring Individual Preferences Near the End of Life.* Institute of Medicine, September 2014

## *Having the Conversation*

Most people agree it is important to discuss end-of-life planning with family members and loved ones, clergy, physicians and other health professionals, and their health care surrogate. However, only a small percentage of individuals do so.<sup>3</sup> Each of us is our own best advocate, and it is therefore important to make an end-of-life conversation a priority.

There may never be a perfect time to talk about dying and end-of-life medical decisions. However, initiating these difficult discussions is ultimately a gift to loved ones as it may ease the burden of family members having to make tough decisions if life-threatening illness arises.

<sup>3</sup> *Final Chapter: Californians' Attitudes and Experiences with Death and Dying.* California HealthCare Foundation, February 2012

*Christ's redemption and saving grace embrace the whole person, especially in his or her illness, suffering, and death...In the face of death – for many, a time when hope seems lost – the Church witnesses to her belief that God has created each person for eternal life.*

*Ethical & Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services, Part Five, USCCB, 2018*

## *Resources*

End-of-life planning creates a number of challenges for family members, loved ones and health care professionals. These situations entail clinical, financial, ethical, social and legal considerations. It is important to explore resources that assist one in reviewing the options in each subject area.

The *Catholic Declaration on Life and Death (CDLD)* helps to document your decisions regarding end-of-life care or treatment and your selection of a health care surrogate in a format that can be shared with your physician(s) other health care providers, your health care surrogate, family members and friends.

The *CDLD* is the only health care advance directive that is promulgated by the Catholic bishops of Florida. This directive conforms to both Florida law and the teaching of the Catholic Church. Confer with your parish priest if using other advance care planning documents or resources.

*Understanding the Catholic Declaration on Life and Death (UCDLD)* provides guidance for completing the *CDLD*.

The *CDLD* and *UCDLD* may be found in English and Spanish at: [www.flacathconf.org/declaration-on-life-and-death](http://www.flacathconf.org/declaration-on-life-and-death).

Additional resources from the Catholic bishops of Florida addressing end-of-life care are available at: [www.flaccb.org/end-of-life-care](http://www.flaccb.org/end-of-life-care).