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*"To live in a manner worthy of our human dignity, and to spend our final days on this earth in peace and comfort, surrounded by loved ones—that is the hope of each of us.*

*"Today, however, many people fear the dying process. They are afraid of being kept alive past life's nature limits by burdensome medical technology. They fear experiencing intolerable pain and suffering, losing control over bodily functions, or lingering with severe dementia. They worry about being abandoned or becoming a burden on others.*

*"Our society can be judged by how we respond to these fears. A caring community devotes more attention—not less—to members facing the most vulnerable times in their lives."*

—[To Live Each Day with Dignity](#), U.S. Bishops, June 2011

Dear Friends,

The statements above are excerpts from a June 2011 statement made by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, in which they address end-of-life issues from both a public policy and a pastoral viewpoint. As Catholics, we believe that responding and embracing those at the end of their lives is both good public policy and a Christian obligation.

As recently as 50 years ago, people expected their doctors to expend every effort to preserve life. Since then, with the advent more advanced technology and pharmaceuticals, modern "healthcare" may be prolonging the dying process rather than preserving life. As a result, most people can tell a sad story about a friend or a loved one whose death was fear-filled, painful and lonely.

In our website, *Embracing Our Dying*, we bishops of California have provided a resource for Catholics facing end-of-life issues. The name for the site was selected because we know that if those who are dying are embraced by their family and their community, they will not seek death, but will live their last days well, and then accept death when it comes. And "embracing our dying" is the best way to stop the call for the legalization of assisted suicide.

Our website offers a better way for individuals, families and friends to approach end-of-life issues. We present an overview of Catholic moral theology regarding death and dying-including a number of Church documents. We include information on current medical and hospital practices-including the use of pain medication. We put forward facts about California law concerning living wills, advance directives and POLST-including actual forms and instructions. We offer suggestions for finding a hospice and connecting with a Catholic parish. And finally, we have an "answer page" which contains frequently asked questions (FAQs) about end-of-life issues.

We hope that this website will serve you and yours well as you deal with end-of-life issues.

Very sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Gerald Wilkerson  
Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles, San Fernando Region  
*President*, California Catholic Conference of Bishops