

July 2006



Man's life comes from God; it is his gift, his image and imprint,  
a sharing in his breath of life...Human life and death are thus in the hands of God...  
But God does not exercise this power in an arbitrary and threatening way,  
but rather as part of his care and loving concern for his creatures.  
If it is true that human life is in the hands of God, it is no less true that these are loving hands,  
like those of a mother who accepts, nurtures and takes care of her child.  
—*Evangelium Vitae*, No. 39

Threats ...hang over the incurably ill and the dying.  
In a social and cultural context which makes it more difficult  
to face and accept suffering, the temptation becomes all the greater  
to resolve the problem of suffering by eliminating it at the root,  
by hastening death so that it occurs at the moment considered most suitable.  
—*Evangelium Vitae*, No. 15

Dear Friends,

We welcome you to our website, [www.EmbracingOurDying.com](http://www.EmbracingOurDying.com), which is a resource for Catholics facing end-of-life issues. The statements above are important teachings from our late Pope, His Holiness John Paul II, which both summarize our belief in the sanctity of human life and acknowledge modern culture's push towards death.

We chose the name *Embracing Our Dying* for our website 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.

As recently as 50 years ago, people expected their doctors to expend every effort to preserve life. Since then, with the advent of ventilators, dialysis, tube feeding, transplants, exotic antibiotics and intensive care units, efforts by healthcare professionals may be prolonging the dying process rather than preserving life. Most people can tell a sad story about a friend or a loved one whose death was fear-filled, painful and lonely.

Our website, which has a uniquely Catholic perspective, 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 and advance directives—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, [www.EmbracingOurDying.com](http://www.EmbracingOurDying.com), 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  
*Embracing Our Dying* liaison