

Novena for the Protection and Care at End of Life



Why Another Novena for Life?

In October the USCCB invites us to pray a [Respect Life Novena](#) for life at all stages.

In January we are called to join in the [9 Days for Life Novena](#).

We are grateful for those who have participated in these novenas. We hope you will continue to do so.

In New York State we are currently at an uncommon point in the stand for life. Most frequently legal battles on life issues center on abortion. However, in June, the New York State legislature passed [a bill to legalize assisted suicide in New York State](#). Since then, it has been awaiting Governor Hochul's action. We have been praying for her to veto the bill since June.

The month of November is National Hospice and Palliative Care Month. So, it is fitting time for us to increase our prayer efforts with a novena. As long as Governor Hochul has not acted on the bill, we will offer our novena for her to veto the bill.

If she vetoes the bill before we complete our Novena for End of Life Care, we will continue our novena with joy and thanksgiving for the intention of each day will remain important, albeit perhaps in a different perspective.

If Governor Hochul signs the bill, we will be saddened but we will not give up. We will continue to pray our novena that no one will choose assisted suicide.

This novena was created by St. Mary's of the Lake in Watkins Glen and St Benedict's in Odessa, NY (with help from a friend at St. Michael's in Newark, NY). We realize this issue is not an issue for us alone. We invite others to join us in this novena. You have our permissions to make as many copies as you need to pray this novena individually or in a group.



Day One

For the Governor's Veto

Prayer Intention:

For the Governor's veto of [the bill passed by the New York State legislature](#).

Once Governor Hochul acts on [this bill](#), please change this intention to "That no one will ever feel a need to choose assisted suicide."

Say an Our Father, 3 Hail Mary's, and a Glory Be.

Reflection:

"Euthanasia" was among the first term used to desire a person dying. In its root meaning, it meant "good death." A good death is natural. This is what we seek as Catholics. One of the problems that legalizing assisted suicide can cause is that health care workers are expected to provide *medical aid in dying*. Prescribing medicine that ends the life of a person is not *aiding* death. It *causes* death.

Healthcare workers exist to provide care, not cause death.

Dr. K writes on what a proper sense of care can bring to a healthcare worker, "Such an approach can engender disapproval, possibly dismissal, possibly discrimination all of which can be viewed as a martyrdom within our times. As workers tread this narrow path may the guidance of the Holy Spirit shed wisdom, right judgment and perseverance upon them."

Learn More:

- Read Bishop Matano's Statement following the passage of the bill to legalize assisted suicide—<https://www.dor.org/statement-from-bishop-matano-regarding-physician-assisted-suicide/>
- *Samaritanus bonus* on the care of persons in the critical and terminal phases of life <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2020/09/22/200922a.html>
- Read "[Top Reasons to Oppose Assisted Suicide](#)" from the USCCB (2017).

Evangelium Vitae, 18

"Precisely in an age when the inviolable rights of the person are solemnly proclaimed and the value of life is publicly affirmed, the very right to life is being denied or trampled upon, especially at the more significant moments of existence: the moment of birth and the moment of death" (Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, March 25, 1995).



Day Two

Assisted Suicide vs. Withdrawing Treatment

Prayer Intention:

For a better understanding of the difference between assisted suicide and withdrawing extraordinary means.

Say an Our Father, 3 Hail Mary's, and a Glory Be.

Reflection:

Fr. Jeff writes, "I remember the last time my mother went to the emergency room before her death. She had been battling emphysema and COPD for several years after smoking for 30 years. This was less than one month after they found she had lung cancer.

They told her that either she needed to go on a ventilator or she would pass soon. She choose to go on a ventilator to give the new chemotherapy a chance to work. Ten days later it was obvious the chemotherapy was not working. She was no longer able to make decisions for herself, leaving us to decide if/when to withdraw the ventilator.

A decision to withdraw a ventilator is not the same as choosing assisted suicide. For her, the ventilator was extraordinary means. Our decision was to withdraw the *extraordinary means* and *let nature take its course*. Assisted suicide would be a decision to kill her. We made a decision, in accord with Catholic teaching to entrust her life to the Lord. Assisted suicide is a decision where a person seems to think they knew better than God when one's appointed time to die is.

Learn More:

- Read what the *Catechism of the Catholic* says about Euthanasia (aka assisted suicide) [2276-2283](#)

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2280

"Everyone is responsible for his life before God who has given it to him. It is God who remains the sovereign Master of life. We are obliged to accept life gratefully and preserve it for his honor and the salvation of our souls. We are stewards, not owners, of the life God has entrusted to us. It is not ours to dispose of."

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2281

"Suicide contradicts the natural inclination of the human being to preserve and perpetuate his life. It is gravely contrary to the just love of self. It likewise offends love of neighbor because it unjustly breaks the ties of solidarity with family, nation, and other human societies to which we continue to have obligations. Suicide is contrary to love for the living God."



Day Three

For the Dying

Prayer Intention:

That those who are dying find accompaniment from their family and friends and be given a proper Catholic understanding of end of life care as they complete their advance directives.

Say an Our Father, 3 Hail Mary's, and a Glory Be.

Reflection:

Dr. K writes, "Jesus, the author of life, as he spoke the word of creation, further manifested himself in the incarnation where as amongst many wondrous perspectives He was the divine healer. That healing, to those He walked amongst included always the mind, body and most of all the eternal souls."

Fr. Jeff writes, "When I hear someone say they never want to be on a ventilator, I remember when I was in Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). There were three unrelated gentleman in the hospital who had been in separate motorcycle accidents. All three had been placed on ventilators and feeding tubes. They would have died without those ventilators (extraordinary means) and feeding tubes (ordinary means as long as the body can process the food).

All three made a complete recovery to continue normal lives without a ventilator or feeding tube."

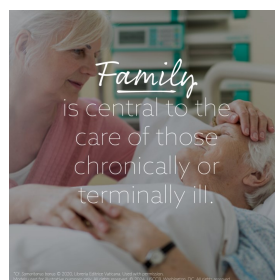
Learn More:

- Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 and reflect on this question. Who is the one who decides the "appointed time for everything"? When is our "time to die"?
- New York State Catholic Conference website for end of life decision making—<https://www.nyscatholic.org/resources/end-life/end-of-life-decision-making>

Pope Francis wrote, "We fail to realize that by isolating the elderly and leaving them in the care of others without the closeness and concern of family members, we disfigure and impoverish the family itself. We also end up depriving young people of a necessary connection to their roots and a wisdom that the young cannot achieve on their own." (*Fratelli Tutti*, October 3, 2020.14).

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith,
Letter [Samaritanus Bonus](#),
On the Care of Persons

"In the specific case of aggressive medical treatment, it should be repeated that the renunciation of extraordinary and/or disproportionate means "is not the equivalent of suicide or euthanasia; it rather expresses the acceptance of the human condition in the face of death" (Section 5.2, quote from EV 65).



Day Four

For a Renewed Understanding of Pain and Suffering

Prayer Intention:

For a renewed understanding of suffering in light of the suffering that Jesus endured for our salvation and for those who seek to end pain to understand how well pain can be managed with Palliative Care.

Say an Our Father, 3 Hail Mary's, and a Glory Be.

Reflection:

The desire to eliminate one's pain and suffering is a good thing. However, that does not mean that is licit to use any means available to end one's pain. The Fifth Commandment says "You shall not kill" (Exodus 20:13). No where does the Bible provide an exception when one is in pain. Palliative care is a new specialty in medicine that controls and even eliminates pain for the dying and those without a terminal illness but still have a long enduring pain.

Samaritanus Bonus, Section 5.7.

"The Church nonetheless affirms the moral liceity of sedation as part of patient care in order to ensure that the end of life arrives with the greatest possible peace and in the best internal conditions. This holds also for treatments that hasten the moment of death (deep palliative sedation in the terminal stage), always, to the extent possible, with the patient's informed consent...The sedation must exclude, as its direct purpose, the intention to kill, even though it may accelerate the inevitable onset of death."

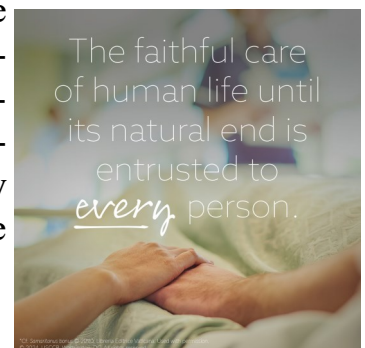
Learn More:

- Read Pope St. John Paul II's apostolic letter, *Salvifici Doloris On the Christian Meaning of Suffering* (February 11, 1984. Boston: Pauline Books & Media. 1984. Available online at https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1984/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_11021984_salvifici-doloris.html).
- Fr. Jeff's article, "Finding Value in Suffering" <https://renewaloffaith.org/finding-value-in-suffering/>

Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1681
"The Christian meaning of death is revealed in the light of the Paschal Mystery of the Death and Resurrection of Christ in whom resides our only hope. The Christian who dies in Christ Jesus is 'away from the body and at home with the Lord' (2 Cor 5:8)."

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter Samaritanus Bonus, On the Care of Persons, Section 5.1

"From a clinical perspective, the factors that largely determine requests for euthanasia and assisted suicide are unmanaged pain, and the loss of human and theological hope, provoked by the often inadequate psychological and spiritual human assistance provided by those who care for the sick."



Day Five

For Healthcare Workers

Prayer Intention:

For health care workers:

- To use their gifts to save lives, not end them
- For conscientious objection protections, that no health care worker be forced to perform procedures that violate their faith and/or moral beliefs

Say an Our Father, 3 Hail Mary's, and a Glory Be.

Reflection:

Margi writes, "Those facing death have verbalized two primary fears: fear of being alone & fear of pain. I volunteer at the House of John, a Comfort Care Home in Clifton Springs, where these fears are addressed by the staff, working with the physician, hospice and family to provide care. It is a place where peace, love and gratitude abound, where those who are dying can live with respect and dignity. All without charge. Even humor, like the patient who insisted she needed a hairdresser. as she exclaimed, "I'm not going to meet my maker looking like this!"

Learn More:

- St. Luke became an evangelist who wrote the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. Paul identifies Luke as a physician in Colossians 4:14. Having been a physician himself, he is the patron saint of healthcare workers.
- St. Jeanne Jugan was 18th century person who answered a call to care for the elderly. In her ministry to them, she founded the Little Sisters of the Poor who run senior living/assisted-living/nursing home facilities. In recognition of her ministry, she is a patron saint of the elderly.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2278

"Discontinuing medical procedures that are burdensome, dangerous, extraordinary, or disproportionate to the expected outcome can be legitimate; it is the refusal of "over-zealous" treatment. Here one does not will to cause death; one's inability to impede it is merely accepted. The decisions should be made by the patient if he is competent and able or, if not, by those legally entitled to act for the patient, whose reasonable will and legitimate interests must always be respected."



Day Six

For Government Officials and Insurance Companies

Prayer Intention:

For government officials and insurance companies to understand their place lies in ensuring proper health care is available and not when health care becomes too expensive for someone to live.

Say an Our Father, 3 Hail Mary's, and a Glory Be.

Reflection:

Dr. K. writes as a medical doctor, "As those who have been given the special privilege to be a part of the care giving team ministering to those with conditions affecting mind and body, it is incumbent to remain attentive to the spiritual, that which is eternal.

In a world conditioned by the norms and laws, which have sprung up out of the common mores of our pluralistic society, regulations are imposed. These have not always aligned with our faith or the Truth that resides in our Church's obedience to the Word of God.

At the bedside and as citizens, healthcare workers need to walk a fine line that allows participation in the care process while not straying into loosening of the recognition of the sanctity and inviolate sacredness of every life, despite that person's perhaps, currently debilitated condition.

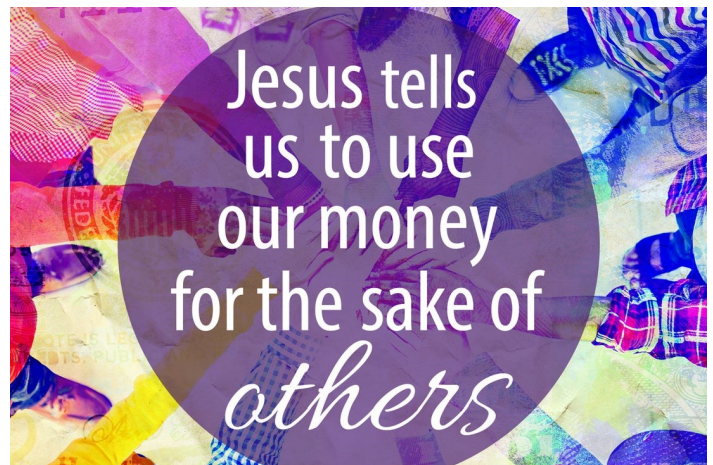
In end of life care, that role can include advocating for and participating in life sustaining palliative care or hospice and

comfort care and remain within the teachings of our Church which does not require extreme measures for those not desiring. That care must not stray into taking away from our Creator, God the Father, his divine plan of when He brings that soul home."

Learn More:

To read about insurance companies offering to pay for assisted-suicide, here are two stories.

- Mary Farrow, "A doctor prescribed a procedure, but insurance offered death." Catholic News Agency. Une 23, 2017. <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/36289/a-doctor-prescribed-a-procedure-but-insurance-offered-death>
- "Insurance denied her chemo treatment. But it covered drugs for suicide.." Catholic News Agency. June 6, 2017. <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/34774/insurance-denied-her-chemo-treatment-but-it-covered-drugs-for-suicide>.



Day Seven

The Line Drawn in the Sand

Prayer Intention:

For a proper understanding of the dignity of all life regardless of disability, impoverishment, or any other reason that may be incorrectly interpreted as devaluing life.

Say an Our Father, 3 Hail Mary's, and a Glory Be.

Reflection:

We have long had laws to prevent a person in distress from committing suicide. Now there are people who want to say it is okay for the terminally ill to commit suicide.

There is a slippery slope if anyone is allowed to end their lives before their appointed time.

In places where assisted suicide has already been legalized, the slippery slope starts with those within months of dying.

It expands to include those with health problems they will face for the rest of their lives.

It expands to include those with mental health illnesses.

Canada is now talking about poverty as a formal reason for assisted suicide. Poverty is not an illness. It is an economic condition that we have the power to change. The value of our lives is not determined by economic states or physical health. It is determined by the fact that we are made in *“the image of God.”* (Genesis 1:27).

Learn More:

Do you know that Canada is open to assisted suicide for non-health reasons such as poverty?

- Find out more in an article from Kevin J. Jones, “Hungry, poor, and disabled Canadians seeking assisted suicide.” Catholic News Agency. December 13, 2022. <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/253067/hungry-poor-and-disabled-canadians-seeking-assisted-suicide>
- Here is another heart-wrenching article of how some people's lives have been “devalued.” Niamh Uí Bhriain, “Woman offered Assisted Suicide for "abject poverty" as she couldn't get housing for her disability.” The Life Institute. May 16, 2022. <https://thelifeinstitute.net/blog/2022/woman-offered-assisted-suicide-for-abject-poverty-as-she-couldnt-get-housing-for-her-disability#>.



Day Eight

For the Families

Prayer Intention:

For families of the terminally ill, may they receive the grace they need to accompany their loved one through death on the journey to eternal life.

Say an Our Father, 3 Hail Mary's, and a Glory Be.

Reflection:

The dying person needs the accompaniment of their family and friends. The family may be assisted in this through hospice services and comfort care facilities.

We know little or nothing of St. Joseph's death. Since he is not mentioned in the Bible during the adult life of Jesus, it is thought that he died before then. Jesus as his son and Mary as his wife would have been present to him. St. Joseph is the patron saint of the dying.

Just as the dying person needs accompaniment, the family may also need accompaniment. Caregiver support has become an important part of some hospice services.

When you pray for a dying person, please remember to pray for their families too.

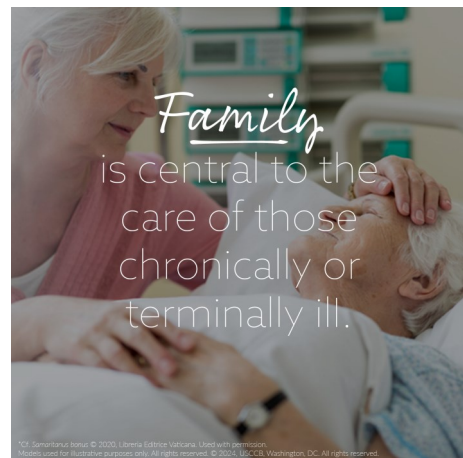
Learn More:

- Ten simple ideas for caregivers—USCCB, “Caring For Loved Ones at Life’s End.” 2018. <https://www.usccb.org/end-of-life-care>.

From the [USCCB Respect Life Prayer & Action Monthly Prayer Guide for November 2025](#)

"To those who care for the sick, the scene of the Cross provides a way of understanding that even when it seems that there is nothing more to do there remains much to do, because “remaining” by the side of the sick is a sign of love and of the hope that it contains. Healed by Jesus, we become men and women called to proclaim his healing power and provide care for our neighbors, until the very end" (<https://www.respectlife.org/prayer-guides>).

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2282
“Grave psychological disturbances, anguish, or grave fear of hardship, suffering, or torture can diminish the responsibility of the one committing suicide.”



Day Nine

Faith and How We Look at Death

Prayer Intention:

For more people to come to know Jesus and the gift of eternal life he offers us revealed in the Resurrection .

Say an Our Father, 3 Hail Mary's, and a Glory Be.

Reflection:

We do not need to face our own death or the death of a loved one alone. We read in Psalm 23:4, *“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, **for you are with me; your rod and your staff comfort me.**”* God is always with us.

For people without faith, not knowing of life in Heaven changes how they see death. It is final for them. Isaiah prophesized that the Lord would come and change how we view death. *“On this mountain he will destroy the veil that veils all peoples, The web that is woven over all nations. He will destroy death forever. The Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces”* (Isaiah 25:6-8a).

The Resurrection of Jesus shows us that God has power even over death. Revelation 21:1-7 points us to Heaven.

People who do not believe in life after death are more likely to support assisted-suicide. For them it might seem that when death is inevitable, why wait. They say, “end the pain”. In faith, we see something greater. We see value in suffering and we know that God is the author of life.

Learn More:

We are nearing the end of the Jubilee Year of Hope but our hope in Jesus Christ will never end. Read [Pope Francis' Bull of Indiction, “Spes Non Confundit”](#) (Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025, May 9, 2024).

Prayer of the Elderly, Pope Saint John Paul II
<https://www.usccb.org/prayers/prayer-elderly-pope-saint-john-paul-ii>

Grant, O Lord of life,
That we may savor every season
of our lives as a gift
filled with promise for the future.
Grant that we may lovingly accept your will,
and place ourselves each day
in your merciful hands.
And when the moment of our definitive
“passage” comes,
grant that we may face it with serenity,
without regret for what we shall leave behind.
For in meeting you,
after having sought you for so long,
we shall find once more every authentic good
which we have known here on earth,
in the company of all
who have gone before us
marked with the sign of faith and hope.
Mary, Mother of pilgrim humanity,
pray for us
“now and at the hour of our death.”
Keep us ever close to Jesus,
your beloved Son and our brother,
the Lord of life and glory. Amen!

Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Letter to the Elderly* © 1999 Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Conclusion

Thank you for praying this novena with us. If you would like to read more about these issues, please see the following resources:

- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)
 - webpage for Assisted Suicide & Euthanasia—<https://www.usccb.org/prolife/assisted-suicide-euthanasia>
 - *To Live Each Day with Dignity: A Statement on Physician-Assisted Suicide*, USCCB, June 2011. <https://www.usccb.org/resources/live-each-day-dignity>
- Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Donum Vitae – Instruction on Respect For Human Life In Its Origin and On the Dignity of Procreation: Replies to Certain Questions of the Day*. February 22, 1987. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19870222_respect-for-human-life_en.html .
- Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction Dignitas Personae, On Certain Medical Questions*. 2008. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20081208_dignitas-personae_en.html.

To conclude we offer the following reflection:

Medical Aid in Dying

A prayer of reflection for Healthcare workers practicing in a culture of acceptance of euthanasia by Dr. K.

Father, as the source of life and all health and healing, accept these prayers, to be with your care givers as they toil in instrumental yet intimate ways amongst the infirm, in their frailty.

Jesus, as you walked amongst us, you healed body, mind and soul of all that sought you in faith; instill in your workers a care ever mindful of the eternal soul while attending to those with physical needs, be they illness, suffering or time of death.

Oh Holy Spirit, strengthen the hearts and minds of caregivers with your gifts of forbearance, wisdom and right judgment as our society turns down its erroneous paths. Strengthen them, that a steadfast regard for the sanctity of each human life, made in Your divine image as precious before You is ever maintained. Strengthen the hearts of those providers that even under duress they advocate for their patients at their times of weakness and vulnerability.

As our culture gradually loses its moorings, form Lord, the consciences of your people so as to align with your truths. Furthermore, be with our lawmakers that legislation prioritizes freedom to exercise those consciences.

May our society appreciate the goodness of Your disciples in their actions. Prevent discrimination from degrading healthcare by excluding those of moral uprightness.

Above all, within Your workers, fashion hearts to go forth with a boldness to recognize and seize opportunities to make You, Jesus, known as the source of all healing, to those to whom they minister their care.

Father, we ask this in the Name of your Son Jesus and with Your Holy Spirit, three in One.

Amen.