

On Death XI

The comfort of being there with your loved ones till their end.

My mother always said she wanted to live to be 100. But lung cancer cut that expectation short at 86; she was treated with radiation, and was able to live on her own up until nearly the end. She entered Hospice in December of 2003, and after Christmas moved into the rectory in Concord with me. The Hospice team got to work immediately, and they helped her with her activities of daily living. She really liked the social worker that helped her get her affairs in order and make her choices. The chaplain also used guided imagery to reduce her anxiety and spent time listening to her tell her past story. She was on oxygen at home, which limited her mobility, but she got around as best she could, ate her favorite foods, although very small quantities and watched her beloved sports teams on TV. Because I worked in Hospice for many years, I considered that she had an easy six months, but I was wrong. Within a few weeks she was ready to go; one evening I came home to the rectory fairly late and went into her room to say “good night” as she was sitting up watching TV. She said “I’m Tired...” So I responded “I’ll help you to bed.” She said, “No, not like that...” I got it. For her that was the way I gave her permission to die. This seems to be an element in many people’s last days; they need to know that they can leave. Shortly thereafter she went into a coma and it was only a matter of less than 24 hours that she had died. I was blessed to be with both my parents when they died; even though it meant separation, and grief, there was such a peace.

IHM Pray for us.

Fr. Jerry