

On Death II

Death, Sickness and its natural course.

Death and sickness. A few of us will just die in our sleep after a good and long life. Most of us will go through a period of intense suffering due to illness prior to “falling asleep.” Some will die from an accident or sudden cause that will prevent any preparation. Sadly, illness is often used as a pretext for not dealing with mortality, and denial around death can be considerable. Few of us are eager to embrace the inevitable, but inevitable it is. In sickness the “dance” between preparing as a good and faithful Catholic and medical expectations raise many knotty questions. Some will be anxious that they do what the Church expects, but really the Church wants to smooth the way for a good and peaceful death. Healthcare now has the capacity to keep people alive on machines for a very long time, long past the threshold of hope of recovery. The question of “how much” healthcare is a personal choice, but Catholics will understand best that no one is required to do or accept any technology that they do not wish to have. I would divide these medical technologies into three categories [1] heroics, [2] good medicine and [3] comfort. The standard I use as a priest and as an R.N., is that each person is unique and each person’s need will be dependent on their unique situation. There really isn’t any “cookie cutter” recipe that covers all situations as we prepare for death.

IHM Pray for us.

Fr. Jerry