

Through the patient gift of care and respect given to us when we are so physically and spiritually vulnerable, we meet the tokens of God's love and the healing life of the Kingdom already active in our world.



The communion of saints is the communion of love, the communion of eternal life, to which we all journey through the grace of Christ.



Day for Life is celebrated yearly by the Catholic Church in Ireland, Scotland and England and Wales. It is a day dedicated to raising awareness about the meaning and value of human life at every stage and in every condition: www.dayforlife.org

Resources

WEBSITES

www.catholicbishops.ie
Irish Bishops' Conference website

www.dayforlife.org
Day for Life website

SOME RELEVANT PUBLICATIONS

Pastoral Letter: Living with Dying
The Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference
October 2002

End of Life Care – Ethical and Pastoral Issues
Irish Bishops' Bioethics Committee 2002

Available from
the Catholic Communications Office
www.catholicbishops.ie

Day for Life Prayer

Go forth, Christian soul, from this world
in the name of God the almighty Father,
who created you,
in the name of Jesus Christ,
the Son of the living God,
who suffered for you,
in the name of the Holy Spirit,
who was poured out upon you.
Go forth, faithful Christian!

May you live in peace this day,
may your home be with God in Zion,
with Mary, the virgin Mother of God,
with Joseph, and all the angels and saints ...

May you return to your Creator
who formed you from the dust of the earth.
May holy Mary, the angels, and all the saints
come to meet you as you go forth from this life ...
May you see your Redeemer face to face.



DAY FOR LIFE • SUNDAY, 3 OCTOBER 2010

Lord,
for your faithful people,
life is changed, not ended

DAY FOR LIFE
SUNDAY, 3 OCTOBER 2010



IRISH CATHOLIC
BISHOPS' CONFERENCE
COMHDHÁIL EASPAG CAITLÍCEACH ÉIREANN

Lord, for your faithful people, life is changed, not ended

Day for Life is the day the Catholic Church in Ireland, Scotland and England and Wales dedicates to celebrating the dignity of human life from conception to natural death. This year its theme is the meaning of Christian death and care for those who are dying.

God did not make us for death but for life. When we touch the mystery of death in prayer, thought or experience, it leads us into the greater mystery of the eternal life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Through our Baptism we have already begun to live this life. We have entered into the mystery of death which Christ, by his resurrection, has changed forever. In him, death is no longer our end but our 'Passover' into a truth and a life we cannot even begin to imagine because it is a life forever beyond the experience of death.

(I Cor 13:12; 15:42-44; 1 Jn 3:2)

Human death is not only a physical and psychological process; it is also a spiritual reality. Without this dimension all our attempts to understand death and dying remain limited and impoverished. In faith we know that all life has a value which cannot be measured or bargained away. No matter how short it may be, or whatever its condition, every life has a purpose and contains a grace. This is why we should not allow ourselves to be persuaded that incapacity or impairment somehow lessen the value of a person's life, or make them less able to enrich others and give glory to God in whose image they are made and continue to grow. We do not possess our lives as we possess some material object, to be used and then disposed of at will. Life is a gift we hold from God, who not only gives life but redeems it.

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The Christian life is not specially protected from illness, pain or death, yet we know that even in these experiences we can find God and be a witness to him, our Lord in life and in death (Phil 1:21). In these moments we can enter more deeply into the mystery of his passion and resurrection so that our life, united with his, may somehow be a grace for others.

This is not always easy; we can be overwhelmed by fear or anxiety and feel that what is asked is beyond our strength. Yet,

even in such moments, we are not alone. We are enfolded in the community of faith which carries us in this world and in the next. This is true especially in the sacraments: Reconciliation which brings us forgiveness, the Sacrament of the Sick which restores and consoles us and Viaticum (Holy Communion for the dying) which strengthens us for our journey into the understanding, truth and life of God's presence. Through the patient gift of care and respect given to us when we are so physically and spiritually vulnerable, we meet the tokens of God's love and the healing life of the Kingdom already active in our world. In so many ways, hidden and seen, at the hour of our death, whether we are conscious or not, alone or surrounded by family and friends, the Church is quietly and prayerfully present. When we see this, we come to realise how great is the communion of love in which we already stand. Then, we can begin to glimpse that all our love is purified and gathered into God's love. This is the love that conquers death; the love that is our Way, our Truth and our Life (Jn 14:5-6).

Death does not break the bonds of love. When we lose someone who has been part of our life, we know they leave an absence no one else can fill. A part of us is lost that can never be replaced. Sometimes, we can let go with relief, but sometimes there will be a sense of guilt as we recall things we should have said when we had the chance or things we meant to do but did not. Even then we know that our prayers for those

who 'have gone before us marked with the sign of faith' are deeds of love from which they and we benefit. We remember them each day at the altar until one day we stand with them in Christ's presence. We know, too, that we draw strength and consolation from the prayers of those who have gone ahead of us. The communion of the saints is the communion of love, the communion of eternal life, to which we all journey through the grace of Christ.

In each Mass we enter into the presence of Christ and share in His Passover. We touch the mystery of death but now we see it through the greater mystery of His unconquerable love. Here the sacrament of

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Christ's presence is also the sacrament of encounter. All are gathered through Him, with Him and in Him, not only in this life but in the next. *O Sacrum Convivium*, the ancient antiphon for the feast of Corpus Christi, beautifully expresses the truth at the heart of our faith, 'O sacred banquet! In which Christ is received, the memory of his Passion is renewed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory to us is given.'