

Diocese of Venice

Respect Life Ministry News

In Support of Life Special Edition

New Program

The new video program, *In Support of Life*, on end of life issues is ready to roll!

The first program will be held on **Friday, January 16** at 10:00AM at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Hall, 1301 Center Road, Venice. Register via 941-441-1112 or Kopko@dioceseofvenice.org.

Two additional programs have been tentatively scheduled for February and March in the Central Deanery. Pastors who would like the program brought to their parish can do so by contacting the Respect Life Department.

Facilitator Training

Every parish is encouraged to have a trained *In Support of Life* (ISOL) facilitator, not only to conduct the program but to serve as a resource for people in the parish.

The second training session will be held on **Saturday, January 31, from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM at St. Cecilia** parish hall, Ft. Myers. Individuals with medical training or knowledge of Catholic Church teaching on end of life issues would be the ideal candidate, although others are invited to apply.

IN
SUPPORT OF

Life

Help from Parish Reps and Committee members will be needed to arrange the viewing of the video in the parish and to help coordinate the event. Parish Reps and committee members are invited to attend the facilitator training to learn more about the issues.

Why Now?

The program has been in development for over a year, but since the national media picked up the Terri Schiavo case, there has been heightened interest in such issues as life support, nutrition and hydration, living wills and other issues. Misinformation abounds.

Also, more people must be educated about the danger to human life that is not just down the road if assisted suicide is legalized; it is

happening in our backyards right now.

One of the oldest "Right to Die" groups, the Hemlock Society, which recently changed its name to "End of Life Choices" (EOLC), has what they call the "Caring Friends" program. Volunteers are trained to help people explore all options for committing suicide, provide support and information to ensure that it is carried out without complications and to be with person at the time.

The fifth Caring Friends training program was held in Orlando just a year ago. People within the 10-county Diocese of Venice have been found dead, having used the Hemlock-recommended "method of choice", namely a plastic bag over the head. (What's so dignified about dying by such a method?)

Catholics need to know that their faith is opposed to the philosophy and activities of such "Right to Die" organizations. They need not be misled by End of Life Choices' softer approach using such terms as:

- ▣ Dignity
- ▣ Compassion
- ▣ Control
- ▣ Choice
- ▣ Hastening death
- ▣ Lessening suffering

Living wills can be dangerous. Learn what's best for you as a Catholic.



Program Overview

The key tool is a video that has been used successfully in several states to help defeat pro-assisted suicide referendums and legislation: Michigan, Massachusetts and Maine.

The Massachusetts Catholic Conference developed the "In Support of Life" program, using videos from Michigan and the Brooklyn Diocese. All three groups gave the Diocese of Venice permission to adapt and use their materials.

Bishop Nevins eloquently introduces the program on the video.

It is recommended that the video be shown in parishes and organizational meetings (such as Knights of Columbus, Council of Catholic Women, etc.) within a few weeks prior to the program. Coordination of efforts between neighboring parishes is encouraged.

The program touches on the following ways to prepare for the end of one's earthly life:

- ♥ Practice living until you die
- ♥ Share your life story
- ♥ Allow and seek forgiveness
- ♥ Offer thanks to God & others
- ♥ Prepare for eternal life
- ♥ Demonstrate love
- ♥ Say good-bye, assured of greater things to come

The video also addresses the issue of doctor-assisted suicide. Although this form of assisted suicide is illegal in Florida, it is already legal in Oregon. Some forms of assisted suicide are happening right here in our own local area.

We must make people aware of what is going on and we need to do more to help people facing difficult end-of-life decisions.

As the narrator on the "In Support of Life" video said, *"Now is the time to better understand assisted suicide, the true needs of the dying, and how the Catholic Church can help. Please take the time."*

Consider the following message from Bishop Nevins on the video: *"We must learn all we can about assisted suicide and the needs of the dying. We must be ready to discuss the issues with others to influence the public debate. We must do all we can to provide the dying and those who care for them with positive alternatives."*

"We are providing educational materials, seminars and pastoral services. Specific opportunities will be available in your parish or local area. I encourage you to take

advantage of them... I look forward to your involvement."

The program will be facilitated by a medical professional and will consist of:

- Opening Prayer
- Video & Reflection
- Church Teaching on End of Life Issues
- Threats to the Dignity of Human Life and Present Dangers
- Tools to Protect Yourself (Designation of Healthcare Surrogate/Living Will)
- Resource Materials and Handouts
- Questions and Answers
- Closing Prayer
- Refreshments

A significant amount of time is allotted during the 1-1/2 to 2-hour session to address participants' questions.

"The sickness of a family member, friend or neighbor is a call to Christians to demonstrate true compassion, that gentle and persevering sharing in another's pain."

*Ad Limina Apostolorum
to Bishops of the U.S.
Pope John Paul II -1998*

RESPECT LIFE MINISTRY NEWS

published by
The Diocese of Venice
Respect Life Dept.
Post Office Box 2006
Venice, Florida 34284-2006
(941) 484-9543/484-1121 FAX
Berdeaux@dioceseofvenice.org