

## **RESPECTING LIFE AT ALL ITS STAGES**

"Make me an Instrument of your peace; grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console"

In November we celebrate the feast day of All Saints and the feast day of All Souls. The readings for these days, as well as for the month, are focused on the end of the year, and cause us to reflect. The days are getting shorter and winter is on the door step. These outward signs can be meaningful to all of us, but especially to those who are at the end of their lives.

Our society however, does not always handle the process of dying and death itself, as a worthy and important part of life. As Christians we recognize this end as our new beginning. One way to honor this is through hospice care and bereavement support.

Hospice care offers comfort services for people who are at the end of their lives, and bereavement support for family members before the death and during the grieving process that follows. A hospice "Care Team" is usually comprised of medical and nursing specialists, family members, and volunteers who are trained to make the final days, weeks or months as comfortable and peaceful as possible for the dying. The team members will differ depending on the care facility or the home environment. Other settings, such as long term care facilities and assisted living facilities also offer these services

Bereavement support strives to support family and loved ones during the dying process and grieving process. Grieving is different for each individual and family. The hospice helps families to navigate these phases, to ensure healthy healing and comfort before the death and after. As they are dying, the patients are being supported to live life to the fullest in mind, body, and spirit.

St. Mary's Hospital Home Health Care Hospice in St. Paul, (<http://www.franciscancare.org/>) is one of many hospice options in the Twin Cities area. Their goal of dignity, peace and loving care is surly what St. Francis had in mind when these words where written; " Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life."