



## Dying into Life

We dedicate each October to Respect for Life and each November to remembrance of the dead. In both we come face to face with the God-given dignity of each and every human life from origin to end.

We Oregonians have good reason to mark time in this way. Oregon was the first state to legalize physician-assisted suicide and one of the first states to permit abortion. Going further down the same dark path, our state legislature passed a law this year mandating insurance coverage of abortion and came close to approving a bill that would have left people with dementia at greater risk of euthanasia.

Unyielding opposition to such state-sanctioned killing comes by way of inheritance to those who put their faith in the God of the Living and the Dead. As October flows into November, think for a moment against the threat to life—and faith—that we face from the extension of assisted suicide and euthanasia.

The opening pages of Scripture tell us that every human being is made in the image of God. So it was in the beginning and is now; but before much time passed, man's savage

selfishness disfigured the image beyond recognition. So for our sake God's only Son emptied Himself to restore its original beauty. He underwent a perilous human birth, lived a full human life, and died a horrific human death. But His end was only the beginning. Now the Risen One, "the Image of the unseen God," shines forth in victorious fullness, bringing to light the indestructible dignity of human life at every age in every condition.

All His life Our Savior put Himself into our hands—to lift Him up from the manger at birth, to take Him down from the Cross and lay Him in the tomb in death. To our assistance He offered no resistance. He was not ashamed to be radically dependent on the charity of strangers. One of them, Simon of Cyrene, lightened the load of His Cross on the way to Calvary.

In all this Jesus deliberately left us "an example." If you take it to heart, you will care for others in their time of need and let them care for you in yours. Scripture teaches us to "bear one another's burdens." It does *not* say: "Never *be* a burden to anyone." *Your* burden may be precisely the one God wants you to lay down in the hands of your neighbor. In his hour of weakness, you can, like the Cyrenian, help bear its weight; to the falling you can lend strength. But when yours fails, the hour has come for your neighbor take the weight of your cross upon his shoulders in turn. How else is he to "fulfill the law of love"?

The Romans designed crucifixion to be a death *without* dignity, and in His Passion, said St. Vincent de Paul, Jesus “nearly lost the appearance of a man.” But He never lost His dignity. No one could take it from Him. He laid it down freely to take it up again in Resurrection.

The undignified death of the “King of the Jews” no longer has power over Him. That is why we who follow Him stand up for the God-given dignity of life and commit ourselves to defend it.