

# Reflection on Health Care Decisions

## THINKING ABOUT DAYS TO COME

Nearing the end of his life, the Hebrew Scriptures tell of Jacob calling his sons together to prepare them for the time when he would no longer be with them. He says,

*Gather around, that I may tell you what is to happen to you in days to come. Assemble and listen, sons of Jacob, listen to Israel, your father (Genesis 49:1).*

Then, we see in the Gospel Jesus speaks openly to his disciples about his death in order to prepare them to carry on his ministry without his physical presence:

*He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and rise after three days. He spoke this openly. Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him (Mark 8:31-32).*

## FAITH AND HOPE WILL GUIDE US

As people of faith, we have assurance that death is not the end, but a transformation from this life to eternal life. Because of this, we can have courage in the face of the many uncertainties of life knowing that,

*...neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8.38-39).*

Whatever joys and challenges life may bring, we are enfolded in God's unfailing love.

## THE GIFT OF PLANNING

Since the time of our forebearers in faith, modern medical technologies have changed significantly. We now have the ability to slow disease progression, to lessen symptoms, and even to cure illnesses that were once incurable. These same advances, however, create a need for thoughtful conversations and intentional planning so our loved ones know our values and preferences should they need to make decisions for us.

Advance care planning conversations and documents provide guidance to our loved ones before an important decision might need to be made. Advance care planning is a gift that lessens the burden and provides support to those who love us most.

Yet, these conversations do not come naturally for most of us. We may hesitate to "have the talk" because we don't want to seem impolite or negative, create fear, or be seen as a burden.

*What stops me from having a conversation about what matters most to me?*

*Who would I want to speak for me if medical decisions need to be made and I cannot speak for myself?*

*What first step can I take to let that person know my thoughts about my values and preferences for medical care?*

## OUR PRAYER

God of comfort and peace,  
teach us to number our  
days that we may  
have hearts of wisdom.

In the face of life's  
uncertainties, hold us in  
hopeful courage, quiet trust,  
and deep faithfulness.

Steady us in seasons of  
struggle, guide us in times  
of confusion, comfort us in  
times of waiting that we  
may more gratefully  
embrace your gift of life.

Amen.

