

Dignity at Every Age

Wednesday of Respect Life Week – October 2021

Helping Others

Grades 7-9

Goal: Students will explore sickness and illness through the lens of the dignity of every person at every stage. Through stories and activities, students will realize that the elderly and the sick not only have love to give, but also, need to receive love.

Materials: Catholics Protect Human Life and Dignity ([video link](#))
Man of Steel ([video link](#))

The Church teaches that every life has value regardless of one's ability, and that God has a plan for each life from birth up until death. We are called to accompany those who are suffering with illness and to give them hope that, because of Jesus' Passion, Death and Resurrection, even our suffering has meaning as an opportunity to love and be loved.

Watch: Catholics Protect Human Life and Dignity ([video link](#))

Questions for Discussion

Is our dignity and value as human beings diminished by poor health or lack of abilities?
Why do the elderly and the sick especially need to be reminded of their value and dignity?
How can we recognize the image of God in those who are sick or elderly? How can we protect their dignity?

Every life matters, regardless of age or ability. Our worth comes from the fact that we are created by God who loves us unconditionally. Think about someone you love. Would your love for them change if they could no longer do the things they can do now? The truth is: love goes deeper! As people age or become sick, it is important for them to be surrounded by people who love them. It's a chance for us to show them that we love them for who they are, not for what they can do.

Watch: Man of Steel ([video link](#))

Questions for Discussion

What in JJ's background has prepared him to accept this challenge and never give up fighting for life?
What does he have in his life worth fighting for?
Is there something in a person's character that keeps them fighting when things get tough, rather than giving up?
Is that a learned trait? Why or why not?
How did the experience of illness change Kris and JJ's relationship? Do you think their love grew stronger through it? Why?
Sometimes people who are sick feel like a burden to others but Kris called JJ her "hero." What gift can someone who is ill or weak offer to those around them? (*giving others the opportunity to love you and care for you is not a burden but a gift*)

Activity: Have the students write about a person in their life who has needed to be taken care of. Have them recall why that person needed help, how the caregiver helped them, and what they learned from the person who needed help. How was serving this person a gift, not a burden? Encourage students to share with the class.

Prayer:

A Blessing for the Sick

Jesus, when you were on earth, people brought the sick to you
and you healed them all.

Today we ask you to bless all those in sickness, in weakness and in pain.

For those who are helpless: Bless your people, O Lord.

For those who must face life under some disability; those whose weakness means that they must always be
cared for:

Bless your people, O Lord.

For those suffering from debilitating or terminal illness and for their caregivers: Bless your people, O Lord.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Lesson adapted from the plans on the Archdiocese of Los Angeles Office of Life, Justice and Peace website.