

# A LESSON ON CARING FOR THE VULNERABLE

## GRADES 7-9 -- Dignity at Every Age - Lesson II (Year I, Day 3)

**Goal:** Students will explore the concepts of illness through the lens of the dignity of every person at every stage. Through stories, students will realize that the elderly and the sick have love to give and need to receive love.

**Materials:** My Story Workbook (see link below)

**Watch:** [Derek Redmond's Olympic Moment](#) by Olympics  
[Treating the Whole Person: An Integrated Approach to the End of Life](#) by the Sisters of Life

### Discussion:

- Why was Derek Redmond's race so inspiring even though he didn't win?
- Was Derek any less valuable or important as a person because he couldn't run anymore?
- Some of the race officials tried to lead Derek off the track, perhaps believing they were being kind to the injured man. How did Derek's father uphold his son's dignity by helping him cross the finish line even though he needed assistance?
- How can we help the sick and elderly run their race to the end with true dignity and compassion?
- Why is an integrated Christian approach to the end of life:
  - *Smart?* (uses science to develop new medical techniques to relieve pain, illness)
  - *Ethical?* (treats human lives with dignity, providing care until the end, never practicing assisted suicide or euthanasia)
  - *Compassionate?* (caring for emotional, relational needs of the sick)
  - *Enlightened by faith?* (recognizing our eternal destiny and that we all belong to God)

**Activity:** [My Story](#): Through this activity, students learn to recognize that the elderly and infirmed have much love and life to give to those around them. In listening to the words of their grandparents, students learn to recognize the dignity of every person.

Have the students prepare an interview with a grandparent or another elderly person in their life. Have them ask about their grandparents' childhood, family, and the lessons they have learned in their journey through life. This gives students the opportunity to delight in the elderly in their life and come to recognize the dignity present in every person, regardless of ability. Share highlights from the interviews at a later class. This ["My Story"](#) workbook may give some ideas of questions to ask.

**Prayer:**

Jesus, when You were on earth, people brought the sick to You and You healed them all.  
Today I ask You to bless all those who are sick, weak and in pain.

For those who are helpless and who must lie in bed:  
Bless your people, O Lord.

For those who must face life with some disability:  
Bless your people, O Lord.

For those suffering from any kind of illness and for their caregivers:  
Bless your people, O Lord.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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