



Wednesday of Respect Life Week
Caring for Those in Need/Every Life Matters
Grades 7-8

Theme: Caring for the Sick and Elderly

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

Lesson: 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 illnesses 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.

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* (JJ Hanson is fighting brain cancer. Rather than give up (assisted suicide), JJ is choosing to fight the cancer with grace and courage knowing that his life is a gift from God. ([video link](#)))

JJ Hanson is a former Marine from the Archdiocese of New York, who knows personally that every day matters and life is worth living whether you are healthy or sick. He uses the determination of a marine to fight cancer and live his best life. In the extra years JJ was given while battling cancer, he and his wife conceived and gave birth to a second son. Had JJ decided to end his life through assisted suicide, their youngest son would not have been born.

Discussion Questions

What in his 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: Celebrating Others

Have the students prepare an interview with a grandparent or another elderly person in their life. Ask them about their childhood, their 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.

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.*