



Archdiocese of Boston
*Initiative for Palliative Care
and Advance Care Planning*



Dear Colleagues and Friends,

So many of you have joined us at our workshops and at our annual Colloquium, when we and some of our wonderful guest speakers have addressed the importance of having conversations in advance of being in situations where serious medical decisions are necessary.

We are facing a pandemic illness, COVID-19, that has forced many patients, their families and health care proxies to make extremely grave decisions about continuing treatment, or even about whether to start treatment under certain circumstances, if the treatment cannot provide the benefit to a patient that it was intended to.

In order to be of assistance to our faith community during this unprecedented public health emergency, we have added some new resources to our webpage. Please feel free to share any of these resources with your colleagues and loved ones. As a reminder, our web address is: www.bostoncatholic.org/palliativecare

The most important thing you can do right now is to ensure that you and your loved ones have had conversations about how you want to be cared for in the event that you cannot speak for yourself and that you have named a primary and an alternate health care proxy. Many people will be infected with coronavirus and sometimes serious complications arise without warning. If you or your loved one needs to be on a ventilator, you will not be able to speak and could be too sick at that point to communicate in other ways. The majority of patients are not being allowed visitors, so any information the health care team would normally gather from loved ones at the bedside cannot always be obtained in the usual way. See the links on the webpage regarding advance care planning. If you have hesitated to do advance care planning in the past, certainly the current situation is a very good reason to illustrate that it is absolutely necessary to do it now.

We are also including links from the Supportive Care Coalition and the Catholic Health Association, where you will find a wealth of information including past recordings and future webinars on COVID-19 and related topics, especially spiritual resources.

There is an abundance of material that pertains to the ethical principles and Catholic teaching directly related to facing these difficult moments and making the best decisions, illuminated by our faith. In the face of a pandemic, along with the strain on healthcare providers and institutions, there are often depletions of needed supplies, staff, equipment, medications and services. Catholic healthcare ethicists have been preparing for this situation for years. See the link on our webpage regarding the role of Catholic Moral Theology in Pandemic Ethics. There are also links to other articles about these situations.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to Diane by email (dmccarthy@rcab.org) with any questions or comments.

Despite the challenges of this time, we know that the tomb will still be empty on Easter morning. Our hope is in the Risen Christ and what He has promised us.

Wishing you and your loved ones peace and good health,
Diane

