



CARING WITH FAITH

**TOWARD
DEATH
WITH HOPE**



LEADER'S GUIDE

PLEASE NOTE: This leader's guide was originally written for those using this video program in its VHS format. Those now using this program on DVD may find some references that do not apply to their use (i.e., directions for locating segments, time notations, etc.). We trust that both VHS- and DVD-users will find this guide a valuable resource.

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CATHOLIC UPDATE VIDEO

The Use of Video in Faith Formation

Jesus used the “media” of his day to teach. He was a master storyteller. His preaching is full of imagery. His parables are calculated to engage his audience. Through the ages, Christian teachers and preachers have followed Jesus in the creative proclamation of his message.

From the culture of Jesus’ time, heavily dependent on *oral* communication—to the advent of *print* communication—to our own time and its dependence on *electronic* media—Christian teachers have adapted their proclamation to each new medium and its particular demands.

Media scholars like Marshall McLuhan remind us of the impact of the medium on the message it carries. *How* we communicate affects *what* we communicate. Electronic media offer us new ways to tell the story of our faith. Father Pierre Babin points out (see *The New Era in Religious Communications*, Pierre Babin with Mercedes Iannone, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1991) that the message, as well as the sender and receiver, all will be re-shaped in the telling.

Catechesis, as a part of the total evangelization process, must touch the learners’ hearts and shine the light of faith on their lives. It must connect to the learners’ experience or risk being discarded as irrelevant. To be effective, catechists must learn how to make the best use of the electronic media available in our culture, aware of the particular medium’s strengths and weaknesses.

Video is a very popular, familiar and accessible part of our electronic culture. It draws us in, captures our imaginations and touches us on a deep, emotional level.

As it speaks to our experience and utilizes several of our senses, its message is more likely to be heard and remembered. By integrating quality video programs into the catechetical process, catechists can share the message more effectively.

At the same time, as television becomes a more pervasive part of our lives, we can be lulled into thinking that it can do everything for us—inform, entertain, shop, even worship. The reality is that it can't and shouldn't do everything. As Pierre Babin emphasizes, electronic media function differently than print media. They appeal first to the emotional content of our faith rather than the intellectual content. Video cannot begin to convey the amount of information print can. It cannot replace the live presence and personal witness of the catechist. But in a catechetical setting, it can be a powerful part of the “mix of media” used in proclaiming the message.

How effectively video—or any electronic media—is used in the catechetical setting depends primarily on how prepared the catechist is to use it:

- A preview of the video is essential to determine the best use of the program with a particular group.
- The catechist should select a video program (or section of a video) based on the audience, the purpose, and the availability of competent teachers and other resources and activities to support the theme.
- Sufficient time should be available to introduce the video and to process the experience.

Catechists must realize that they control the use of video in their sessions. They might approach a video program in one of two ways: as a skeleton on which to build a presentation or as a way to “enflesh” an existing skeleton.

A video program well-tailored to the needs of a

group might be used in its entirety. At other times, catechists may creatively manipulate the video to fit their needs:

- An excerpt may be taken from a longer piece to illustrate a point.
- A video may be shown with the *sound off* to highlight an aspect of the program.
- The “pause” button can be used freely to interject explanations and examples or to elicit reactions.
- The program or excerpt may be repeated to emphasize a point.

The producers of this video program have attempted to craft both medium and message with an awareness of the power of the medium as well as its limitations. They encourage those who use it to study this guide and become familiar with ways to allow this program to supplement their own sharing of the Gospel message of Jesus Christ.

Introduction to the Series

Catholic Update Video is a video resource designed for use in the RCIA, catechist formation, sacrament programs for parents, faith-sharing groups, study groups, ministry training and high school religious education. *Catholic Update Video* draws from Catholic life and practice to present a single topic in a “video toolbox” format with four distinct segments—story, witness, teaching and musical reflection.

Catholic Update Video has been designed with today’s learner in mind. Its segments are short and can stand alone or be used with others in the program. The format is flexible, making it useful in a variety of group settings as well as for individual viewing. The emphasis is on what video can do best, namely touch us through story (*story segment*), testimony (*witness segment*) and

song (*musical reflection segment*) with images and the emotions they carry. But a more “didactic” approach (*teaching segment*) respects the need to convey a concise core of information.

The general model for catechetical process (life experience, message or doctrine, response) is respected by the order of the four segments, although at times a catechist may choose to use them alone or out of sequence:

- Each program begins with a **story segment** designed to draw viewers in and help them connect their life experience to the faith topic.
- The testimony of real-life Catholics in the **witness segment** helps viewers reflect on their own life experience and prepare for group sharing.
- Our teacher briefly highlights some aspects of the topic in the **teaching segment**. Relevant images help to illustrate the points being made. (*This segment is not intended to treat a topic exhaustively nor substitute for a more thorough presentation on the message or doctrine.*)
- Viewers are invited to respond in prayer using the **musical reflection segment**.

The program’s host provides a context for each segment. This is designed to help viewers who will see the program from beginning to end. Catechists who use segments individually or out of sequence should prepare their own lead-in. On-screen graphics provide viewers with a question for reflection or sharing between segments.

This leader’s guide is an important tool for making the best use of this video program.

It includes the following features:

- **Summary and Suggestions for Use** for each segment.

- **Questions for Sharing** for the *story, witness* and *teaching segments*; facilitators can choose from them or use them as models for developing their own questions.
- **Suggestions for Use** for the *musical reflection segment* provide suggestions for using this segment in a prayer setting.
- **Resources for Further Study** are listed at the end of this guide.
- Approximate times are noted for where each segment begins. (*If the VCR is equipped with an “elapsed time” counter, reset the counter to 0:00:00 at the beginning of the tape and fast-forward to the time listed for the beginning of the desired segment. If the VCR does not have an “elapsed time” counter, the facilitator can fast-forward in the “review” mode [i.e., while the VCR is in “play”] to find the gray screen and Catholic Update Video logo that indicate the start of a segment.*)

CARING WITH FAITH **TOWARD DEATH WITH HOPE**

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

The “Caring with Faith” programs are a “mini series” within the larger Catholic Update Video series. They are designed for caregivers, support groups, families, pastoral training sessions and healthcare settings. Each video explores the ways Christians enter into the mystery of human suffering.

Dying is a natural part of the life cycle, yet it is often an object of fear both on the part of the one who is dying and those who love the dying person. While many people will freely talk about any number of very personal matters, death is a taboo subject, one to be avoided. This leaves us ill-equipped for dealing with it openly when our own death or the death of a loved one approaches.

Why do so many fear death? For one, we live in a culture largely removed from the cycle of life and death. Our early experiences of death may be limited to the death of a pet, while many of our ancestors, especially those in rural farming communities, had more opportunities to see death as a natural part of life. Our culture has been called “death denying.” The achievements of science, especially medicine, have given us a sense (however true or false) of power over death, or at least the ability to postpone it. We prize youth and health; the images that fill advertising and popular media do not dwell on sickness or death.

We also live in an age where incredible amounts of information are available to us with a few strokes on the keyboard. Death remains an unknown experience in a culture that wants to know it all. Death also ultimately means loss—the loss of relationships first

and foremost. It is difficult to embrace an event that will bring separation from our loved ones.

Christians believe that death is the doorway to eternal life with God. Building a bridge from this belief to our personal feelings in the face of death is our task. Embracing death as a natural part of our *life* journey as well as our *faith* journey can bring beauty and hope to an experience many see only as bleak and painful.

In this video program, we offer a Christian view of death and the dying process. In our *story segment* we spend a day with a hospice nurse, traveling with her on her visits to the dying and talking with her about her experiences.

In the *witness segment*, Father Silas Oleksinski, O.F.M., offers his personal thoughts and insights on the topics of suffering, death and dying, and visitors. He was interviewed just weeks before his death from cancer.

Our teacher, Patti Normile, spent a lot of time with the dying and their loved ones while serving as a hospital chaplain. She shares some of the insights gained from her experiences in the *teaching segment*.

We close our program with a *musical reflection segment*. Dancer Betsey Beckman adds interpretive movement to the David Haas song, "The Story of God." This is a song of God's victory over death.

Audience

This program is intended for an adult or teenage audience. It may include

- those who are facing their own death as the result of illness or injury. It may be viewed by individuals (home, healthcare facility) or in group settings (parish, healthcare facility, family).
- those who are walking with another on their

journey to death: caregivers, healthcare workers, family members and pastoral care visitors.

- those who are working through their grief after the death of a loved one.

Story Segment

(Begins approximately 04:00 into program.)

Summary

Cheri King, a hospice nurse, allows us to take a peek into her work with dying patients. We accompany her on her visits to three patients—Mae, Rose and Virgil. She shares some of the insights she’s gained through working closely with the dying.

The first visit is with Mae, a woman with lung cancer. In addition to checking Mae’s breathing, Cheri talks with her about the availability of an aide to help with bathing. Cheri mentions that there are special books available to help Mae’s young grandchildren understand and deal with her illness and death. Mae shares her concern about how her husband is coping. Cheri listens with caring and then offers the observation and encouragement that “Everybody comes to terms with things in their own way.”

Cheri reflects that part of her role is to talk openly with patients about their death and dying. She observes that often patients don’t have anyone to share their feelings with or get straight answers from.

The next visit is with Rose, a woman who has pancreatic cancer. Cheri remarks that Rose is a real inspiration to her—a woman of faith and optimism. Part of the visit involves a discussion about medicine dosage. She jokes about Rose’s husband’s cooking and asks Rose about her level of involvement in household chores.

Cheri reflects that the dying phase of life is an important one. She says she tries to help her patients see it as a natural part of life that can be both positive and meaningful.

The final visit is with Virgil, a man with end-stage heart disease. Virgil complains of being worn out and having chest pain. Cheri checks his breathing, asks about his use of an inhaler, and tells him to wear his oxygen that day. Virgil's sense of humor is apparent as he jokes with Cheri and blames his chest pains on his excitement about her visit.

Cheri reflects that her patients gift her by allowing her to see the benefits of their positive lives. She enjoys seeing family members expressing their love for the dying patient. She says she gets back more than she gives.

Suggestions for Use

This segment offers a window into the lives of three dying patients and the insights of a woman who has made the care of the dying her life's work. It may be used to help dying and grieving persons share the feelings generated by their own experience.

While Cheri does not explicitly talk about issues of religion or spirituality, she alludes to it in a reference to a pastoral visit by a chaplain. She is aware of the power of faith as reflected in the lives of her patients. Those using this segment may wish to develop the role of faith as appropriate to their situation, supplemented by material in the other segments of this video.

For the grieving

The segment may be viewed by groups of those who have lost or are losing a loved one to death. Watching this may help them to articulate some of their concerns

and fears for their loved one and for themselves. The following or similar questions may help in this sharing.

For the dying

This segment, viewed alone or with a group of others who are dying, may help one who is dying to get in touch with what this process means personally. Journaling about the experience and/or sharing this with others may aid the growth process—the eventual acceptance of the fact that one is dying—and the ability to share this experience with loved ones. The following or similar questions may be helpful for journaling and sharing.

Questions for Sharing

For the grieving

1. Cheri says that many people avoid talking honestly about death. How comfortable are you with this topic? What do you need to say that you haven't expressed yet?
2. What are your feelings looking into the lives of other dying patients when you have a loved one who is dying/has recently died?
3. What insights did you gain from the patients visited?
4. What insights did you gain from the hospice nurse—either in her interaction with her patients or in her comments on dying?
5. How does your faith affect the process of grieving in your life?

For the dying

1. What did you think of Cheri, the hospice nurse, and

the things she said about dying? What was especially meaningful for you?

2. Mae expressed concern about how her husband was handling things. Who in your life do you have similar concern about?
3. Virgil used humor to lighten the mood without denying the reality of his situation. When has humor been a useful tool for you or your family/friends?
4. Rose's faith and optimism help her to approach her living and dying with a positive attitude. How is your faith helping you live and die with grace?

Witness Segment

(Begins approximately 15:00 into program.)

Summary

Our witness is Franciscan friar, Silas Oleksinski. Shortly before his death from cancer in the fall of 1995, he granted the producers the awesome opportunity to record some of his insights into the dying process—enhanced by his personal perspective as a dying person.

Father Silas was born in Conover, Wisconsin, on October 21, 1923. He was received into the Franciscan Order in 1948, made his solemn profession in 1952 and was ordained a priest in 1957. His years of ministry include parish work, retreat center directorships, college treasurer, orphanage chaplain and missionary work among other things. He worked toward racial integration in New Orleans in the early 1960's. He participated actively in efforts to help the poor in Louisville, KY, in the mid-1960's. At an age when many are already retired, Father Silas began a new ministry. He offered his services for the evangelization of the Commonwealth of Independent States (former

Soviet Union). This ministry was interrupted by the discovery of cancer in 1994.

Despite his illness, he requested assignment to a parish in New Orleans. There it was discovered that his cancer was spreading. He returned to Cincinnati in late July 1995 and died on September 28th. Excerpts from an interview conducted in his final weeks make up this *witness segment*.

Father Silas, following the model of his order's founder, St. Francis of Assisi, viewed aspects of life as "brother" and "sister." He speaks of his cancer as his dancing partner and shares some of his thoughts about suffering, dying and visitors.

ON SUFFERING..

- suffering is part of the reality of life
- without suffering I lose a dimension of my life
- one of our greatest gifts is that we can identify with the suffering of Jesus

ON DYING and DEATH...

- death is the culmination of the whole birthing and dying process
- dying is an integral part of my life
- this is the gift that God gives us: to just take one more step today and the next tomorrow
- not knowing what comes next or whether I can take the next step is emptiness in the sense that I depend upon Jesus for that energy to say, "Jesus is Lord"
- this moment is Jesus' gift to me now
- while the past may be over, I will be living with God forever
- this is the process of healing as well as the process of dying

ON VISITORS...

- make it an opportunity for pleasantness
- always be aware that the patient is the one that needs the comfort
- it's a blessing not to have to talk but to be present—it's just good to be together
- take this moment and celebrate it

Suggestions for Use

This segment offers a unique view of the thoughts and experiences of one dying person. While Father Silas' experience is clearly his own, he gives us a window into the world of all those who are dying. Emotional attachment and personal grief may prevent this kind of conversation from happening with dying loved ones. Those who are dying may draw comfort from this fellow traveler who has a hopeful and faith-filled, yet practical, view of the dying process.

For the grieving

The segment may be viewed by groups of those who have lost or are losing a loved one to death. Watching this may help them to articulate some of their concerns and fears for their loved one and for themselves. The following or similar questions may help in this sharing.

For the dying

This segment, viewed alone or with a group of others who are dying, may help one get in touch with what this dying process means to him personally. Journaling about the experience and/or sharing this with others may serve as an aid in the healing process, the eventual acceptance of the fact that one is dying, and the ability to share this experience with loved ones. The following

or similar questions may be helpful for journaling and sharing.

Questions for Sharing

For the grieving

1. What is the hardest part of seeing your loved one suffer?
2. Have you experienced anything positive happening in your relationship as a result of this situation?
3. What are your feelings about your own death? How are these affecting your grieving process?
4. Father Silas' faith gives his view of dying a hopeful light. How does your faith affect your view of death and dying?
5. What kind of visitor are you? What new insights did you gain from hearing Father Silas' remarks?

For the dying

1. What is your reaction to Father Silas calling his cancer his "dancing partner"? What would it take for you to view your own illness or injury in this way?
2. What is your experience of suffering? How does it add to/subtract from your life?
3. What is your own view of dying? your personal death?
4. Father Silas' faith gives his view of dying a hopeful light. How does your faith affect your view of death and dying?
5. What would you like to say to your visitors?

Teaching Segment

(Begins approximately 20:00 into program.)

Summary

Patti Normile, an experienced chaplain, author and educator, shares her insights in the *teaching segment*. She explores dying in relation to life and suggests that death may be the ultimate healing.

Patti begins by relating a story told by the late Jesuit writer and teacher Anthony de Mello of a wise one who knew how to create love and harmony. He advised viewing life from the perspective, “I am dying and this...person too is dying.” These words help us to move beyond the denial of our mortality and invite us to experience real relationships with others and with life (*One Minute Wisdom* by Anthony de Mello, Doubleday, 1986).

Patti says, “Dying is something we do while we live; living is what we do while we are dying.” We all experience death constantly and in a variety of ways—opportunities, the cells in our bodies, relationships, pets, friends and family die.

Each death takes a bit of us with it but also has the potential to create new life. Since we all will die a bodily death, the challenge is to live fully until we die and to enable others to do so.

Even though death is a natural experience, it is often feared because it is unknown. It separates us from what we know. It may fill one with fear of abandonment.

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross taught about the stages of grief experienced by the dying. People generally go through the following stages: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance (*On Death and Dying*, MacMillan, 1969). Patient, friends and family may all experience these stages but not simultaneously.

Allowing and accepting one's own feelings as well as those of others is important. Sharing perceptions and expectations of death brings fears to light.

When a cure is not possible, healing of a person is still possible. We can help calm the patient's fear of abandonment with the message, "God knows, accepts and loves you." Healing can bring reconciliation with others and God as well as hope for the future.

Lengthy illness and aging allow loved ones to journey through the stages of grief before death comes. Sudden death robs them of this opportunity. In the case of sudden death, the stages of grieving must follow rather than precede death. Death has to be faced without preparation.

Death raises questions that can challenge the faith of the most religious. Spiritual healing can link patients, families and friends to the life of Christ, his resurrection and salvation. Journeying through the grieving process may reaffirm faith. One may find that healing and death are not opposites; death may be the ultimate healing.

Suggestions for Use

Patti invites us to look at death as a natural, necessary and even positive life event. She says it may be the "ultimate healing." Those who are grieving—and this may include the dying and their loved ones as well as the loved ones of those who have already died—may find both comfort and challenge in her words. Comfort often comes when we realize we are not alone, not crazy for feeling as we do. The challenge may be in "putting a new frame" around our experience, seeing that there may be something positive to be gained from this very painful situation.

Many people have difficulty talking honestly about death. This segment may be viewed in a group—within

a grieving family or in groups of those who are going through similar experiences (dying, preparing for the death of a loved one, grieving the loss of a loved one)—or individually. The segment may facilitate more open and honest sharing on this difficult and painful topic. The questions that follow invite discussion and sharing in groups. Individuals may be invited to use them for their own reflection and/or journaling.

Questions for Sharing

For the grieving

1. Knowing what you do of the pain of losing a loved one, would you rather your own death be sudden or following a lengthy illness? Why?
2. How has your faith been challenged by the impending or recent death of your loved one? How has your faith been reaffirmed?
3. What healing do you need at this time?
4. What do you fear about death?
5. We are all moving closer to our own deaths. What has your experience of losing a loved one to death taught you about your own life? How can you live more fully until you too die?

For the dying

1. Which of Kubler-Ross' stages of grief do you find yourself in? Is it helpful to know that others go through similar stages? What will it take for you to reach the stage of acceptance?
2. How has your faith been challenged by your experience of dying? How has your faith been reaffirmed by this same experience?

3. Patti says that healing and death aren't opposites. Even though you haven't been physically cured, what healing have you experienced? What healing do you need at this time?
4. What do you fear about dying?
5. What do you think Patti means when she says that death may be the "ultimate healing"? How does this fit your own experience?

Musical Reflection Segment

(Begins approximately 28:00 into program.)

Summary

Dancer Betsey Beckman adds interpretive movement to the David Haas song, "The Story of God." This is a song of God's victory over death. It is set to a Gaelic melody with scriptural basis in 1 Corinthians 15:54b-55, Hosea 13:14, Genesis 1-2 and Revelation 21:5-6. As the words of the song move from images of death and grief to God's salvation, the emotions of mourning give way to the feelings of joy. We believe that death is not the end for us, yet our joy in the Resurrection is only possible through the death of Good Friday. As Christians, we know that both death and life, grief and joy, are our story and God's story.

Suggestions for Use

This segment can be used within a prayer service that concludes a gathering of those dealing with the reality of dying and death. It may be used as a reflection or to invite sharing. An outline of a sample prayer experience follows.

1. Opening Prayer: (The following or similar words

may be used.) *Loving God, we come before you today realizing our great need for you in the face of our powerlessness over death. We acknowledge that you have conquered death and we rejoice in this fact. We ask your blessing on us as we struggle to accept the loss and death in our lives. We believe that you share our pain. Help us to become aware of your presence with us as we gather to pray.*

2. Scripture Reading: Psalm 86:1-7
3. Reflection: Ask the group to reflect on the feelings they experience in the face of death.
4. Invite sharing of feelings.
5. Shared Prayer (petitions)
6. Close by viewing the *musical reflection segment*.

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

1) Scripture references:

OLD TESTAMENT

Prayers for the Suffering: Psalms 6 (supplication in time of trial); 22 (suffering and hopes of the upright); 23 (the good Shepherd); 30 (thanksgiving after mortal danger); 31 (prayer in time of ordeal); 38 (prayer in distress); 40 (song of praise and prayer for help); 69:1-4 (lament); 70 (a cry of distress); 71 (a prayer in old age); 86 (prayer in time of trial); 102 (prayer in misfortune); 131 (childlike trust); 142 (prayer in persecution). The Book of Job is a story of faithfulness despite suffering. Isaiah 40 focuses on the promise of salvation.

NEW TESTAMENT

Jesus Heals

Matthew 4:23-25; 8; 9; 12:9-14; 14:34-36; 15:21-31; 17:14-20; 20:29-34; Mark 1:40-45; 2:1-12; 3:1-6; 5;

6:53-56; 7:31-37; 8:22-26; 9:14-29; 10:46-52; Luke 4:31-37, 40-41; 5:17-26; 6:6-11, 17-19; 7:1-17; 8:26-56; 9:37-43; 13:10-17; 14:1-6; 17:11-19; 18:35-43; John 4:46-54; 5; 9; 11:1-44.

Our Healing Ministry

Matthew 25:31-46; Mark 6:7-13; 16:15-18; John 13:12-15; 20:21; 1 Corinthians 12:9; 12:28, 30.

On Suffering, Death and Resurrection

Matthew 10:37-39; Mark 14:33-34; Luke 23:46; 7:11-17; 24:39; John 5:24-25; 6:39-54; 11; Romans 5:12; 6:3-11; 8:17; 1 Corinthians 15; 2 Corinthians 4:12-14; 12:7-10; Philippians 1:21-23; 3:20-21; Colossians 1:24; 2:12; 3:1-4; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Timothy 2:11-12; 1 Peter 4:13; Hebrews 2:15; 5:7-9; 9:27-28.

2) *Catechism of the Catholic Church* references:

The *Catechism* addresses sickness and suffering in its treatment of Anointing of the Sick in 1499-1532. References to the Christian view of death and resurrection can be found under “I Believe in the Resurrection of the Body” (988-1019), “I Believe in Life Everlasting” (1020-1060), “Christian Funerals” (1680-1690) and “Respect for the Dead” (2299-2301).

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