

The Catholic Women's League of Canada

National Hospice Palliative Care Week: 12 Hours of Prayer

May 3–9, 2026

A Supplement to 12 Hours of Care for Palliative Care 2025



“National Hospice Palliative Care Week is a time to celebrate and highlight the incredible work being done to provide quality palliative care across the country.

Join us in recognizing the impact of palliative care on individuals and families,
and to call for better access to this care for all.

The first full week of May marks National Hospice Palliative Care Week in Canada.”

(Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association)

Everyone can be a Good Samaritan... “loving by bearing another’s pain” (Pope Leo XIV).

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Introduction

The Catholic Women’s League of Canada calls its members to live out their faith through prayer, service and social justice. During National Hospice Palliative Care Week, service becomes a visible expression of compassion, accompaniment and deep respect for the dignity of life at every stage. Councils are invited to choose one or two service activities that reflect the needs of their parish or community. Whether simple or more involved, each act of service is a sign of hope and solidarity with those who are dying, those who care for them and those who grieve.

As members of the League family, we cherish the sacredness and dignity of every human life. During National Hospice Palliative Care Week, we unite in prayer and compassion to support those nearing life’s end, offering comfort not only to patients but also to their families and caregivers. This week reminds us of our shared commitment to compassionate care, as reflected in Resolution [2025.04](#), which calls on the federal government to complete the development of the Office of Palliative Care and ensure early, universal and equitable access for all Canadians.

United in faith and purpose, we stand with those facing life-limiting illness, offering hope, presence and love every step of the way. We invite members to participate in the 12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care—for one hour, 12 hours, or continuously throughout the week—interceding for those who suffer, their caregivers and all who provide palliative care.

Reflection

“Do small things with great love” (St. Teresa of Calcutta).

Through prayer and action, we live our Catholic faith, witness Christ’s love and strengthen our collective voice in advocating for compassionate end-of-life care.

Madonna

Madonna Clark
National Chairperson of Service
The Catholic Women's League of Canada



A Message from National President Betty Colaneri

My dear sisters in the League,

Now more than ever, the members of The Catholic Women's League of Canada need to promote and participate in "12 hours of Prayer for Palliative Care." There continues to be a strong, universal trend toward the legalization of euthanasia. The federal government continues to accede to pressures to expand medical assistance in dying (MAiD) to include a wider range of reasons and age groups. Our mandate and beliefs do not accede to the pressures of society that chooses to devalue the lives of the sick and vulnerable. Catholics respect all life at all stages, from conception to natural end.

Palliative care isn't optional—it is a core part of the church's call to help the sick, the lonely and the fearful. While some see MAiD as a solution to end-of-life suffering, palliative care should be recognized as the real solution. Palliative care is a vital way to accompany the suffering, offering love, comfort, care and support when hope for a cure diminishes. Even in these harsh times, if a person feels loved, respected and accepted, the dark shadow of euthanasia fades or disappears entirely. Compassion through palliative care affirms human dignity by alleviating physical, emotional and spiritual suffering without hastening death—something distinctly different from the violation of life's sanctity. The late Pope Francis emphasized that "incurable does not mean un-care-able."

There is confusion around the use of the word 'dignity,' which is often used to justify MAiD. Dignity does not come from ending life quickly; it comes from the right of every person to receive psychological, spiritual and human assistance. Healing is not always possible but care always is. St. Pope Paul II often said, "to cure if possible, always to care." For the terminally ill, it is about finding reasons for hope within their difficult situation, not giving up on them. This is where palliative care comes in—it guarantees not only medical attention, but also human presence, compassion and closeness.

It is also important that families are not left alone in these difficult moments. Their role is decisive. They need access to adequate resources that provide appropriate physical, spiritual and social support.

During our time of prayer, let us pray for the sick, their families and their caregivers. Let us also pray for the integration of true care, for increased efforts to ensure healthcare and spiritual support and for solidarity in advocating for policies that genuinely help and provide concrete support for vulnerable individuals.

The sick deserve medical, psychological, spiritual and human care and assistance, even when a cure isn't possible, ensuring they are never abandoned. Pope Leo expressed his hope that "may the Spirit of the Lord enlighten our minds, so that we know how to defend the intrinsic dignity of every human person."

National Chairperson of Service Madonna Clark, continues to promote numerous resources to support this extremely important mandate. The “12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care” Kit is one such resource, offering numerous options for councils and members to utilize.

Let us keep promoting palliative care as a profound act of mercy. It upholds life and dignity through comprehensive comfort and spiritual support rather than hastening death.

Now is the time—*Ignite Your Passion, Empower His Mission!*

Your sister in Christ,



Betty Colaneri
National President



Ignite Your Passion, Empower His Mission: Suggested Actions for the Week

We invite members to guide their parish communities in prayer, compassionate service and a commitment to dignity, reflecting on palliative care through the theme, *Ignite Your Passion, Empower His Mission*.

Faith

- Lead the “12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care” and invite parishioners to pray for those receiving palliative care, their families and caregivers.
- Encourage parishioners to pray the rosary or spend quiet moments in reflection.
- Prepare and share prayer cards with scripture, prayers or words of encouragement.

Service

- Coordinate the creation of small comfort items, such as blankets, socks, rosaries, or practical gifts like travel-size hand cream, mini notebooks with pens, stress balls or lip balm, to include in comfort packs that provide gentle, practical support. Consider providing gift cards to help cover patient needs or supplies at a hospice.
- Encourage parishioners to offer practical help or supportive gestures to families and caregivers within the community.
- Invite parishioners to perform simple acts of kindness, presence and accompaniment for those experiencing loneliness or grief.

Social Justice

- Lead reflection on the dignity of every human life, especially at its most vulnerable moments.
- Encourage parishioners to pray for equitable access to compassionate palliative care for all.
- Foster faith-filled conversations that affirm care, accompaniment and respect at the end of life.

Horizons of Hope: A Toolkit for Catholic Parishes on Palliative Care

“As Christians, each of us is called to respect the dignity of all persons and the sacredness of human life. In a spirit of love, we are also called to be present to those who suffer, to care with them and for them and to comfort them, especially at the end of life’s journey” (Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops).

The *Horizons of Hope: A Toolkit for Catholic Parishes on Palliative Care*, published by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, offers guidance for parishes and communities to better understand and provide compassionate palliative care. It includes resources to educate, support families, advocate for equitable access and strengthen the faith community’s response to those facing serious illness and end-of-life challenges. It encourages a holistic approach that integrates spiritual, emotional and physical support in accordance with Catholic teaching.

For more information and resources visit cccb.ca/horizons-of-hope.

“The most terrible poverty is loneliness and the feeling of being unloved” (St. Teresa of Calcutta).

Ignite Your Passion, Empower His Mission: Faith

*“Speak tenderly to them. Let there be kindness in your face, in your eyes, in your smile,
in the warmth of your greeting. Always have a cheerful smile.*

Don't only give your care, but give your heart as well” (St. Teresa of Calcutta).

Short Prayers for Palliative Care

(Adapted from AI-generated prayers)

Comfort in Suffering

God, You are the giver of life and death, You became human, accompanied us and shared our joy and know our pain. Be with those who suffer physically, mentally or emotionally. Give us the courage and grace to draw near to those who suffer to offer prayer and comfort. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen

Prayer for Peace

Lord, I seek Your wisdom and compassion. I confide to You my special need: *[name your need]*. I trust in Your assurance... I wait upon Your mercy. Please grant me the courage and strength to show Your grace and spread peace. This we ask through Your Son, Jesus. Amen

A Personal Prayer

God, thank You for being with us right now. We confess that we don't understand why things happen... but we do know that You walk with us on every path. Remind *[Name]* that You are walking with them right now. For You are the Physician of our bodies and souls, and to You do we send up glory: to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever more. Amen

Strength for the Journey

God of strength in weakness, sustain us for the journey of walking our loved one home to You. Steady our hands and gentle our hearts that we may be ready to be welcomed by Christ our Lord, the Physician of all Salvation, into His eternal kingdom and take their souls into Your keeping. Through Jesus Christ. Amen

Prayer for Entrustment

Lord, help me to entrust *[loved one]* into Your loving hands. I surrender what I cannot control. Show me how to best care for them in their suffering. Calm all doubts and fears with the word of Your promise of eternal salvation. Through Jesus Christ. Amen

The Caregiver's Beatitudes

Blessed are you who touch your patients gently... for you possess the hands of Christ. Blessed are you who show love to your patients, for you possess the heart of Christ.

Prayer for Compassion

Lord, give all who accompany those in palliative care the grace to continue their ministry of compassion and grace. Fill them with love as they strive to love with Your heart. Amen

Prayer for Wisdom

Lord, we ask for focus and wisdom for [*insert name*], especially when burdens at home feel heavy. Lead us always to be positive as we entrust the past to Your mercy, the present to Your love, and the future to Your providence. Amen

A Prayer for Someone Who is Seriously Ill

I/we pray for peace.

May we know compassion and care;
may we be surrounded by goodness and love.

I pray for ...*name*...

May you feel the love and care of those around you;
may you be comforted and feel protected.

May any anxious thoughts be stilled;
may any worries be heard and understood.

May the loving and compassionate arms of God
enfold you and keep you safe.

I pray for all whom you love and care about:
your family, friends, neighbours...

May they be filled with compassion and understanding,
patience and strength.

May they be kept safe from harm.

May their love and care for each other
be a sustaining bond.

I pray for all who love and care for you:
your family, carers, doctors, nurses...

That they may be filled with love,
in doing all that they can for you.

And I pray for this place, that there may be peace,
and in that peace that you will truly know
that you are precious and loved.

Amen.

<https://stnicholashospice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Prayers-for-care-homes.pdf>

A Prayer Service for Palliative Care

(Adapted from AI-generated material)

The National Hospice Palliative Care Week is a great time to add an extra prayer service to the daily Eucharistic celebrations. Ask your spiritual advisor and/or pastor for their assistance and book a Mass for palliative care. Incorporate some, or all, of the following into the Mass to pray for those in palliative care.

Opening Prayer

Loving God, You accompany us in all life's journeys. We ask for the guidance and strength of the Holy Spirit as we gather in support of those in the final stages of their earthly life. Give us the courage to bring comfort and peace and to face our fears so that we may be Your hands and voice during this most difficult time. May these prayers help us to honour the true dignity of life, and that, through Jesus, Your Son, we will be led to Your presence and to eternal life in heaven. Amen

Prayers of the Faithful

For all those in palliative care, that they may feel the love of Jesus and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, finding peace and comfort as they journey towards eternal life in heaven.

For those who fear the process of dying, that they may find a source of comfort in their caregivers to ease their anxiety and provide both spiritual and physical support.

For the grace of a "good death," that patients may be supported in reconciling with their past, experiencing God's love and finding hope in the promise of resurrection.

For a "culture of life," that we may truly cherish and accompany those who are elderly, frail or dying, rather than abandoning them in their greatest time of need.

Closing Prayer

God of all life and death, who knows our joys and shares in our pain. We ask You to be with those who suffer physically, mentally or emotionally. We seek Your blessings for all who walk with someone nearing the end of their earthly journey. Grant them patience, love and perseverance to follow this most difficult journey. May we leave here refreshed, renewed and dedicated to providing comfort to the very end. In Jesus's name. Amen

If you are unable to hold the suggested prayer service above in your parish, an alternative prayer service for the sick follows on the next page and can be done at home with your family, at a council meeting or at someone's house.

Visiting the Sick

Living with Christ Special Issue: Household Rituals, Prayers and Blessings Through the Year

One of the traditional seven corporal works of mercy is to visit the sick. This simple ritual can help us focus on our call to be present to our brothers and sisters who are sick.

Gather the household together and explain that today, we remind ourselves of our duty and privilege as followers of Christ to bring comfort, joy and peace to those who are suffering from illness.

If possible, arrange for members of your household to visit someone who is sick and share this simple ritual with them. If a visit is not possible, you may “visit” the sick with your prayers for their needs.

A Blessing for the Sick

The leader lights a candle as a reminder of Christ’s presence.

Leader: Blessed are You, O Christ, source of all healing.
We pray for our brother/sister [*name*]. *

All: **Bring them Your healing in body and spirit.**

Leader: O Lord, may all our sick find consolation in Your healing presence.
May those in whose care they are entrusted be gifted with wisdom and skill,
and those who surround them be gifted with love and trust, openness and support
in their care. And may they be healed along with all who are in need.

All: **Amen**

If you wish, end by listening to or singing an appropriate song and then sharing a sign of peace with one another.

**If you are unable to visit someone who is sick, here mention the name of individuals or groups of people who are sick, facing or recovering from surgery, in nursing homes or hospitals, battling cancer, etc.*

Ignite Your Passion, Empower His Mission: Service

Three Ways to Serve:

1. Create Comfort Items: Bring tangible comfort to those in palliative care or with serious illness.
 - Prayer shawls & lap blankets that are soft, lightweight and easy to drape.
 - Quilts: join quilted blocks from multiple volunteers
 - Comfort packs: combine blankets/shawls with a note or small gift cards and notes that offer encouragement.
 - Provide gift cards to stores to help cover patient needs or supplies at a hospice.

Tips:

- Use soft, washable fabrics or yarn.
 - Keep items light and easy to use.
 - Works great as a group project.
2. Offer Practical Help: Support families and caregivers with everyday tasks.
 - Meal support: deliver meals or organize a meal train
 - Household help: help with errands, laundry, cleaning or yard work
 - Transportation: assist with driving to appointments or picking up supplies
 - Childcare and pet care: offer short-term relief for caregivers

Tips:

- Even small acts make a big difference.
 - Simple sign-up systems help families know help is available
3. Provide Kindness & Presence: Offer emotional support to those who are lonely or grieving.
 - Visits and companionship: 10-15 minutes of companionship can brighten someone's day.
 - Telephone/video Check-ins: Check in via regular telephone calls or messages.
 - Ongoing support: Offer consistent presence for families or individuals.
 - Creative comfort: Bring handmade items such as a craft or activity.

Tips:

- Listening is sometimes the greatest gift.
- Pair presence with a comfort item for extra impact.

Remember: Every action, big or small helps Ignite Your Passion and Empower His Mission

Prayer Shawl & Lap Blanket Patterns

Yarn and Tools:

- Soft, washable yarn (acrylic, bamboo blend or soft cotton)
- Knitting needles: US 8–10 (5–6 mm)
- Crochet hook: H–J (5–6 mm)
- Yarn needle for finishing

Garter Stitch Prayer Shawl (Knitting)

Size: 20" x 60" (adjustable)

Instructions

1. Cast on 40 stitches.
2. Knit every row until the shawl reaches desired length.
3. Bind off loosely.
4. Weave in ends.

Notes: Garter stitch creates a soft, stretchy, drapery fabric. Add a border by picking up stitches along the edge and knitting two rows for a finished look.

Cozy Lap Blanket (Crochet, beginner-friendly mesh)

Size: 36" x 36"

Instructions:

1. Chain 121 (adjust for width).
2. Row 1: Single crochet in 2nd chain from hook and across.
3. Row 2: Chain 3, skip 1 stitch, double crochet in next stitch, *chain 1, skip 1, double crochet in next stitch across.*
4. Repeat row two until blanket reaches desired length.
5. Fasten off and weave in ends.

Tips:

- This creates a light, breathable blanket suitable for sensitive patients.
- For more warmth, use a thicker yarn or smaller hook.

Finishing and Comfort Tips

- Choose calming colors (soft blues, lavenders, creams).
- Avoid scratchy yarns or bulky fibers.
- Optional: Add a simple border or edging for a polished, cozy finish.

These projects make wonderful gifts for palliative care or hospice patients, offering comfort and warmth.

Ignite Your Passion, Empower His Mission: Social Justice

Human Dignity

At its core, human dignity is the idea that every person has intrinsic worth and deserves to be treated with respect and honour. This worth isn't something people earn or achieve, but rather something they inherently possess by virtue of being human. The concept transcends cultural, religious and societal differences and is rooted in the belief that all people deserve to live in conditions that allow them to thrive.

Human dignity goes hand in hand with the idea that each person deserves basic human rights, including the right to freedom, equality and justice. That is why human dignity equates with social justice. Respect for human dignity fosters an environment where individuals feel valued, safe and supported. Some examples include

- **Compassionate Care:** Handling elderly or sick individuals with gentleness, respecting their modesty and treating them with kindness.
- **Valuing the Vulnerable:** Treating homeless individuals with dignity by acknowledging them and offering assistance, rather than judging or ignoring them.
- **Protection of Rights:** Ensuring people have access to education and safety, protecting them from exploitation.

Palliative Care

Palliative care is a specialized, holistic approach designed to improve the quality of life for people of any age living with serious, chronic or life-limiting illnesses. It focuses on relieving symptoms, pain and stress—physical, emotional and spiritual—while supporting both patients and their families. Palliative care differs from hospice care. Hospice care is specifically for the final stages of life, while palliative care can be provided at any stage of a serious illness.

“Palliative care should be accessible to all Canadians regardless of their age, their sex or gender, the expected path of their illness, their community, their socio-economic status or their culture. Our analysis shows, however, that this isn't the case” (Canadian Institute for Health Information, *Access to Palliative Care in Canada 2023*).

For this reason, the League's national council adopted Resolution [2025.04](#) Federal Government to Complete the Development of the Office of Palliative Care. The action plan encourages members to:

1. Write letters to the prime minister, minister of health and local members of parliament urging the government to develop an Office of Palliative Care to provide early, universal and equitable access to early community palliative care through creation of national policies and standards.
2. Increase communication, education and advocacy efforts in parishes, schools and communities through guest speakers, hosting the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops' *Horizons of Hope: A Toolkit for Catholic Parishes on Palliative Care* program,

participating in “12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care” and/or distributing pertinent postcards/information.

3. Continue to monitor/follow-up with government on the progress related to this resolution.
4. Begin conversations to promote increased access to palliative care.

While we have made progress in expanding palliative care in Canada, we have not completed the journey until all Canadians have access to quality palliative care.

Palliative care is increasingly recognized as a human right, grounded in the fundamental rights to health and dignity, as supported by the [World Health Organization](#) and other international bodies. It is considered essential for relieving pain and suffering, though it remains a largely “unenforceable” or developing right globally due to resource, policy and training limitations.

Buy a Postcard

Members of parliament (MPs) need to know constituents’ views on matters at the core of their beliefs. Consult the resolutions on the national website and contact your MP with your views. Write to their Ottawa address, as you will not need a stamp. Buy a postcard depicting a scene in your community or province and mail it to your MP with a simple message:

- “I support the need to complete the Office of Palliative Care.”
- “Oppose MAiD for those suffering from mental health diagnoses. Support Bill C-218.”
- “Keep the ‘Good Faith Defence’ in section 319 3(b) of the *Criminal Code*.”

Any one of these messages will help raise awareness. Send multiple postcards to ensure your voice is heard.

*“Palliative Care: A profound act of mercy and compassion.
Our mandate and mission”
(Betty Colaneri, National President)*

