

## Case Study

### Death and Eternal Life

*Is Preparing for Death and Eternal Life*

*a*

*Virtuous Act*

*Resulting in Happiness, Freedom and Benefits?*

## Introduction

This case study evaluates the topic of preparing (or not preparing) for earthly death and our passage to eternal life. It examines how avoidance of death and the consequences of being ill prepared leaves many with significant emotional, financial and spiritual distress and therefore is counter to a morality of happiness and a freedom of excellence. The case study recognizes that planning work, which may commence with a morality of obligation and some anxiety, results in transitive and intransitive benefits. It also recognizes that due to financial and other constraints that planning in this area is not a priority for most people, particularly in younger years.

As Director of Catholic Cemeteries for the Archdiocese of Vancouver, I wanted to address the issue of avoidance of death and indifference to preparation; to explore the principles of moral theology and to examine meaningful ways to perhaps motivate the community to prepare spiritually, mentally and practically for death and the eternal life to come. Arguments for being prepared will be presented which lead to a morality of happiness, the good life and good formation of the family and community. This outweighs the freedom of indifference of not being prepared or an attitude "it'll work out."

If Moral Theology addresses the question of "what constitutes the good life," a life that is fulfilling, satisfying, rewarding and flourishing; what then can be proposed to encourage more people to acquire knowledge, engage in critical reflection and make practical plans as virtuous acts leading to happiness, freedom, and further character formation?

## The Act of End-of-life Preparations, The Virtues and Virtuous Action

Being prepared for death includes *preparing mentally* to come to acceptance that earthly life will one day end; *preparing spiritually* to accept that we are participants in Christ's Passion, death and Resurrection with what the Resurrection means personally – union with God, everlasting life; and *preparing practically* to develop an estate that includes a Will, a funeral plan, sacred burial space, plus one's intent for health care.

Catholic Cemeteries advises parishioners to approach the *practical* part in bite size pieces. Getting from intention to action requires virtuous characteristics. Key questions are:

*If one's Christian destiny is preparing for Heaven, union with God and in the communion of saints, how should a person approach earthly death?*

*What decisions and attitudes regarding my death and preparation for it best reflect who I am, who I want to become, and how I get there?*

*When is it just and prudent to prepare for the hour of our death (and eternal life)? Anytime, when one is sick and dying, or never-leaving it to family which may be formative for them.*

The sub-acts for end-of-life preparation involve gaining knowledge, discerning choices, reflecting on and reasoning with church teaching, then preparing documentation that reflects one's values, faith and beliefs. Another important sub-act is to share the plans with family in meaningful conversations. This work is formative for the one pursuing the plan and those with whom the plan is shared. It results in a clear outline of burial location with a burial space contract and a pre-arranged funeral Mass that may or not include all details but in most likelihood, has a pre-selection of readings and music.

Pinckaers summarizes St. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*: *In general*, on the question of happiness Aquinas indicates this resides in the loving vision of God with grace of the Holy Spirit working in the human heart through faith in Christ and through charity. *In particular*, moral theology being organized around the seven principal virtues. How do the virtues support and apply to end-of-life planning?

Virtues	Application in End-of-life Planning
Faith (virtuous belief) – and the corresponding gifts of intelligence and knowledge.	Faith in the Resurrection results in Hope and a reduction in fear of the unknown. It can avert the sin of anger. Faith is cited as one of the wings of the dove, the other reason. Faith is needed to seek the truth and live by the truth. It is the virtue by which we believe truthful answers.
Hope – and the corresponding gift of fear.	Hope is union with God in the life to come which minimizes fear of death and the unknown. It provides a positive outlook to the mystery of death and the life to come. It requires reflection on the meaning of death and what is hope...heaven, eternal life, the fullness of life, union with God, or seeing God face-to-face.
Charity (Christian love) – and the corresponding gift of wisdom.	Mattison III cites that charity inclines us to the sorts of actions that lead us and others to the ultimate destiny of union with God, which is true happiness. It can be argued preparing one's plan is a charitable act towards the family – a wonderful expression of love and one's love for God. The latter meeting the greatest commandment, love the Lord with all your heart. Going through the process provides wisdom, not to mention Grace. It is a gift to the family who'll have to implement the plan, in short stewardship for the family and representation of the life lived. Mattison III also states that charity perfects the cardinal virtues, charity with prudence are the most important of the virtues for end-of-life planning.

<p>Prudence – practical wisdom and the gift of counsel.</p>	<p>This virtue is key to the process covering careful consideration of the spiritual and practical aspects of planning. A prudent discernment may help the person discover peace for their destiny and see rightly in preparing responsibly. One doesn't require solertia (nimble decisiveness) but does require docility (the following of others).</p>
<p>Justice – with the virtue of religion and the corresponding gift of piety.</p>	<p>What is just to my family and to my community? In today's fast paced culture, the funeral and end-of-life services force those involved to reflect on what's important. Justice is the virtue that inclines us to good relationships with others. Pre-arranging involves family and possibly clergy. Following the Golden Rule certainly applies: "Do unto others as you would have done to you" (Matt. 7:12). I think most would not appreciate if someone dies in the family without plans nor any discussion on funeral and burial preferences. But this happens again and again with families woefully unprepared.</p>
<p>Fortitude – and the gift of courage.</p>	<p>Great courage is required to face one's mortality and address the topic responsibly. Thinking of the two components attack and endurance; in death, or in sickness that may be terminal, one must endure. One may also attack the disease and the notion of death. I think we'd prefer they attack the notion of death and eternal life to see the beauty that awaits. Patience is another sub-virtue worth mentioning – learning and discerning takes time. And fortitude is cited as needed for progress in the virtuous life.</p>
<p>Temperance – and the gift of fear.</p>	<p>The notion of Christian modesty comes to play here tempering the sin of pride and envy. Should a funeral be lavish with an expensive casket, etc., maybe reflecting envy of other funerals? Or should a funeral be modest reflecting reverence for the Lord, humility and a life of Christian faith, hope</p>

	and charity. We had a case 2 years ago of an over-the-top funeral with use of canons and great fanfare. It raised eyebrows, not to mention our curiosity for the motives of the opulence. Guilt or other motivations were at play.
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Many of the seven deadly sins were touched upon. I think the sin of sloth can be recognized for those who avoid the responsibility, care and attention to end-of-life awareness, beliefs and practical preparation. We commemorate Christ's Passion, death and Resurrection every Sunday and talk about the communion of saints at various times of year. Christian death is rooted in our faith journey. Currently we are commemorating the month of Holy Souls, another rich tradition in the faith calling attention to those who have gone before us. Thus, being ignorant of one's Christian destiny can be arguably be categorized as slothful.

I don't think dwelling on sins would motivate people to pre-arrange. It would represent a step towards the morality of obligation, rules, and freedom of indifference. But it is worthy of mentioning.

The Catechism defines sin as an offense against reason, truth, and right conscience; it is failure in genuine love for God and neighbour caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods. It wounds the nature of man and injures human solidarity<sup>1</sup>.

Let us examine our death-denying culture in the next section.

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<sup>1</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), 1849.

## Death Culture & Avoidance of the Topic

Prior to the industrial revolution we were more attuned to the natural environment with the seasons of spring, summer, fall and winter. People living in smaller agricultural communities were more exposed to death, the cycle of natural life as witnessed in crop cycles and the death of animals. Today there is a distance from these natural rhythms and death. This distancing is one aspect, a real avoidance is another reality all together.

In a quantitative study<sup>2</sup> fielded in 2014, it was found that 20% of the adult population had taken steps towards funeral and prearrangement plans and 80% had not. The study didn't ask if these plans were actual contracts or simply declarations of intent. A study published in 2010 by Pollara Research<sup>3</sup> indicated the rate to be 12% of adults 35 and older and 17% of adults 55 and older. The incidence increases with age but does not vary significantly by ethnicity or other characteristics such as income, and frequency of attending church. Of interest, the 2014 study revealed that over 66% had a Will, so the mental construct of some level of end-of-life preparation is evident for one's financial affairs but this construct is not translated to the same degree to other estate aspects of funeral and burial pre-arrangements.

In addition to avoidance, oversight (have not thought about it) and procrastination are also reasons for not planning. In a UK study<sup>4</sup> investigating older people's attitudes to planning cited some reasons for avoidance including a self-described attitude "to live for today, enjoy life to the maximum, not thinking much about the future, and not letting worries and problems affect life." Some had a perceived degree

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<sup>2</sup> Mustel Research (2014). Long-term Strategic Planning Market Research (quantitative study of Metro Vancouver Catholics).

<sup>3</sup> Pollara Research (2010). Attitudes and Impressions of the Funeral Service Industry.

<sup>4</sup> Samsi, Kritika; Manthorpe, Jill (2010). "I live for today": a qualitative study investigating older people's attitudes to advance planning. Social Care Workforce Unit. King's College London UK.

of support from family and had a disinclination to plan as they felt their spouse or children would be able to make decisions on their behalf.

Even for those facing a critical illness or life-threatening illness denial of death is prevalent.

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross was a psychiatrist who wrote a book in 1969 called *On Death and Dying*<sup>5</sup> inspired by her work with terminally ill patients. She developed a model with five stages of grief, a series of emotions experienced by terminally ill patients prior to death. These include denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Many, even those with a diagnosis of a terminal illness, deny they are going to die. Our culture avoids the topic despite the truth that we all will die one day – a biological reality.

Proprietary qualitative research<sup>6</sup> sponsored by Catholic Cemeteries identified underlying fears that are emotional barriers for people to prepare. These are:

Fear of Death, Deterioration and the Unknown	Great deal of denial about death. Visceral fear of physical harm or bodily deterioration. Afraid of small spaces, of the dark, being enclosed...burn, liquify, disintegration.
Fear of Abandonment/ being Alone	Afraid of being left alone – avoidance of end-of-life (consider this as the very reason they need to plan). Starting arrangements is often seen as bad omen, inviting death.
Fear of Loss of Control & Freedom	Afraid of abdicating control. When people feel out of control, they may start to distrust the situation and the people who are helping them to manage their affairs.

<sup>5</sup> Kübler-Ross, Elisabeth. *On death and dying* (1969). New York: The Macmillan Company.

<sup>6</sup> Right Brain qualitative research study. June 2015. Vancouver. The Right Brain Group.



Fear of Loss of Respect & Betrayal	People going through loss warrant a high respect. Especially sensitive to disrespectful conversations, behavior and disruptive physical surroundings. When vulnerable prone to feel manipulated.
Fear of Loss of Self-identity	Decisions must support who they are and what makes them unique. Want to make practical and rational decisions considering the relationship between material world and eternal life.

From the 2014 quantitative study we know key motivators for pre-planning are: to insure wishes are carried out, and to save others from the stress of funeral details. Secondary reasons include removing the financial burden of a funeral, and to insure they are buried near family or friends.

With the law passed permitting legal assisted suicide and the fact that many children of parishioners are inactive, the practicality of ensuring one's wishes are met are ever more relevant.

We've had many cases where active parishioners, often active for many decades, did not have a funeral Mass because the inactive children did not deem it important to them or to their parents' community. These are missed opportunities for evangelization, not to mention healing for all concerned. Dr. Alan Wolfelt<sup>7</sup>, a psychologist focused on bereavement, loss and transition, cites the importance of rituals such as the funeral mass that help the family and community come to terms with the loss of a loved one. He cites bereavement is prolonged when there is an absence of the funeral ritual.

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<sup>7</sup> Wolfelt, Dr. Alan. Director for the Centre for Loss & Transition. Cited on <https://www.centerforloss.com/grief/funerals-and-ceremonies/> 6 November, 2017.

## Impact of Avoidance and the Moral Issue

Avoidance of end-of-life planning is partly due to a person's anxieties about dying or an inability to come to terms with his or her own mortality. Attitudes toward death manifest themselves in a range of behaviours and can involve a fear or acceptance of death (Frankl 1965, 1990).<sup>8</sup>

With death being a biological reality, and morality being concerned with the principles of right and wrong behaviour and the goodness or badness of character, avoidance of death and preparing for it is not good moral conduct. All too often providers like Catholic Cemeteries observe the sorrow and chaos experienced by families who do not have plans. This involves the reality of families having to make many decisions in sorrow, triggered by a death in the family, with decisions required to be made in a very short-period of time. Final funeral and burial expenses alone place stressors on families at an already emotional time.

For those who find themselves having to make life or death choices for a loved one without having discussed his or her wishes, the process can be overwhelming, leaving family members with a sense of overwhelming guilt or regret (Emanuel, vonGunten, & Ferris, 2000).<sup>9</sup> Dealing with death and one's approach to it is very personal and varies based on culture, upbringing, religious life and other factors. For the believer, we must consider death with the destiny of eternal life to be a journey of great hope.

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<sup>8</sup> Frankl, Victor E. (1965), *The doctor and the Soul: From Psychotherapy to Logotherapy*. New York: Vintage.

<sup>9</sup> von Gunten CF<sup>1</sup>, Ferris FD, Emanuel LL. (2000), The patient-physician relationship. Ensuring competency in end-of-life care: communication and relational skills. JAMA, 2000 Dec 20;284(23):3051-7.

## Our Christian Destiny

Each of us must contemplate our own reactions to death and to the mysteries around it. For the believer, the promise of eternal life is the greatest of all hopes. Father Benedict Groeschel, C.F.R, a wise lecturer, retreat master, monk and author cites in his book *After this Life*<sup>10</sup>, that for the believer, the promise of eternal life is the greatest of all hopes. And that this great promise endows our earthly life with meaning and removes physical death of its power. He encourages us to never think of death alone but always in conjunction with eternal life. Father Groeschel was the victim of a hit-and-run accident, had no vital signs for thirty minutes, then lived to write and lecture on the topic. As a trained psychologist supporting people with anxiety and fear; and in his vocation as a priest, I have found his writing most truthful about the broader realities of a death-denying culture. Groeschel goes on to state, “life after death and the promise of eternal life should fill us with awe.”

We are called to be participants in Christ’s Passion, Death and Resurrection; bodily death is defeated opening a pathway to life. However, we may face suffering, and we will face the truth of bodily death. The Resurrection gives us hope in reconnecting the soul with our body. Life will change, not end and we participate in the passage.

Every Mass is a memorial Mass celebrating Christ’s life, death and Resurrection. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (Catechism)<sup>11</sup> paragraph 1005 states:

To rise with Christ, we must die with Christ: we must “be away from the body and at home with the Lord.” In that “departure” which is death the soul is separated from the body. It will be reunited with the body on the day of the resurrection of the dead.

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<sup>10</sup> Groeschel, C.F.R, Father Benedict. *After This Life: What Catholics Believe About What Happens Next*. (November 5, 2009). *Our Sunday Visitor*.

<sup>11</sup> The Catechism of the Catholic Church (Doubleday Publishing. April 1995). *Imprimi Potest* +Joseph Cardinal Ratziner. Interdicasterial Commission for the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

If we have hope and a mature Christian understanding of death, then why aren't more adult Catholics formed and prepared? The church has not convinced the culture let alone much of its own community of the evidence and meaning of Christ's death and Resurrection. I'd have to say that the culture is all pervasive. In our parishes, we need to do a better job through homiletics and catechesis to explain the meaning of the Resurrection and what it means personally. The Catechism outlines this in paragraph 1014:

The church encourages us to prepare ourselves for the hour of our death. In the ancient litany of the saints, for instance she has us pray: "From a sudden and unforeseen death, deliver us O Lord"; to ask the Mother of God to intercede for us "at the hour of our death" in the Hail Mary; and to entrust ourselves to St. Joseph, the patron of a happy death.

Many people Catholic Cemeteries serve are not prepared for the hour of their death. In the face of declining function, cognitive ability and other realities, the older adult in particular, should prepare accordingly when they are of sound mind and body. Death can be faced with fear, anxiety and avoidance but if we go through the Kubler-Ross cycle we eventually come to acceptance. So how do we get to acceptance and perhaps leapfrog over things like denial and anger?

## Preparing Mentally, Spiritually and Practically is the Most Virtuous Path

In *Introducing Moral Theology*, Mattison III cites that moral theology is an exploration of the question

“what is a good life?” with pursuit of answers to contemporary questions on how to live our lives as nourished by smart and Holy people. The virtues being stable qualities that enable a person to live a good life, a happy life.

St. Thomas Aquinas observed that people long to be happy<sup>12</sup>. Socrates argues that the just or moral life is the good life. He states in the *Crito*, the most important question is not simply how to live but how to live well.<sup>13</sup> Our philosophical fathers as well as leading Christian thinkers in Saints Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, answer this question, “to live virtuously, or in a morally good manner.”

In short, the most fulfilling and happy life is the virtuous life rooted in the love of God and the love of neighbour that Christ commands.

Therefore, the most fulfilling and happy life reflecting the love of God and neighbour (including our families and community) is one that seeks union with God, particularly at life’s mortal end and happiness to those touched by one’s earthly life. The morality of happiness approach offers intrinsic benefits versus following the rules approach of a morality of obligation.

For those in our community with modest to higher religious and spiritual convictions, they can best live them out by pursuing the virtuous path of preparedness with the intentionality of happiness for themselves and the lives they touch. Mattison III defines intention as a goal or purpose toward which we direct ourselves with the rationale that what we do leads to happiness. There is a gap however in

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<sup>12</sup> Aquinas, Thomas St., *Summa Theologiae*, English Dominican trans. (New York: Benziger, 1948), I-II 1.

<sup>13</sup> Plato, *Crito* 48-49.

intention and actions as it relates to planning for the end of our mortal life – this is evidenced in lower numbers of those with funeral and burial plans as compared to the numbers of those with a will.

### Example of “Mary, the Preparer” versus “Shirley, the Avoider”

In our parish presentations, I cite two additional firsthand experiences. When I moved to BC as a young man in my mid-twenties, I befriended a wonderful retired school teacher who was 72. She became my best friend and she had a strong faith. She had chronic illnesses and I became her care advocate. In the late stages of illness, she was in a state of *Grace* and openly said, “Lord, I am ready, take me.” She had all her earthly arrangements settled well in advance and submitted to the Father’s will. It was beautiful. She is buried 400 metres from my office. Her Will, funeral, burial space and affairs were planned and settled well in advance of her death.

On the flipside, I helped a neighbour Shirley in her later life stages. She was a lapsed Anglican with poor formation and what I’d describe as prickly relationships with her sons and community. We often talked and I offered on occasion to help with estate matters to which she always avoided the topic. She died in hospital without any funeral or burial plan and she didn’t have a Will. Her sons were at a loss on her final wishes and the home was stuck in probate for 2 years. A poor example of preparation in practical and spiritual terms. I prayed for her as I know she died in fear with anxiety. I felt for her family who had a sense of dread, instead of a sense of awe and deliverance.

I encourage people to “be more like Mary, less like Shirley.”

## **Transitive benefit to Those touched by the Person going through the Process**

Mattison III cites in the chapter on concerning intentions that intentions have a transitive effect and

they make changes in the world around us. Intentions shape who we are. For those who defer end-of-life pre-arrangement it says something about them to others. Most people do not talk to each other about death, funerals and burials unless they are participating in a funeral.

For those who plan and declare their intentions, it can be an act of evangelization, a modelling effect for those who talk about it with the person who made the plan. In the fall of 2016 I lost my mother-in-law and in January 2017, my father-in-law. My wife and I talked about their plans years ago and were grateful when they let us know about their intentions and plans and we were especially grateful when each of them died in that we knew their preferences. Their loss was difficult enough but the ability to be present to the loss was appreciated versus having to deal with many detailed arrangements not knowing if what we were doing was reflecting the wish of the parent. In working this through it spoke volumes about the character of my in-laws.

For years my father-in-law, who moved from Poland after the war, participated in church but didn't take the eucharist. He was reverent in his prayers. My mother-in-law after the war remained in post war Poland and had to renounce her faith to get state support for her training to become a nurse. She became communist. For that reason, they were married civilly and not in the church which always bothered my father-in-law. This was only revealed at the late stages of their declining health.

They received beautiful pastoral care, my father-in-law made a confession after 20 years and started receiving the eucharist again. He and my mother-in-law married in the church at 92 and 84 respectively and fully reconciled with the church. They both received the sacrament of the sick and died peacefully.

Many of these things were witnessed by my wife, me as the son-in-law and my children. I'm very

grateful they took the journey of reconciliation. It enriched our faith and made a very favourable impression on my partially active children.

I tell this story as an account of the transitive effect and benefits. The other person affected was a caregiver who healed many wounds at the hands of my ill mother. While tending to her care with meal preparations etc., she was being mothered and nurtured. That was wonderful to observe and experience. I often reflect on this in this era of assisted suicide and how all these Graces would have been cut short if this was a route ever taken.

Addressing whether to pre-need plan or not, an individual really needs to consider their hierarchy of values. Planning requires careful reflection on the values of family, faith, responsibility to self and community and for hope. Choosing to defer planning reflects one's values as well, the value of living for today, of focusing intentions to other areas of need which may be to serve the family as best one can with the resources one has. The mere act of discussing intentions could alleviate fear of death and the unknowns.



## Intransitive Benefit to Family and Community

Mattison III further cites the impact of our actions on ourselves as the intransitive effect. The benefits my in-laws received included a sense of peace and a sense of care for their family. Their process of discernment included careful consideration, thought for the family which developed their sense of charity and goodwill. They also showed mercy in the donations and charitable giving included in their Wills.

I'd say my in-laws developed Grace because of the prudent care from their pre-arrangement planning. We experienced their love, their sacrifice and their hope. They died in peace which was comforting. Many dear friends were witnesses to their faith and prudence through the funeral and end-of-life process.

My parents have developed their funeral and burial plans many decades ago. We have talked about their plan on several occasions. They are pleased to have this in place out of care for each other and their family. They are ready for the journey. They will have church services and their wishes will be made.

Some no doubt will grow closer to God as part of discernment and planning. It takes care, responsibility, courage to some degree and fortitude to prepare thoroughly. It is our hope at Catholic Cemeteries that more in the community develop pre-arrangement plans which will benefit the planner immensely.

## Grace and the Great Quest

In People's natural curiosity for truth, beauty and the good. In this yearning for humanity and search for meaning, seeking *Grace* is foundational. Catechism paragraph 154 states:

Faith is a gift of God, a supernatural virtue infused by him. "Before this faith can be exercised, man must have the grace of God to move and assist him; he must have the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God, who opens the eyes of the mind and makes it easy for all to accept and believe the truth."

Sherry Weddell, in her book *Forming Intentional Disciples* summarizes grace well. She states grace is a supernatural gift of God to help us attain eternal life. She cites St. Thomas Aquinas' teaching that grace heals the soul by helping us recognize the good while empowering us to desire the good, do the good, persevere in the good and reach glory.

In life, death becomes a focal point. In paragraph 1021:

Death puts an end to human life as the time open to either accepting or rejecting the divine grace manifested in Christ...the final encounter with Christ in his second coming.

When a parishioner of any age has *Grace* their submission to the will of the Father and acceptance of death can come earlier in life for not only being ready for "the hour of their death," but enjoying a life filled with *Grace*.

## Preparing and the Principle of Double Effect

The act of preparing end-of-life plans is mostly viewed as praiseworthy (vs blameworthy). We've heard blameworthy and disappointment from survivors making plans for a deceased loved one often regretting plans were not in place.

Given people have a multitude of intentions in their life, end-of-life planning can be placed on a lower priority level, certainly for younger cohorts who are raising families. There is however the opportunity to promote preparation as revealing of our character on who the person is and becoming. What end-of-life plans demonstrate, when completed, says volumes about the person(s) who have gone through the process. Almost a right of passage.

Pre-arrangement made with Gardens of Gethsemani with conscious intent of final interment in a Catholic cemetery with intent for a Funeral Mass is one's testament to their faith, their hope in the Resurrection and the charity it provides their family. It passes on some wisdom and values. A Catholic funeral and interment in sacred grounds is an extension of one's faith.

End-of-life planning work doesn't come without challenges. The principle of double effect can apply, particularly in the early phases of planning up until contractual arrangements are finalized. Although the intention may be to be mentally, spiritually and practically prepared which are all positive characteristics of end-of-life planning; addressing one's own mortality is a truth many find to be uncomfortable. When stimulated by an invitation to attend a presentation or prompted by the death of someone in the community it is a time of personal reflection and for some a gradual getting used to the idea.

Some may see the task of discerning burial choices, making a contract and learning more about the funeral mass, as something not relevant in their life if they are currently healthy. We are called to be

prepared to the hour of our death. As a reader of the annual BC Coroner's report we know that roughly 10% of all deaths are a result of injuries...sports injuries, traffic fatalities and falls in the elder population. So regardless of age, the hour of one's death could be anytime.

Pre-arranged plans can cost between \$10k and \$40k (or upwards). Many have not anticipated the cost or were very ignorant on the costs. For others without the financial means, payment plans are the only option which in some cases can place a financial burden on the arranger. In some cases, children of older adults making plans quietly object to the cost, sometimes on the basis it takes money out of the estate thinking they can scatter the person's remains or leave an urn at home. Often there is ignorance of church teaching or the elder's degree of importance for sacred burial space, the beauty of the funeral mass ritual and reflection of their religious values. Children of older adults we've encountered do not object at all once they better understand the religious significance and in respecting the wishes of the elder. Some of these concerns are mute points because the financial costs simply get deferred to a future "at-need" point in the death of the individual.

Pre-arrangement planning may be viewed at first as a morality of obligation and seen as rules bound given Catholic tradition and teaching with emphasis on traditional full body burial, it's position that cremains is the body in another form and therefore, require inurnment in a worthy container in a reverent place of rest. These traditions once explained reveal beauty and richness, healing aspects for emotional health and the teaching that life changes and doesn't end with bodily death.

In *Morality, The Catholic View*<sup>14</sup>, Servais Pinckaers, O.P., explains what he calls the great divorce between happiness and moral theology around the 14<sup>th</sup> century with two distinct conceptions of

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<sup>14</sup> Pinckaers, O.P., Servais. *Morality, The Catholic View* (2001). St. Augustine's Press.

freedom which engendered two types of morality: the freedom of indifference, the source of the morality of obligation and freedom of excellence, which inspires moralities of happiness and the virtues. He further cites how freedom of excellence engenders moralities of happiness. God through Jesus Christ inspires moral excellence.

Our challenge is to not bind the urging of pre-arrangement to a morality of obligation but to inspire planning via a morality of happiness infused by virtuous acts. Pinckaers goes on to encourage the repair of the divorce between happiness and the moral life through the rediscovery of the spiritual nature...yearning for truth, goodness and happiness. He also cites the principle of renewal seeking pleasure and joy.

Below are the key findings of emotional qualitative research conducted in June 2014. They outline the internal, compelling desires that drive people to make decisions that fulfill those needs.

Emotional Need	Comment
The Need for Community (desire for connection...)	Be taken care of by “my people” with shared values, beliefs, interests. A spiritual community – Mass of Remembrance. Candles, events, monthly mass, no-cost infant burial, etc. priests praying at cemeteries.
The Need for Spiritual Community	Someone has our backs “Catholicism is family oriented...” Drawn to the beauty of the church. At key times lapsers crave rituals – marriages, death is one of those noted by Angus Reid.
The Need for Self-Identity - expressing of some aspect of self that is unique and different.	Customs, family traditions, connection back to baptism (pall), home.... Beauty “walking on grounds akin to being in church”. Choices based on personality of deceased – “I want to please her” Also ...ties to pre-need. “The less I cause grief

	the better.” “I wish my dad made arrangements.”
The Need for Respect	Handling of body, arrangements, everything, grounds crew. Body is temple of the Holy Spirit – hence our reverence.
The Need for Family Legacy	Lasting impact on hearts and minds of others. Carrying on of traditions and values. Relationship after death. Family connections and future descendants.
The Need for Nurture	Help to grow physically, mentally and spiritually Help clients to feel loved and cared for and appreciated We’ll help you navigate this time with grace
The Need for Control	To control what happens after death Organize world around you so things run smoothly

As leader of Catholic Cemeteries, I’ll have our team revisit emotional research findings and put them through the filter of the morality of happiness and principle of renewal connecting emotional needs, our emphasis to help the community with end-of-life planning, and the principles of pleasure and joy. Our challenge is to identify the freedom, the happiness benefits of these desires and to communicate them in a loving, morality of happiness way.

## Summary

The church teaches us that we can accept or reject divine grace at death and calls us to prepare for the hour of our death and eternal life. A person operating out of a morality of happiness can joyfully engage in pre-arrangement planning to enlighten themselves spiritually, mentally and practically and act with an intention to be happy and to prepare for eternal life with God.

Although little empirical evidence indicates higher levels of happiness with pre-arranged plans, the process of engaging in one's eternal destiny helps to form the person and those surrounding them. Plans provide a model for the family and act as a testament of one's faith, hope and joy.

As a ministry of His Church, I think it prudent to review insights from this paper with cemeteries staff and funeral home partners to address how to shift messaging to a tone of joy and awe; shifting away from a tone of a morality of obligation. It is timely to review with clergy how we talk about the Resurrection with practical encouragement work with the community. We can collaborate on catechesis and messaging.

The secular culture we live in is pervasive and has us avoid death, be indifferent to it or defer thinking about it. These are key challenges coupled with the complex psychological barriers people have about death. We must offer hope as Father Groeschel encourages where we must never think of death alone but always in conjunction with eternal life and in his words; "life after death and the promise of eternal life should fill us with awe."

## Definitions – from Google Dictionary 7 October, 2017

### Death

the act of dying; the end-of-life; the total and permanent cessation of all the vital functions of an organism.

### Life

the condition that distinguishes organisms from inorganic objects and dead organisms, being manifested by growth through metabolism, reproduction, and the power of adaptation to environment through changes originating internally.

### Moral

concerned with the principles of right and wrong behavior and the goodness or badness of human character. "the moral dimensions of medical intervention"  
*synonyms:* [virtuous](#), [good](#), [righteous](#), [upright](#), [upstanding](#), [high-minded](#), [principled](#), [honorable](#), [honest](#), [just](#), [noble](#), [incorruptible](#), [scrupulous](#), [respectable](#), [decent](#), [clean-living](#), [law-abiding](#) "a moral man"

### Morality

principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behavior.  
*synonyms:* [ethics](#), [rights and wrongs](#)

### Pre-arrangement

to arrange in advance or beforehand.

### Principle

a fundamental truth or proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behavior or for a chain of reasoning. "the basic principles of Christianity"  
*synonyms:* [truth](#), [proposition](#), [concept](#), [idea](#), [theory](#), [assumption](#), [fundamental](#), [essential](#), [ground rule](#) "elementary principles"

### Prudence

the quality of being prudent; practical wisdom. That which disposes us to see rightly.  
"we need to **exercise prudence** in such important matters"  
*synonyms:* [wisdom](#), [judgment](#), [good judgment](#), [common sense](#), [sense](#), [sagacity](#), [shrewdness](#), [advisability](#) [More](#)

### Soul

the principle of life, feeling, thought, and action in humans, regarded as a distinct entity separate from the body, and commonly held to be separable in existence from the body; the spiritual part of humans as distinct from the physical part.

### Theology

the study of the nature of God and religious belief. (Theos = God in Greek)

### Virtue

behavior showing high moral standards. "paragons of virtue"  
*synonyms:* [goodness](#), [virtuousness](#), [righteousness](#), [morality](#), [integrity](#), [dignity](#), [rectitude](#), [honor](#), [decency](#), [respectability](#), [nobility](#), [worthiness](#), [purity](#);

### Virtuous

having or showing high moral standards. "she considered herself very virtuous because she neither drank nor smoked"  
*synonyms:* [righteous](#), [good](#), [pure](#), [whiter than white](#), [saintly](#), [angelic](#), [moral](#), [ethical](#), [upright](#), [upstanding](#), [high-minded](#), [principled](#), [exemplary](#)



## Appendix -- Questions Unanswered

In identifying the issues, many questions were addressed in the paper. The following is a list of questions that arose but were not addressed. The ministry can address these at a future point.

*Is one freer and more liberated from the fear of death by developing a healthy Christian perspective on death and eternal life or to live in the moment, day-by-day?*

*Is an acceptance and welcoming of the Resurrection liberating?*

*How do we balance the wishes of the individual vs family vs community? Is it just to leave arrangements for family at the time of death, and perhaps even formative? Is it prudent to leave the outlay of finances for arrangements to a later time?*

*What is the greatest expression of Faith, Hope and Love? How does pre-need planning look when put through the filters of the virtues?... ultimately leading to the good life.*

*Many have an attitude that the Lord will take care of them; but does one trust handing control to one's poorly formed family that may not exercise Christian funeral and burial traditions?*