

Introduction

During an editorial board meeting the editors were discussing what theme should be given to this issue. A number of possible themes were on the table, but one editor argued for the topic of death with the simple and oft-heard viewpoint about death and taxes being inevitable. Not only is it inevitable that each of us will one day die, but it is also inevitable that ministers will encounter death in their pastoral service. There simply is no avoiding death.

November is a fitting time to reflect upon death. With the feasts of All Saints and All Souls our Church's liturgy calls us to reflect upon death. In most regions of the United States and Canada, nature, with its falling leaves and fallow fields, also draws our attention to the processes of dying. The skies are grayer and the days are shorter. Perhaps our bones get a bit stiffer and our muscles ache just a bit more. We are reminded of our mortality.

Three articles examine different aspects of death and dying. All our authors touch upon significant pastoral concerns. One of the regular authors upon whom we call, Zachary Hayes, O.F.M., of Catholic Theological Union, offers a concise and helpful reflection on the theology of death. In a few pages he covers much ground and provides rich food for thought. Our second article by Margaret Costello and James Wallace, C.Ss.R., is a sensitive and insightful examination of the challenge to preach in the setting of death and grief. A host of practical and useful suggestions can be found throughout the article that should be of help not only to preachers but liturgical planners and others who must assist those who come to the Christian community to find comfort amidst their grief. The final article on the theme is also co-written and addresses moral and pastoral issues concerning the decision to pursue or cease further medical efforts to forestall death. As medical technology becomes more complex and readily available it remains important that the human dimension of patient care stay at the forefront. Readers of the essay by Herbert Anderson and Thomas Nairn, O.F.M., will find much good advice about keeping death a humane and Christian experience for both the dying and those who love them.

Speaking of experience, William Donovan provides a clear and helpful reflection on the mystery of the Trinity by reminding readers that it is a doctrine which is first of all rooted in religious experience. When religious language and theology obscures or denies salvific experience then we have another kind of "death." Retrieving trinitarian language the author suggests is an invitation to reflect upon three "moments" of God's love for us. A second non-thematic article adds to this issue's

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richness. Peter Black, C.Ss.R., and Kevin O'Neil, C.Ss.R., offer a succinct and balanced treatment of the evolving state of Catholic moral theology. Under various headings the authors summarize a large amount of recent scholarship which has transformed our understanding of fundamental moral theology. Readers will find it a worthwhile and trustworthy summary of scholarly developments in an important field.

Because the article by Anderson and Nairn is an extended case study, we have not included our usual column "Getting Down to Cases" in this issue. But readers will find our three other regular columns along with a number of book reviews and our annual index for the issues of 1999. Our book review editor Daniel Grigassy, O.F.M., has been doing a splendid job both in selecting books for review and in getting reviews done in a timely manner.

Finally, the publishers and editors have an important announcement included in this issue. As was mentioned in our May issue of this year, this journal was one of only four Catholic periodicals to receive a grant from the Lilly Foundation for support of religious publishing. We are most grateful to the people at Lilly and one of the first initiatives to stem from the grant is announced on the next page, the establishment of an annual award for theological reflection. Readers will benefit in the future from the scholarship this award encourages. Maybe, too, upon reading the announcement readers will be motivated to take pen in hand or fingers to keyboard and submit their own essay. We welcome you to do so.