

# Discussing death with your children

**By Bruce Hultquist**

*Special to the Review*

Ask any parent about his or her top priority in life and most of their answers will be same: their children.

As parents, our job is to guide our kids through life by celebrating their achievements and helping them during difficult times. As we grow older, we watch the roles reverse and the children often becomes the parents' primary caregiver.

When a parent eventually passes away, it's common for our loved ones to feel a little lost, no matter what their age. We can prepare our children for the loss by openly communicating with them about the inevitable.

Talking to our kids about what should happen when we die is an awkward and emotional conversation. Most often, their reaction is one of anxiety, confusion, anger or fear; sometimes, they will refuse to even discuss the subject.

Having a plan for your end-of-life care and discussing that plan with your children is the best way to ensure your wishes are met. This includes a living will that includes details about your funeral and burial arrangements and preferences.

By preparing your plan in advance and maintaining open communication with your children about those details, you will eliminate some of the stress, confusion and financial burden that they will experience when you do pass away.

Thinking about your death is never easy, and it can be even more difficult to discuss the topic with others. We may feel inclined to avoid the conversation until a crisis or life-threatening disease occurs, putting off the thought of death for as long as possible.

However, having the conversation before a tragedy strikes will greatly reduce stress and allow you to make thoughtful, educated decisions about your end-of-life care. Involving your kids in these preparations can make it easier for both you and them to face. Starting the process is difficult for everyone, but ultimately, preparation and open communication about death is in the best interest of both you and your children.

No one likes to think about his or her death; talking about it makes us feel scared and vulnerable. The thought of leaving our children, grandchildren and loved ones is almost unbearable, but death is life's only certainty. All parents want to make sure their loved ones will be taken care of, especially after they pass away. Preparing your end-of-life wishes and communicating is one of the best things you can for your

children.

*Bruce Hultquist is the director of Redemptorist Cemeteries. The Redemptorists operate four cemeteries in the Archdiocese of Baltimore: Most Holy Redeemer and Sacred Heart of Jesus in Baltimore, St. Mary's in Annapolis and St. Mary's in Ellicott City. For questions about burial and funeral planning, call 410-284-0648.*

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