

*Every difficulty in life is an opportunity to grow*

Why do bad things happen to good people? Some people believe that God loves and rewards good people, and hates and punishes bad people. If something bad happens to you, they conclude, it must be because you did something wrong.

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Today's Gospel comprehensively rejects this idea. When people arrive to tell Jesus about a riot in which lives had been lost, he reminds them of a natural disaster that had the same outcome. These poor people, he says, were no greater sinners than anyone else

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Do you remember Boxing Day 2004? A tsunami in Indonesia left 230,000 people dead or missing – not because they were bad people, but because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Bad things happen to people not because they are bad people, but because bad things happen. Rather than spend energy seeking answers that don't exist, it is far more important to ask the right question: what does this event call me to change about my attitudes, or the world in which I live?

That explains Jesus enigmatic reply, "Unless you repent you will all perish as they did." It is also the central point of his story about the fig tree that doesn't bear fruit: rather than cut it down, the gardener pleads for more time to fertilise and water the tree, to give it another chance to bear fruit.

This helps to re-frame our question. The big question is not 'why do bad things happen to good people'. The big question is, 'what do good people do when bad things happen?'

The truth is, God loves every person, and desires every one of us to flourish and bear fruit in our lives – to reach the fulness of life.

Like the withered old tree that gets another chance to bear fruit, we are never without options to do good and to bear fruit, no matter how dry or painful or challenging our situation.

And even when it is our society that seems to be heading in the wrong direction, we still have many opportunities to bear good fruit: to stand out against social trends we find so distressing, and to give an alternative witness.



*... it may bear fruit next year ...*

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## Reflection

In the age of 24/7 connectedness, can I find the courage to look at my neighbour rather than my mobile device?

In an age of growing self-centredness, can I care as much about the needs of others as I do about my own needs?

In the busy-ness of my day can I make time to be still, to focus my heart, and name at least one thing in my life for which I can sincerely give thanks to God?

*You deserve excellent palliative care services, not euthanasia.*

The push for assisted dying and euthanasia in WA is driven by 'bad news stories' of people whose dying is marked by suffering and pain.

Such deaths are actually quite rare. No reasonable person wants anyone to suffer for a moment longer than necessary, so of course for some people assisted dying looks like a good idea.

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The trouble is, many ideas that look good on paper turn out to be bad in practice – and that makes them bad ideas.

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A more socially and ethically responsible option would be to look closely at the causes of suffering and then seek more compassionate and humane ways to relieve it without jeopardising the patient's safety or dignity.

You may have heard about palliative care. This is a specialised branch of medicine that is not well understood even by some doctors and people who work within the health system.

Palliative medicine allows people with chronic or painful diseases to live and function as well as humanly possible for as long as their condition allows.

Palliative care is about living well, and that is why (when it is practiced ideally) it also allows people to die well: pain-free, with dignity, and with the business of life successfully concluded.

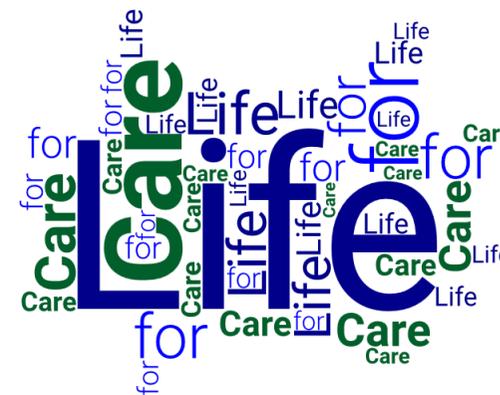
Excellent palliative and end-of-life care always accompanies and never abandons the patient, regardless of the depth or extent of the patient's needs. The best palliative care returns control to the patient, supports their family, and offers a wide range to medical and non-medical care including spiritual and pastoral support.

Some people think that euthanasia and palliative care are the same thing, or can work well together, however experience proves otherwise. The quality of palliative care services always declines dramatically when assisted dying is also on the table.

Palliative care does not prolong suffering, it contains it. It promotes living to the full at the end of life, until we die a natural death.

In contrast, the only goal of euthanasia is the death of the person.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dr Doug Bridge, *Euthanasia: Frequently Asked Questions*.



## Call to Action

Bad laws are passed only when good people say nothing. Let your MPs know what you think.

To find out how contact *Care for Life*

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