

Posted by Robin Goldsworthy on Jul 28th, 2011 and filed under Religion.

QUESTION:

I was just told by my doctor that I have congestive heart failure. I'm the mother of two adult children. We are a close family. My husband died four years ago. I'm taking good care of myself, taking my medication as prescribed and trying to stay positive even though my energy is much lower than it used to be. I don't want to tell my children of my heart condition. I think they would spend time worrying until I pass away. I'd rather have quality time with them until the very end and not have them think they have to treat me any more specially than they already do. Am I doing the right thing?

– Confused

Answer:

Dear Confused,

I can certainly appreciate your wanting to spare your children from worrying about you because of your diagnosis. But I urge you to reconsider. Death is not something that we in this country talk about easily, even in our churches. However, it is an important subject to demystify so that we will be prepared for it when it comes – as it will for all of us.

Whatever time you have until your death can provide your whole family with a rich opportunity to share more deeply the spiritual and physical issues around your life and death. And as members of a close family, they will likely begin to notice your lack of energy and worry about what is going on for you, without the answers they want and need. If you need support in sharing your news, your clergy-man or -woman should be able to help.

You describe them as caring adult children who lost their father four years ago, and they may well have many questions to ask you and things they want to tell you. If you die before you and they have those opportunities, the door will be closed on some vital sharing. Please don't deny them that chance.

Another danger is that they may somehow learn about your diagnosis before or after your death and feel distressed that you did not trust them enough to share news that will continue to affect them for the rest of their lives.

Such heavy secrets, kept from those we love, can cause serious wounds. Give your beloved children the chance to treat you with loving care as long as they can. That gift is something that will be a blessing in their lives and yours.

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