

# “Doing Small Things with Great Love”

A Tribute to Personal Support Workers

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# Empathy - Compassion





# Vulnerability

*(vulnerare)*



An example of solidarity in our vulnerability . . .



# The Black Death

(1347-1351)



A subitanea (et improvisa) morte,  
libera nos, Domine





Trionfo Della Morte,  
Galleria Regionale Di  
Palazzo Abbatellis,  
Palermo  
(1446)



The image features a solid black background. At the top, there is a decorative border composed of several overlapping, wavy bands of color. From left to right, these bands transition through a spectrum: yellow, orange, red, and finally into shades of green and cyan on the far right. The colors are vibrant and the lines are fluid, creating a sense of movement and depth.

*Ars Moriendi*





# ON THE DEHUMANIZATION OF DEATH

Sickness and death . . .  
as “technical [problems] technically handled  
by technical people”

J. Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life* (CUA Press, 2007), 70

The background of the slide is a solid black field. At the top, there is a decorative, wavy, translucent shape that transitions through a spectrum of colors: yellow, orange, red, and finally into a bright cyan/blue at the right edge. This shape appears to be a stylized representation of a horizon or a wave.

# The Dignity of *Persons*





# Physicalism

*Dignity attached to humanhood*



# Personalism


*Dignity attached to function*



## Rationality/Cognition

- ▣ *Joseph Fletcher (1905-1991), Humanhood*
- ▣ “Humans without some minimum of intelligence or mental capacity are not persons, no matter how many of their organs are active, no matter how spontaneous their living processes are. If the cerebrum is gone, due to disease or accident, and only the mid-brain or brainstem is keeping autonomic functions going, they are only objects, not subjects—they are its, not thous. Just because heart, lungs, and the neurological and vascular systems persist, we cannot say a person exists.”

Joseph Fletcher, *Humanhood: Essays in Biomedical Ethics* (Prometheus, 1979), 135.



“People . . . have no reason to feel guilty about putting a Down's syndrome baby away, whether it's ‘put away’ in the sense of hidden in a sanitarium or in a more responsible lethal sense. It is sad; yes. Dreadful. But it carries no guilt. True guilt arises only from an offense against a person, and a Down's is not a person.”

Bernard Bard and Joseph Fletcher, “The Right to Die,” *The Atlantic Monthly* 221 (1968): 59-64.



# THE SELECTIVE BESTOWAL OF PERSONHOOD IN HISTORY

- Women legally declared persons in Canada on October 18, 1929.
- Beforehand, British Common Law claimed that women were :  
  
“persons in the matter of pains and penalties,  
but not in the matter of rights and privileges.”

## LEADING WITH INHERENT DIGNITY

- “I feel the duty to reaffirm strongly that the intrinsic value and personal dignity of every human being do not change, no matter what the concrete circumstances of his or her life. *A man, even if seriously ill or disabled in the exercise of his highest functions, is and always will be a man*, and he will never become a ‘vegetable’ or an ‘animal.’”
- “There needs to be a reversal of the current trend . . . we must ensure that elderly people can grow old with dignity, without having to fear that they will end up no longer counting for anything.”

Address of John Paul II to the Participants in the International Congress on “Life-Sustaining Treatments and Vegetative State: Scientific Advances and Ethical Dilemmas,” *Saturday, March 20, 2004*

John Paul II, Letter to the Elderly, 1999





Dignity



Personhood



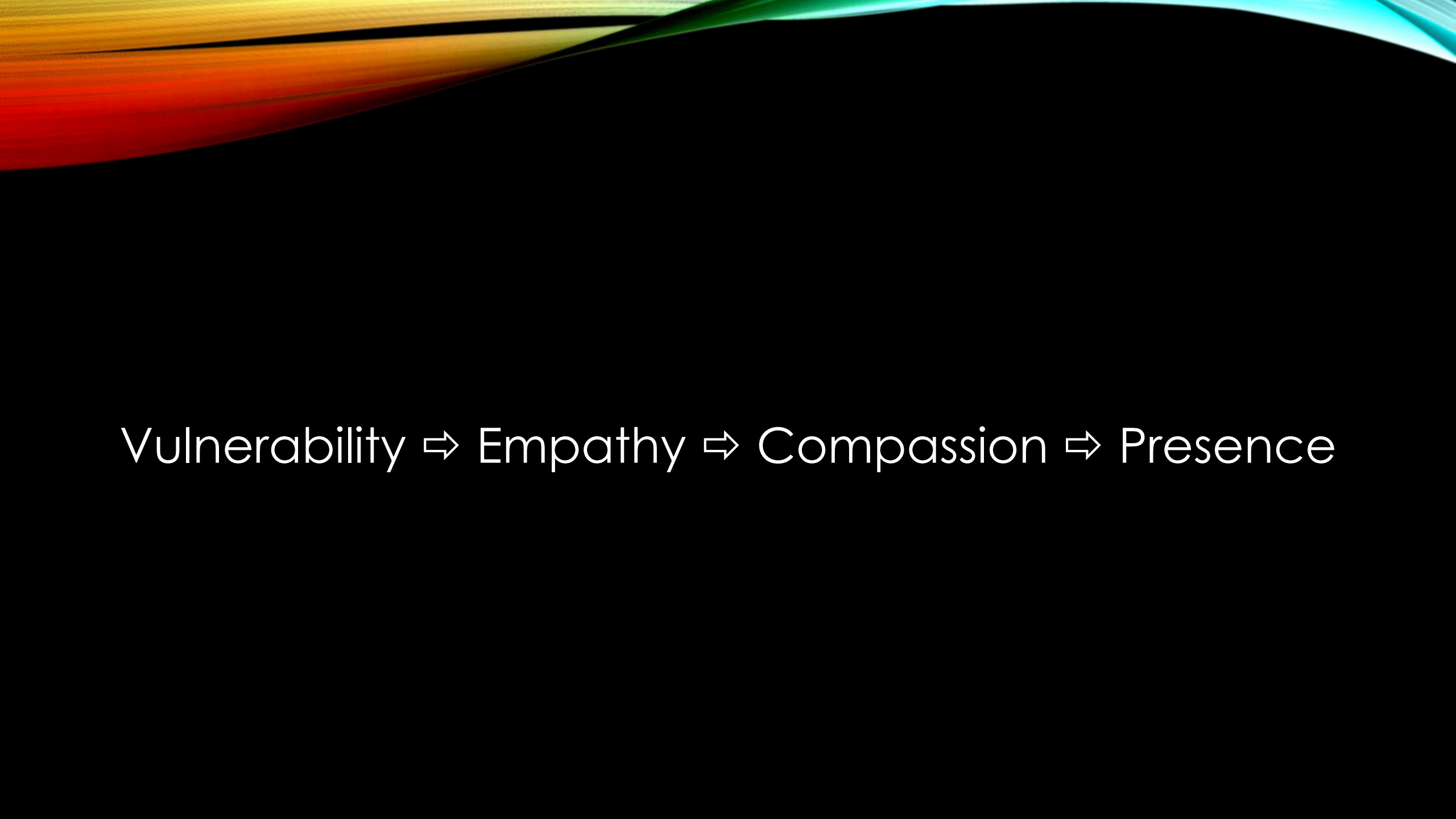
Function

The background features a solid black field. At the top, there is a decorative, wavy, translucent shape that transitions through a spectrum of colors: yellow, orange, red, and finally into a bright cyan/blue at the right edge. The shape has a soft, ethereal quality, appearing like a light wave or a stylized horizon.

Seeing our neighbour as vulnerable . . .

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Cleveland Clinic, “Empathy”



Vulnerability  $\Rightarrow$  Empathy  $\Rightarrow$  Compassion  $\Rightarrow$  Presence



“When we honestly ask ourselves  
which persons in our lives mean the most to us,  
we often find that it is those who,  
instead of giving much advice, solutions, or cures,  
have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds  
with a gentle and tender hand.

The one who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion,  
who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement,  
who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing  
and face with us the reality of our powerlessness,  
that is a person who cares.”

