

Euthanasia Bulletin Inserts

1. The Gift of Life

Life is a gift freely bestowed on us by God. It is the fact that it comes from God that makes life precious. The value of our lives does not depend on externals, such as the goods that we acquire, the positions that we attain, the skills that we develop or our physical prowess. Life is our greatest gift from God and, as such, deserves the utmost care and respect. It is for this reason that we cannot condone actions which will harm life at any stage. As John Paul II pointed out in *Evangelium Vitae* (The Gospel of Life, 1995):

“Precisely in this age when the inviolable rights of persons are solemnly proclaimed and the value of life publicly affirmed, the very right to life itself is being denied or trampled upon, especially at the more significant moments of its existence: the moment of birth and the moment of death.”

2. The End of Life

The life of every person will some day come to an end. Catholics have traditionally prayed for a “happy death”. There are two intentions attached to such a prayer. The first is that we will die in a state of grace and attain eternal salvation. The second is that the physical aspects of death will be peaceful and consoling. The teaching of the Church is attuned to both of these. The Church offers the ministry of the sacraments in response to our spiritual needs. Palliative care is called for in response to our needs for physical and psychological comfort in times of pain and suffering. Nutrition, hydration and warmth must be provided, and we must remember that the Church respects the choice of the dying to avoid intrusive, ineffective and overly burdensome treatment. We should feel reassured that modern medical knowledge, properly applied, can ensure a peaceful death.

“The dying should be given attention and care to help them to live their last moments in dignity and peace.” (The Catechism of the Catholic Church #2299.)

3. The Human Response to Pain and Suffering

As human beings we experience joy in life and we also experience pain and suffering, whether emotional, psychological or physical. We celebrate each other's joy and are also called to share each other's pain by showing compassion to the suffering. Some mistakenly think that euthanasia and assisted suicide are "compassionate", since they end the person's suffering. . We, rather, are called to show *true* compassion by alleviating suffering, by assisting those in pain, and by comforting the afflicted. We must walk with our fellow human beings at all phases of their lives.

"Euthanasia must be called a fake mercy, and indeed a disturbing 'perversion' of mercy. True compassion leads to sharing another's pain: it does not kill the person whose suffering we cannot bear." *Evangelium Vitae* (The Gospel of Life 1995), Pope John Paul II

4. End of Life Care

Catholics are called upon to respect and sustain life, their own as well as that of others, from the moment of conception to the moment of natural death. In the case of those who are dying we are to provide spiritual and physical care. They should receive ministry from a priest and the appropriate sacraments. Physically, they should receive nutrition, hydration and physical comfort. However, they may refuse treatment which will be a great burden to them without achieving positive results. Medication can be given for the relief of pain even if a secondary unintentional result might be to speed the dying process.