



## **Pastoral Statement**

### ***Infirmatur quis in vobis***

#### **on Human Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide**

1. Infirmatur quis in vobis inducat presbyteros ecclesiae et orent super eum unguentes eum oleo in nomine Domini et oratio fidei salvabit infirmum et adlevabit eum Dominus et si in peccatis sit dimittentur ei (James 5 : 14-15)
2. Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven. (James 5: 14-15)
3. From the earliest times, the Christian response to illness and suffering is prayer for and care of the sick person, to either cure them or make them feel more comfortable, and in all circumstances, to share in the person's suffering, uniting the sick person's suffering and our suffering with the sick person, to Christ's redemptive suffering. The earliest Christians did so according to the example of the Apostles who carried out the will of the Lord (Mark 6: 7-13).
4. The Christian response to illness and suffering does not include euthanasia or assisted suicide, neither of which, from a Christian perspective, can be considered a form of merciful release or compassionate action.
5. The intentional killing, or facilitation of or collaboration in the killing, of another human person, whatever the circumstances, is always morally unacceptable.
6. As of June 2016, human euthanasia is legal in the Netherlands, Belgium, Ireland, Colombia, and Luxembourg. Assisted suicide is legal in Switzerland, Germany, Japan,

Albania, Canada, and in the American states of Washington, Oregon, Vermont, Montana, and California.<sup>1</sup>

7. Human euthanasia is defined as “an intentional termination of life by another at the explicit request of the person who wishes to die. Euthanasia is generally defined as the act of killing an incurably ill person out of concern and compassion for that person's suffering. It is sometimes called mercy killing, but many advocates of euthanasia define mercy killing more precisely as the ending of another person's life without his or her request.”<sup>2</sup>

8. The distinction is drawn between active euthanasia as “causing the death of a person through a direct action, in response to a request from that person”<sup>3</sup> and passive euthanasia as “(h)astening the death of a person by altering some form of support and letting nature take its course”.<sup>4</sup>

9. Assisted suicide – including physician-assisted suicide – is a form of voluntary passive euthanasia. It is “(s)omewhat of a hybrid between passive and active euthanasia...(in which)...a physician supplies information and/or the means of committing suicide (e.g., a prescription for a lethal dose of sleeping pills, or a supply of carbon monoxide gas) to a person, so that that individual can successfully terminate his or her own life”.<sup>5</sup>

10. An issue which arises for faithful Christians from the legalization of human euthanasia and assisted suicide is the distinction between an action being legal in a civil jurisdiction and the morality of that action. While it is most often the case that when an action is legal it is also morally good, there are instances when the legality of an action does not make it a morally acceptable action.

11. This situation certainly exists in the case of human euthanasia and assisted suicide. The morality of actions involved in these cases pertains to the valuing of human life, both in its first stages and in its final stages. It also pertains to the understanding of human suffering and loss of independence, particularly in whether these are considered an intolerable burden to be ended or as a reality of human life to be experienced from the Christian perspective of ultimate meaning.

12. It is certain that life issues are a most complicated area of human existence. They are complicated because they involve our very being, and the meaning we ascribe to our life. We are inseparable from our conception and death, and the time which passes in between. It is little wonder that life issues foster such passionate controversy, vociferous argumentation, and steadfast positions. They also foster doubt among many Christians, other people of faith and all people of good will.

13. Therefore, to be absolutely clear, the intentional killing, or facilitation of or collaboration in the killing, of another human person, whatever the circumstances, is always morally unacceptable.

14. I join my brother Orthodox, Eastern Catholic and Roman Catholic Bishops in Canada in affirming that the dignity of the human person and the flourishing of the human community demand:

1) protection and respect for each human life from conception to natural death, and

2) freedom of conscience and religion for each person as well as each institution.

15. On the moral and social evil of assisted suicide, the Eucharistic Catholic Church believes and teaches the following:

“Whatever its motives and means, direct euthanasia consists in putting an end to the lives of handicapped, sick, or dying persons. It is morally unacceptable. Thus an act or omission which, of itself or by intention, causes death in order to eliminate suffering constitutes a murder gravely contrary to the dignity of the human person and to the respect due to the living God....”<sup>6</sup>

“Suicide contradicts the natural inclination of the human being to preserve and perpetuate his life. It is gravely contrary to the just love of self. It likewise offends love of neighbor because it unjustly breaks the ties of solidarity with family, nation, and other human societies to which we continue to have obligations. Suicide is contrary to love for the living God.”<sup>7</sup>

“Intentional euthanasia, whatever its forms or motives, is murder.”<sup>8</sup>

“Suicide is seriously contrary to justice, hope, and charity.”<sup>9</sup>

16. As faithful Christians, we believe in the inherent value of each individual human life as created by God from conception to natural death. We also believe that each individual is ultimately not in control of their own destiny but that it unfolds according to the will of God to Whom we are submitted.

17. In professing these beliefs, we must realize that the legal frameworks of many jurisdictions are not based on these beliefs. We live in a world in which ultimate value is placed on the independence and right to self-determination of the individual. We must realize, and come to terms with the fact, that the supremacy of God has been replaced by the supremacy of the individual human person.

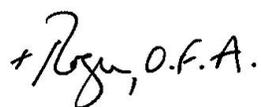
18. We must realize that while we live in this world, we are not of this world. This means that, as faithful Christians, we base our reflection and action about the world in

which we live on our understanding of the teachings of Jesus Christ our Lord. Indeed, the title 'Lord' needs to be reasserted in this context.

19. As faithful followers of Our Lord Jesus Christ, we must do what is within our spiritual capacity and our civil powers to oppose the legalization of human euthanasia and assisted suicide. On the spiritual plane, this means the offering of reparation through prayers and Masses for the sins committed through legalization of human euthanasia and assisted suicide; this, not only for those who will end their own life voluntarily and with determination, but also for those who assist in any manner in the act itself, as well as for those civil and religious authorities who enable these acts. On the civil (societal and political) plane, we must bring our beliefs to bear in our correspondence and conversations with others, especially with our elected officials. This obligation endures beyond the point of legalization; that is, while we recognize that a legal framework may be in place for human euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide, an obligation remains to speak to its moral unacceptability.

20. Troubling as it may be that many support the legalization of human euthanasia and/or assisted suicide, it is even more troubling to find some Christian ministers who advocate for an understanding of human euthanasia and assisted suicide in terms of merciful release and compassion. This position is contrary to the sanctity of life understood as created by God, and to the redemptive understanding of Christian suffering.

Given at Toronto, Ontario, Canada, on the feast of the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary, this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of August, in the year of our Lord 2016, the 11<sup>th</sup> year of my episcopate.



Most Reverend J. Roger LaRade, O.F.A.  
Primate Archbishop  
Eglise Catholique Eucharistique – Eucharistic Catholic Church

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legality\\_of\\_euthanasia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legality_of_euthanasia)

<sup>2</sup> <http://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Euthanasia+and+Physician+-Assisted+Suicide>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 2277

<sup>7</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 2281

<sup>8</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 2324

<sup>9</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 2325