



Archdiocese of Vancouver
ARCHBISHOP'S OFFICE

February 11, 2016

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Canada is just months away from passing a law making it legal to assist people to commit suicide. Before that happens, we all need to do everything possible to influence politicians to stand up for life and to protect vulnerable people from suicide. Two weeks ago, I wrote the Premier of British Columbia and all MLAs to inform them of the concerns of the Catholic community regarding forthcoming legislation. Now I am calling on the help of all the faithful in the Archdiocese of Vancouver.

The Catholic Church firmly opposes suicide, assisted suicide and euthanasia. No Catholic can, in good conscience, support, work towards or promote access to them. Human dignity is undermined when life can be taken at will.

All Canadians are deeply concerned that people are able to die with dignity and care. This is best assured through effective palliative care, a medical specialty which relieves the pain and suffering of those who are dying. As Catholics, we are convinced by our faith, by our long-standing tradition of providing care for the sick, and by the witness of health care professionals who assist the dying that palliative care is the most ethical way to ensure that all British Columbians can die in a manner that respects human dignity.

Furthermore, any assisted suicide legislation must protect the conscience rights of both individuals and institutions. Doctors, nurses, care aids and any other Canadians who believe that suicide is wrong must be free to continue to work in their chosen fields, free from any form of coercion or discrimination. Likewise, hospitals, care homes and other institutions that refuse to take part in suicides or euthanasia must be guaranteed their right to continued equitable participation in our provincial health care system.

You can help promote the sacred value of human life and freedom of conscience by taking two simple yet effective steps.

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First, I am asking you to sign the petition you will find at the back of the church that calls for a national palliative care strategy. It will be sent to Ottawa so that legislators will know that the Catholic community is firmly convinced of the need for this care.

Second, in your pews is a postcard addressed to the federal Minister of Justice, asking her to ensure that conscience rights of individuals and institutions are protected in any assisted suicide law. Please sign the card and return it to the ushers.

During this Lent, I invite you to offer some of your prayer and fasting for the success of these two concrete initiatives.

With the assurance of my prayers for you and your families as we walk together in fostering a culture of life, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ J. Michael Miller CSB

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Archbishop of Vancouver