

## Talking Points – Physician Assisted Suicide

- The Catholic Church teaches that life is the most basic of all human goods but not that it should be extended at all costs. There comes a time when it would be unreasonable and even cruel to prolong the dying process. We assist those who are dying; we never kill them.
- Those promoting physician assisted suicide claim they want to help those suffering from intractable pain. However, new medical specialties in pain management mean that it is most unusual that pain cannot now be dealt with effectively.
- In 2009 there were 95 deaths in Washington State and Oregon through physician assisted suicide. Overwhelmingly those who asked a physician to help them kill themselves were white, highly educated, had cancer and had a fear of losing autonomy and their dignity.
- Patients have a right to demand that they received adequate pain control and their families should assist them.
- The advocates of the legalization of physician-assisted-suicide claim they want to help dying people in terrible pain end their lives. However, where physician-assisted-suicide is legal the principal reasons people want to kill themselves is because they fear losing control of their lives or becoming a burden on others.
- Opposition to euthanasia and physician assisted suicide is not simply a Christian position. The great pagan physician, Hippocrates, said in his oath 500 years before Christ, “I will give no one a deadly medicine even if asked, nor counsel any such thing . . .”
- Only three states (Oregon, Washington, and Montana) have legalized physician assisted suicide. Most states (and most countries) believe that legalizing physician assisted suicide would place in great jeopardy those who are suffering and vulnerable.
- The Federal Drug Administration approves drugs that are meant to heal and cure. To use them to kill people violates federal drug laws.
- Physicians receive extensive training to put their skills at the service of those who are ill. It violates their sacred oath to use their skills to help people kill themselves.
- Laws against physician-assisted-suicide also protect physicians against being manipulated or pressured to violate their sacred oath to use their skills only to cure and to heal never to kill.

- The humane approach to dealing with suffering of the dying is not to kill the one who is suffering.
- The humane approach to eliminating suffering is not to eliminate the one who is suffering.
- The law (and certainly not the Church) does not insist that a person be kept alive as long as possible using every technical means available. There comes a time when the use of machines to keep people alive is not compassionate or reasonable.
- The Catholic Church in the United States teaches that there is a moral obligation to use a medical intervention to prolong life only if it holds out a reasonable hope of benefit without imposing an excessive burden in the judgment of the patient.
- Vulnerable, dying people could be encouraged by unscrupulous relatives or friends to seek the help of physicians to kill themselves so that they cease to be a burden or so that heirs could obtain an inheritance earlier.

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