

Physician-Assisted Suicide:

A Perversion of Mercy

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In recent years, the push for Physician-Assisted Suicide (PAS) has been framed as a compassionate choice, a way to end suffering and uphold “personal dignity.” Yet the Catholic Church, rooted in Scripture and Tradition, makes clear that such practices gravely misunderstand both human dignity and authentic compassion.

In Canada, PAS has been legal for several years, and the consequences are devastating. In 2023 alone, over 15,000 Canadians died under what is called *Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID)*, a phrase that hides the harsh reality of euthanasia. This represents almost 5% of total deaths in 2023, meaning one in every twenty Canadians who died did not receive love and care in their final days, but instead were handed a cold, clinical death. When universal healthcare is paired with PAS, the sick are no longer seen as treasures to be cherished but as burdens to be removed, lives deemed more “valuable” dead than alive.

When physicians abandon their oath to “do no harm” and instead participate in killing, the foundations of healthcare itself begin to collapse. Death is redefined as a “treatment,” and human life is reduced to a calculation of cost and convenience. This is a betrayal of the Hippocratic Oath and a direct violation of the Fifth Commandment: “*Thou shalt not kill.*”

What begins in Canada rarely stays there. Already, eleven U.S. states and the District of Columbia have legalized PAS, and New York is rapidly moving toward becoming the next. When I recently spoke with Respect Life Directors from California and Delaware, the grief in their voices was unmistakable as they described the painful reality of living in states where the law itself tells people that intentionally ending life is a solution.

“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” (CCC 2277).

Pope St. John Paul II in *Evangelium Vitae* (The Gospel of Life) writes that “euthanasia must be called a false 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” (66). Compassion, therefore, is not eliminating suffering by killing the sufferer, but walking with them in love.

As Catholics, we are called to reject false compassion and instead embrace the Gospel of life. By caring for the sick, comforting the dying, and accompanying the vulnerable, we proclaim to the world that every human life, from conception until natural death, is a gift worthy of love.

As St. Paul writes to the Romans, “For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord” (14:7–8).

Other Resources

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith – [*Samaritanus Bonus*](#)

USCCB – [*To Live Each Day with Dignity*](#)

The National Catholic Bioethics Center – [*A Catholic Guide to End-of-Life Decisions*](#)