

END OF LIFE VOCABULARY

MEDICAL AID-IN-DYING

"Let's call a spade a spade. Medical aid-in-dying is euthanasia" (Dr. Yves Robert, Secretary of the College of Physicians of Québec, quoted by *L'actualité médicale*, January 29, 2013).

EUTHANASIA

Euthanasia is the deliberate killing of someone, with or without that person's consent, in order to eliminate all suffering.

What does the Criminal Code of Canada say about euthanasia? "A person commits homicide when, directly or indirectly, by any means, he causes the death of a human being" (article 222).

What does the Catholic Church say about it? "I confirm that euthanasia is a grave violation of the law of God, since it is the deliberate and morally unacceptable killing of a human person" (Blessed John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, no 65).

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Providing a person who wants to kill him or herself with a way to do it – by giving them information, lethal substances (pills or other substances) or a weapon – constitutes assisted suicide.

What does the Criminal Code of Canada say about assisted suicide? "Anyone is guilty of an indictable offence who: a) counsels a person to commit suicide, or (b) aids or abets a person to commit suicide" (article 241).

What does the Catholic Church say about it? "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 neighbour (...). Voluntary co-operation in suicide is contrary to the moral law" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 2281-2282).

OVER-ZEALOUS TREATMENT

A treatment offered to a sick person is described as "over-zealous" when it is extraordinary or disproportionate to the benefits obtained or expected.

What does the Catholic Church say about over-zealous treatment? "Discontinuing medical procedures that are burdensome, dangerous, extraordinary, or disproportionate to the expected outcome can be legitimate; it is the refusal of 'over-zealous' treatment. Here one does not will to cause death; one's inability to impede it is merely accepted" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no 2278).

PALLIATIVE CARE

Palliative care offers a dignified death by providing patients with relief from their pain and the social, emotional and spiritual support they require to face and experience their death with courage. Good palliative care can help the dying to find meaning in their pain and suffering. The last weeks and days of a person's life are often a time of spiritual journeying and a time of reconciliation with family, with friends and with God. Euthanasia is incompatible with the principles and the goals of palliative care.

THE CHRISTIAN VISION

"No, suffering is not useless. And it does not diminish human dignity. Hanging on the wood of the cross, disfigured, unrecognizable, Christ was not undignified. At the time of our own suffering and death, we do not lose our dignity. Human dignity depends neither on the quality of our lives nor on our autonomy. It finds its source in God, who created us in his image and likeness (...). When we unite our lives and our sufferings to those of Christ through love, they become a prayer offering. We thus give ourselves the opportunity to bring those we love closer to God..." (*Living, Suffering and Dying . . . What for?* Catholic Organization for Life and Family).

TO LEARN MORE

- ❑ **Living With Dignity:** www.vivredignite.com and <http://vivredignite.blogspot.ca/>
- ❑ **Physicians Alliance for Total Refusal of Euthanasia :** <http://www.totalrefusal.blogspot.ca/>
- ❑ **Euthanasia Prevention Coalition:** www.epcc.ca
- ❑ **Catholic Organization for Life and Family :** www.colf.ca