

Living Out Our Faith To the End



• A Catholic Perspective on the End of Life Issues

- Deacon Michael Giuliano, MD
- Archdiocese of Newark



Let Us begin
as we begin all
things:



- Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of us your faithful and kindle in us the fire of Your Love.
Send forth Your Spirit and we shall be created
And You shall renew the face of the earth
- Let Us Pray: O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit instructs the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever rejoice in His consolations.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen



Church Teaching on the Dignity of Every Life

- Each life is an unrepeatable gift from God
- We are all called to respect, protect this sacred gift
- Our life belongs to God, we are only caretakers for a short time
- We are called to care for that life, preserve it and use it for His glory



Steven McDonald:
1957-2017

Church Teaching on the Dignity of Every Life

- Nothing can diminish this God given dignity
- Not genetic abnormalities
- Not a gunman's bullet
- Not a severe illness that robs of us our independence
- Suffering and illness and even death when viewed through the eyes of our faith are opportunities to finding oneness with Christ

But What About
the “Quality of
Life”





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What Exactly is a Human
Life Worth?

Life is a Gift to be Cherished, Never rejected



- “Human Life is sacred and inviolable at every stage and in every situation: it is an indivisible good” *Evangelium Vitae*, The Gospel of Life

When faith
Meets Medicine:
Must We Do
Everything?



Ordinary vs Extraordinary care

- There are two criteria that must be met for a medicine/therapy/treatment/surgery/ to be ordinary and therefore morally obligatory:
- 1. *A reasonable* prospect of benefit and
- 2. not involve excessive expense, pain or inconvenience.
- Note that this is always relative to the specific case



Can I refuse to be put on a ventilator?
It Depends

- Your 80 and dying from stage 4 lung cancer? Extraordinary
- Your 40 with pneumonia and need it for a short time? Ordinary

What About the Special Case of Nutrition and Hydration?

- Food and water are natural means for sustaining life, not medical acts, even if delivered artificially
- Nutrition and hydration are ordinary means of care and thus morally obligatory unless the person can no longer absorb
- The length of time they are used is not grounds for withholding artificially delivered nutrition and hydration
- If the result of withdrawing nutrition and hydration is death by starvation/dehydration, as opposed to an underlying disease, it is gravely immoral.

Principle of Double Effect


- A person may licitly perform an action that he foresees will produce a good effect and a bad effect provided that four conditions are verified at one and the same time:
 - 1.that the action in itself from its very object be good or at least indifferent;
 - 2.that the good effect and not the evil effect be intended;
 - 3.that the good effect be not produced by means of the evil effect;
 4. that there be a proportionately grave reason for permitting the evil effect

Definitions and Entering Medical Legal World

- Health Care Proxy* (Yes)
- Living Will
- MOLST/POLST Medical Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment
- DNR Do Not Resuscitate
- Quality of Life
- Advanced Directives
- Passive Euthanasia
- Physician Assisted Suicide

Palliative Care and Hospice Care

- **Hospice care:** A service promoting compassionate care for the dying by providing physical, spiritual and emotional resources for terminally-ill patients and their families. Hospice services may be provided in a home setting or in an institutional setting. The mission of hospice is to celebrate life in the face of death by offering medical, emotional, and spiritual support to the dying patient and their loved ones. Hospice care includes palliative care
- **Palliative care:** Focuses on providing patients with relief from pain, suffering, symptoms and stress of serious illness. It is sometimes referred to as “comfort care” provided by a team of professionals.



Illness/Pain/Suffering and Death

- World view is this is evil/ stop it at all costs
- Christian view- Redemptive nature of suffering when joined to Christs suffering

“Death as friend joining us on the journey
To our true home”

from, The Gift of Peace
Cardinal Bernadine

Physician Assisted Suicide (PAS) in New Jersey

- NJ has joined 8 other States legalizing PAS, Aide in Dying
- Need to be terminally ill (6 months to live or less) certified by two doctors
- MD's can legally Rx a lethal dose of medication but YOU have to self administer the medication out of the hospital
- Rational is consistent with autonomy based secular ethics with has become the dominant philosophy of our society
- "I" am in charge of my life/ it is my life / it is my choice
- Why should "your religious belief get in the way of "MY" choice

So why not have PAS??

- When the dignity and value of any human life is diminished it effects the Value of all life

*Currently its being pushed as a RIGHT of an individual but how soon will it become an OBLIGATION (saving family money and trouble?) or even become a REQUIRMENT as society needs to make “choices” about spending limited health care dollars

- And what about the corrosive effect on all doctor – patient relationships (is my doctor here to kill me??)
- This legislation gives the power to the State to have people killed and the doctors have been tasked to be the executioners...(death penalty only other setting)

Belgium Experience: the slippery slope realized

- Aide in dying has now spread from terminally ill to anyone who is “suffering” including children
- Unrequested Euthanasia has become common in hospitals to the point that people fear to be admitted
- The “value” of human life is more monetarized like any “commodity” and ease of killing has now spread....who is next??

When Will They Come For You??

- When they came for the murderers with capital punishment, we said nothing
- When they came for the Downs babies with abortion, we said nothing
- When they came for the babies with trisomy 13/18 and cystic fibrosis and fragile x and 100 other disorders, we said nothing
- When they came for the terminally ill with physician assisted killing, we said nothing
- When they came for those in vegetative states with starvation and dehydration we said nothing
- When they came for the depressed and mentally ill we said nothing...

Call To Action For Everyone of Faith



Get educated about the issues and spread the word



Ask for Professional help when counseling about end of life issues



Get involved in the public debate and the private conversations



Pray that God gives us the strength to stand up to the “culture of death” and stand for the culture of life



May God Bless You and give you Courage and Hope...