

Care & Prepare:

# Catholic Moral Doctrine

# Foundations



# The Sanctity of Life



“[Life] remains a sacred reality entrusted to us, to be preserved with a sense of responsibility and brought to perfection in love and in the gift of ourselves to God and to our brothers and sisters.”

St. John Paul II  
*Evangelium Vitae* #2

# Stewardship Over Human Life

“In the face of death--for many, a time when hope seems lost---the church witnesses to her belief that **God has created each person for eternal life**...The truth that life is a precious gift from God has profound implications for the question of stewardship over human life. We are not the owners of our lives, and hence, do not have absolute power over life. We have a duty to preserve our life and to use it for the glory of God, but the duty to preserve life is not absolute, for we may reject life-prolonging procedures that are insufficiently beneficial or excessively burdensome.”

-*Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services (ERD)*,  
Introduction



# Assisted Suicide

# What is Euthanasia, or Assisted Suicide?

- Euthanasia is “[a]n action or omission which of itself and by intention causes death, with the purpose of eliminating all suffering” (*Evangelium Vitae*).
- Euthanasia and suicide are **never morally acceptable options**.
- “Euthanasia is considered murder because it always involves the deliberate elimination of a human being [...] **Euthanasia does not eliminate suffering, but instead eliminates the person who suffers**”  
(Most Reverend Jose H. Gomez, *A Will to Live: Clear Answers on End of Life Issues*).



# Christian Response to Suffering

- Suffering isn't dignified, but the human person has dignity in suffering.
- Those choosing assisted suicide don't want to die. They are sick, in pain, hurting, and don't want to feel like a burden.
- The truly compassionate response is to accompany, reassure, love, care for, and advocate on behalf of those who suffer.



# Ordinary and Extraordinary Means of Preserving Life





# Ordinary Means of Preserving Life

- “A person has a **moral obligation to use ordinary or proportionate means** of preserving his or her life.
- “*Proportionate means* are those that in the judgment of the patient offer a reasonable hope of benefit and do not entail an excessive burden or impose excessive expense on the family or the community”(1).
- *Ordinary means* include “[b]asic care (such as nutrition and hydration, pain relief, antibiotic treatment, and postural change) [which] is generally the same for all patients and should always be provided” (2).



# Extraordinary Means of Preserving Life

“A person may forgo extraordinary or disproportionate means of preserving life. Disproportionate means are those that in the patient’s judgment do not offer a reasonable hope of benefit or entail an excessive burden, or impose excessive expense on the family or the community” (ERD 57, p. 31).

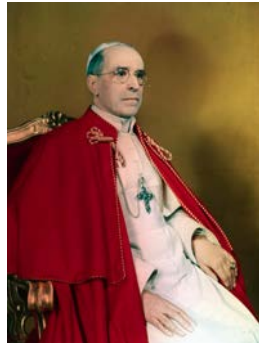
- *Burdensome* - Extreme pain/discomfort; severe financial hardship
- *Dangerous* - Experimental or life-threatening treatments
- *Extraordinary* - Extreme medical procedures to prolong life
- *Disproportionate to Expected Outcome* - Even with care, life/health would only be helped by a small degree



# Use of Pain Medication

“It is worth recalling here a statement of Pius XII that is still valid. A group of physicians [...] asked: ‘Is the removal of pain and consciousness by means of narcotics...permitted by religion and morality to both doctor and patient even at the approach of death and if one foresees that the use of narcotics will shorten life?’

“The pope answered: ‘Yes, provided that no other means exist and if, in the given circumstances, the action does not prevent the carrying out of other moral and religious duties...death is by no means intended or sought, although the risk of it is being incurred for a good reason; the only intention is to diminish pain effectively by use of the painkillers available to medical science.’” (*Euthanasia, CDF, 1980*)



# Examples

Life-Sustaining Means	Ordinary or Extraordinary	Proportionate or Disproportionate	Factors to Consider
Food and water	Ordinary (must always be provided; patient may need help of feeding tubes)	Proportionate	If death is imminent, patient may be unable to assimilate nutrients.
Antibiotics, pain relief	Ordinary (as needed)	Proportionate	
Ventilator	Depends	Depends	Chance of recovery; extremity of burden
Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)	Depends	Depends	Chance of recovery (survival rate of in-hospital CPR is 10-20% and drops to 5% for chronically-ill elderly patients)

# Q&A Discussion



*“I have come that they might have life  
and have it more abundantly.”*

*John 10:10*

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