

Talking Points on Assisted Suicide Legislation

(These may be helpful for brief bulletin ads and pastor's columns.)

- The term “death with dignity” is insulting and biased. There is nothing remotely undignified about the natural process of death. Every human life has inherent dignity, and death is a part of every human life. Death is not a “choice.” Death is a certainty.
- This is a dangerous movement. New York State rightly spends millions of dollars every year in efforts to combat suicide. If you cross any major bridge in this region, you will see a sign that says “Life Is Worth Living.” We have anti-bullying campaigns and suicide hotlines, all to prevent suicide. And now we’re turning around and saying, “Well, *some* lives are not worth living.” This double standard is based entirely on disability, as patients fear “losing autonomy” or “being a burden” due to their disabilities.
- If we legalize assisted suicide, the pressure on people to end their lives will dramatically rise. People with terminal illnesses will feel as though they need to “get out of the way” and not drain financial resources. They will inevitably get pressure, subtle or not so subtle, from relatives, health care providers, insurers. They will be made to feel as though the very fact that they are drawing breath is an inconvenience to someone else.
- The legislation that has been introduced in New York State lack safeguards for vulnerable people. There is no requirement for counseling, there is a lack of informed consent, there are loopholes which allow for coercion and undue influence by others, and there are insufficient conscience protections for hospitals and health providers.
- Pain control has come so far. If we’re going to support something, let’s support increased education in pain management for all health professionals, education in palliative care, and removing barriers to hospice care. We should focus on ending the suffering, not ending the life of the sufferer. Kill the pain, not the patient.
- The NYS Catholic Conference has a new website and video to inform Catholics of our teachings about the end of life. www.CatholicEndofLife.org The Catholic Church does not teach that life must be preserved by any and all means. Extraordinary means are not necessary when death is near; people must be allowed to die naturally. But we can’t intentionally take their lives or help them to intentionally hasten their death.

Legislation in support of Assisted Suicide has been recently introduced into the both houses of the New York State legislature. Education, prayer, advocacy and references for care and services that support life from the moment of conception to natural death are needed now more than ever to promote and defend the sanctity of all life. Please see resources and recent media in support of life and end of life issues that can be shared and voiced in homilies, though chaplaincy, parish committees, ministries, schools, religious education programs, parish outreach and diocesan entities. Workshops and meetings can also provide time for video and dialogue. Providing the foundational understanding of the dignity of the human person through all phases of life promotes a culture of life, and love of one another.

TAKE ACTION NOW at the NYSCC [Catholic Action Network](#) to oppose assisted suicide legislation in New York State.

- I. **Now and at the Hour of Our Death, A Catholic Guidance for End-of-Life Decision Making** is available at a new website from the New York State Catholic Conference at: catholicendoflife.org
End of Life Decision Making Guides can be ordered in Booklet form [here](#)
(Spanish Available)

II. Recent Media Resources in Support of Life with Opposition to Assisted Suicide Legislation

1. Cardinal Timothy Dolan on Doctor Assisted Suicide; [here](#).
2. Good news [here](#): Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos says he has serious concerns with assisted suicide.
3. Op Ed. by Dr. Ira Byock on assisted suicide is [here](#).
4. Life is Worth Living Even When Your Terminally Ill, [Blog post](#) from the Arch Diocese of New York.
5. DRVC Respect Life Office [February Enews](#).
6. [Does Assisted Suicide Equal Death with Dignity?](#) Msgr. Donald Hanson.
7. [Video](#) on Death with Dignity.
8. [Flirting with Death](#) by Richard Doerflinger, The Public Discourse (1/2015)
9. The Long Island Catholic; Our Lives are Still Worth Living, A Seminarian with Brain Cancer [Here](#)

III. The Catholic Church's Position on Assisted Suicide

1. [Maintain a Ban on Assisted Suicide](#) (NYSCC)
2. The New York State Catholic Conference [Memorandum of Opposition](#) to recent legislation introduced to legalize Assisted Suicide in New York State.

IV. Church Teaching and Resources on Assisted Suicide

1. [To Live Each Day with Dignity](#) (Power Point USCCB)
2. Killing the Pain not the Patient; [Palliative Care vs. Assisted Suicide](#) (USCCB)
3. Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia; [Beyond Terminal Illness](#) (USCCB)
4. Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia: [From Voluntary to Involuntary](#) (USCCB)
5. [Prayer Resources](#) (USCCB)
6. [Declaration on Euthanasia](#)
7. Catechism of the Catholic Church; [Respect for Human Life](#) (CCC, 2259)
8. Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide [resources](#) (USCCB)
9. [Evangelium Vitae](#), National Catholic Bioethics Center (NCBC)
10. [Dignitas Personae](#) The Dignity of the Human Person (Vatican)
11. DRVC Respect Life Office Website respectlife.drvc.org

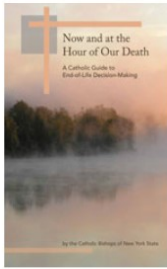
POTENTIAL BULLETIN ADS

We have provided some general bulletin ads that might be helpful for you and/or your bulletin editor. These files are .jpg files. If another format is needed, please contact sdolan@drvc.org.

Now and at Hour of our Death

Catholic Guidance for End of Life Decision Making

Talking about death and dying can be difficult and uncomfortable, yet perhaps no conversations are more profound or necessary for all of us. End-of-life decisions are among the most challenging we will ever face as individuals and families and as members of society. Residents of New York state must be particularly vigilant as we seek to oppose any legislation that promotes assisted suicide.



The bishops of the United States teach us:

"Catholics should be leaders in the effort to defend and uphold the principle that each of us has a right to live with dignity through every day of our lives. As disciples of one who is Lord of the living, we need to be messengers of the Gospel of Life. We should join with other concerned Americans, including disability rights advocates, charitable organizations, and members of the healing professions, to stand for the dignity of people with serious illnesses and disabilities and promote life-affirming solutions for their problems and hardships. We should ensure that the families of people with chronic or terminal illness will advocate for the rights of their loved ones, and will never feel they have been left alone in caring for their needs. The claim that the "quick fix" of an overdose of drugs can substitute for these efforts is an affront to patients, caregivers and the ideals of medicine.

When we grow old or sick and we are tempted to lose heart, we should be surrounded by people who ask "How can we help?" We deserve to grow old in a society that views our cares and needs with a compassion grounded in respect, offering genuine support in our final days. The choices we make together now will decide whether this is the kind of caring society we will leave to future generations. We can help build a world in which love is stronger than death.

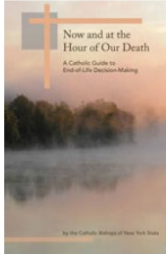
To Live Each Day with Dignity: A Statement on Physician-Assisted Suicide

*Find out more by reading the New York State's Catholic Bishops' document, *Now and at the Hour of our Death* by visiting catholicendoflife.org and www.nyscatholic.org.*

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What does the church teach about...

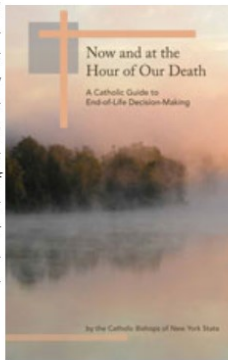
- **End of life decision**
- **Nutrition and Hydration**
- **Palliative Care and Hospice**
- **Health Care Proxies and Living Will**
- **Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia**

Find out by reading the New York State's Catholic Bishops' document, *Now and at the Hour of our Death* by visiting catholicendoflife.org and www.nyscatholic.org.

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Our lives are not our own....

"The Church teaches us that each and every human life is an unrepeatable gift, created in the image and likeness of God. We are called to respect and protect human life because of its inherent dignity, sacredness and value. We understand that life is a sacred trust over which we have been given stewardship, but not ownership. Our life belongs to God, and we do not have absolute power over it. So while it is entrusted to us, we are called to care for it, preserve it and use it for the glory of God. All those who are sick should rightfully expect, accept, and be provided appropriate food, water, pain control, bed rest, suitable room temperature, personal hygiene measures and comfort care. These are not medical treatments, but basic care-giving, the care that is owed to one human being by another. Truly to respect the dignity of the person, we must provide those who are sick with adequate pain relief, symptom management, compassion, acceptance, love, and physical, emotional and spiritual care."

To learn more about the Church's teaching about assisted suicide and other end of life issues, visit catholicendoflife.org and www.nyscatholic.org.