



UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

CARDINAL O'MALLEY: CALIFORNIA LEGALIZATION OF ASSISTED SUICIDE "A GREAT TRAGEDY FOR HUMAN LIFE"

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WASHINGTON—Cardinal Seán O'Malley of Boston, chairman of the Committee on Pro-Life Activities of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), responded on October 6 to Governor Jerry Brown's signing of the new California law legalizing assisted suicide.

Cardinal O'Malley called the governor's decision "a great tragedy for human life," and a tragedy "compounded by confusion among those who supported this law."

"A government that legalizes assisted suicide sends the terrible message Pope Francis has so eloquently warned us against, that there is such a thing as disposable people," Cardinal O'Malley said. "I am sure the Catholic Church in this country will redouble its efforts to protect innocent life at its most vulnerable stages, and to promote palliative care and other real solutions for the problems and hardships of terminally ill patients and their families."

The full text of Cardinal O'Malley's statement follows:

"Governor Brown's decision this week to sign a bill legalizing doctor-assisted suicide in California is a great tragedy for human life. As a result, in all the West coast states, seriously ill patients suffering from depression and suicidal feelings will receive lethal drugs, instead of genuine care to help alleviate that suffering.

The tragedy here is compounded by confusion among those who supported this law.

For example, Governor Brown said he signed this law because it should not be a crime for a dying person in pain to end his life. But suicide itself is a tragedy, not a crime. The crime is for people in authority such as physicians to facilitate the deliberate deaths of other, more vulnerable people. That crime will now be permitted in California. And where such "assistance" is legal, most people taking the lethal drugs do so not because of pain but because they feel they are helpless and a "burden" on others. The state of California in effect is now confirming this judgment. A government that legalizes assisted suicide sends the terrible message Pope Francis has so eloquently warned us against, that there is such a thing as disposable people.

With the bishops of California I grieve for this deeply flawed action. I am sure the Catholic Church in this country will redouble its efforts to protect innocent life at its most vulnerable stages, and to promote palliative care and other real solutions for the problems and hardships of terminally ill patients and their families."

For more information on the bishops' advocacy against assisted suicide, including their 2011 statement, "To Live Each Day with Dignity," see: www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/assisted-suicide/to-live-each-day.

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<http://www.usccb.org/news/2015/15-139.cfm>