

LIFE-GIVING LOVE

A NATIONAL CAMPAIGN

FOR PALLIATIVE AND HOME CARE

AND AGAINST EUTHANASIA AND ASSISTED SUICIDE

Overview by the Most Reverend Paul-André Durocher, Archbishop of Gatineau and President of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB)

Our modern world is so focused on wellbeing, on personal flourishing, that we no longer know what to do with suffering, sickness, disease, old age and death. It used to be that we all wanted to get to heaven; today we all want to “get down south”! This important change in society has brought about important consequences in our way of understanding ourselves, and in our way of understanding the very meaning of life.

Is it any wonder then that people, in this context, try to hide from suffering and even hide death itself? Thus there is a call that is making itself ever more generalized -- to legalize euthanasia and assisted suicide. Until recently our legislators, who were formed in the Judeo-Christian tradition, resisted this call. But the recent adoption of Bill 52 on end-of-life care in Quebec created an important breach in this resistance, a breach that could engulf the rest of Canada in a kind of tidal wave if it is not resisted.

The new Quebec law on end-of-life care uses the euphemism “medical aid in dying”. It seeks to make euthanasia legal within Quebec and in the healthcare centres of the province. That is why this law constitutes an important crucial moment for all of Canada, a *kairos*, a time of decision, a time of choice, where our future is at play. In this context, it becomes all the more urgent to respond to the call by the Second Vatican Council for a formed, informed, committed laity in the midst of our world. Pope Francis wrote these words: “To be Church means to be the people of God, a people who lives in harmony with the Father’s project of love. This reminds us that we are called to be yeast in the midst of humanity, this entails announcing, bringing the good news of God’s salvation to our world, which is so often lost, which needs answers that will give hope and courage and new vigor, as we journey on the way of life.”

With these words in mind, the Catholic Organization for Life and Family (COLF) has decided to launch a National Campaign in favour of Palliative and of Home Care, and against Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide. The Bishops of Canada are happy to support this campaign with its beautiful theme, “LIFE-GIVING LOVE”.

The campaign’s goals: To inform Christians about the major issues surrounding this question; to introduce them to the age-old wisdom of the Church on the subject; to support their involvement with the sick and the dying, and to prepare them to take political action with a view to creating a legislative environment more hospitable to life.

The campaign’s method: In keeping with the document “Elements of a National Pastoral Initiative for Life and the Family” — adopted by the CCCB in 2011 — the campaign provides training tools for the advancement “of the common good and of civic responsibility”.

The campaign’s tools mentioned below are available **free on a brand new website dedicated exclusively to the National Campaign (www.lifegivinglove.com)**. They are also available from the Catholic Organization for Life and Family (www.colf.ca) on a USB key for \$10.

Here is a quick overview of this National Campaign...

THE APPROACH

“Life-giving love as the answer to suffering – Caring for the vulnerable.”

THE TOOLS

- **A WEBSITE** exclusively dedicated to this National Campaign for Palliative and Home Care and against Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide. The documents listed below are available on the website.
- **A VIDEO** (10 minutes) in which doctors, disabled persons and other experts explain their stand against euthanasia and assisted suicide, and show how palliative care best responds to the needs of the suffering.
- **“LIFE-GIVING LOVE” – A SHORT AND SIMPLE LEAFLET** with a twofold objective: (1) to clarify the words being used, to give an overview of the situation in Canada and of that prevailing in Belgium and Oregon; (2) to propose the Christian approach to the suffering and loneliness of others: loving care and commitment.

- **PRAYER CARD FOR LIFE** (printed copies available from COLF: www.colf@colf.ca).
- **INTENTIONS FOR THE PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL**
- **QUOTES** from Church documents regarding end-of-life issues (helpful for the preparation of homilies).
- **“WHAT CAN I DO?”** – Action items: contact your MP, intervene in the traditional and social media, encourage organizations opposing euthanasia and assisted suicide, deepen your reflection on these issues, and more.
- **HYPERLINKS** to pertinent articles, to organizations working to counter euthanasia (Euthanasia Prevention Coalition, Living with Dignity, Alliance of Physicians against Euthanasia); and to Catholic organizations (CCCB, COLF, Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute, Catholic Health Association of Canada, etc.).
- **[“FAMILIES, CHRIST CALLS US TO SOW HOPE AND JOY!”](#)** – COLF’s 2014 Message to Families focused on the need for having a heart that sees and takes action. A reflection on Pope Francis’ call to reject the “throwaway” culture, to live “global solidarity” and to become “contagious” with hope and joy.
- **OTHER DOCUMENTS TO ENCOURAGE REFLECTION**
 - **From the Catholic Organization for Life and Family (COLF):**
 - ✓ **[“Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide – Urgent Questions!”](#)**: a 12 page brochure accompanied by a [Workshop Guide](#)
 - ✓ **[“Living, Suffering, Dying... What For?”](#)** – A leaflet on the Christian meaning of life and suffering
 - ✓ **[“End of Life Vocabulary”](#)** – To overcome confusion
 - ✓ **[“Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide: Why Not?” – Quick answers to common arguments](#)**

- ✓ ["A Matter of Solidarity"](#) – Brief presented to the Parliamentary Committee on Palliative and Compassionate Care
- ✓ ["COLF calls Christians to be Audacious Witnesses"](#)
- ✓ ["Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide: Pitfalls and Alternatives"](#): audio presentations from experts invited to COLF's 2010 Seminar on Bioethics (LINK)
- ✓ ["A Pan-Canadian Palliative and End-of-Life Care Strategy? Yes. As soon as possible"](#)

THE TIMING

The **Campaign will be launched at the beginning of October**, just two weeks before the Supreme Court hears the Carter case on October 15, 2014.

Urgent educational work must be undertaken to raise the awareness of Catholics about these issues. This will demand an on-going effort over the coming months and years, but this is only a beginning.

Thank you for giving this campaign serious consideration.

Ottawa, September 2014