



The Catholic Women's League of Canada

MEMO

DATE: October 9, 2020

FROM: Pat Deppiese, national chairperson of Christian family life

TO: Parish chairpersons of Christian family life

CC: Parish presidents, provincial presidents, diocesan presidents, life members (upon request)

Greetings dear sisters in the League! I do hope you are enjoying the beautiful late summer that we are now experiencing. The children are all back to school, and we are all praying they stay safe during this terrible pandemic. Many of us have had a lovely summer off and are hopefully enthusiastically embracing getting back to League work, particularly that of the Christian family life standing committee. Like myself, some of you may be in the third year of your term—we are all in this together! Stay safe, healthy and calm!

As pointed out in the Christian Family Life Study Kit which can be found on the national website under 600 Series: Manuals, “When we think of part (c) of the standing committee, called ‘ministry to,’ we should really consider it as our call from Jesus to walk beside, to interact with the other person. ‘So that they may be one, as we are one’ (John 16:22). We should ask ourselves, what can we do as a CWL council; indeed, what can I do as a person, to make another’s way easier? Our mission is to enable other people, to help them stand on their own as one who is graciously loved by God. Recalling the words of Jesus, (Matt 25:40) ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’”

Euthanasia Prevention

Christian family life communique #8 (April 3, 2020) outlined how members could write and voice their concerns and opinion regarding Bill C-7, an *Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying)*. The bill had its first reading on February 24, 2020 and seeks to expand the eligibility criteria for euthanasia. The government was prorogued until September 23rd. For more information, read Euthanasia Prevention Coalition’s July 31, 2020 newsletter at epcc.ca.

The *First Annual Report on Medical Assistance in Dying in Canada, 2019*, indicates 13.7% of this country’s citizens include isolation or loneliness as one of their reasons for requesting to be lethally injected. It is a sad situation when people want to die because of loneliness.

Some other reasons people gave for asking to be euthanized were:

- Loss of ability to engage in enjoyable activities. It is a serious concern, but with proper interventions, it can be overcome.

- Loss of ability to perform daily living activities—also a serious concern that can be overcome with proper interventions.
- Inadequate control of pain (or concern about it). Palliative and hospice pain-control experts will tell you most serious pain in terminal illnesses can be successfully alleviated.
- Loss of dignity—again, a serious concern that can be overcome with appropriate care.
- Perceived burden on family, friends, and caregivers.
- Emotional distress/anxiety/fear/existential suffering.

One thing members can do something about is one of the first concerns that patients have—loneliness. Encourage members to try to exhibit God’s love, kindness and compassion to those isolated because of the pandemic, or are residents in care homes, or to anyone who is self-isolating at this time. They need to feel welcome, wanted and needed. I am pretty sure if someone who asked to die was told they are worthy of life and love, they would think twice about it. Maybe all they want to hear is that someone cares. In this time of pandemic, this could take the form of phoning someone you know, perhaps someone in your parish who is facing loneliness, see how they are feeling, ask about their family members’ health—connect with them.

There are workshops on euthanasia on the national website under 800 Series: Workshops: Euthanasia (#809) and Workshop on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide (#825).

I remind councils that Euthanasia Prevention Coalition is still one of the national voluntary funds, and donations to this wonderful group under the direction of Alex Schadenberg are gratefully accepted. There is an urgent call for financial help.

Palliative Care

Encourage members to take a course on palliative care offered in their communities or through the church. The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops is producing an education kit soon that aims to help parishes ensure Catholics understand what palliative care is and how they can access it.

Domestic Abuse

There is excellent resource material regarding domestic abuse that has been compiled by the National Board of Catholic Women (England and Wales) entitled *Raising Awareness of Domestic Abuse*. Encourage members to download it from nbcw.co.uk. The booklet is designed to help us to help others to live without fear and could be a useful resource for parish groups offering pastoral care and guidance.

Your province/diocese will likely have knowledge of domestic abuse awareness groups in your area. Perhaps you can pick up some brochures to put in the vestibule regarding domestic violence, who the victims are, how prevalent it is and where to go for help if you are a victim. Does your community have any safe houses? They may need your help. The four basic domestic violence types are physical assault, sexual assault, psychological assault and attacks against property and pets. Let us make every attempt to help those affected to escape the cycle of abuse.