

Legislation

Date: November 17, 2020

Communiqué #11



Care for Our Common Home

TO: Provincial Chairpersons of Legislation
CC: National Executive (for information)
FROM: Betty Colaneri, National Chairperson of Legislation
ENCL: Submission to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops on Bill C-7: *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying)*

“Be sanctuaries of respect for life, proclaiming the sacredness of every human life from conception to natural death” (Pope Francis).

My dear League sisters,

Time is of the essence! Bill C-7 *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying)* has passed second reading in the House of Commons and has now completed its public hearing before the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs. The federal government introduced the bill (sponsored by the minister of justice) and vowed to move it quickly through parliament. It has done precisely that. Chairpersons, please reach out with urgency to your diocesan counterparts and ask them to stress to members that it is imperative to contact their local members of parliament to voice their concerns.

On November 9th, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops submitted a brief on C-7 to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. According to the document, “The proposed legislation of Bill C-7 remains deeply flawed, unjust, and morally pernicious. The Bishops of Canada continue to call on Catholics and all people of good will to make their voices heard in opposition to this Bill. Similarly, every Canadian legislator should recall that no law that permits the taking of innocent human life can ever be morally justified. Such a law would always violate the intrinsic dignity of the human person.” The complete document is enclosed for your information and reference.

“Bill C-7 would allow assisted death for Canadians who are not dying, by removing the requirement that a person’s death must be ‘reasonably foreseeable’ in order to be eligible for assisted suicide and euthanasia. The bill establishes two streams of eligibility: those whose natural death is foreseeable, and those whose natural death is not foreseeable. For those whose death is reasonably foreseeable, Bill C-7 would remove some key safeguards that were established in 2016, such as a 10-day reflection period between the request and the hastened death, and the requirement

that a person is able to consent at the time of the hastened death. The bill also sets additional conditions for hastened death for those who are not dying. ... The bill specifies that mental illness alone cannot make someone eligible for assisted death” (Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, “Bill C-7 to expand Medical Assistance in Dying”).

In response to legislation in favour of euthanasia being adopted by a growing number of governments worldwide, the Holy See posted, “Letter ‘Samaritanus bonus’ of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on the care of persons in the critical and terminal phases of life, 22.09.2020” on the Vatican website. The letter refers to the parable of the Good Samaritan that teaches us that “even when a cure is unlikely or impossible,” medical, nursing, psychological and spiritual care “should never be forsaken.”

Under the heading “III. The Samaritan’s ‘heart that sees’: human life is a sacred and inviolable gift,” it states, “abortion, euthanasia and wilful self-destruction (...) poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are a supreme dishonor to the Creator.” Another important reference can be found under the heading “IV. The Cultural Obstacles that Obscure the Sacred Value of Every Human Life”. “In this connection, Pope Francis has spoken of a ‘throw-away culture’ where the victims are the weakest human beings, who are likely to be ‘discarded’ when the system aims for efficiency at all costs... In this culture of waste and death, euthanasia and assisted suicide emerge as erroneous solutions to the challenge of the care of terminal patients.”

I highly recommend that you read and advise your diocesan counterparts to refer members to the letter. Reading it confirms what Christian ministry is all about. Christians are all meant to be like the Good Samaritan. One of the paragraphs in the letter sums it up beautifully, “It is proper for the Church to accompany with mercy the weakest in their journey of suffering, to preserve them the theological life, and to guide them to salvation. The Church of the Good Samaritan regards ‘the service to the sick as an integral part of its mission.’”

Take action—voice your concerns. The vulnerable are counting on the League.



Betty Colaneri
National Chairperson of Legislation