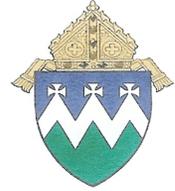


Diocese of Las Vegas
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Diocese of Reno
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Joint Statement of Bishops Pepe' and Calvo Against Doctor Prescribed Suicide

As many of you are aware, there is a bill in the Nevada Legislature to make doctor prescribed suicide legal in Nevada. The bill is SB 261. It provides that a person over 18 years of age who has been diagnosed with a terminal illness with six months or less to live in the opinion of a doctor, may request that a doctor provide a prescription “that is designed to end the life of the patient.”

While the teaching of the Catholic Church against suicide is clear, there are other aspects of SB 261 that we, as Catholics, should also focus on. The very concept of doctor prescribed suicide is an assault on the dignity and worth of human life. The underlying message is that once a person is told that they have a short period of time to live, that person’s worth is diminished, and that if a person is unproductive, weak, and vulnerable, they lose their “value.” Such a concept certainly diminishes the person’s true humanity.

Sadly, it is easier and less expensive to end a life than to care for someone in the midst of suffering. If doctor prescribed suicide becomes “the new norm,” what comes next? Will monetary factors influence decisions on whether or not someone is given the opportunity to battle against a potentially terminal condition?

Physicians are the first to admit that they are notoriously poor in predicting life expectancy in terminal illnesses, and studies have confirmed this fact. It is very common for people with a terminal diagnosis to live much longer than six months – often years longer. Some are ultimately cured. Will it become permissible, and even routine, for health insurance companies to deny further treatment once a person has been given a diagnosis that they will die within six months? It is a fact that in states such as Oregon and California that enacted doctor prescribed suicide, insurance companies have denied payment for potentially lifesaving medical treatments, while offering to pay for assisted suicide instead.

What about our brothers and sisters with disabilities who need continued medical treatment in order to stay alive? Will these disabled persons be deemed to be ultimately “terminal”, and, if so, will government and insurance companies continue to pay for the treatments or equipment necessary to keep them alive, or will disabled persons be pressured to utilize the “assisted suicide option”? Will the elderly, instead of being encouraged to pass on their years of wisdom and love to friends and family, be coerced into taking a deadly prescription, so as not to be a “burden” to their families? In fact, the number one reason listed by patients in Oregon who request “assisted suicide” is not uncontrolled pain – it is being a “burden” to their families!

Another factor which should be considered if the State of Nevada legalizes doctor prescribed suicide, is the impact it may have on persons who are battling depression, suffering from Traumatic Brain Injury, or fighting suicidal tendencies. We believe the message which the enactment of SB 261 would send is that suicide is acceptable, if your life seems to be hopeless.

A basic principle of Catholic moral teaching is the value of all human life. Legalizing doctor prescribed suicide diminishes the value of life, and is an attack on all human dignity.

We urge you to use the information which is provided below to make sure that your legislators know that you value human life, and that you oppose legalizing doctor prescribed suicide.

Use the URL <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/Opinions/79th2017/A> to go to the official website of the Nevada Legislature. It will bring up “Share Your Opinion With Your Legislators”. Select SB 261 from the “Select Bill” drop down, and then go to the “Your View” line, and click on “Against”. This will register your opposition to Doctor Prescribed Suicide.