

# "HOW CAN A LETHAL PRESCRIPTION BE A CRIME IF SOMEONE WANTS IT?"

## WHY ASSISTED SUICIDE IS WRONG.



*Sixth in an  
8 Part Series*

You are at a family gathering. A relative starts talking about Jack Kevorkian.

"He's ghoulish, for sure, but he's got a point. If someone wants to die, then who's the victim? I don't see what's wrong with assisted suicide if a person wants it."

Your relative dismisses the argument about life being a gift of God. "I'm not religious. Give me a good reason to keep it a crime, not a bible quote."

So, what are the reasons?

### *Slopes & rinks*

If the law permits assisted suicide, then look out for the ice, both on the slope to the bottom and in the rink at the top.

A practice that starts out as voluntary will slide down the hill to become involuntary. That's the picture emerging from Holland, where euthanasia is practiced. Many Dutch are euthanized without being asked, even though that's not supposed to happen.

Furthermore, judging whose death wish is truly voluntary is like entering a hockey rink with banana peels as skates. The process will be slick and hazardous. Can

we expect the government or anyone else to eliminate error?

Studies prove that most suicidal wishes are caused by treatable depression. Even doctors find depression difficult to spot, and it's often misdiagnosed. Legalize assisted suicide and the request to die will become a "right" to be carried out, not an alarm signal for crisis intervention. And, as proven in Holland, the target will expand to the very old and those with severe disabilities.

As a result, people will die who otherwise would want to live. Where's the freedom in that?

### *Affirming a life*

Chances are, a person truly seeking death is convinced that life is too painful, or has no worth and no meaning. Usually the suicide wish harbors a hidden desire: "Stop my pain. Help me find meaning in my life, tell me my life really does have worth."

If we take the suicide plea at face value, rather than as a call to affirm life, then we confirm a lie instead and fail the test. We reinforce the person's sense of worthlessness and ignore the treatable causes.

Something else happens on a broader scale when the law enters the scene.

Presently, the law in Massachusetts treats every suicide as a threat to life because the law values every person. Give any persons, such as the terminally ill, the "right" to receive help with suicide, and automatically the law treats those lives because of their terminal condition as less worthy of protection.

The message is loud and clear: while we will care when the healthy try suicide, we won't care when the dying do it. Their lives are not worth the effort to save. This raises the further issue: If the dying are not worth the effort to save, then how can we justify their sometimes expensive support?

*I'm not worth it, you're not worth it*

The result is not about choice, but about being branded as a life so lacking in value in the law's eyes as to be eligible for death. This stigma will affect all the terminally ill, even those who treasure life. It will impact financial and medical policies for all the dying.

***This bulletin insert is provided by the Massachusetts Catholic Conference as part of its initiative In Support of Life. To learn more you can contact our office at 1-617-367-6060 or visit our website at [www.macathconf.org](http://www.macathconf.org).***

Our country's framers built our system of government on the foundation of inalienable interests. Certain rights, such as the right to life, were considered so fundamental to the just conduct of social affairs that their possessors could not renounce such rights nor could the government be a party to any such attempt.

If assisted suicide becomes legal, then some members of Massachusetts will be left with only the alienable right to life. The state will be a party to this discrimination. The dying will lose their equal stake in the law's protection and they will become even more vulnerable to cost-cutting policies based on "quality of life".

None of these concerns requires a religious faith to apprehend or to appreciate. What's wrong with allowing assisted suicide for those who want it? It devalues life and endangers those who don't want it. No bible quote needed.

MASSACHUSETTS CATHOLIC CONFERENCE  
West End Place, 150 Staniford Street, First Floor  
Boston, MA 02114-2511  
617-367-6060 (ph) 617-367-2767 (fx)  
[www.macathconf.org](http://www.macathconf.org)

