



MEDIA RELEASE – Archdiocese of Brisbane

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CATHOLIC CHURCHES OBSERVE DYING PEACEFULLY – NO EUTHANASIA SUNDAY **NOVEMBER 17**

Brisbane Archdiocesan parishes and others across Queensland are observing “Dying Peacefully – No Euthanasia” Sunday today, helping to break down the misunderstandings of the Catholic faith’s approach to euthanasia.

A range of resource materials outlining the church’s “Care First” approach of support for palliative care services as opposed to the introduction of so called “voluntary assisted dying” (VAD) were being distributed at Mass centres.

The initiative was recommended by Archbishop Mark Coleridge as it became clear the issues of VAD and palliative care, which itself is much more than the sedation of pain, were not well understood in the community.

For example, the Catholic tradition affirms that a person can voluntarily stop treatment for a terminal illness that is judged to be overly burdensome or disproportionate.

Alternately, a patient’s pain and suffering can be relieved, even if the medication intentionally administered for this purpose could have the foreseeable effect of hastening death.

Also individuals and their loved ones can document their wishes, in terms of care and their desire for potential life-prolonging interventions should they become incompetent, in the form of an advanced care plan.

None of these examples constitute VAD and each of them is perfectly compatible with the Catholic faith.

All scenarios also fit comfortably within the spectrum of what should be provided in a properly funded Palliative Care system available on a state-wide basis.

In a written message to the Catholic faithful – one of the resources being distributed at the weekend – the Archbishop was clear not to impute bad faith or evil intent to those who saw things differently.

“We all want to be compassionate in difficult circumstances; we all value personal freedom,” he wrote.

“The difference is in the way we define what these mean in those circumstances; and in that task I am concerned to look beyond political expediency, economic myopia and ideological posturing.

“It’s more a matter of helping to chart a wise and genuinely human course into the future in a way that learns from the past.

“Our support for better palliative care is grounded in the common good of society.

“Better end-of-life care begins with better conversations about death and dying and how we can die well in ways that do not undermine the foundational values of our society.”

A Parliamentary Health Committee is currently preparing recommendations on aged care, end of life care, palliative care and VAD.

The reporting deadline was delayed from November 2019 to March 2020.

ENDS

Released by the Catholic Communications Office

***For follow up inquiries please contact Adrian Taylor on 0419 027 769 or
taylor@bne.catholic.net.au***