



OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

Statement in Support of Motion 456

The care of our loved ones as they approach the end of their lives is of deep concern to all of us. In all that we do in our homes or institutions to help them prepare for death, we want their inalienable dignity as human beings and children of God to be honoured and respected.

This issue requires our urgent attention. In our country we continue to witness sustained pressure for the legalization of practices that run counter to this dignity, namely, euthanasia and assisted suicide. For example, the Supreme Court of Canada, in October of this year, will hear arguments in what is called *the Carter case*, which is seeking to have both euthanasia and assisted suicide legalized. Also, a Member of Parliament has currently introduced two private member's bills aimed at the legalization of these practices. In addition, we see today in the media frequent argumentation presented in favour of both euthanasia and assisted suicide.

The commitment of the Catholic Church to honour and protect human life at every stage from beginning to natural end is resolute. Good quality palliative care is the appropriate way to care for our loved ones at the end of their lives. It is consistent with the call of the Gospel to affirm life at every stage, and acknowledges that God alone is the author of life and we are but stewards. Palliative care serves to surround a person with the spiritual, medical, psychological and social supports necessary to affirm and uphold their dignity and assure the best quality of life possible as they approach natural death. It excludes euthanasia, which is the deliberate killing of someone, with or without that person's consent, in order to eliminate all suffering. Likewise does palliative care not include assisted suicide, by which a person provides the means for another to kill him or herself.

Mr. Charlie Angus, Member of Parliament for Timmins - James Bay, has introduced to the federal Parliament Motion 456, which calls for the establishment of a national palliative care strategy in our country. Such an initiative is worthy of our support and I am pleased to add my voice and that of the Archdiocese of Edmonton to those of others who endorse it.

In contrast, both euthanasia and assisted suicide are absolutely unacceptable and must be vigorously opposed. They violate the bedrock principle of the intrinsic value and sanctity of each human life at every stage of natural existence.

Most Reverend Richard W. Smith
Archbishop of Edmonton
7 May 2014