

The long-standing Catholic way to make a moral choice is, namely, individual conscience, the "law inscribed by God" in human hearts, "the most secret core and sanctuary of man...[where] he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depth. In a wonderful manner conscience reveals that law which is fulfilled by love of God and neighbor" ("Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," No. 16).

Who Are We?

- We are a Compassion & Choices initiative that elevates the voice of faithful Catholics who want to serve as a resource for those looking for guidance on the end-of-life experience and how their faith can inform those decisions.
- We come from all walks of life and many of us know first hand the pain of watching loved ones die a long, slow, painful death.
- We believe that death is a deeply personal journey and that the individual facing it, along with their family, should have all medically available options available to them and should have their choices respected by their healthcare provider.

Why Do We Exist?

- Death is a part of life that we will all have to face. Catholics for Compassion desires to support you in deciding how your faith guides you and your loved one at the end of life.
- We hope that by sharing our personal stories and providing resources to others about how our Catholic faith informs our views, we will help people who are suffering from a terminal illness and their families feel like they are not alone.
- We acknowledge and respect the concerns of the Catholic Church and faithful Catholics regarding the available options as one nears the end of their life. We believe that faithful Catholics need to be fully informed and have all of the options available to them so that they can—together with their families - make decisions informed by their faith about what is best for them. Options can include palliative sedation, voluntary stopping eating and drinking or withdrawing other life prolonging measures. Several states have the additional option of medical aid in dying for the terminally ill, which is self administered prescribed medication to end suffering and allow a peaceful death.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

→ *How does this group respond to what the Church says about suffering?*

We acknowledge people's individual beliefs, and believe that one's faith should not limit one's choice to decide which end-of-life option is best for them and their family. Particularly, the Catholic moral tradition is clear that simply prolonging physical life is not required, especially when the means to accomplish prolonging life is "precarious and burdensome." We affirm that one's own conscience is the final arbiter of right and wrong.

→ *What options are available as one nears the end of their life?*

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→ *Is medical aid in dying the same as assisted suicide or suicide?*

No. State legislatures and the American Association of Suicidology (AAS) recognize medical aid in dying as differing from suicide, assisted suicide, or euthanasia. Likewise, from a moral perspective there is a different intent. Whereas the intent of a suicide is to end life, the intent of a person choosing medical aid in dying is to end their physical suffering even while they would like to continue living.