



ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE *of* ALBANY

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED SUICIDE: PASTORAL AND LITURGICAL GUIDELINES AND DIRECTIVES



Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany, NY

Physician-Assisted Suicide: Pastoral and Liturgical Guidelines and Directives *1st Edition*

I. Pastoral Preamble:

A culturally significant piece of legislation was passed by the New York State Assembly and Senate legalizing so called “assisted suicide”, with the official title, the “Medical Aid in Dying Act” (NYS Bill A136/S.138). On February 6, 2026 the Governor approved and signed this Act into law in our State. This law will take effect on August 5, 2026. As we know well, physician-assisted suicide or, as it is euphemistically called, “assisted dying”, is the deliberate and intentional act of hastening and facilitating a patient’s death by providing the means (such as prescription barbiturates) and/or information to commit suicide “to a patient who is otherwise physically capable of suicide, and who subsequently acts on his or her own to commit suicide.”¹ Doctors will therefore be asked, in effect, to break their Hippocratic Oath of “doing no harm.” As the American Medical Association puts it: “Physician-assisted suicide is fundamentally incompatible with the physician’s role as healer, would be difficult or impossible to control, and would pose serious societal risks.”²

As a priest, or a minister, we have encountered many who have contemplated ending their life because of illness, old age or depression. As an individual and as a member of a family, or as a friend, we may have spent time with those close to us, who might have been contemplating ending their life, or who have had debilitating terminal illnesses.

We are well aware of all the various medical, scientific and social factors involved in the legalizing of assisted suicide, most notably: the concerns about becoming a burden to family and friends; the fear of future suffering; the inclination to equate a terminal diagnosis with a life that is not worth living; and the elevation of autonomy as the ultimate right. Yet, in the face of terminal illness and the inevitability of death, the answer is not to kill, but to care authentically. For, “the judgement that an illness is incurable cannot mean that care has come to an end.”³ Rather, when a cure proves to be impossible and the weight of suffering and death burdens the sick, our notion of care must expand to consider the physical, social, familial, and religious support necessary to accompany and assist the dying until their natural death.⁴ Authentic care, therefore, adopts a “contemplative gaze” that sees beyond the illness to contemplate, receive, and treat the whole human person, and

¹ American Medical Association (AMA), *Code of Medical Ethics*, Opinion 5.7: <https://code-medical-ethics.ama-assn.org/ethics-opinions/physician-assisted-suicide>; Timothy E. Quill, “Death and Dignity,” in *Last Rights: Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia Debated*, ed. Michael M. Uhlmann (Washington, DC/Grand Rapids, MI: Ethics and Public Policy Center/William B. Eerdsman Publishing Co., 1998), pp. 327-328.

² American Medical Association (AMA), *Code of Medical Ethics*, Opinion 5.7.

³ Samaritanus Bonus, I.

⁴ Ibid.

thus, strives neither to hasten death, nor to obstinately preserve life.⁵ Instead, it seeks to remain with the sick, loving them when they believe themselves to be unlovable, helping them to carry their burden when it seems too heavy to bear, and accompanying them through the hours of suffering that can often seem meaningless, until their life comes to its natural end. Although, authentic care is the responsibility of us all (family, friends, priests, parishioners, physicians, nurses, etc...), it is especially so for those who have been called to the profession of palliative and hospice care. When these two forms of care are undertaken authentically, they greatly aid the dying, reduce the factors that often lead to requests for physician-assisted suicide, and uphold the dignity of the human person.

While reason provides us with many arguments for which we should oppose physician-assisted suicide and, with it, the “culture of death,” as Christians, a most compelling factor is our belief in life and, in God, the author and source of life.⁶ We believe that life is a *gift*. We are stewards of all we have and are – including life itself: we are not possessors, nor owners. Just as it is absurd to speak of having a choice or right to end life at its beginning, so too for life as it draws to its natural end, even when life seems a very heavy burden or a cross, rather than a gift.

As priests and ministers, we are also aware of the gift of ministry, a sacred trust given to us by God. With the passing of the “Medical Aid in Dying Act,” we now encounter many difficult and complex pastoral situations. There are general questions and issues: How can we continue to be defenders and promoters of a culture of life? How can we best help the many wonderful people and groups who work with the elderly, the dying, or those who find life hard and burdensome? The legalizing of physician-assisted suicide raises, of course, specific moral, pastoral and liturgical questions: How do we minister to those who have chosen, or are contemplating assisted suicide? How do we minister to their family or friends? How do we counsel and assist many Catholic (and other) members of the medical profession, who now find themselves in an invidious position due to this Act? What should we do once someone has taken their own life by physician-assisted suicide?

II. General Factors:

These are crucial and weighty questions facing any person but, in particular, those who exercise the gift of ministry in the Church. Therefore, the purpose of these Diocesan guidelines and directives is to provide some help and guidance in providing authentic pastoral/liturgical care, bearing in mind the many and complex situations that ministers are likely to encounter. Indeed, many documents, including those from the Church’s Magisterium, guidelines from other dioceses and pastoral/academic articles on assisted suicide identify four main situations that ministers are

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ John Paul II characterizes this culture as one that “denies solidarity, is excessively concerned with efficiency, and, in a certain sense, is “a war of the powerful against the weak: a life which would require greater acceptance, love and care is considered useless, or held to be an intolerable burden, and is therefore rejected in one way or another.” Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelium Vitae*, 12.

likely to encounter. Each scenario carries with it the need for careful discernment about what pastoral counsel and care would be offered and what liturgical/sacramental action should be taken:

1. A person who is considering physician-assisted suicide (PAS), but who has not yet determined whether or not to request this course of action.
2. A person who has firmly determined to request PAS, but has not yet done so.
3. A person who has formally requested PAS and now awaits, or has already obtained, the prescription to end his or her own life.
4. A person who has come to a firm and final decision to administer the prescription.

One might also add other, closely related, situations. For example, what to do when medical staff, or family members, or friends, have cooperated or collaborated with the decision and/or act of physician-assisted suicide? What funeral arrangements are possible for a person who has taken their life through physician-assisted suicide? What care and support can be given to the family and friends of a person who has taken their life through PAS?

Most certainly, any a priest or minister should always be ready to engage in a conversation with the people involved in any of these scenarios. The conversation and any subsequent pastoral counsel and/or liturgical action should be compassionate, respectful and firmly based upon the Church's clear and constant teaching regarding euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide. Morally acceptable alternatives to physician-assisted suicide (palliative care, hospice, pain control etc.) should also be a part of any conversation or counsel.

III. Specific Guidelines:

A. Anointing of the Sick, Viaticum and Reconciliation:

The abundance of God's love and mercy shines forth in all of Christ's sacraments, but with special splendor in those three sacraments – Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, and Viaticum (also called “last rites”) – reserved for the faithful who are about to take the leap from time into eternity, from obscurity to the clear vision of God. While the treasury of God's grace in these wonderful sacraments is inexhaustible, the fruitful reception of His grace in them also involves the disposition of the one seeking to receive them. It is with these truths in mind that the *Code of Canon Law* states the following when speaking about the administration and reception of the anointing of the sick, reconciliation, and Holy Communion:

- Concerning the Anointing of the Sick:
 - the anointing of the sick is not to be conferred upon those who persevere obstinately in manifest grave sin.”⁷
- Concerning Holy Communion:
 - Those “obstinately persevering in manifest grave sin are not to be admitted to holy communion.”⁸

⁷ *Code of Canon Law*, c. 1007. Cf. *Pastoral Care of the Sick (PCS)*, General Introduction, n.7.

⁸ *Code of Canon Law*, c. 915.

- Those who are “conscious of grave sin are not to celebrate Mass or receive the body of the Lord without previous sacramental confession.”⁹
- Concerning Reconciliation:
 - “to receive the salvific remedy of the sacrament of penance, a member of the Christian faithful must be disposed in such a way that, rejecting sins committed and having a purpose of amendment, the person is turned back to God.”¹⁰

In the light of these canonical points (based as they are upon an authentic understanding of the sacraments), when ministering to those who are considering PAS or who have already requested PAS, the priest or minister has a crucial role and calling. The priest or minister has the challenge of striving to persuade the person to turn away from their decision to pursue PAS and to turn instead towards Christ, so that the person is disposed to receive the Lord’s sacramental graces. In order to aid the priest or minister in this most difficult, yet vital encounter of pastoral care, the following directives are given:

Guidelines and Directives for the Anointing of the Sick and Viaticum:

1. As noted above, “The Anointing of the Sick is not to be conferred upon those who persevere obstinately in manifest grave sin.”¹¹ If a person has requested PAS, this request is a grave sin, which sets the person in objective contradiction with Christ’s Paschal Mystery and with their baptismal call to live and die with Christ.
2. In the case of someone who has **not requested PAS** but is **considering** this possibility, but has not yet determined to do so (cf. Case 1 above, p.2 “General Factors”), the Anointing of the Sick should **not** be delayed, and the priest should encourage the person to make a confession.¹² This will be an opportunity to help the person remember his/her baptismal call in Christ, reject the temptation of PAS and the sin of despair, offer the fatherly accompaniment of a priest, and invite him/her to contemplate the Passion of the Lord.
3. In the case of someone who:
 - a. has **firmly determined** to request PAS, but has **not yet** done so (cf. case 2 above, p.2 “General Factors”), or
 - b. has **formally requested** PAS and now awaits or has already obtained the prescription to end his or her own life (cf. case 3 above, p.2 “General Factors”); or
 - c. has come to a **firm and final decision** to administer the prescription (cf. case 4 above, “General Factors”);

the priest is in a different situation. The request for the Anointing will be a providential opportunity to accompany and engage this person with understanding and encourage them to receive God’s mercy through Confession. As a true father and physician, the priest will

⁹ *Code of Canon Law*, c. 916.

¹⁰ *Code of Canon Law*, c.987.

See *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*, 1450-1451 and *Order of Penance*, Introduction, 6a, On Contrition.

¹¹ *Code of Canon Law*, 1007.

¹² Cf. Case 1 above, p.2 “General Factors”.

listen attentively and will make every effort to help this person change his determination. If the person decides to reverse his or her decision, the priest will be able to anoint him or her after Reconciliation/Confession. Otherwise, the person's decision to pursue PAS will require the priest **to delay** the anointing and absolution in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, as well as postpone the reception of Holy Communion or Viaticum.

Guidelines and Directives for the Sacrament of Reconciliation

4. In order for a priest to give absolution, the three acts of the penitent must be present: contrition, confession, and satisfaction.¹³
5. In the case of someone who has requested physician-assisted suicide (PAS), the matter of contrition arises. The confession of sins is not enough if there is no detestation for the sin committed and a resolution not to sin again. A person who has formally requested PAS has placed him or herself in an objective state of sin.¹⁴ Through this request, the person has started a process that he/she intends to end in suicide, with the complicity of a physician or other medical professional. True, but imperfect contrition only requires purpose of amendment, that is, the resolution to reject the objective state of sin and promise to **rescind** the official request for PAS as soon as possible. If this rescinding of the decision is made, the penitent should also properly dispose of the medication, and notify any relatives, friends, and relevant medical personnel of his or her change of heart. It may happen, however, that after all reasonable efforts have been made, the person seeking PAS shows neither signs of being sorry, nor the needed purpose of amendment. In this painful situation, the penitent requires the priest to **delay** absolution until a later time, while other efforts are made so that the penitent may be properly disposed to validly partake of the sacrament.¹⁵ It must be noted that to “delay absolution is a medicinal act of the Church, intended not to condemn, but to lead the sinner to conversion.”¹⁶
6. If the penitent has decided to apply for PAS but has not yet begun the official request process (cf. case 2 above, p.2. “General Factors”), the priest can **give absolution**, as long as the penitent **clearly indicates** that he/she will reverse his decision.
7. If a person has definitively resolved to self-administer the physician-assisted suicide prescription (cf. case 4 above, p. 2. “General Factors”), the priest or minister may pray with the person and his/her family. The priest or minister ought to pray in such a way that calls upon God's mercy for the individual and strives to dissuade him/her from committing suicide. True pastoral accompaniment is always oriented toward conversion, therefore, the priest or minister must strive to never reduce the moral and eternal gravity of the situation, nor give the impression of approving of an action so contrary to the dignity of the human person.
 - a. For guidance, some sample prayers to be used in this difficult situation are provided in Appendix II.

¹³ See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1450-1460 and *Order of Penance*, Introduction, 6.

¹⁴ Cf. Cases 3 and 4 above, p. 2., “General Factors.”

¹⁵ Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, c. 980 and c. 987.

¹⁶ Cf. Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF), Letter: *Samaritanus Bonus*, 11.

- b. **Under no circumstance** may the priest or minister be present when a person self-administers the physician-assisted suicide prescription, in order to avoid scandal and preclude any impression of approval.
 - c. Should a person die through physician-assisted suicide, his or her family members who **did not** cooperate with or approve of the action ought to be assured that the church never despairs of a person's eternal salvation. As the Catechism states: "By ways known to him alone, God can provide the opportunity for salutary repentance...The Church prays for persons who have taken their own lives."¹⁷ With messages of hope, therefore, families ought to be encouraged to pray for the salvation of their family member who has committed an objectively grave sin against God's love by taking their own life.
8. In the case of someone who has committed the sin of **cooperation and/or scandal** by encouraging a relative or friend to request PAS, the priest will confirm he or she is contrite and has a firm purpose of amendment. **Absolution** can be granted to the penitent, who may be invited to make proper satisfaction by praying for those he/she has offended, and, if possible, talking to them and trying to convince them to rescind their PAS request.
- a. In the case of someone who has **cooperated** with the administration of PAS (i.e. physician, psychiatrist, pharmacist, etc...), the priest will welcome him/her mercifully and help him/her understand the seriousness of his/her sin and the greatness of God's love. True contrition requires purpose of amendment, which implies a resolution to stop participating in PAS and begin a path of healing and reconciliation with the Lord. Possible means of satisfaction for those who have participated in PAS could involve praying for those whom they have helped commit suicide, seeking to heal wounds created in the family by their promotion of PAS, performing acts of mortification, or offering acts of love (thereby seeking to foster true compassion) for those whom they have affected, etc.

B. Order of Christian Funerals:

Regarding the celebration of a Catholic Funeral, a number of factors are to be considered. A funeral is, of course, celebrated for the person who has died.¹⁸ However, it is crucial to recognize that the family and friends of the deceased, as well as the wider community, are also most certainly ministered to, involved in, and touched by, the celebration of a funeral.¹⁹

A Catholic funeral, under ordinary circumstances, would not be denied to those who commit suicide, as the Church recognizes that "grave psychological disturbances, anguish, or grave fear of hardship, suffering or torture can diminish the responsibility of one committing suicide."²⁰ While those who commit suicide by PAS may have done so with diminished competence, and thus, with reduced culpability – as in the case of other suicides – PAS involves a number of circumstances

¹⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2283.

¹⁸ *Order of Christian Funerals*, General Introduction, nn. 4-6, 18.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 4, 7, 16-17.

²⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2282.

and pastoral concerns that make it qualitatively different from other suicidal actions. Circumstances and concerns that warrant a thorough pastoral review of each case, and which may result in the deprivation of an ecclesiastical funeral in accord with canon 1184.

Guidelines and Directives for The Order of Christian Funerals:

As noted, there are certain pastoral concerns when it is known that the deceased ended their life by means of physician-assisted suicide (PAS):

1. PAS, as a form of “state-sanctioned suicide,” is different from other suicides because it intentionally promotes a culture of death, it involves the active participation of society (medical professionals, family members, state employees, etc...) and because it generates public scandal by leading others to sin.²¹
2. In light of these differences, when reviewing a request for the celebration of a Funeral Mass for a person known to have committed PAS, a more thorough and prudent pastoral investigation must be undertaken by the pastor and/or parish prior to granting permission for the celebration. Such an investigation should consider, among other relevant factors:
 - a. The individual’s competence and moral culpability;
 - b. The degree of publicity surrounding the act;
 - c. The family’s approval or disapproval of the individual’s decision to pursue PAS;
 - d. The family’s disposition toward the Church’s teaching on PAS; and
 - e. The degree of publicity surrounding the family’s approval of their loved one’s suicide and/or rejection of the Church’s teaching on PAS.
3. Upon completion of this review, assuming there are no impediments present, and no public scandal has already occurred or will likely occur, a Funeral Mass may be celebrated for a person who has taken their life through PAS.²²
 - a. Should permission be granted by the pastor and/or parish for such a Funeral Mass, no eulogy is to be permitted, nor any sign given that the choice of suicide has or ever could be approved.
 - b. The Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ and the hope founded in his merciful love must remain the focus of any Mass, but especially in such circumstances as this. Therefore, pastors and priests must take great care to select prayers for the Funeral Mass that are suitable to these circumstances.
 - c. See “Appendix II” for recommendations for prayers for Masses for the Dead.
4. If, however, a pastor and/or parish judges that the celebration of a Catholic funeral would give rise to public scandal, the matter must be referred to the diocesan bishop for review. After consultation with, and approval by, the diocesan bishop, a Catholic funeral may be refused.
 - a. Circumstances for refusal may include cases in which the deceased clearly and publicly advocated for physician-assisted suicide, was manifestly competent in the decision to pursue PAS, and/or where family members openly reject the Church’s teaching on physician-assisted suicide and publicly promotes and/or celebrates the assisted-suicide of their loved one in a manner that risks causing scandal among the faithful.

²¹ <https://www.nyscatholic.org/posts/statement-cardinal-dolan-and-nys-bishops-state-sanctioned-suicide-bill>

²² Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, c. 1184.

5. If a funeral is denied to the person who committed suicide using PAS, this is **not** a judgement on the salvation of the deceased, rather it is a means of protecting against matters, such as the scandal of a public sin that promotes the culture of death and erodes our vision of every human life as a gift.
6. Any person who committed suicide by using PAS may have their remains buried according to the Rite of Committal.²³
7. A suitable time after the burial, the priest should encourage the family of the deceased to have Masses offered for the repose of their loved one's soul. In any case, any kind of celebration of the decision of requesting PAS must be avoided.
8. Any questions should be referred to the Tribunal or Liturgy Office.

Pastoral care of the family and friends of someone who goes through with physician-assisted suicide should remain an important and ongoing focus for the Church (that is, the parish or chaplaincy, or other community), as can be demonstrated in a priest's or minister's ongoing healing and compassionate ministry.

A Concluding Prayer:

God our Creator, we give thanks to you,
who alone have the power to impart the breath of life
as you form each of us in our mother's womb;
grant we pray, that we, whom you have made stewards of creation
and of life itself,
may remain faithful to this sacred trust
and constant in safeguarding the dignity of every human life.
We pray for a spirit of conversion
in those who allow or promote a culture of death,
most especially those charged with public office;
that they may once more see and understand the truth
and recognize their responsibility to guard and defend
every human life from conception to natural death.
Through Christ, our Lord. Amen

Approved by the Most Rev. Mark O'Connell, Bishop of Albany, NY

1st July 2026

²³ Cf. Order of Christian Funerals, Committal Rites.

APPENDIX I

More detailed Points from *Samaritanus Bonus* (CDF, “on the care of persons in critical terminal phases of life”, 2020) Part V: Par. 11:

11. Pastoral discernment towards those who request Euthanasia or Assisted Suicide

The pastoral accompaniment of those who expressly ask for euthanasia or assisted suicide today presents a singular moment when a reaffirmation of the teaching of the Church is necessary. With respect to the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, the confessor must be assured of the presence of the true contrition *necessary for the validity of absolution* which consists in “sorrow of mind and a detestation for sin committed, with the purpose of not sinning for the future”. In this situation, we find ourselves before a person who, whatever their subjective dispositions may be, has decided upon a gravely immoral act and willingly persists in this decision. Such a state involves a manifest absence of the proper disposition for the reception of the Sacraments of Penance, with absolution, and Anointing, with Viaticum. Such a penitent can receive these sacraments only when the minister discerns his or her readiness to take concrete steps that indicate he or she has modified their decision in this regard. Thus a person who may be registered in an association to receive euthanasia or assisted suicide must manifest the intention of cancelling such a registration before receiving the sacraments. It must be recalled that the necessity to postpone absolution does not imply a judgment on the imputability of guilt, since personal responsibility could be diminished or non-existent. The priest could administer the sacraments to an unconscious person *sub condicione* if, on the basis of some signal given by the patient beforehand, he can presume his or her repentance.

The position of the Church here does not imply a non-acceptance of the sick person. It must be accompanied by a willingness to listen and to help, together with a deeper explanation of the nature of the sacrament, in order to provide the opportunity to desire and choose the sacrament up to the last moment. The Church is careful to look deeply for adequate signs of conversion, so that the faithful can reasonably ask for the reception of the sacraments. To delay absolution is a medicinal act of the Church, intended not to condemn, but to lead the sinner to conversion.

It is necessary to remain close to a person who may not be in the objective condition to receive the sacraments, for this nearness is an invitation to conversion, especially when euthanasia, requested or accepted, will not take place immediately or imminently. Here it remains possible to accompany the person whose hope may be revived and whose erroneous decision may be modified, thus opening the way to admission to the sacraments.

Nevertheless, those who spiritually assist these persons should avoid any gesture, such as remaining until the euthanasia is performed, that could be interpreted as approval of this action. Such a presence could imply complicity in this act. This principle applies in a particular way, but is not limited to, chaplains in the healthcare systems where euthanasia is practiced, for they must not give scandal by behaving in a manner that makes them complicit in the termination of human life.

APPENDIX II

PRAYERS

GENERAL INTERCESSIONS²⁴

These intercessions may be used throughout the year, especially during Suicide Awareness Month (September).

For our Pope, our Bishop, our priests, deacons, and lay Catholic ministers, that they bring the healing presence of Christ's peace into the lives of those who are suffering with suicidality and into the lives of those who are grieving of a suicide.

We pray to the Lord.

For our elected officials, that they repeal physician-assisted suicide, and come to enact legislation that secures and furthers a culture of life, prevents suicide, and upholds the dignity of every human person from conception to natural death.

We pray to the Lord.

For physicians, nurses, and all professionals who care for the sick and dying, that they may never see their patients as burdens, but may be given the grace to love each patient with the love of Christ until natural death.

We pray to the Lord.

For psychologists, psychiatrists, therapists and all who provide treatment to people who are suicidal, may God grant them the gifts of wisdom, healing, and compassion.

We pray to the Lord.

For those living with a mental illness, depression, and suicidal thoughts, may they find the help and support that they need to lead peaceful and full lives.

We pray to the Lord.

We commend to your mercy and defense all who are contemplating suicide this day. Bring someone or something to intervene.

We pray to the Lord.

For families and friends experiencing the loss of a loved one by suicide, may they find healing and comfort in your Church.

We pray to the Lord

For those who have cooperated and participated in physician-assisted suicide, may the Holy Spirit illumine their consciences, bring them to repentance, and grant them life in Christ.

We pray to the Lord

²⁴ Diocese of Des Moines, Iowa, <https://www.dmdiocese.org/filesimages/MentalHealthMinistry/intercessory-prayers-for-suicide-loss.pdf>

For the repose of the souls of our fellow parishioners, our family members, and neighbors who have died by suicide or physician-assisted suicide. May they experience the mercy and love of Christ.

We pray to the Lord

OTHER INTERCESSIONS²⁵

For all people in nursing homes: that we would be inspired to visit them and remind them of their great worth.

We pray to the Lord

For elderly parents and godparents: that the love and respect of their children might sustain them and bring them joy.

We pray to the Lord

For those denied adequate care: that we might stand up for their God-given dignity and assist them in their needs.

We pray to the Lord

For all who are forgotten or thrown away, and especially for the poor, the sick, and the aged: that God might change our hearts and move us to love them as the image of Christ.

We pray to the Lord

For those who have grown tired of life, and especially for those tempted to suicide: that God might grant them patient endurance and the support of loved ones.

We pray to the Lord

For those tempted to despair because of constant pain: that they might join their suffering to the Cross of Christ.

We pray to the Lord

For those who have grown weak or infirm: that we might see God's power in their fragility and experience a new revelation of God's love for them.

We pray to the Lord

That the sick may find strength and courage in the Cross of Christ and discover the redemptive value of their suffering.

We pray to the Lord

For all who are about to die: that through our love, care, and devotion, they might know the beauty of life, as they prepare for death.

We pray to the Lord

²⁵ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/assisted-suicide/to-live-each-day/upload/prayer-resources.pdf>

**PRAYERS THAT MAY BE SAID WITH THOSE WHO ARE CONTEMPLATING
PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED SUICIDE**

1.

Lord God, Author of all life
and giver of every good gift,
you have made us to know you, to love you
and to serve you,
especially in others.
You are with us in all things
and every good path can lead us to you.

We know that you are with us now,
at this pivotal moment of choice and decision.
Guide us, we pray, with your good and loving counsel.
Enlighten any darkness in our heart
and grant us right faith, certain hope, and perfect charity.
Let your will, not our will, be done.
Let life, not death, be our choice:
 even though this choice seems daunting and overwhelming,
 even though there seem to be so many reasons to choose another path than life.

Lord, also help us take to heart
that your gift of life is very much about others,
especially family and friends.
May their love give us courage and strength
to walk this challenging path of life.

We ask too that your Holy Spirit,
the Lord and Giver of Life,
will give us those much needed gifts of clarity, direction,
confidence, and understanding.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

(Composed by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany)

2.

O Lord our God,
We come before you seeking the grace we need in this hour of trial.
Steer the ship of our life to yourself,
the quiet harbor of all storm-stressed souls.
Look with compassion upon your servant, N.,
whose heart is burdened by suffering, fear, loneliness, and despair.

Show him (her) the path that leads to life.
Renew within him (her) the spirit of trust and hope.
Send your Holy Spirit upon your servant
to dispel all darkness and strengthen every weakness.
Preserve him (her) from the temptation to surrender to despair,
or to choose death as a solution to suffering.
Help him (her) to recognize
the enduring dignity and worth you have bestowed upon him (her),
and to receive with courage the love and care
offered by family, friends, caregivers, and your Church.

Grant him (her) the grace to unite his (her) present sufferings
to the Cross of your Son, Jesus Christ,
confident that neither suffering nor death
can separate us from your love.
Guide and strengthen us all to choose what is good,
to remain faithful to your commandments,
and to rejoice always in your life-giving presence.

For you are the Lord of life, our hope in affliction,
and our salvation in every trial.

Yours is the glory and praise for all eternity.
Amen.

(RC Diocese of Albany, adapted from the Prayer of Saint Basil the Great, Pontifical North American College, *Manual of Prayers*, Prayer of Saint Basil the Great, 308)

3.

God our Father,
your Son Jesus Christ freely accepted our sufferings
to teach us the virtue of patience, trust, and perseverance
in the midst of every trial.
Hear the prayers we offer for our sick brother (sister), **N**.
In his (her) pain, illness, and uncertainty,
let him (her) know that he (she) is never abandoned by you,
but remains precious in your sight.

Strengthen him (her) when hope grows weak,
comfort him (her) when fear presses,
and preserve him (her) from every temptation to despair, suicide,
and any choice contrary to your loving plan.

May he (she), and all who suffer,
come to recognize that their lives possess enduring dignity and purpose,
and that they are called to holiness even in the midst of affliction.
Unite your servant's sufferings to the suffering of Christ,
so that what is borne with faith, hope, and love
may become a source of grace for his (her) own sanctification
and for the good of your Church and the salvation of the world.
Grant him (her) the courage to receive each day as your gift,
to entrust the future to your providence,
and to walk the path of life you have prepared.

Through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
Health of the Sick and Comfort of the Afflicted,
may your servant know the peace of your presence
and the strength of your unfailing love.

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

(RC Diocese of Albany, adapted from the *Prayers for the Sick*, Pontifical North American College, *Manual of Prayers*, 294.)

4.

O most High and glorious God, enlighten the darkness of our hearts.
Give your servant **N**., a firm faith, sure hope, perfect love, profound humility,
with wisdom and knowledge so that he (she) may carry out all of your commandments.

(RC Diocese of Albany, adapted from *St. Francis of Assisi's Prayer Before a Crucifix*, Pontifical North American College, *Manual of Prayers*, 254)

5.

Father in Heaven,
grant **N.** comfort in his (her) suffering.
Give him (her) courage when afraid,
patience when afflicted,
hope when dejected,
strength when tempted,
faithfulness when carrying the cross,
final perseverance when weary
and when alone
assure him (her) of the prayerful support of your holy people.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

(RC Diocese of Albany, adapted from *Prayers of the Sick*, Pontifical North American College, *Manual of Prayers*, 294)

6.

Do not look forward to the changes and chances of this life with fear.
Rather, look to them with full confidence that, as they arise,
God to whom you belong
will, in his love,
enable you to profit by them.
He has guided you thus far in life.
Do you but hold fast to His dear hand,
and He will lead you safely through all trials.
Whenever you cannot stand,
He will carry you lovingly in his arms.

Do not look forward to what may happen tomorrow.
The same Eternal Father who takes care of you today
will take care of you tomorrow,
and every day of your life.
Either He will shield you from suffering,
or He will give you unfailing strength to bear it.

Be at peace then,
and put aside all useless thoughts,
all vain dreads and all anxious imaginations.
Through Christ, our Lord. Amen

(*St. Francis de Sales, Complete Trust in God*, Pontifical North American College, *Manual of Prayers*, 64)

7.

In all things may the most holy,
the most just, and the most lovable will of God be done,
praised, and exalted above all forever.
Your will be done, O Lord, your will be done.
The Lord has given, and the Lord has taken away;
blessed be the name of the Lord now and always.
Amen.

(Prayer for the Acceptance of God's Will, Pontifical North American College, Manual of Prayers, 222)

8.

O God, early in the morning I cry to you.
Help me to pray and to concentrate my thoughts on you:
I cannot do this alone.
In me there is darkness,
but with you there is light.
I am lonely, but you do not leave me.
I am feeble in heart, but with you there is help.
I am restless, but with you there is peace.
In me there is bitterness, but with you there is patience.
I do not understand your ways,
but you know the way for me...
Restore me to liberty,
and enable me so to live now,
that I may answer before you and before me.
Lord, whatever this day may bring,
your name be praised.

(Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Prayer of Trust in God's Will, Pontifical North American College, Manual of Prayers, 222)

PRAYERS FOR THE INTERCESSION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

The Memorare

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,
that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection,
implored thy help, or sought thy intercession, was left unaided.
Inspired by this confidence I fly unto thee,
O Virgin of virgins, my Mother.
To thee do I come,
before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful.
O Mother of the Word Incarnate,
despise not my petitions,
but in thy mercy hear and answer me.

Our Lady of Good Counsel

O Holy Virgin,
to whose feet we are led by our anxious uncertainty
in our search for and attainment of what is true and good,
invoking you by the sweet title of Mother of Good Counsel,
we beseech you to come to our assistance,
when, along the road of this life,
the darkness of error and of evil
conspires towards our ruin
by leading our minds and our hearts astray.
O Seat of Wisdom and Star of the Sea,
enlighten the doubtful and the erring,
that they be not seduced by the false appearances of good;
render them steadfast
in the face of the hostile and corrupting influences of passion and of sin.
O Mother of Good Counsel,
obtain for us from your Divine Son a great love of virtue,
and, in the hour of uncertainty and trial,
the strength to embrace the way that leads to our salvation.
If your hand sustains us,
we shall walk unmolested
along the path indicated to us
by the life and words of Jesus, our Redeemer;
and having followed freely and securely,
even in the midst of this world's strife,
the Sun of Truth and Justice under your maternal Star,
we shall come to the enjoyment of full and eternal peace
with you in the haven of salvation.
Through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

Our Lady Help of Christians

Most Holy Virgin Mary, Help of Christians,
how sweet it is to come to your feet imploring your perpetual help.
If earthly mothers cease not to remember their children,
how can you, the most loving of all mothers forget us?
Grant then to your servant **N.**, we implore,
your perpetual help in all his (her) necessities,
in every sorrow,
but especially in this hour of temptation.
We ask for your unceasing help for him (her),
and for all who are now suffering.
Obtain for him (her) the grace to resist suicide
and to persevere in God's grace
until the Father calls him (her) home.
Please help the weak, cure the sick, and convert sinners.
Obtain for us, O Mary, Help of Christians,
that having invoked you on earth
we may love and eternally thank you forever in heaven.
Through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

OTHER PRAYERS

Prayer to St. Joseph

To you, O blessed Joseph,
we have recourse in our afflictions,
and, having implored the help of your holy Spouse,
we now, with hearts filled with confidence,
earnestly beg you also to take **N.** under your protection.
By that charity
wherewith you were united to the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God,
and by that fatherly love
with which you cherished the Child Jesus,
we beseech you and we humbly pray
that you will look down with gracious eyes
upon that inheritance which Jesus Christ purchased by His blood,
and will succor **N.** in his (her) hour of need
by your power and strength.
Defend, O most watchful guardian of the Holy Family,
this chosen son (daughter) of Jesus Christ.
Keep from him (her), O most loving Father,
all blight of error and corruption.
Aid him (her) from on high, most valiant defender,

in this conflict with the powers of darkness.
And even as of old
you rescued the Child Jesus from the peril of His life,
so now defend God's chosen one
from the snares of the enemy
and from all adversity.
Shield him (her) ever under your patronage,
that following your example
and strengthened by your help,
he (she) may choose life,
die a happy death,
and attain to everlasting bliss in heaven.
Through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

St. Michael the Archangel

St. Michael the Archangel,
defend us in battle;
be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil.
May God rebuke him, we humbly pray;
and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly host,
by the power of God,
cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits
who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls.
Through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

St. Dymphna
(Patron Saint of mental illness)

Good Saint Dymphna,
great wonder-worker in every affliction of mind and body,
we humbly implore your powerful intercession
with Jesus through Mary, the Health of the Sick,
in our present need (*state your intention*)...

Saint Dymphna, martyr of purity,
patroness of those who suffer with nervous and mental afflictions,
beloved child of Jesus and Mary,
pray to them for us and obtain our request.
Grant all those for whom we pray
patience in their sufferings
and resignation to the divine will of God.
Saint Dymphna, virgin and martyr, pray for us.

St. Jude
(Patron Saint of Lost Causes and Hopelessness)

Most holy Apostle, St. Jude,
faithful servant and friend of Jesus,
the Church honors and invokes you universally
as the patron of hope.
Please intercede on our behalf.
Make use of that particular privilege given to you
to bring hope, comfort, and help where they are needed most.
Come to our assistance
in this great need
that we may receive the consolation and help of heaven
to overcome this trial, particularly (*make your request*)...
I praise God with you and all the saints forever.
I promise, blessed St. Jude,
to be ever mindful of this great favor,
to always honor you as my special and powerful patron,
and to gratefully encourage devotion to you.
Through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

St. John of God
(Patron Saint of hospitals, the sick, nurses, and the mentally ill)

O Father, we humbly seek the intercession
of St. John of God
for those burdened by despair and hopelessness.
Through his intercession,
may Your divine light
pierce through their darkness,
bringing comfort and healing to their weary hearts.
Grant them strength to rise anew,
and surround them with love and support,
that they may choose life
and find peace in Your everlasting embrace.
Through Christ, our Lord,
Amen.

St. Teresa of Calcutta

In need of special help,
I appeal with confidence to you,
O St. Teresa of Calcutta,
for I require not only spiritual graces
but also temporal ones,
and particularly (*mention the grace you seek*)...
May you,
who on earth had such great devotion to Jesus
in the Blessed Sacrament,
and to Mary, Cause of Our Joy,
and who always had compassion for those who were in suffering,
obtain from Jesus and from His heavenly Mother
the grace I now request,
and also a sincere resignation to the Will of God.
Through the same Christ, our Lord
Amen

PRAYER FOR THOSE WHO HAVE DIED THROUGH PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED SUICIDE

1.

Almighty God, Father of all and lover of all souls,
you hold dear what you have made
and your compassion reaches out to all, for they are yours.
You strengthen us by the mystery of the Cross
and with the sacrament of your Son's Resurrection.
Look gently upon your servant *N* and have mercy.
Forgive all his (her) sins and grant him (her) peace,
for we now commend his (her) soul to your loving embrace.
Remember the faith of those who mourn his (her) loss;
comfort and console them by your power and protection.
In this moment of trial and tribulation,
we pray and long for that day,
when all will be made new again in Christ, our risen Lord,
who lives and reigns with you for ever and ever. Amen

(RC Diocese of Albany, adapted from the Order of Christian Funerals, Prayers and Texts in Particular Circumstances)

2.

O gentlest Heart of Jesus,
ever present in the Blessed Sacrament,
ever consumed with burning love for poor souls,
have mercy on the soul of Thy servant, *N*.
Be not severe in Thy judgement,
but let some drops of Thy Precious Blood fall upon our beloved departed brother (sister),
and do Thou, O merciful Savior,
send Thy holy angels to conduct the soul of Thy servant
to a place of refreshment, light, and peace.
Through Christ, our Lord
Amen.

(RC Diocese of Albany, adapted from the Prayer for the Faithful Departed, Pontifical North American College, Manual of Prayers, 299.)

SUGGESTED PRAYERS FOR THE FUNERAL MASS

(Cf. III. Various Commemorations, A. For One Deceased Person, 5 Other Prayers)

Collect

Incline your merciful ear to our prayers, O Lord,
and grant to the soul of your servant **N.**
the remission of all his (her) sins,
that he (she) may have life on the day of resurrection
and may rest in the splendor of eternal light.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Prayer over the Offerings

Almighty ever-living God,
whose Son has given himself to us as the Bread of life
and has poured out his Blood as the Chalice of salvation,
have mercy, we pray, on your servant **N.**,
that the offering we make to you
may be for him (her) the source of salvation.
Through Christ our Lord.

Prayer after Communion

As we receive the pledge of eternal life,
we humbly implore you, O Lord,
for the soul of your servant **N.**,
that, freed from the bonds of mortality,
he (she) may join the company of the redeemed.
Through Christ our Lord.

(cf. D. Other Prayers for the Funeral Mass, from *Order of Christian Funerals*)

Collect

O God, who alone are able to give life after death,
free your servant **N.** from all sins,
that he (she), who believed in the Resurrection of your Christ,
may, when the day of resurrection comes,
be united with you in glory.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Prayer over the Offering

Almighty and merciful God,
by means of these sacrificial offerings
wash away, we pray, in the Blood of Christ,
the sins of your departed servant **N.**,
and purify unceasingly by your merciful forgiveness
those you once cleansed in the waters of Baptism.
Through Christ our Lord.

Prayer after Communion

Having received the Sacrament of your Only Begotten Son,
who was sacrificed for us and rose in glory,
we humbly implore you, O Lord,
for your departed servant **N.**,
that, cleansed by the paschal mysteries,
he (she) may glory in the gift of the resurrection to come.
Through Christ our Lord.