

**Saskatchewan Catholic Bishops' response to Physician
Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia
World Day of the Sick, February 11, 2017**

Introduction

It has now been two years since the Supreme Court of Canada overturned the existing laws against physician assisted suicide (PAS) and euthanasia. During these past two years, alongside Catholic dioceses and organizations across the country, and often joined by other Christian communities and religious traditions, we have sought to express and articulate the reasons for our opposition to PAS and euthanasia.

- In July of 2015 and March of 2016 we issued pastoral letters arguing that eliminating a life is not an appropriate response to suffering; pressing for improved access to palliative care, including proper pain and symptom management, offering real choices that reduce suffering, rather than end life; and calling for the conscience rights of individual healthcare workers and healthcare institutions to be protected.¹
- In striving to articulate our opposition to PAS and to educate our own faithful in this regard, we established a committee made up of representatives from Catholic health organizations and from our respective dioceses and eparchy. This committee has assisted us in engaging the faithful in political advocacy; in bringing ecumenical and interfaith partners together to write a joint statement in support of palliative care and the protection of conscience rights in the spring of 2016, and sending an interfaith delegation to the provincial legislature with our message;² and preparing materials to promote a Catholic vision of care for the dying, including the brief videos on palliative care and long-term care.³
- The five Bishops of Saskatchewan are the sponsors of Emmanuel Care, the Catholic Health Ministry in our province; Emmanuel Care has worked with the staff in Catholic facilities on policy which unequivocally states that our Catholic facilities will not provide PAS. This public work, alongside private advocacy and relationship-building, has led to strong support for finding a way forward where Catholics and other faith-based affiliate healthcare providers will have conscience protection in our province.
- Our dioceses have worked hard to provide opportunities with Catholic ethicists and leaders to form our pastors, lay leaders, and faithful regarding both Catholic teaching as it relates to developments in our society.

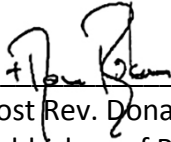
¹ http://saskatoonrcdiocese.com/sites/default/files/pastoral_letter_re_legalization_of_assisted_suicide_and_euthanasia.pdf and http://saskatoonrcdiocese.com/sites/default/files/bishop/letters/pastoral_letter_march_2016.pdf.

² http://ecumenism.net/archive/docu/2016-06-21_saskatchewan-interfaith-statement-on-freedom-of-conscience-and-palliative-care.pdf.


³ <https://vimeo.com/193720740> and <https://vimeo.com/193720005>.

Now, at this critical time of implementation of PAS in our health system, we have felt it appropriate to publish three new texts, each with a different purpose and audience. First, we have written a Pastoral Letter on 'Living Through Our Dying', addressed to our brothers and sisters in faith and all people who have the gift of life. Our aim with this letter was to initiate a dialogue with our culture, recognizing that many struggle to see our opposition to PAS as an expression of compassion. We wanted to articulate what we stand for (more than what we oppose), to recognize the challenge of placing our trust in God, and to extend the invitation to hope that our faith offers. Secondly, we have written a Pastoral Reflection on 'Jesus: The Word Who is Life', which situates the Paschal Mystery as the foundation of our understanding of the meaning of human dying. It is intended to be formative catechesis primarily for our own faithful, but it may well be of use to our Christian brothers and sisters as well. Finally, we have written Pastoral Guidelines, addressed to priests, deacons and the Catholic faithful, intended to give support and guidance to those ministering to people facing the end of their lives. It was our hope to write guidelines which would equip those in ministry to follow Jesus faithfully, while extending his invitation of faith and life to those tempted to choose the circumstances of their own death.

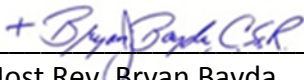
Sincerely,



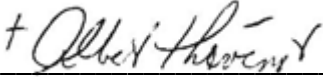
Most Rev. Donald J. Bolen
Archbishop of Regina



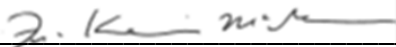
Most Rev. Murray Chatlain
Archbishop of Keewatin-Le Pas



Most Rev. Bryan Bayda
Eparchial Bishop of Saskatoon



Most Rev. Albert Thévenot
Bishop of Prince Albert



Very Rev. Kevin McGee
Diocesan Administrator for Saskatoon