

END OF LIFE ISSUES—SPIRITUAL VALUES

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT from the CATHOLIC CATECHISM

2258 "Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains for ever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can under any circumstance claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being."⁵⁶

Euthanasia

2276 Those whose lives are diminished or weakened deserve special respect. Sick or handicapped persons should be helped to lead lives as normal as possible.

2277 Whatever its motives and means, direct euthanasia consists in putting an end to the lives of handicapped, sick, or dying persons. It is morally unacceptable.

Thus an act or omission which, of itself or by intention, causes death in order to eliminate suffering constitutes a murder gravely contrary to the dignity of the human person and to the respect due to the living God, his Creator.

The error of judgment into which one can fall in good faith does not change the nature of this murderous act, which must always be forbidden and excluded.

2278 Discontinuing medical procedures that are burdensome, dangerous, extraordinary, or disproportionate to the expected outcome can be legitimate; it is the refusal of "over-zealous" treatment. Here one does not will to cause death; one's inability to impede it is merely accepted. The decisions should be made by the patient if he is competent and able or, if not, by those legally entitled to act for the patient, whose reasonable will and legitimate interests must always be respected.

2279 Even if death is thought imminent, the ordinary care owed to a sick person cannot be legitimately interrupted. The use of painkillers to alleviate the sufferings of the dying, even at the risk of shortening their days, can be morally in conformity with human dignity if death is not willed as either an end or a means, but only foreseen and tolerated as inevitable. Palliative care is a special form of disinterested charity.

As such it should be encouraged.

Respect for health

2288 Life and physical health are precious gifts entrusted to us by God.

We must take reasonable care of them, taking into account the needs of others and the common good. Concern for the health of its citizens requires that society help in the attainment of living-conditions that allow them to grow and reach maturity: food and clothing, housing, health care, basic education, employment, and social assistance.

2289 If morality requires respect for the life of the body, it does not make it an absolute value. It rejects a neo-pagan notion that tends to promote the cult of the body, to sacrifice everything for its sake, to idolize physical perfection and success at sports.

Respect for the person and scientific research

2292 Scientific, medical, or psychological experiments on human individuals or groups can contribute to healing the sick and the advancement of public health.

2293 Basic scientific research, as well as applied research, is a significant expression of man's dominion over creation. Science and technology are precious resources when placed at the service of man and promote his integral development for the benefit of all. By themselves however they cannot disclose the meaning of existence and of human progress. Science and technology are ordered to man, from whom they take their origin and development; hence they find in the person and in his moral values both evidence of their purpose and awareness of their limits.

2294 It is an illusion to claim moral neutrality in scientific research and its applications. On the other hand, guiding principles cannot be inferred from simple technical efficiency, or from the usefulness accruing to some at the expense of others or, even worse, from prevailing ideologies. Science and technology by their very nature require unconditional respect for fundamental moral criteria. They must be at the service of the human person, of his inalienable rights, of his true and integral good, in conformity with the plan and the will of God.

2295 Research or experimentation on the human being cannot legitimate acts that are in themselves contrary to the dignity of persons and to the moral law. the subjects' potential consent does not justify such acts. Experimentation on human beings is not morally legitimate if it exposes the subject's life or physical and psychological integrity to disproportionate or avoidable risks. Experimentation on human beings does not conform to the dignity of the person if it takes place without the informed consent of the subject or those who legitimately speak for him.

2296 Organ transplants are in conformity with the moral law if the physical and psychological dangers and risks incurred by the donor are proportionate to the good sought for the recipient. Donation of organs after death is a noble and meritorious act and is to be encouraged as a manifestation of generous solidarity. It is not morally acceptable if the donor or those who legitimately speak for him have not given their explicit consent. It is furthermore morally inadmissible directly to bring about the disabling mutilation or death of a human being, even in order to delay the death of other persons.

Respect for the dead

2299 The dying should be given attention and care to help them live their last moments in dignity and peace. They will be helped by the prayer of their relatives, who must see to it that the sick receive at the proper time the sacraments that prepare them to meet the living God.

2300 The bodies of the dead must be treated with respect and charity, in faith and hope of the Resurrection. the burial of the dead is a corporal work of mercy;²¹ it honors the children of God, who are temples of the Holy Spirit.

2301 Autopsies can be morally permitted for legal inquests or scientific research. the free gift of organs after death is legitimate and can be meritorious. The Church permits cremation, provided that it does not demonstrate a denial of faith in the resurrection of the body.²²

Article 5 **THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK** from CATHOLIC CATECHISM

1499 "By the sacred anointing of the sick and the prayer of the priests the whole Church commends those who are ill to the suffering and glorified Lord, that he may raise them up and save them. and indeed she exhorts them to contribute to the good of the People of God by freely uniting themselves to the Passion and death of Christ."⁹²

1500 **Illness and suffering have always been among the gravest problems confronted in human life.** In illness, man experiences his powerlessness, his limitations, and his finitude. Every illness can make us glimpse death.

1502 **The man of the Old Testament lives his sickness in the presence of God.** It is before God that he laments his illness, and it is of God, Master of life and death, that he implores healing.⁹⁸ Illness becomes a way to conversion; God's forgiveness initiates the healing.⁹⁹ It is the experience of Israel that illness is mysteriously linked to sin and evil, and that faithfulness to God according to his law restores life: "For I am the Lord, your healer."¹⁰⁰ The prophet intuits that suffering can also have a redemptive meaning for the sins of others.¹⁰¹ Finally Isaiah announces that God will usher in a time for Zion when he will pardon every offense and heal every illness.¹⁰²

1503 **Christ's compassion toward the sick and his many healings of every kind of infirmity** are a resplendent sign that "God has visited his people"¹⁰³ and that the Kingdom of God is close at hand. Jesus has the power not only to heal, but also to forgive sins;¹⁰⁴ he has come to heal the whole man, soul and body; he is the physician the sick have need of.¹⁰⁵ His compassion toward all who suffer goes so far that he identifies himself with them: "I was sick and you visited me."¹⁰⁶ His preferential love for the sick has not ceased through the centuries to draw the very special attention of Christians toward all those who suffer in body and soul. It is the source of tireless efforts to comfort them.

1505 **Moved by so much suffering Christ not only allows himself to be touched by the sick, but he makes their miseries his own: "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases."**¹¹¹ But he did not heal all the sick. His healings were signs of the coming of the Kingdom of God. They announced a more radical healing: the victory over sin and death through his Passover. On the cross Christ took upon himself the whole weight of evil and took away the "sin of the world,"¹¹² of which illness is only a consequence. By his passion and death on the cross Christ has given a new meaning to suffering: it can henceforth configure us to him and unite us with his redemptive Passion.

1511 The Church believes and confesses that among the seven sacraments there is one especially intended to strengthen those who are being tried by illness, the Anointing of the Sick:

This sacred anointing of the sick was instituted by Christ our Lord as a true and proper sacrament of the New Testament. It is alluded to indeed by Mark, but is recommended to the faithful and promulgated by James the apostle and brother of the Lord.¹²⁴

1517 **Like all the sacraments the Anointing of the Sick is a liturgical and communal celebration,**¹³¹ whether it takes place in the family home, a hospital or church, for a single sick person or a whole group of sick persons.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER

1526 *"Is any among you sick? Let him call for the presbyters of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven"* (□ Jas 5:14-15).

1527 *The sacrament of Anointing of the Sick has as its purpose the conferral of a special grace on the Christian experiencing the difficulties inherent in the condition of grave illness or old age.*

1528 *The proper time for receiving this holy anointing has certainly arrived when the believer begins to be in danger of death because of illness or old age.*

1529 *Each time a Christian falls seriously ill, he may receive the Anointing of the Sick, and also when, after he has received it, the illness worsens.*

1530 *Only priests (presbyters and bishops) can give the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, using oil blessed by the bishop, or if necessary by the celebrating presbyter himself.*

1531 *The celebration of the Anointing of the Sick consists essentially in the anointing of the forehead and hands of the sick person (in the Roman Rite) or of other parts of the body (in the Eastern rite), the anointing being accompanied by the liturgical prayer of the celebrant asking for the special grace of this sacrament.*

1532 *The special grace of the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick has as its effects:*

- *the uniting of the sick person to the passion of Christ, for his own good and that of the whole Church;*
- *the strengthening, peace, and courage to endure in a Christian manner the sufferings of illness or old age;*
- *the forgiveness of sins, if the sick person was not able to obtain it through the sacrament of Penance;*
- *the restoration of health, if it is conducive to the salvation of his soul;*
- *the preparation for passing over to eternal life.*