CATHOLICS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF DYING WELL

For Catholics, it is important to help those who are facing death to...

- Prepare
evans themselves to die well
- Respect the value of their lives
- Provide rituals to support the grieving
- Mediation to relieve the pain
- Treat palliative care
- Euthanasia & assisted suicide

For our Catholic teaching on death life can only be understood in the context of the Kingdom of God. Eternal life is the belief that when Jesus died on the cross, he paid for our sins and when he rose from the dead, he defeated death. Catholics therefore believe that because of these things, Christians can hope to go to heaven after death and spend eternity with God.

Death: The end of physical life, when the physical body ceases completely to function.

Eternal Life: The term used to refer to life in heaven after death. Also, the phrase Jesus uses to describe a state of living as God intends, which leads to life in heaven.

KEY DOCUMENT FOR THIS TOPIC:

EVANGELIUM VITAE

Written by St Pope John Paul II.

"...I confirm that euthanasia is a grave violation of the law of God, since it is the deliberate and morally unacceptable killing of a human person." - St Pope John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae (Good News of Life), 1995

This teaching comes from the belief that all human life is sacred or holy. Belief in the sanctity of life comes from an understanding that life itself is a gift from God and is therefore precious and should be respected from conception to natural death.

- Deliberate killing, such as euthanasia and assisted suicide, are seen as going against the instruction in the Ten Commandments: “Do not murder.” There are suitable alternatives to euthanasia available through palliative care.
- Also, the Catholic tradition teaches that suffering does have a purpose in helping us to learn about ourselves and others and to understand the human condition.
- The Church also acknowledges that some people are able to identify with the suffering of Jesus at the crucifixion.
- It is reasonable to seek palliative care to reduce pain and maintain dignity. Evangelium Vitae points out that 'such heroic behaviour [Jesus’ death on the cross] cannot be considered the duty for everyone.'

Palliative care aims to control pain and maintain dignity. It allows people to... relief medication, nursing care, supervision and practical help until natural death occurs.

The Catholic Church supports those who wish to receive relief medication and nursing care, supervision and practical help until natural death occurs. For those who have a significant illness (such as cancer) or degenerative condition (such as Motor Neurone Disease) there may be long periods of pain.

The Church also acknowledges that some people are able to identify with the suffering of Jesus at the crucifixion. A palliative care team includes medical professionals, psychologist, nurse, chaplain and social worker.

There are suitable alternatives to euthanasia available through palliative care.

1. Define the key concept death
2. Which quote supports the Christian belief that after death life is ‘changed not ended?’
3. What three things do Catholics believe are important to help those who are facing death?
4. What is euthanasia?
5. What is assisted suicide?
6. What does the Catholic Church teach about euthanasia and assisted suicide?
7. What does St Pope John Paul II say about euthanasia in Evangelium Vitae?
8. What two reasons does St Pope John Paul II give to support palliative care as an appropriate method of relieving pain?

Choose a Task

1. Create a detailed mindmap (try to make this visual)
2. Create a multiple-choice quiz (aim for at least 10 questions)
3. Create a poster leaflet

Exam Question

b) Describe Catholic teachings on Palliative Care [5]