

LIFE AND DEATH

Source of Wisdom

Christians believe that at death life is '**CHANGED** not ended'

 Eternal Life

*"I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that **flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.** Listen, I tell you a mystery: **we will not sleep, but we will be changed.**"*
- 1 Corinthians 15: 50-51

CATHOLICS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF DYING WELL

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

PREPARE themselves to die well
This may include:

- Spending **time with family**
- Updating their **will** to reduce worry about money and inheritance
- Discussing what they'd like their **funeral** to be like
- **Making peace** with family members and friends
- For those in significant pain 'preparing for death' will include **palliative care** to reduce pain

RESPECT the **VALUE** of their lives

The Catholic Church **rejects** euthanasia and assisted suicide as ways of ending a life.

Life is God given and therefore **only God can take it** (death must be natural).

The Catholic Church promote **hospices** (a place where people with terminal illness can go for control of the symptoms and pain) and other organisations that provide palliative care when treated to cure a medical condition is no longer possible.

Provide RITUALS to **SUPPORT** the **GRIEVING**

- This means that the **funeral rite** includes **imagery and symbols** that reflect belief and hope in **eternal life**.
- Prayers are said for those who have died. Belief in eternal life is explored through **music and art**.



Euthanasia & Assisted Suicide

These are both ways of ending someone's life **BEFORE** its 'natural end'.

Euthanasia

This term means a 'good' or 'gentle' death.

Euthanasia is the term used to refer to a procedure where a **MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL** gives medication to end the life of a person who is suffering **UNBEARABLE PAIN** from a prolonged **INCURABLE** condition. **Voluntary Euthanasia** is done on the request of the individual whose life will be ended. Such voluntary euthanasia is legal in the Netherlands.



Both euthanasia and assisted suicide are currently **ILLEGAL** in the UK. The Catholic Church teaches that these **DELIBERATE ACTIONS** to end a life before natural death are **WRONG** in **ALL CIRCUMSTANCES**.

Assisted Suicide

Seeking help to end one's own life.

Assisted suicide is the term used when an individual **SEEKS HELP** to **END THEIR OWN LIFE** in a **PAIN FREE**/reduced process. Some countries have changed their laws to permit (allow) assisted suicide.

KEY DOCUMENT FOR THIS TOPIC: EVANGELIUM VITAE (Good News of Life).

Written by **St Pope John Paul II**.

St Pope John Paul II
Evangelium Vitae
(Good News of Life) - 1995

*"...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.**"*



- 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 Controlling Pain



WHO NEEDS IT?

For some people the time leading up to death can be long. 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.

Palliative care aims to control pain.

MEDICATION TO RELIEVE THE PAIN

Medication is provided to reduce pain and to enable the individual to retain as much dignity and quality of life as possible.

Hospices and other organisations that offer similar care, have doctors to provide pain relieving medication, nursing care, supervision and practical help until natural death occurs.

Motor neurone disease, also known as ALS, occurs when specialist nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord called motor neurones stop working properly.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH ON PALLIATIVE CARE

The Catholic Church supports those who provide care because it respects the value of every person until their natural death. The source of wisdom you would use here is Pope St John Paul II's document: *Evangelium Vitae* (Good News of Life).



St Pope John Paul II
Evangelium Vitae
(Good News of Life) - 1995

St Pope John Paul II clearly stated in this document that palliative care is an appropriate way of relieving pain for two reasons:

1. It allows people to **reject any treatment that is too painful or difficult**.
2. It allows people to **maintain their dignity and some quality of life**.

Some pain relieving drugs are very strong and in some cases can make death happen sooner. Some people object to the use of these drugs.

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 a life in heaven.*

Jesus' death and resurrection allows us to spend eternity with God

Catholic teaching on death can only be understood in a context in a belief in *Eternal life*. 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.



Knowledge Check

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

CHALLENGE!

Turn over the mat and try to complete your task without looking at the information. Then refer back to the task mat to see what you have missed/could have included.

Exam Question

b) Describe Catholic teachings on Palliative Care [5]