



In a world increasingly marked by avoided pain, the rush to resolve suffering, and the loss of the transcendent meaning of life, the debate over assisted suicide has intensified to become one of the most pressing issues of our time. Under the guise of compassion, personal freedom, and dignity, lies a much deeper and more complex reality—one that affects not only individuals but the very soul of our civilization.

This article seeks to offer a serious, clear, and deeply spiritual reflection on assisted suicide, from the age-old wisdom of the Catholic faith. Our goal is not only to explain why the Church opposes this practice but, above all, to show how human life, even in pain, has infinite value, how suffering can be redeemed, and how accompanying those who suffer can become a heroic Christian act and a true mark of civilization.

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## 1. What Is Assisted Suicide?

Assisted suicide is the practice by which a person—usually a doctor—provides a patient with the means necessary to take their own life, typically through a lethal substance. Unlike direct euthanasia (where the doctor administers the substance), in assisted suicide it is the patient who carries out the final act.

Those who defend this practice often appeal to the patient's autonomy, their right to die with dignity, and the desire to avoid physical or psychological suffering considered unbearable. However, beneath this surface lies a deep wound in our culture: the inability to find meaning in suffering, the radical loneliness of many people, and the growing medicalization and dehumanization of death.

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## 2. A Civilization That Doesn't Know What to Do With Suffering

We live in a society that idolizes physical well-being, youth, and efficiency. In this context, pain, dependency, and old age are seen as intolerable failures. The body becomes a disposable instrument when it no longer "functions well."

Pope Francis has spoken forcefully on this topic:



*“Euthanasia and assisted suicide are a defeat for all. The answer we must give is to never abandon those who suffer.”*

*(Address to the Italian Association of Medical Oncology, 2019)*

Suffering, instead of being accompanied, is eliminated. The person, instead of being cared for, is abandoned under the disguise of compassion.

The Christian tradition, on the other hand, teaches that suffering, though mysterious and painful, is not absurd. In the crucified Christ, suffering gains a redemptive value:

*“Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church” (Colossians 1:24).*

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### 3. A History of Faithfulness to Life

From its earliest centuries, the Church has clearly opposed suicide and, by extension, any form of assistance in carrying it out. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (nos. 2280–2283) teaches:

*“We are stewards, not owners, of the life God has entrusted to us. It is not ours to dispose of.”*

Suicide contradicts love for oneself, wounds love for neighbor, and rejects God’s love. Throughout the centuries, the saints, martyrs, mystics, Church Fathers, and Doctors of the Church have consistently spoken about the value of life, even amid suffering.

Saint John Paul II, in his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* (1995), denounced this new form of the “culture of death”:



*“Euthanasia is a grave violation of the law of God, since it is the deliberate and morally unacceptable killing of a human person.”*

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## 4. Misunderstood Mercy

One of the most common arguments in favor of assisted suicide is mercy. How can we not help someone who is suffering terribly to end their pain?

True mercy, however, does not consist in eliminating the one who suffers, but in alleviating their suffering with love, closeness, and care. As Pope Francis says, “Euthanasia is not an act of compassion. It is the defeat of love.”

True mercy:

- **Accompanies:** it does not abandon in the darkest moment.
- **Listens:** it does not judge but welcomes the cry of the one who suffers.
- **Cares:** it does not seek to eliminate pain at any cost but to support the one who bears it.
- **Redeems:** it sees in Christ’s Cross the light for all our sufferings.

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## 5. Theological Implications: Where Is God in the Midst of Pain?

The great human question in the face of suffering is: why? Where is God when I need Him most? Why does He allow pain?

The Christian answer is not a logical argument but a person: **Jesus Christ**. He did not eliminate suffering from the world but **assumed it, inhabited it, redeemed it**. On the cross, God joins Himself to human pain to the fullest. He does not offer us a theory, but His presence.

This radically changes our perspective:

- God **does not abandon us** when we suffer.



- Pain **is not useless** when united to the Passion of Christ.
- Suffering lived in love **becomes an offering, intercession, salvation.**

| *“If we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified with Him”  
(Romans 8:17).*

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## 6. What Is the Church Saying Today?

The Church offers, in contrast to assisted suicide, an integral response that combines:

- **Palliative care:** medicine that accompanies, relieves, and dignifies without hastening death.
- **Human and spiritual presence:** families, communities, and parishes that do not abandon.
- **Pastoral accompaniment:** priests, religious, and trained laypeople who listen, pray, and bring hope.
- **The Sacraments:** especially the Eucharist and the Anointing of the Sick as strength to live the final moments with meaning.

Life, even when wounded, is worth living. We are not alone.

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## 7. Practical Guide for Catholics: What to Do When a Loved One Asks to Die

### 1. Listen With the Heart

Many people do not want to die—they want the pain to stop. Listening patiently and without judgment can open paths of hope.



## 2. Do Not Respond With Arguments but With Love

What saves are not speeches but concrete gestures of tenderness, shared time, and offered forgiveness.

## 3. Seek Professional and Pastoral Help

You are not alone. Turn to doctors, priests, and communities. Suffering shared becomes lighter.

## 4. Speak Gently About the Value of Suffering

At the right moment, share how others have found meaning in their pain. Not as an imposition, but as testimony.

## 5. Offer Spiritual Accompaniment

Pray together, offer the Eucharist, invite to Confession, and prepare the soul for the encounter with the Lord.

## 6. Promote Palliative Care

Get informed, defend the right to a dignified end—not a provoked death.

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## 8. How to Live This in Daily Life

- **Value life in its fragility:** begin by caring more attentively for the elderly, the sick, and the lonely.
  - **Educate in hope:** teach the young that suffering is not the end, that there is beauty even in the Cross.
  - **Be a community:** create networks of love where no one feels disposable.
  - **Pray** for those nearing the end of life, for those considering suicide, for those who have lost meaning.
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## Conclusion: The True Civilization

A civilization is not measured by its technology, its laws, or its science, but by **how it treats the weakest**. Assisted suicide is not mercy: it is the failure of a culture that no longer knows how to accompany. But there is still hope.

The Catholic faith calls us to raise our gaze, to look at the crucified and risen Christ, to not flee from suffering, but to transform it into an offering. It calls us to be **light for those who suffer, a voice for those who cannot speak, a presence for those who feel alone**.

May we be able to say with Saint Paul, at the end of our journey:

*"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).*

And when our hour comes, may we surrender our lives not out of despair, but out of love, with the peace of those who know they are going to meet the Father.

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