



THE ARCHDIOCESE OF HALIFAX-YARMOUTH

On Medical Assistance in Dying and Hope in Christ: A Toolkit to Share our Message

*A resource to help clergy, chaplains, and those in pastoral care
have meaningful conversations about euthanasia, assisted
suicide, and the mercy of God*



Archdiocese of | Archidiocèse d'
Halifax-Yarmouth

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this toolkit is to equip you, as a priest, deacon, chaplain or person in pastoral care, to have meaningful conversations with people about Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD). You will find a summary of the Church's teaching on the subject, talking points to convey, and the context of MAiD in Nova Scotia and throughout Canada.

Euthanasia and assisted suicide are legal in Canada, and many view them as compassionate solutions to suffering. However, as Catholics we know that we cannot support a practice that elevates freedom of choice over God's authority – and ultimately fosters a culture of death.

The process of MAiD compels us to witness to the love of Christ for all involved. It is a teaching moment. Whether conversing with the sick and suffering or their loved ones, let us always seek to respond with compassion and understanding.

Beatitudes

The Beatitudes show us how to live out our faith. We know that enduring pain, suffering, discomfort and loss, when united to the Passion of Christ, become sources of Grace, spiritual growth, and even joy. They help us grow closer to God and become more like Jesus. Similarly, let us approach every difficult conversation with these virtues in mind so we may meet people where they are and walk with them on their journey.

THE BEATITUDES GUIDE OUR RESPONSE TO MAID



Blessed are the poor in spirit:

Even though we face many trials on earth, we will have a great reward for approaching them with humility and charity.



Blessed are those who mourn:

Let us show empathy for and mourn with those who are suffering, drawing strength from the Lord's Passion. Let us also sincerely convey MAiD's incompatibility with our Catholic faith and teaching.



Blessed are the meek:

Accepting our circumstances with grace and reacting with self-control is a great virtue. Let us remind patients and their loved ones of this as we walk with them.



Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness:

Let us study and seek to understand Church teachings, and to trust that God's way is the best way.



Blessed are the merciful:

We should never judge the eternal destiny of a person's soul, but rather listen to and pray with them, committing them always to the mercy of God. Let us also express to them that holistic end-of-life care is the truly merciful option, never killing.



Blessed are the clean of heart:

Let us share messages of peace, love and truth and remind the faithful to keep their minds on things that are good and holy. Let us see God in one another and strive to keep His commandments.



Blessed are the peacemakers:

Where tension and anger exist, especially surrounding the topics of death and assisted dying, let us strive to be understanding and connect people to Christ.



Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake:

We must hold fast to the truth and defend Christ's teaching on death, even if we are faced with animosity, stigma, harassment, or other obstacles and challenges.

fig 1. THE BEATITUDES SERVE AS A GUIDE

MAiD *Overview*

MAiD is the practice of ending one's life, either via a patient-administered drug (assisted suicide) or via injection administered by a medical practitioner (euthanasia).



MAiD in Canada

- MAiD has been legal in Canada since 2016. In 2024, Health Canada received 22,535 MAiD requests – 73% resulted in the procedure. However, this doesn't account for patients who died before they could receive it. If they had, the figure would be closer to 94% – a sobering reflection of the increasing demand for assisted suicide.
- The slippery slope: originally only available to the terminally ill, MAiD has been extended to include patients experiencing "unbearable suffering," a concerning vague description which leaves room for interpretation. In March 2027¹, it will also be available to people whose only underlying medical condition is mental illness.
- Bill C-7², which was given royal assent in 2021, loosens restrictions even further, including removing the requirement that a person's natural death must be reasonably foreseeable.
- Bill C-218³, tabled in June 2025⁴, would amend the Criminal Code to stop the scheduled 2027 expansion of MAiD.

MAiD in Nova Scotia

- In 2024, there were 445 MAiD deaths in the province, a 62 percent increase from 274 in 2022, and a jarring 1,754% increase from 2016 when the practice became legalized.
- The healthcare landscape in our province is rocky; there are less restrictions to MAiD here compared to many other provinces.
- All Canadians have the right to freedom of conscience per the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but this is not the case in Nova Scotia. **In May 2024, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia enacted a new policy that requires medical professionals to provide effective referrals, even if it goes against their conscience⁵.** This means that if medical professionals will not provide MAiD, they must refer their patient to someone who will. Provinces like B.C., Alberta, and Manitoba allow physicians to abstain from providing an effective referral.
- Upon receiving the news, a group of 50 Nova Scotian physicians stated that they will not follow this policy, although standing against it could force them out of their practice.
- St. Martha's Regional Hospital in Antigonish was Nova Scotia's only Catholic hospital, but it recently lost its Catholic sponsorship. In 1906, it was founded by the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Martha who ended their religious sponsorship in 2026. Despite the congregation putting forward an alternative Catholic sponsor, the province rejected it and stated that the facility's "services and policies... will more closely align with all other hospitals across Nova Scotia."⁶
- The province also forced the hospital to offer MAiD in 2019, although it was initially exempt.

Why People Choose MAiD

There are many factors that may cause a person to consider MAiD⁷ :

- Disease-related symptoms (could include pain, loss of bodily functions, difficulty breathing, etc.)
- Loss of autonomy
- Loss of ability to enjoy activities
- Fear of future suffering
- Loneliness⁸
- Feeling like a burden⁹

CHURCH *Teachings*

Many people, Catholics and non-Catholics alike, struggle to understand why the Church condemns assisted suicide. Many feel that it is a compassionate approach to suffering, or that humans should have autonomy over their own life and death. Below is a summary of scripture and Catechism passages which should help you explain the Church's loving but firm stance on the issue when people ask about it.

About euthanasia and assisted suicide

- The Church's teaching on this topic ultimately stems from the fifth commandment: "You shall not murder." (Exodus 20:13 NRSV-CE)
- This extends to the killing of oneself, which is a violation of God's sovereignty, since He made each one of us and has authority over our lives.
 - *See also Psalm 139:13-16, Genesis 1:27, 1 John 3:14-15 and CCC no. 2258.*
- Assisted suicide undermines the dignity of human life and harms the building up of society (CCCB letter, May 2023)¹⁰.
- Grave psychological disturbances, anguish, fear of hardship, suffering, or torture can diminish the responsibility of the one committing suicide. (CCC no. 2282) However, the act of proactively causing one's death by medical or other means must always be rejected. For more on this, see [Congregation For The Doctrine Of The Faith Letter, Samaritanus Bonus: on the care of persons in the critical and terminal phases of life](#)

The Church teaches that a person who dies in a state of mortal sin without repenting and accepting God's love separates him or herself from communion with Him. (CCC no. 1033) As such, we must carefully and intentionally have conversations with persons considering euthanasia/assisted suicide to ensure they are aware of the risk to their soul. As chaplains and clergy, we know that these situations are often extremely difficult and painful. Therefore, our first priority is to listen and ask questions, showing that we care and will be by the person's side. The second priority is to share the truth about MAiD and its risks in a carefully considered and loving manner. Finally, we should assure them that God has a plan for their life, even though it may be difficult to understand, and that we and their loved ones will walk with them and face whatever comes.

Suffering

- Suffering has the potential for great meaning and value. It can lead us closer to Christ and unite us to His passion. (CCC no. 1501, 1502)
- Suffering does not take away from human dignity and must never be used to justify actions that are morally wrong ¹¹.
- **A person's value is in their inherent dignity as a being made in the image and likeness of God – not in how well they function.**

About the sacraments and Catholic funeral/burial

- No one should be denied the sacraments of Penance, Holy Communion, and Anointing of the Sick whenever there is sincere repentance of one's sins.
- Sadly, there are instances when a person is determined to choose to end their life¹². A person can receive the sacraments only when the minister discerns in the person a readiness to take concrete steps to modify their decision in this regard.

If a person is eligible to celebrate a sacrament, but is not properly disposed, we tend to speak of delaying a sacrament rather than denying it¹³. Delaying absolution is not meant to condemn a person, but to lead them to conversion...to provide the opportunity to desire and choose the sacrament up to the last moment.¹⁴



Please refer to this [helpful resource](#) from our Archdiocese regarding sacraments and funeral rites for those who are considering MAiD.

- All Catholic funerals are offered for sinners. However, the Church does require that the funeral be a sign of faith, and respectful of the conscience and decisions made by the person who has died. When a person chooses to die by euthanasia or assisted suicide, the Church must ask:
 - + Did the person willingly choose euthanasia or assisted suicide, knowing it was contrary to the faith?
 - + Did the person have a high profile, and is his or her choice well known?
 - + Did the family support or even celebrate the choice?
 - + Would the celebration of a Catholic funeral cause scandal, encouraging others to engage in MAiD?
- **While a person's determined choice to resort to MAiD makes the celebration of the sacraments impossible, we must still demonstrate God's love and mercy through prayer, presence, and compassion.**

The Church has always rejected hastening or abetting death, and teaches that all life is sacred from conception to natural death. At the same time, it acknowledges that **God's mercy extends well beyond the confines of our understanding.**



HOW TO SPEAK ABOUT OUR HOPE IN CHRIST: *Talking Points*

In this section, we offer key messages and themes that can help you engage in conversation with others. In these conversations, please keep in mind:

- **Listening is the most important action we can do.** In complex situations where people turn to the Church for guidance, our default must first be to listen and seek to understand.
- **Respond to what you hear, informed by the messages below.** These words are not to be read verbatim to another person. We invite you to read these talking points as part of your preparation for ministry and encounters. The most important part of communication is to speak from the heart – inspired by the Holy Spirit and with a focused mind.

A. FOUNDATIONS FOR OUR HOPE: *Top Line Talking Points*

Topline talking points are the most important messages on a topic that we as Catholics can share with the world, and we should try to weave them into our conversations where possible. Ask questions before sharing your message and seek permission to begin the conversation. For a list of example questions, visit our [Ministry of Care and Companionship page](#).

- God loves you. You have value, a purpose and a mission.
- There is value and there is redemption in suffering.
- Offer your day, your suffering, and your life to Him.
- The Church has always rejected hastening or abetting death.
- Life is sacred at all stages, from conception to natural death.
- The mercy of God is a mystery, and nothing is impossible for Him.
- Patients should have plenty of access to treatment and resources that address their pain, so they do not feel the need to resort to MAiD. Such resources may include mental health and disability services, and comprehensive palliative care.

We should encourage investment in solutions like palliative care, disability and mental health services. (See the section “A Better Way Forward” for more on this.)



St. John Vianney and his reminder of God's mercy

Let us recall the story of a poor widow who went to St. John Vianney, the Curé of Ars, to confess her sins. Her husband had committed suicide — he jumped from the bridge into the river. She wept, saying to the priest, “I am a sinner, a poor woman. But my poor husband! He is in hell. He committed suicide, and suicide is a mortal sin. He is in hell”. And the Curé of Ars said, “But wait a moment, ma’am, because between the bridge and the river, there is the mercy of God”.

B. MESSAGES OF ENCOURAGEMENT

While listening and being compassionate are essential, it is equally important to share the truth. Patients ought to know the potential consequences of such a decision upon their soul. It is better to risk offending someone because you want them to have eternal life than to say nothing. Each person has a right to know about these implications, and once they are suitably informed, it is up to them.

For those intent on receiving MAiD

- You are loved and cared for, even when you are alone or suffering.

“If God sends you many sufferings, it is a sign that He has great plans for you and certainly wants to make you a saint.”

- ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA

- Your pain is real and I understand that. I want to be with you in your suffering.

“Suffering is a great favour. Remember that everything soon comes to an end... and take courage. Think of how our gain is eternal.”

- ST. TERESA OF AVILA

- Fear and despair are natural responses to pain, the unknown or to danger. However, these feelings can prevent recovery, increase pain and fatigue, and move us to make choices that are not good for us and for those around us. Faith is the antidote to fear.
- Trust God with what lies ahead. His mercy and compassion are greater than our human weakness.

For loved ones of a person receiving MAiD

- God loves you and your loved one. His mercy and compassion are unfathomable.
- If you haven't already, consider speaking to your loved one about their decision. Tell them you love them and want the best for them; although you are not in their shoes and cannot necessarily understand their pain, you want life, not death for them (especially eternal life) and want to walk with them in their suffering. Let them know you will be there for them, and they do not have to go through with euthanasia – they are not alone.
- A person's value arises from their inherent dignity as a human being and not from how well they function.
- Your faith (or the faith of your loved one) offers good news and hope, especially during this period of pain and suffering.

C. MESSAGES TO SHARE WHEN HOPE IS DIFFICULT

Human suffering

- The Church does not view suffering as an end in itself. For those who are dying, pain medication may be administered even when one of the unintended side effects is hastening death. (CCC no. 2279) Also, Catholics who are close to death may forgo heroic and extraordinary treatment if it is only delaying the inevitable. (CCC no. 2278)
- Suffering has meaning and value. It can lead us closer to Christ and unite us to His passion. (CCC no. 1501, 1502)
- As Christians, we are called to accompany the sick, vulnerable, poor, and the dying. No one should feel like a burden.
- Christians – especially St. Basil – are credited with inventing the modern hospital. We continue to care for the sick and dying in Catholic hospitals, hospices, shelters, and through other ministries.
- Suffering does not lessen human dignity and should never be used to justify an act that is morally wrong.

About mental health and disabilities

- All humans are made in the image and likeness of God and have equal dignity and value – regardless of their abilities.
- 1 in 3 Canadians experience a mental illness at some point in their lives ¹⁵.
- Yet – in March 2027, MAiD will be made available to people whose only underlying medical condition is mental illness ¹⁶.
- Expanding access to euthanasia and assisted suicide for those living with mental illness closes the door to any hope of recovery¹⁷. In fact, the majority of Canadian psychiatrists do not support this expansion, nor do they feel that Canada is prepared to safely execute it ¹⁸.
- **Over one quarter of Canadians say they have a disability, and the highest concentration of people with disabilities is in Nova Scotia¹⁹.**





DID YOU KNOW?

Many great saints struggled with mental health issues, yet they lived beautiful lives in service of God and others.

- St. Oscar Romero struggled with scrupulosity and was diagnosed with obsessive compulsive disorder. He is the patron saint of El Salvador and persecuted Christians.
- Bl. Enrico Rebuschini dealt with depression all his life.
- Servant of God Rose Hawthorne Lathrop suffered post-partum depression and psychosis, even spending time in an asylum. She later founded a Dominican order of nursing sisters.
- St. Louis Martin had dementia.

Douglas Radamez Barahona, Giovanni Ascencio Ardón y Raul Lemus- Grupo Cinteupiltzin CENAR El Salvador
(https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mural_Oscar_Romero_UES.jpg), „Mural Oscar Romero UES“, crop, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/legalcode>

Freedom of conscience

- Physicians have a right to freedom of conscience and must be allowed to refuse procedures, referrals, or advice that conflict with their faith or values.
- The right to practice one’s religion and to live according to one’s conscience supersedes the desire of patients to choose the conditions and circumstances of their death.
- There is room in this province and country for a plurality of beliefs under our laws and our Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
- Medical professionals who stand publicly against MAiD are risking their livelihood and reputation to defend what is right. They deserve our full support.
- More important by far than a right to freedom of conscience is God’s authority over all life, and the laws He has written.

About freedom of choice (for the dying)

Freedom is a gift from God. This means we are also free to do the wrong thing, including ending our own life or someone else’s. There is no “right to die”; it is an inevitable experience we will all have, but it is up to our Creator to decide when and how this will happen, just as He decides to give us life. The experience of suffering and dying without trying to control it teaches us great humility and shows us how to rely on Him. Those who are suffering may feel they can’t control anything so they may want to control the nature and timing of their death. Instead, they need love, company, and access to quality resources for mental health, healthcare, and palliative care – which addresses all of their needs and respects their dignity as a person.

Visit [No Options, No Choice](#), a rich resource published by the Christian Medical and Dental Association of Canada.



CHRISTIAN MEDICAL AND DENTAL
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

D. BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN FEAR AND HOPE

When speaking with someone about MAiD, or any complicated issue, it can be difficult to know how to bridge the distance between the teaching of the Catholic Church and the feelings, opinions, and understanding of the person you're talking to. *Bridging* is a method that can be used to discuss complex topics by directing the conversation back to the points you want to share, especially when you are approached with a difficult question, or a topic intended to catch you off guard. Many politicians use this tactic to get their message across in debates and interviews. However, we must always apply this strategy in a Christian manner – with truth, integrity, and understanding.

Bridging is a three-part process:

1. Receive all questions with the dignity that each person deserves
2. Use a “bridge” when needed
3. Direct the conversation to your main messages/talking points

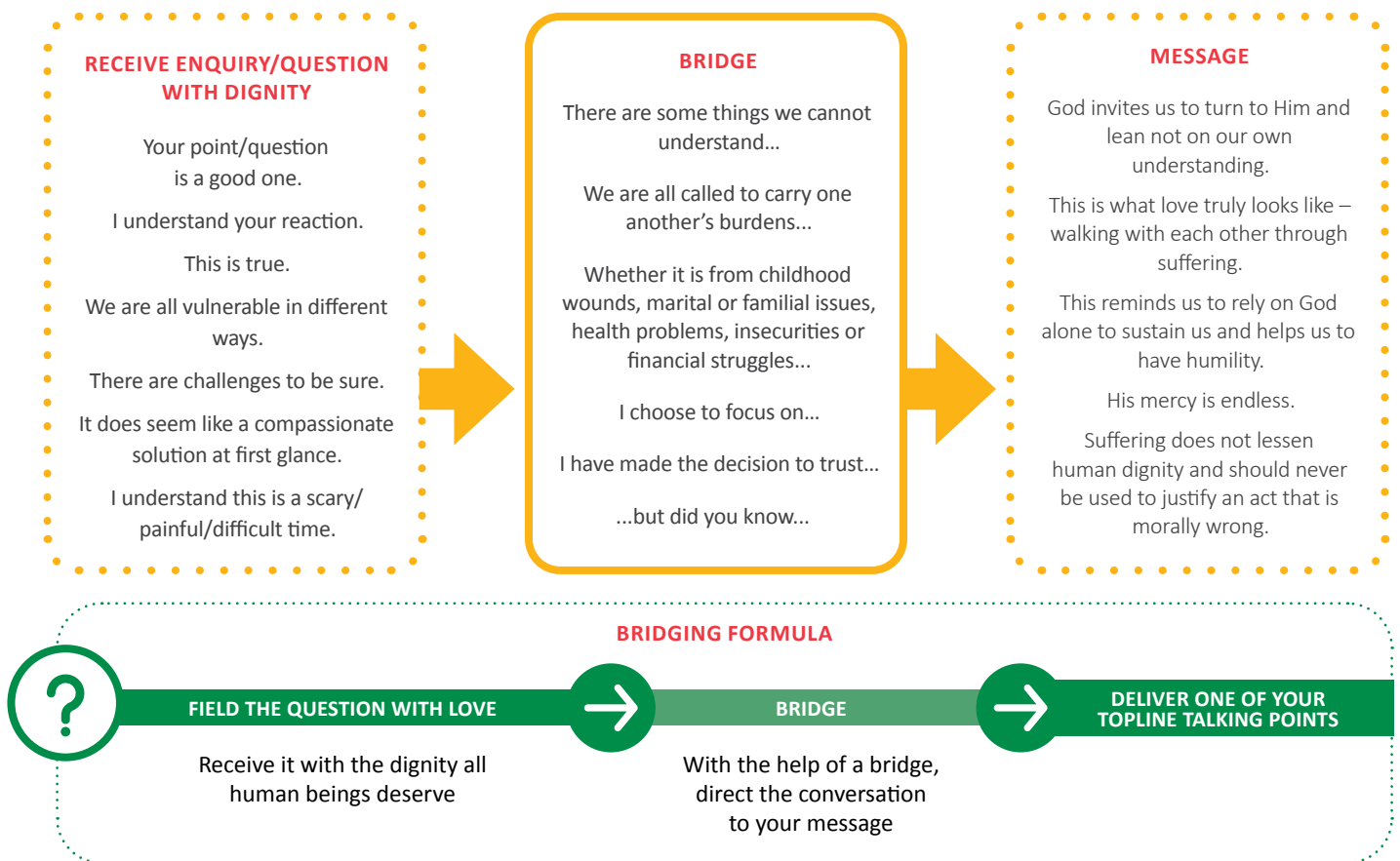


fig 2. BRIDGING WITH CHARITY



**ON THE
FRONT LINES:**
*What to do
During & After MAiD*

As Catholics, it is not morally permissible for us to be present in a space where MAiD is taking place, especially as pastors or chaplains. See [Samaritanus Bonus: on the care of persons in the critical and terminal phases of life](#).

However, we may find ourselves in the next room, in the same building, or sitting with the family of the person receiving MAiD. Despite our best efforts and sincere prayers, we may still find that people choose to go through with the process. At this last hour, our call is to spiritually accompany the person and/or their loved ones. Figure 3, below, offers ways we can be present and share Christ in these final moments.

“Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”

- LUKE 23:34 NRSV-CE

MAKE USE OF HOLY SIGNS AND SYMBOLS SUCH AS THE ROSARY, A CRUCIFIX, HOLY WATER, THE SIGN OF THE CROSS, ETC.	READING SCRIPTURE, I.E. PSALM 23, THE OUR FATHER IN LUKE 11, OR THE BEATITUDES IN MATTHEW 5.
HOPE AGAINST ALL HOPE	PRAYERS
OFFERING THE SITUATION AND OUTCOME TO OUR LORD	SILENT PRESENCE/LISTENING
EMPHASIS ON FORGIVENESS/ GOD’S MERCY	EVOKE THE NAME OF JESUS OR INVITE THE HOLY SPIRIT TO BE PRESENT



fig 3. DURING MAiD



Watch & share helpful videos at
[Dying To Meet You](#)

*Always keep God's
infinite mercy foremost
in your mind.*

AFTER MAiD

Messages to share with persons experiencing regret after losing someone to assisted suicide.

- Regret is natural and normal.
- Let us bring our regrets to the Lord and speak about them with loved ones.
- Since it never seems like a “good time” to discuss MAiD, it is always a good time.
- It is never too late to speak about your emotions to your loved one who has chosen MAiD, (if they have not gone through with it yet.) If they have already gone through with it, pray for them.
- If you feel you pressured someone to choose MAiD, go to confession, and pray for the soul of your loved one. Connect with others who have lost loved ones to MAiD, suicide, or other causes. Grieving together is healing.
- If you did not speak up against the person’s decision, you may feel a sense of guilt. Bring this to the sacrament of confession. Know that it was ultimately not your decision and entrust the person’s soul to God. Sometimes it is very difficult to know what to say, and when. God sees your heart.
- Make use of the sacraments. Spend time in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and consider offering a Mass for the soul of your loved one.
- Consider peer support or grief counselling*, such as:
 - [In-Person Grief Support Group through Hospice Halifax](#)
 - [Guided Grief Halifax](#)
 - [Survivors of Suicide Loss Halifax](#)

*See the Resources section at the end for more information on the above

A photograph of a woman wearing a light purple floral headscarf and a grey cardigan over a white shirt. She is smiling warmly. A healthcare professional in a light blue coat is seen from the side, with their hand resting on the woman's shoulder. The woman is holding a white document. The background is a bright, indoor setting, possibly a clinic or office.

**A BETTER WAY
FORWARD**

We should not encourage people who are suffering to simply end their lives. Rather, we should encourage crisis prevention and holistic, compassionate treatment and care. This includes disability support, mental health treatment, and palliative care.

MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT AND DISABILITY SERVICES

Despite what popular perception might be, not everyone who receives MAiD is elderly or near death. Due to the vague eligibility requirements in Canada, many people are young and even physically healthy, but are dealing with mental health struggles, disabilities, or other forms of suffering.

It is hypocritical and unacceptable for Canada to campaign for suicide prevention and at the same time encourage assisted dying for the mentally ill. Let us champion counselling, therapy, group support, and healthy coping tools to help those who are suffering, rather than encouraging them to end their lives.

TESTIMONIES

- Sam is a young man who attempted to take his own life in 2021, having struggled with anxiety and depression growing up. Now, he speaks about the need for better mental health support in Canada.
[See his testimony at nooptionsnochoice.com](https://nooptionsnochoice.com)²⁰.
- Tracy is an accessibility rights advocate living with spinal muscular atrophy.
[Watch her story at nooptionsnochoice.com](https://nooptionsnochoice.com)²¹.

RESOURCES

When speaking to persons who are struggling with mental health issues, consider sharing tangible resources and action items with them. Does your parish offer a counselling program, or are there any pastors in the church who are good listeners/are known for offering helpful counsel? Does the hospital they are staying at offer counselling or mental health support? Do they have connections to disability services and support workers?

See the Resources section at the end of this toolkit for more information.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Palliative care affirms the God-given value of each human life. It seeks neither to hasten nor delay death, but to manage pain and symptoms.

It addresses the needs of the whole person: physical, psychological, social, and spiritual, through a diverse team of medical professionals, volunteers, family members, and more. It surrounds the patient with a supportive community so that their final days are not spent in suffering or isolation.

What does palliative care look like in Canada?

More people are receiving palliative care compared to five years ago, and more are dying with at-home palliative care support, according to The Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI)²². However, there is much room for improvement in treatment and accessibility. Many patients visit the emergency room because they don't have access to the at-home palliative care they need. Patients also die in the hospital while waiting for care in the community, even when home or long-term care supports are in place.

"There is a current misconception that at the end of one's life there will be intractable physical pain. As a family physician who has practiced palliative care on hundreds of patients, my experience over the last 25 years is that this scenario is the rare exception and not the rule. Appropriate palliative care interventions at or near the end of life reduce and can relieve the vast majority of physical pain. In the rare exception of intractable pain, there is the option of palliative sedation until the patient passes away. The bigger issue is not intractable pain but access to good palliative care."

— DR. JAMES K. WHEELER, FAMILY PHYSICIAN IN CHATHAM, ONT.

Supporting palliative care in Canada – what can you do?

1. Build an action plan to commemorate [National Hospice Palliative Care Week](#), which occurs annually in the first week in May.
2. Support [Pallium Canada](#), a charity dedicated to improving the quality and accessibility of palliative care.²³
3. Write to your provincial member of Parliament or the Legislative Assembly, or the federal minister of health.



fig 4. PALLIATIVE CARE: A PROTECTIVE SHIELD FOR THE ILL AND VULNERABLE
INSPIRED BY PASTORAL LETTER ON MAID FROM ARCHBISHOP DUNN

"All are called to give witness at the side of the sick person and to become a 'healing community' in order to actualize concretely the desire of Jesus that, beginning with the most weak and vulnerable, all may be one flesh."

-CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, "SAMARITANUS BONUS"

A rich resource on palliative care from Canadian bishops

[Horizons of Hope: A Toolkit for Catholic Parishes on Palliative Care](#) is a free practical resource to help us all be better informed. Please make use of this toolkit in your parishes whether by forming new study groups or as part of existing faith formation activities.



Parish Action Items

For a list of activities you may consider in your parish and community, see our [Ministry of Care and Companionship page](#).



A photograph of two hands held up in a gesture of prayer or offering. The hands are positioned in the lower half of the frame, with fingers spread and palms facing upwards. The background is a soft, out-of-focus landscape with a light sky and darker ground. A semi-transparent red rectangular box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the word "PRAYERS" in white, bold, uppercase letters. A thin, dotted orange line is positioned below the text within the red box.

PRAYERS



“Even the weakest and most vulnerable, the sick, the old, the unborn and the poor are MASTERPIECES OF GOD’S CREATION, made in his own image, destined to live forever, and deserving of the utmost reverence and respect.”

— POPE FRANCIS, DAY FOR LIFE GREETING, JULY 7, 2013

“Love is not passive; it goes out to meet the other.”

- POPE LEO XIV

“Let us raise our prayers to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Health of the Sick, asking her to assist all who suffer and are in need of compassion, consolation and a listening ear. Let us seek her intercession with this ancient prayer that has been invoked in families for those living with illness and pain:

Sweet Mother, do not part from me.
Turn not your eyes away from me.
Walk with me at every moment
and never leave me alone.
You who always protect me
as a true Mother,
obtain for me the blessing of the Father,
Son and Holy Spirit.”

Pope Leo XIV in his message on the 34th World Day of the Sick

A prayer for those who are ill²⁴

God our Father, we bring before you today
those who suffer from illness or disability—
those whose lives are profoundly affected by their illness.

When they feel fragile and broken,
remind them that you call them by name
and hold them in the palm of your hand.

When they feel devalued, remind them
that they are made in the image of Jesus.

When they are reminded of different times in the past,
lead them to grow in the faith that you love them today,
as they are, in the reality of their lives this day.

When they feel uncertain and fearful about the future,
lead them to that perfect love which casts out all fear.

When situations remind them not of what they can do,
but of what they cannot do, remind them that love never fails.

May all of us, whatever our circumstances,
never be so taken up with our own concerns that we do not
see or respond to the needs of others, especially those who
suffer in our midst.

May we live with courage to respond to the challenges that
each of us faces.

Amen.

– Via Catholic Health Association USA

The 23rd Psalm

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long.

– Psalm 23, NRSV-CE

*Simple prayers*²⁵

Jesus, I trust in You.
Jesus, I need You. Apart from You I can do nothing.

In your mercy, love in me and through me.
Jesus, with all my heart, I cling to You.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, I believe in Your love for me.

Keep me, O Lord, as the apple of Your eye; beneath the
shadow of Your wings protect me.

God, come to my assistance: O Lord, make haste to help me.

Oh my Jesus, I surrender myself to you, please take care of
everything. Blessed Mother Mary, I also surrender myself to
you, please help take care of everything.

Prayer for healing

Lord,
Look upon me with eyes of mercy. May Your healing hand rest
upon me, may Your life-giving powers flow into every cell of
my body and into the depths of my soul, cleansing, purifying,
restoring me to wholeness and strength for service in Your
Kingdom.

Amen.

Prayer before surgery

Loving Father,
I entrust myself to Your care this day; guide with wisdom and
skill the minds and hands of the medical people who minister
in Your Name, and grant that every cause of illness be
removed. May I be restored to soundness of health and learn
to live in more perfect harmony with You and with those
around me.

I ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Prayer for those tempted by assisted suicide or despair

Loving God, You are the source of all life and the healer of
every broken heart. Look with mercy on those who face
unbearable suffering and are tempted toward assisted suicide.
Grant them patient endurance and the unwavering support of
family, friends, and caregivers. Help them to see Your presence
in their pain, as You were with Your Son on the Cross. Surround
them with compassionate care that honors their dignity, eases
their burdens, and affirms the sacred value of every moment
of life. May they find peace in Your promise of eternal healing.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRAYERS FOR THE DYING

*I Believe in Life Everlasting*²⁶ (CCC no. 1020)

The Christian who unites their own death to that of Jesus views it as a step towards Christ and an entrance into everlasting life. When the Church speaks Christ's words of pardon and absolution over the dying Christian, seals that Christian for the last time with a strengthening anointing, and gives Christ in viaticum as nourishment for the journey, she speaks with gentle assurance:

Go forth, Christian soul, from this world
in the name of God the almighty Father,
who created you,
in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God,
who suffered for you,
in the name of the Holy Spirit,
who was poured out upon you.

Go forth, faithful Christian!
May you live in peace this day,
may your home be with God in Zion,
with Mary, the virgin Mother of God,
with Joseph, and all the angels and saints...

May you return to your Creator
who formed you from the dust of the earth.
May holy Mary, the angels, and all the saints
come to meet you as you go forth from this life...

May you see your Redeemer face to face.

*Prayer when dying*²⁷

Jesus, Mary and Joseph,

I give you my heart and my soul. Assist me in my last
agony, and grant that I may breathe forth my soul in
peace with you.

Amen.

PRAYERS FOR LOVED ONES AND CAREGIVERS

*A Prayer to St. Jude*²⁸

Most holy apostle, St. Jude, faithful servant and friend of
Jesus,

The Church honours and invokes you universally as the
patron of hope. Please intercede on my behalf.

Make use of that particular privilege given to you to bring
hope, comfort and help where they are needed most.

Come to my assistance in this great need that I may receive
the consolation and help of heaven as I work with my
challenges, particularly as I pray for my family and friends
who are ill, and try to give them the support they need.

I praise God with you and all the saints forever. Amen.

*Scripture for Those Working in Pastoral Care*²⁹

For this reason, since the day we heard it,
we have not ceased praying for you
and asking that you may be filled
with the knowledge of God's will
in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,
so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord,
fully pleasing to him,
as you bear fruit in every good work
and as you grow in the knowledge of God.

May you be made strong with all the strength
that comes from his glorious power,
and may you be prepared to endure everything with
patience,
while joyfully giving thanks to the Father,
who has enabled you to share in the inheritance
of the saints in the light.

Colossians 1:9-12 NRSV-CE

Amen.

Prayer After a Person Has Died

Come to his (her) rescue, Saints of God; run out to meet him (her), angels of the Lord.

Response. Welcome his (her) soul. Lead him (her) into the presence of the Most High.

May Christ, who called you, receive you. May the angels lead you to Abraham's bosom.

R. Welcome his (her) soul. Lead him (her) into the presence of the Most High.

Eternal rest grant to him (her) O Lord; and let perpetual light shine upon him (her).

R. Lead him (her) into the presence of the Most High.

Lord, have mercy. A. Christ, have mercy. C. Lord, have mercy.

R. Our Father who art in heaven ...

Eternal rest grant to him (her), O Lord. A. And let perpetual light shine upon him (her).

From the gates of hell A. Deliver his (her) soul, O Lord.

May he (she) rest in peace. A. Amen.

O Lord, hear my prayer. A. And let my cry come unto you.

The Lord is with you. A. And with you also.

Let us pray.

To you, Lord, we commend the soul of your servant (handmaid) N.

Being dead to this world, may he (she) live unto you. In your most merciful goodness forgive whatever sins he (she) has committed in this life through human weakness: through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Saints to invoke

St. Jude, for desperate situations and hopeless cases

- St. Jude (or Thaddeus) was one of Christ's 12 apostles and is believed to be the author of the Book of Jude in the Bible.³⁰ Catholics often turn to him when a situation seems desperate or impossible – and we know that nothing is impossible with God.

- [Novena to St. Jude](#)

St. Dymphna, for nervous and mental afflictions

- St. Dymphna is an Irish saint who was killed by her father after rejecting his incestuous advances. After her death, there were many reports of healings for persons with epilepsy or mental illness, including anxiety disorders.³¹

- [Prayer to St. Dymphna](#)

Our Lady of Lourdes for healing

- St. Bernadette witnessed apparitions of the Blessed Mother at a grotto in Lourdes, France in the 1800's.³² Many healings happened at the grotto, and it continues to be a pilgrimage site where healings occur to the present day.

- [Prayer to Our Lady of Lourdes for healing](#)



Top Line Talking Points

- Life is sacred at all stages, from conception to natural death.
- There is value and there is redemption in suffering.
- We live in a culture of death which elevates self above God and views morality as subjective. As Catholics, we are called to defend life and Truth, even when it is uncomfortable. We are also called to treat everyone with dignity and respect.
- We must champion mental health and accessibility resources, better healthcare and palliative care, which addresses the needs of the whole person, affirms the value of their life, and seeks to ease their suffering.
- Physicians must have freedom of conscience and must be allowed to reject participating in assisted suicide or practices that go against their beliefs.

Bridging

1. Receive all questions with the dignity that each person deserves
2. Use one of the “bridges,” i.e. “that’s a good question...There are challenges to be sure...”
3. Direct the conversation to your topline talking points

MAiD in Nova Scotia

Our province forces physicians to provide effective referrals for MAiD, and actively encourages the practice. This directly disregards the right to freedom of conscience that we have in the Canadian Charter. A group of Nova Scotian physicians has taken a stand against this policy, although this stance threatens the livelihoods of its members. Nova Scotia also has a high rate of MAiD deaths, and a high rate of disability. There are fewer MAiD restrictions here than in some other provinces.

MAiD in Canada

Canada is at the extreme end of the spectrum regarding the promotion of assisted suicide. Our country is swiftly moving towards making MAiD more accessible and more widely practiced, with talks of offering it for infants³³ even surfacing among physicians.

On the Sacraments

- While a person’s choice to resort to MAiD makes the celebration of the sacraments impossible, we must continue to demonstrate God’s love and mercy through prayer, presence, and compassion.

IMPORTANT RESOURCES

RESOURCE	AUTHOR/PUBLISHER	WEB ADDRESS
ON PALLIATIVE CARE		
Palliative care: Horizons of Hope: A Toolkit for Catholic Parishes on Palliative Care	Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops	cccb.ca
Archdiocesan Ministry of Care and Companionship webpage	Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth	halifaxyarmouth.org
Palliative Care and a Catholic Response to Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide	Archdiocese of Toronto	Archtoronto.ca
ON MAiD		
Pastoral Guidance from Archbishop Dunn Regarding MAiD (Eng/Fr)	Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth	halifaxyarmouth.org
Samaritanus Bonus Letter on the Care of Persons in the Critical and Terminal Phases of Life	The Vatican	Vatican.va
No Options, No Choice	CMDA	nooptionsnochoice.com
Catechism of the Catholic Church For full context, consult the CCC sections 2258-2330 on the Fifth Commandment.		
Archbishop Emeritus Mancini's Letters to the Faithful: Response to Medical Assistance in Dying	Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth	halifaxyarmouth.org
A Pastoral Reflection on Medical Assistance in Dying	Atlantic Episcopal Assembly	Diocese of Edmonston
Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide	CCCB	cccb.ca
Hope and Dignity	Archdiocese of Edmonton	Hopeanddignity.caedm.ca
Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide	Archdiocese of Montreal	Diocesemontreal.org
PRAYERS AND RITES		
Catholic Health Association – Prayer Library	Catholic Health Association of the United States	chausa.org/prayers
Guide For Celebrating the Pastoral Care of The Sick	CCCB	cccb.stjoseph.com
Understanding Sacramental Healing: Anointing And Viaticum	CCCB	cccb.stjoseph.com
Prayers Of the Sick	CCCB	cccb.stjoseph.com
A Companion for the Sick	Veritas Book Store, Halifax	Veritasbookstore.ca
Resources from the Archdiocese of Toronto on Euthanasia and Palliative Care	Archdiocese of Toronto	Archtoronto.org
GRIEF		
In Person Grief Support Group	Hospice Halifax	hospicehalifax.ca
Community-based Grief Support	Guided Grief Halifax	guidedgriefhfx.ca
Support Group	Survivors of Suicide Loss Halifax	sosnovascotia.com

CONTACTS

RESOURCE	AUTHOR/PUBLISHER	WEB ADDRESS
MENTAL HEALTH		
Suicide hotline	Talk Suicide Canada	1-833-456-4566 or Text 45645
Mental health hotline for children	Kids Help Phone	1-800-668-6868 or Text 686868
Crisis line	Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Crisis Line	1-888-429-8167
Service referral for various issues and crises	211	Call 211 or visit mha.nshealth.ca
Free single-session supportive counselling for individuals 18 and older, couples and families	Access Wellness	Accesswellness.lifeworks.com
DISABILITIES		
Provides funding for support services from a Service Provider for someone who requires support to live on their own	Independent Living Support	novascotia.ca
Assistance with purchase/rental of approved assistive technology and equipment	Access AT Canada	accessassistivetech.ca
Individual and family support for mental disabilities	Inclusion Nova Scotia	Inclusionns.ca Reach out to the Inclusion Facilitator: 902-410-4370 outreach@inclusionns.ca
Independent living services, employment opportunities, vocational training and skills development, behaviour support programs, recreation programs, and respite care	Diverse Abilities Nova Scotia	diverseabilitiesns.ca
Support for individuals who are blind and low vision	Canadian National Institute for the Blind	Cnib.ca
Support for individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing	Canadian Hearing Services	Chs.ca
Assistance with the Canada Disability Benefit (CDB), Disability Tax Credit (DTC), or other provincial supports	Pathway to Benefits	benefitpathway.ca



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- ³ [Private Member's Bill C-218 \(45-1\) - First Reading - An Act to amend the Criminal Code \(medical assistance in dying\) - Parliament of Canada](#)
- ⁴ [Bill C-218: Stop MAiD for mental illness](#)
- ⁵ [Nova Scotia Policy Violates Doctors' Freedom of Conscience | ARPA Canada](#)
- ⁶ [Sisters of St. Martha to end sponsorship of Antigonish hospital](#)
- ⁷ [Reasons for requesting medical assistance in dying | The College of Family Physicians of Canada](#)
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- ¹² [Pastoral Letter on MAiD from the Atlantic Episcopal Assembly](#)
- ¹³ [Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons & Families Considering or Opting for Death by Assisted Suicide or Euthanasia - The Catholic Bishops of Alberta and the Northwest Territories](#)
- ¹⁴ [Samaritanus Bonus: on the care of persons in the critical and terminal phases of life \(14 July 2020\)](#)
- ¹⁵ [About mental illness - Canada.ca](#)
- ¹⁶ [Canada's medical assistance in dying \(MAiD\) law](#)
- ¹⁷ [Open Letter From The Permanent Council To The Government of Canada on Permitting Persons Living with Mental Illness to Access Euthanasia/Assisted Suicide](#)
- ¹⁸ [Brief to the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying \(MAiD\) - Ontario Psychiatric Association](#)
- ¹⁹ [Disability Statistics in Canada | Made in CA](#)
- ²⁰ [Sam's Story - No Options, No Choice](#)
- ²¹ [Tracy's Story - No Options, No Choice](#)
- ²² [Access to palliative care in Canada - CIHI](#)
- ²³ [Advancing palliative care for all Canadians - Pallium Canada](#)
- ²⁴ [From Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth - Ministry of Care and Companionship: Prayer](#)
- ²⁵ [Prayers, Promises and Encouragement - Hope and Dignity](#)
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- ³⁰ [Why is St. Jude the patron saint of lost causes? – EWTN Great Britain](#)
- ³¹ [Saint Dymphna | Story, Feast Day, Patron Saint, & Miracles | Britannica](#)
- ³² [Our Lady of Lourdes - My Catholic Life!](#)
- ³³ [Canadian doctors push for babies to be euthanized under MAiD program | The Post Millennial | thepostmillennial.com](#)