

## Live and Let Live

As Catholics, praying for the protection of life from conception until natural death is a familiar concept. Although we are very aware of abortion, we do not often focus on the other threat – respect for natural death. Our lives are a gift from God and at the end of our earthly life, God calls us to Himself. Inherent in our belief is that death occurs on God’s schedule. (CCC 1011, 2258)

As the movement for so-called assisted suicide gains ground, culture is now chipping away at natural death. Bishop Scott McCaig, the Roman Catholic Military Ordinariate of Canada, in a May 11 homily specifically warned about the dangers that lie ahead from legalizing this practice. He cautioned that the government will take an interest in forcing euthanasia on citizens, especially the poor and sick, as a way of saving healthcare dollars.

In every country that has allowed doctors to kill patients, safeguards meant to protect the weak and vulnerable have eroded. Allowing people to end their lives creates incentives to seek death as a cost



saving option. The elderly, sick, and infirm are often seen as burdens that can be easily disposed of. “Not being a ‘burden’ becomes a very powerful coercion to end one’s life,” Bishop McCaig said. He warned that euthanasia to save healthcare dollars will be voluntary at first. Then it will become a duty. Then it will be forced. It will especially affect the poor. He described how the Netherlands progressed from assisted suicide to euthanasia, first for the terminally ill, then for the chronically ill, then for physical illnesses, then for

psychological distress, and from voluntary to involuntary euthanasia called “termination of the patient without explicit request.”

Suicide is contrary to the fifth Commandment, “thou shall not kill.” History demonstrates the gap between assisted suicide and mandatory killing by euthanasia is very, very narrow, he said. Now that some states in the US have legalized so-called assisted suicide, we must avoid the slippery slope experienced in other countries. We cannot allow government bureaucrats, no matter how well-meaning, to decide who lives and who dies for convenience or financial reasons and we cannot allow the healthcare industry to further redefine healthcare to include intentional death.

*S. O'Brien, Pro-Life Ministry*