

All Souls Day 2025 with a Catholic Response to MAiD

After yesterday's celebration of All Saints, which calls us to contemplate the communion of saints and the promise of eternal life, today we gather to remember all the faithful departed. We reflect on the mystery of death. For Christians, death is not the end of life but the beginning of a new and everlasting life with God. On this day, when we face the mystery of death, we are reminded of the promise of resurrection and eternal life. The Church teaches us that, when we die, most of us need some process of purification. This process has traditionally been called "Purgatory." Our prayers accompany those who have gone before us as they make their final passage to God. In praying for our loved ones, we give thanks for their lives, and we hope to be reunited with them in God's love.

The Book of Wisdom teaches us that the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and that God's mercy sustains them through suffering and death. Our Psalm today expresses our confidence in the Lord: "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living," trusting that our loved ones now walk with God in eternal life.

The Book of Revelation offers us a vision of a new heaven and a new earth, where God will wipe away every tear, and death will be no more. This promise underscores the dignity and hope we hold for all human life—life that is sacred from conception to natural death.

In our Gospel, Jesus raises the young man at Nain, demonstrating His power over death and His compassion for those who mourn. It is a reminder that Christ is the resurrection and the life, and that our hope rests in Him.

Yet, as we hold onto this hope, we are also called to confront the painful realities of our world. One such challenge today is the increasing acceptance of Medical Assistance in Dying, or MAiD. Since 2016, the latest figures indicate that almost 77,000 Canadians—an entire city's worth of people—have chosen to end their lives through assisted death. What began as a measure for the terminally ill has expanded beyond its original intent. Now, MAiD is available to those who are not dying, including individuals with disabilities, chronic conditions, mental health struggles, and feelings of loneliness or being a burden. This expansion raises profound moral and spiritual questions. It suggests that life, especially life with suffering, can be deemed less valuable or no longer worth living. But as Catholics, we know that every human life, regardless of age, health, or ability, is sacred, created in the image and likeness of God and loved unconditionally. Our faith teaches us that true mercy and compassion do not lie in hastening death but in accompanying those who suffer with love, presence, and care.

Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, exemplified this truth. He never turned away from suffering. He touched the sick, comforted the lonely and walked beside those in pain. He demonstrated that the answer to human suffering is not death, but love, through the compassion of palliative care that relieves pain and nurtures the whole person—body, mind, and spirit. The dignity of every person does not diminish with illness or age; it is rooted in being made in God's image.

The danger of MAiD is that it can be offered as a quick, seemingly merciful solution to feelings of despair, loneliness, or a sense of being a burden. But these feelings are human and deserve compassion, not a prescription for death. The Church teaches that intentionally ending a human

life is intrinsically evil because it contradicts the fundamental truth that life is a gift from God that must be respected and protected at every stage.

Moreover, the widespread acceptance of MAiD poses spiritual risks. Those who choose assisted death, especially if motivated by feelings of despair or lack of support, may be prevented from receiving the sacraments of reconciliation, the Eucharist, and the Anointing of the Sick, sacraments that bring grace and healing. It can also affect the dignity of their death and their journey into eternity.

On this day of remembrance, we pray for our loved ones—trusting in the hope of the resurrection, and for all who are vulnerable or suffering. We are called to be witnesses of hope, compassion, and care, following Christ's example. We must advocate for a culture of life, one that affirms hope and the inherent dignity of every human being, especially those most at risk of being discarded or overlooked.

Our response as Catholics is clear: we oppose MAiD because it undermines the sacredness of human life. We commit ourselves to walking with those who suffer, offering love, support, and the hope of Christ. We believe that true mercy does not end life prematurely but instead embraces suffering with compassion, providing care that heals and uplifts those in need.

I sent a Pastoral Letter to all clergy throughout the Diocese in September and again in October, asking them to express our opposition to MAiD and ask our parishioners to write letters to the Premier and to our local MLAs, including their names, addresses and emails. I indicated that vulnerable patients across Nova Scotia are being offered MAiD even before they ask for it. All

doctors in our province must participate in this process or face discipline. This is why we must encourage our parishioners to write or email our politicians to voice our opposition. I have included all the names, addresses and emails for our local MLAs.

Every parish was provided with a bundle of information including a sample copy of a letter to be sent to our Premier and local MLAs. We also provided posters and brochures to all parishes entitled, *Hope. Compassion. Care: A Catholic Response to Medical Assistance in Dying*. If you did not receive this information, please contact your parish and ask where you may receive this information, which the bishop requested be distributed in your parish.

As we remember our loved ones, let us also renew our dedication to defending life, full of hope and trust in the Lord's promise of resurrection. Let us pray for wisdom, courage, and compassion in a world that desperately needs to rediscover the dignity of every human life, especially in moments of suffering.

May eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May their souls and all the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace. And may the Lord strengthen us to be faithful witnesses to life, hope, and love.