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## “...In Case You Missed It...” FROM LAST WEEKS BULLETIN

Each week I put together a fairly lengthy bulletin article, either of my own writing or one that I have come across from an online magazine or blog that would possibly be informative and relevant for our parishioners. In some ways it can be like composing another homily and requires a bit of work and time, which I'm happy to put into this effort. Our parishioners, due to schedules and the seasons are not always present at Mass here from week to week due to travel, holidays or cottage time and so may have missed one of the perhaps more worthwhile articles I've posted.

This weekend is a long weekend which means that many of our parishioners will be away. This is always in the back of my mind when I'm looking to put together the bulletin article as I know that a really good article may be seen by way fewer people depending on the time of year and the weekend.

I got to thinking that maybe it would be a good idea to post here (at the top of the bulletin) the topic(s) I posted in the previous bulletin so that parishioners who are computer savvy may go to our parish website and read any or all of the many previously posted bulletins. I hope this will be helpful.

### **Last Weekend's Bulletin on the Feast of Pentecost – May 15<sup>th</sup> Bulletin Article: “MERCY REVEALED”**

This was an article written and posted on Mark Mallett's blog concerning the real meaning of mercy (relevant and important in this *Year of Mercy*) especially when many are using the word but perhaps void of its true meaning in God.

*(Fr. Charles)*

## DEATH WITH REAL DIGNITY

**Doctors cannot promise patients absolute control over their dying moments.** (from Mercator.com, May 9, 2016 by Martin Cullen, an intensive care specialist in Sydney.)

Back in November I was part of the TV audience of Q & A, the ABC's flagship live debate program on current issues. Generally it's a program with strong left-wing or liberal views peppered with a mild or unappealing opposition.

The topic of this episode was “Facing Death”: euthanasia and assisted suicide. As an intensive care physician I've had a long-standing interest in this. It is not a topic for the fainthearted. Indeed the atmosphere was tense in the studio. The ABC even needed a pre-program “clown/comedian” to relax the audience. He didn't succeed.

Ironically the studio management mentioned a number of times that if anyone in the audience was feeling suicidal or depressed a counsellor was on hand to talk! As responsible as their decision was, isn't it self-evident that doing harm to yourself is not a healthy act? Did they implicitly understand that, yes, people who are thinking of self-harm are somewhat vulnerable?

How can a TV station stack a panel and audience with euthanasia supporters telling patients that life is worthless

when you're dying, and then turn around and offer counselling to anyone who is feeling a bit raw? Did they just miss the point that euthanasia is the ultimate self-harm and is exactly contrary to their responsible action of having a counsellor around for support? It was a mad contradiction.

Amongst the panelists were two palliative care physicians who were swinging on the spectrum of pro-choice, a physician, a cancer sufferer and the very funny comedian and media host, Andrew Denton. Denton was responsible for the show's topic as he has been investigating the topic for some months and has led a renewed zest for the euthanasia movement.

It is a topic that is sensitive and filled with suffering for so many people, but there has to be a respectful discussion. This was mostly adhered to during the discussions apart from Denton making disparaging and arrogant comments about an audience member's research into the slippery slope of euthanasia practice. Denton dismissed him as a confabulator.

The debate opened up around some hard cases of people with severe disabilities or metastatic malignancies and the desire to terminate their own lives. These hard cases were reinforced by Denton articulating his pro-euthanasia viewpoint well, summarising the key themes of the debate: relieving suffering, choice and the inconsistency between being “allowed” to kill oneself by starvation (an act of omission) and not being allowed to kill oneself with a drug such as Nembutal (an act of commission). For all his argument and emotion he didn't do himself any favours by denying euthanasia was killing and stubbornly calling it “choice”.

It struck me that against these pro-euthanasia arguments we need to repeat that the most cogent reason for opposing euthanasia lies in the fact that you are human, my fellow human, with a noble and royal dignity that needs to be honoured and held sacred, even more so when you are sick and dying; that wanting to kill yourself is breaching the dignity of your own being.

You and I belong to each other. What you do to yourself somehow tangibly impacts on your neighbour.

When a person says they want to end their life on their terms, that's understandable and utterly reasonable, but when translated to mean “I want to kill myself” we need, with sensitivity, to explore the reasons. Maybe the problem is that as a society and medical profession we don't travel with our dying patients well. Families also need to note how they care for their loved ones. Remember compassion means “to suffer with.” How important a slogan is that!

Life is a sacred gift; we don't totally own it. The incredible efforts people make to keep us alive and protect our lives – exemplified in soldiers going to war to protect their country, or a selfless act of bravery in saving a life in peril – are tangible signs of our dignity. If you could be morally justified in taking your own life, thereby transgressing the greatest right we have, the right to life, then you could be justified in doing anything.

Yet we actually don't belong to ourselves totally nor have the right to do whatever we want; our laws reflect that fact. There is no unbridled right without a responsibility as its boundary. We have a responsibility to each other; we have partial rights to others. An example of this is your personal income and tax. You may say that the money you earn is yours, but a higher order has rights over some of that money, that is, the State for the purpose of the common good and looking after the less fortunate in society.

Similarly your life is not completely yours: you didn't bring yourself into the world, you as a person live in a society connected with fellow humans in a tangible manner, you are a member of society and have to contribute to it, people depend on each other. As John Paul II said, a neighbour is not "the other" but "another" – another me. We are bonded. "No man is an island". The sentiment that it's your life and you can do with it in any way you want cannot be true. Reality doesn't reflect that idea.

Another aspect of the debate is that people too often want to end their life because they're lonely or they don't feel loved. You don't kill what you hold valuable. We need to show the public that most people die well, that a lonely and scared death can be overcome by our genuine concern for the sick. Mother Teresa used to say that more people are converted by kindness than eloquent argument; people are moved by love. There are generally few problems when someone realizes they are loved.

Returning to Q&A, the notion of "control" ran hot through the evening's course. One long-suffering woman who had a neurological degenerative disease spoke about wanting to end life when she so determined. When was that going to be and how irreversible would that intention be? How was she going to "control" her death?

There is a crazy notion in the Western world that life is about control and autonomy. We can't control lots of things, even our bowel and bladder function, so how are we to ensure control of death? It just doesn't happen. Even those deaths that are hastened, how often are they uncontrolled? When you're unconscious how can you control your death?

Vomiting or seizures or discomfort or incontinence can occur in dying days; there never is absolute control. It's a misnomer. The simplistic argument that taking a "kill pill" will gently ease me out of this world is easily swallowed by pro-euthanasia followers. But I know as a clinician that when we aim to keep patients comfortable when they are dying they can require close monitoring and infusions of sedatives to keep on top of discomfort. It's not easy.

Many in the pro-euthanasia movement are well intentioned. But the consequences of their ideas are so dangerous for society. Taking the loaded language and emotion out of the debate is key. Showing that you look after the elderly and lonely is a good place to start. Understanding that we are all in this together, suffering with the dying, going through the last days and hours of life as a companion, is what we doctors must commit ourselves to.

### **MASS INTENTIONS – May 24 – May 29, 2016**

Tues., May 24 – 8:30 am - Victorino, Vitaliana & Luz Ruelos+  
Req I. & Z. Reid  
Wed., May 25 – 7:00 pm – Robert St. Denis+ Req Madge St. Denis  
Thurs., May 26 – 8:30 am–John Young+ R. Jack & Jeananne Ralph  
Fri., May 27 – 8:30 am – Baby Laure-Emmanuelle Alice Bouvier+  
Req. Mullin Family  
Sat. May 28 – 5:00 pm – Raymond Rodrigues+ Req. Iris Dias  
Sun. May 29–9:00 am–Mona Anderson+ Req. Hicke Family  
11:00 am – Corinna McQuat+ Req. The Hallihans

### **CWL Upcoming Events: Please mark these dates.**

Coffee Sunday will be Sunday, May 29. Leo's Lunch will be Monday, May 30 in the parish hall. Tickets available after all masses or by calling 905-620-0724. Coffee Sunday/Strawberry Festival will be June 26. More info. to come. All women of the parish are invited to the CWL Potluck supper to be held on June 21<sup>st</sup> at 6:00 pm. Please call 905-620-0724 to be added to the list

### **Trinity Sunday – May 22, 2016**

#### **Working wonders for those in our community...**

"I first came to Rose of Sharon as a pregnant, young mom, thinking this would never happen to me," explains Brittany, now with her five year old son Ethan and one year old daughter Sarah. At 17, Brittany came to the Rose of Sharon to enrol in the mother baby programs designed to assist her and her new family get on their feet. Everything from diapers, food, clothing cooking classes, completion of high school education, Ontario Works application, resume assistance and more was available to her. Within a year, she was able to use her new-found skills to adjust to her new life. Brittany thanks ShareLife donors for their financial support to help them deal with the challenges they have faced, and learning to grow as a family and enjoy each other. Last year over 6300 young parents received the care, counselling and educational support they needed to care for themselves and their new families. Next Sunday, May 29<sup>th</sup> is ShareLife Sunday.

### **Heroic Catholicism**

You are invited on May 28<sup>th</sup> to join Tim Staples and Tanya Granic Allen at the Canada Christian College in Toronto in what is going to be another amazing day filled with prayer, faith and fellowship. In a world where it is increasingly more difficult to practice our faith, the world and the Church requires people to practice heroic Catholicism. For more info. [www.ServiamMinistries.com/events/heroic/](http://www.ServiamMinistries.com/events/heroic/)  
For group tickets: [emrleblanc@gmail.com](mailto:emrleblanc@gmail.com)

### **Chalice**

This weekend (May 21/22) Deacon Mike Conlin from Midland, Ontario is here in our parish to speak about *Chalice*. Chalice is a Canadian, Catholic sponsorship organization founded and headed up by a parish priest in Nova Scotia, Father Pat Cosgrove. For the fifth year in a row *MoneySense* magazine has given Chalice a top-rated ranking among Canadian international aid organizations for its efficiency and transparency.



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