



DIOCESE OF PORTLAND
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

July 18, 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In June, the state legislature approved physician-assisted suicide in Maine, and the bill (LD 1313) was signed into law by Governor Mills. **This was the eighth legislative attempt to pass the law in Maine, including a proposed law that failed in a statewide vote in 2000.** How many times must Maine voters have to express their opposition on the same matter? Upon signing the recent measure into law, Governor Mills described it as an “agonizing” decision. Rightly so, as this law validates suicide by allowing doctors to prescribe deadly medications to hasten a person’s death, an action that deeply wounds the dignity of the human person.

As I said in my statement following the passage of physician-assisted suicide, this law legalizes a practice which has devastating effects on the common good. It further desensitizes individual consciences and society at large to the inherent value of each human life, especially in our young people. Suicide should always be seen as a tragedy, not an option. Pope Francis speaks of it as part of a “throwaway culture,” encouraging human beings to feel that we can mold the world into our own notion of truth, which includes discarding the pieces that don’t fit into our plan.

We can be grateful that God created us with the inner gifts of love and mercy, and thankful that our country affords us the opportunity to defend that which we believe. Several organizations outside of the Church are leading a “People’s Veto” against physician-assisted suicide. As your bishop, I support this effort and encourage you to have your voice heard. A “People’s Veto” requires 64,000 registered voters in Maine to sign a petition in order to send the measure to a statewide referendum. If you are a registered voter who wishes to sign, please ask your priest or a parish employee for guidance on how to do so in your area.

The Catholic Church has a long history of promoting the preservation of human dignity at the end of life. I invite you to read *Three Beliefs*, a guide for Maine Catholics regarding end-of-life decisions that includes an explanation of Catholic teaching on life-sustaining treatment and care. To view the document, ask for a copy at your parish or visit www.portlanddiocese.org/threebeliefs.

Join me in praying that our Merciful Father will confirm our resolve to live always for others and cherish God’s sacred gift of human life.

Sincerely in Jesus, our Hope,

Most Reverend Robert P. Deeley, J.C.D.
Bishop of Portland