

February 20, 2019

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

With some urgency I bring to your attention a bill that is rushing through the Nevada legislature to make doctor prescribed suicide legal in our state. The bill is SB 165. It provides that a person over 18 years of age may request a doctor to give a prescription designed to end his or her life, provided there is a diagnosis of a terminal illness and the opinion of two physicians that the person will live six months or less.

While people may view this bill as allowing for personal choice to end one's life, there are consequences that could actually take away from patients their choice to sustain their lives or to seek further medical treatment. For example, it is a fact that in states such as Oregon and California that have enacted doctor prescribed suicide, insurance companies have denied payment for potentially life-saving medical treatments, offering instead to pay for assisted suicide. What will be next? Will people with disabilities be similarly vulnerable to pressure to utilize the assisted suicide option over funding for necessary equipment or treatment? And will the elderly face a choice to take a deadly poison so as not to be a burden on family? When does the "right to die" turn into a "duty to die"?

What message would passage of this bill send? Suicide among teenagers is on the rise; what impact would this have on young people struggling with emotional issues or, for that matter, persons battling depression or suffering from traumatic brain injury? What about our veterans, approximately 20 of whom are committing suicide each week? Do we give up on them? Will we say there's no help or that life with tough challenges is not worth living? In Oregon the general suicide rate increased by more than twice the national suicide rate in the fifteen years since assisted suicide was passed. Some may view this as success for their law; I think it is a defeat for human compassion.

I rarely write a letter asking your help to inform our lawmakers about a particular bill. But our conviction in the value of human life compels me to make this urgent request. Go to the official website of the Nevada Legislature and click on the 80th Session (2019). Scroll down to "Share Your Opinion with Your Legislators." On the Select Bill, click SB 165, go to "Your Opinion of the Bill" and click on "Against" and then fill in the "Your Information" section. Or call your legislator. Thank you.

In Christ,

Bishop Randolph R. Calvo
Diocese of Reno