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The Moral Gravity of MAiD

Recently a number of pastors have been asked to celebrate the funeral rites of the Catholic Church for someone who has died by way of Medical Aid in Dying (MAiD), a government sanctioned form of assisted suicide/euthanasia.

The older people among us may remember that formerly the church did not do funerals for those who died by suicide. That changed with increasing awareness of a suicidal person's lack of culpability. However, when someone commits MAiD, the process includes ascertaining the person's cognition, intentionality, and freedom. Until and when we cannot trust that process, we can only take the person's decision at face value; they are culpably choosing a form of suicide.

Killing someone, including oneself, is a serious offense against God, our creator. We belong to God, especially by our baptismal faith, whereby we have a relationship with our Heavenly Father. Serious offenses break relationships. An employee who steals from the employer such that the company is imperiled, a spouse who has an adulterous affair, a witness who lies so that a case before the courts is affected, all these examples have consequences in which relationships are broken. Of course, when we break our relationship with God, i.e. commit mortal sin, our Lord is always gracing us with his love that we may repent. The spiritual drama of our human lives is: do we repent or not? This question is especially poignant in the case of MAiD: when would the person repent? Full repentance would include changing one's decision and not dying by MAiD.

When a priest is asked to conduct the Church's normal funeral rites for one who has died by MAiD, he is unable to do so. Firstly, out of respect for the decision of those who die this way with the apparent culpability that is part of this process. And secondly and at least as significantly, because to do so would make it appear that MAiD is morally acceptable. It is not.

The lack of the usual funeral is additionally hard for the bereaved who already suffer the loss of the deceased. Other prayers are always possible, such as in the cemetery, and the bereaved may gather later to participate in a Mass for the Dead.

Lastly, we as the People of God must find ways to bring the love of our Lord to those who suffer, who are dying, who are in need of knowing the hope we have in Christ. It is a very salutary practice to pray for the grace of final perseverance. And we are called always to discover the truth of our Lord's words about carrying our cross and the place of self denial in our spiritual lives. We remember that for us Jesus prayed: "not my will be done but yours."

Guided by the Holy Spirit, we pray together:

Jesus, *have mercy on us*

St. Mary, *pray for us*

St. Joseph, *pray for us*

Yours in Christ,

†Gary Franken
Bishop of St. Paul in Alberta

*For more information, see the Alberta Bishops' document on MAiD
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GrMSAOrzkb4s9a2XVXvEewsbpUPqPw/view?usp=sharing>

**For more assistance, contact the Bishop's office (as per below)