

Respect Life Bulletin for Sunday, October 16, 2022

From Dr. John Willke's New Book "Assisted Suicide & Euthanasia"

Here are some points and counterpoints from Dr. Willke's new book about candidates for euthanasia -- aka when the doctor kills the patient!

I want a death with dignity.

Would she want a death with dignity, or would she really want to live with dignity until death? Truly we should not equate dignity with control of bowel function or the need to be able to independently care for our own bodily needs at all times. True human dignity is internal, not external. True human dignity is the person himself. Illness does not destroy it. If a patient is treated with dignity by family and friends, he or she retains all the respect and dignity that their personhood is due."

"But I think Aunt May does realize that she's quite a burden to her loved ones. If she agrees, why not help her on her way and relieve the burden?"

Several thoughts are relevant here. If in fact Aunt May is the unselfish, self-sacrificing type who might want to get out of the way so as not to be a burden to her loved ones, she is very likely a person who has been helping others all her life. She, of all people, probably most richly deserves to be cared for, just as she has been caring for others..."

In considering this point Dr. Willke cautions that we must remember the past and realize that euthanasia stands on a slippery slope:

Do we help to get rid of those who burden us?

The classic example of getting rid of those who are burdensome was the euthanasia program in Germany [which resulted in the murder of 275,000 patients] that preceded the Holocaust.

Don't forget, each of our own turns will come someday. The simple, direct ethic here is clear. Each individual should be valued because of who they are, not by their physical condition. Just ask people in disability organizations. Ask those of minority races -- of the 'wrong' religion. They'll tell you. The only way to be sure that *you* will be taken care of in your declining years is for you to take care of others now. The only way you can be sure that *your* life will be protected is to protect other lives now."

Editors' note: This article was disseminated August 1998. Today, 9 states (CA, CO, HI, ME, NJ, NM, OR, VT, and WA) and DC have legalized physician-assisted suicide via legislation and 1 state (MT) has legal physician-assisted suicide via court ruling. Church teaching forbids physician assisted suicide.