



A Catholic response to  
**Euthanasia**  
and **Assisted Suicide**

## Ideas for Preaching on the Topic of Euthanasia

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View Example Homily: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VvNSyrk7vJg>

### Practical Suggestions:

1. Speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15).
2. Pray for inspiration.
3. Write the homily out in advance and stay close to text.
4. Have it reviewed by other clergy, pastoral team for feedback in advance.
5. Use all of homily to deal with the one issue.
6. Explicitly show empathy for vulnerable people who might be tempted to choose euthanasia.
7. Avoid using theological terms that will not be easily understood.
8. Stories from your own experience are very helpful in illustrating points (ensure some details are changed to protect confidentiality unless you have permission to share). Tell stories: of hope where people have survived despite dismal prognosis, that demonstrate that we don't need to be afraid of death, that show the positive aspects of a "good death", that reassure people that God and the church will be with them.
9. Always explain **why** the church teaches what it does, i.e. it comes from God, commandments protect the vulnerable, etc. Church teaching has a rational basis and is not just a set of arbitrary rules.
10. Find a way to connect Sunday readings to euthanasia issue.
11. Review:
  - *Samaritanus Bonus*, CDF 2020  
<https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2020/09/22/200922a.pdf>
  - CCC s. 2276-2279, 1854-1861
  - Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons & Families Considering or Opting for Death by Assisted Suicide or Euthanasia: *A Vademecum* for Priests and Parishes: The Catholic Bishops of Alberta and the Northwest Territories, 2016

## Content Suggestions:

1. Define euthanasia – use words like lethal injection – differentiate the discontinuation of heroic measures or the use of medications to reduce pain even when they may unintentionally cause death.
2. Euthanasia in Canada is expanding more rapidly than anywhere else in the world. It is now available to the disabled and the mentally ill. There are proposals to add it for children or “mature minors”, people who have advanced directives for dementia and even children under the age of one.
3. Be clear and precise about the church’s opposition to euthanasia – “morally unacceptable” CCC, “intrinsically evil” SB, “murder” CCC. But explain why.
4. Emphasize why the church is opposed to euthanasia – comes from God’s word in the scriptures – based on the moral law of God “You shall not kill” and social teaching – Jesus identifies with the vulnerable (Mt 25:40).
5. The purpose of God’s moral law is to protect the vulnerable.
6. The church reminds us of the inherent dignity of every person regardless of characteristics.
7. The purpose of human life is to know God as revealed in Jesus Christ, have faith in Him and imitate Him in all that we do.
8. We must imitate how He dealt with suffering – He experienced it while relying on His Father for sustenance.
9. Deuteronomy 31:88 The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”
10. We can trust in the everlasting love of God in our times of trial.
11. If a person requests euthanasia we need to help identify the source of their suffering, accompany them for support and endeavour to alleviate their suffering.
12. The suffering that drives people to euthanasia is not physical it is existential.
13. Faith in Christ can make people more resilient so they can cope better with loss.
14. Reminder of the need for evangelization.
15. Find a way to connect the Sunday readings to euthanasia.
16. Explain that the church teaches that if a person freely chooses euthanasia and is fully aware of what they are doing they could be committing a mortal sin which could separate them from Christ for all eternity. If a person intends to go ahead with euthanasia, we need to gently try to convince them otherwise offering support, counselling and friendship.
17. After the action is taken, the soul of a person who has chosen euthanasia should be committed to the mercy of Christ as only He can judge our actions and we do not know what other factors may have led to the decision to choose euthanasia. May need to differentiate between a suicide in which people are unable to consent due to psychiatric illness and euthanasia where they must be competent and know what they are doing to get the procedure. This will be of emotional help for those who have lost a loved one due to suicide.
18. A person who intends to die by way of euthanasia may not receive the sacraments. (Viaticum, Anointing of the Sick and Reconciliation) This is not a punishment but a recognition of their desire to separate themselves from Christ.
19. We have accepted many good things in our lives from God, how can we now reject the gift because of suffering?
20. If we were to remove all of suffering, we would remove all life.
21. Clergy have the option of providing a person who has died by way of euthanasia a funeral, with some restrictions (see *Vademecum*).