

Ethics and euthanasia - the issues it faces

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Euthanasia: The Unethical End

The word “euthanasia” comes from the Greek words “Eu” which means “good” and “thantos” meaning “death” (Chadwick). This entails that euthanasia literally translates to a good death and implies that there is such a thing. Euthanasia is the act or practice of intentionally killing one who is terminally ill or severely injured in order to relieve the pain and suffering (Merriam-Webster). The act of euthanasia has been at the centre of controversy for decades. All over the world, there is a constant debate concerning the legalization or illegalization of the act (Leishman). While some feel that it is better to take the pain away from those that are suffering, others feel that those people should not have their lives taken from them before their time. The Catholic Church is part of the group that is not in favour of euthanasia. In fact, the Catholic Church views euthanasia as both morally and ethically wrong. The Church feels that euthanasia goes against everything that the Catholic faith teaches about the importance of human life. Euthanasia is wrong in the eyes of the Catholic Church because it goes against God, devalues life, and promotes suicide.

Euthanasia is seen as wrong by the Catholic Church because the act goes against God. Euthanasia goes against God in several ways all by disobeying one of the Ten Commandments. The act of euthanasia breaks the fifth commandment, which states: “Thou shall not kill” (Catechism of the Catholic Church). Since euthanasia is the act of intentionally killing someone, it is still considered murder, even if it is to end one’s suffering. While the intentions of trying to assist the patient in need are good, doctors and nurses are given

the right to kill and control the lives of others, something that should be in God's hands. God has a plan for everyone and when prematurely ending one's life, God's plan for that person is disrupted. It is also believed that everyone has a purpose. The termination of one's life might not allow that person to fulfill the purpose that God has given them, making euthanasia go against God's plans (Gupta). Catholics believe that "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away" (Job 1: 21). This is another reason why euthanasia goes against God. The right to life and death belongs to God, as he is the one who has control over it. The decision to terminate one's life goes against God's right to give and take life (Gupta). Pope John Paul II had spoken about euthanasia in 1995, saying that, "Euthanasia is a grave violation of the law of God, since it is the deliberate and morally unacceptable killing of a human person." (BBC News). He felt that the intentional killing of a human being was immoral and went against God. As the leader of the Catholic Church, Pope John Paul II was aware that euthanasia had gone against the teachings of the Catholic Church and also against God.

The way that euthanasia devalues life is another reason why it is immoral and unethical in the eyes of the Catholic Church. At an event promoted by the Pontifical Academy for Life in 2008, Pope Benedict XVI said, "Though aware of the fact that 'it is not science that redeems man', all society, and in particular the sectors associated with medical science, are duty bound to express the solidarity of love, and to safeguard and respect human life in every moment of its earthly development, especially when it is ill or in its terminal stages." (Catholic. org). Pope Benedict XVI felt that even though doctors feel that the only option for someone who is terminally ill would be

euthanasia, those suffering should still be treated with love and respect. Euthanasia devalues the lives of others because it does not respect all human life. Each human being has value and a person is not valueless because they are chronically ill or dying (Bouroque and Ayoub). Many supporters of euthanasia see it as a way for one to die peacefully and that they are in so much pain that they have the right to die (Chadwick). However, disease, pain, suffering, or loss of ability, movement, or even body parts does not devalue a person to the point where it is their “right” to die. The Catholic Church teaches that all life is sacred as it is a gift given from God (Gupta). It is because of this that all life should be sacred and respected. Euthanasia rejects the gift of life from God and idea that life is sacred no longer exists due to the act.

The final reason why euthanasia is seen as immoral and unethical by the Catholic Church is because it promotes the act of suicide. Suicide is the act or an instance of taking one’s own life voluntarily and intentionally (Merriam-Webster). Since euthanasia is also an act of intentionally taking one’s life, it is considered assisted suicide. As a form of suicide, it promotes the act of one’s self-destruction. When one attempts suicide, they are tended to by a medical professional who comes to the person’s aid. However, because doctors and nurses are the ones performing the act of euthanasia, they are encouraging the ability to have the option of ending one’s life, which goes against their commitment to protect and preserve life (Bouroque and Ayoub). Suicide is also promoted through the different kinds of euthanasia. There are five different kinds of euthanasia; active euthanasia, where a person deliberately causes the patient’s death, passive euthanasia, where

the patient's life isn't directly taken, but instead, is allowed to die, voluntary euthanasia, where the patient requests their death, involuntary euthanasia, where the person is unable to make the choice of life or death and the choice is given to the appropriate person, and indirect euthanasia, where medication is given to the patient that speeds up the process of death (BBC News). The different options for euthanasia allow the patient, doctor, and even relatives of the patient control the death of the patient. Suicide is promoted through the different options that are explored by those involved in determining how the patient's life will end. Euthanasia also promotes suicide because the act of euthanasia shows that there is no other way out, which is the similar thought connected to how those feel who commit suicide (Bouroque and Ayoub). Many feel that ending the patient's life will end their suffering, however, that is not the case. There are ways to kill the pain instead of killing the patient and it is the doctor's duty to give the proper medication in order to do so (Bouroque and Ayoub). When euthanasia is the chosen method instead of other medications, suicide is promoted because it shows that the only way to end suffering is to end life, which is not true as there are other ways out of the situation.

Euthanasia is currently one of the most controversial topics in the world. While the debate to globally legalize the act is still ongoing, the Catholic Church stands firmly against the act. Euthanasia is wrong in the eyes of the Catholic Church because it goes against God, devalues life, and promotes suicide. Euthanasia gives one the power to end their life before the proper time, essentially going against God's will. Life is also devalued by the act as not all life is not seen as sacred anymore. The act of suicide is also

promoted, seeing as one now has the control to decide how and when their life will end, going against the teachings of the Catholic Church.