THE CATHOLIC ETHICAL TRADITION: RESPECTING THE SPIRIT AS WE CARE FOR THE BODY

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CICIAMS WORLD CONGRESS
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Catholic Understanding

Care/Healing

Catholic Ethical Tradition

Human Dignity/Common Good
Primacy of Caring

Healing is not the same as curing.
Curing is not the same as caring.
New Charter for Health Care Workers

- Ministers of Life
  - Service to life and health, primary goods of person
  - Inter-relationship of human and divine
  - Integral view of human illness
  - Interpersonal relationship
    - Trust of sick person
    - Knowledge and conscience of health care worker
New Charter for Health Care Workers

- Church considers service to people who are sick and suffering an integral part of the mission of the Church
- Nursing is part of the pastoral and evangelizing activity of the Church
CICIAMS Ethics Guidelines

Section Three: Professional Responsibilities

- Service is a way of life
- Nursing is a relationship
- Technological competence and ethical responsibilities
  - Respect for the dignity of the sick person
  - Rights of the sick person
  - Moral wisdom
CICIAMS Ethics Guidelines

Section Three: Professional Responsibilities

- Respect patient regardless of circumstances or social status
- Take the whole person into account
  - Physical, social, emotional, spiritual
- Importance of thorough preparation
- Importance of an informed conscience
Continuing Tension

Respect

Care
END-OF-LIFE CARE
End-of-Life Care

- Europe, USA, Canada, Australia?
- Asia?
- Africa?
- Latin America?
New Charter for Health Care Workers

- Section Three: Dying
  - Respect life and care for it
  - Holistic care
    - Compassion
    - Professionalism
  - Attentive and caring presence
  - Alleviate pain of the dying person
Section Five: Care for Dying and Seriously Ill

- Serving life means assisting it to its natural completion
- Not arbiters of life and death
- Relief of pain is important
- Do not abandon patient
- Interact with chaplains, social workers, family and friends
- Help patient to accept death and to live out life to its natural end
Catholic Values and Considerations

- Stewardship and duty to preserve life
  - Human life is sacred
  - Duty to preserve life
  - But limited to what is beneficial to patient without being excessively burdensome to the patient
  - “Ordinary” v “Extraordinary” means
Catholic Understanding

- Choices made in light of ...
  - Respect for person
  - Christian meaning of life, suffering and death
Catholic Tradition

► “Ordinary” and “Extraordinary” Means
  ► “Middle position” of virtue
    ▪ When death is immanent one may withhold or withdraw those treatments that “would only secure a precarious and burdensome prolongation of life”
      ➢ Vatican’s Declaration on Euthanasia

► Not the equivalent of suicide
► Acceptance of the human condition
Catholic Teaching

Ordinary and Extraordinary Means

- “No person is obliged to submit to a health procedure that the person has judged, with free and informed consent, not to provide a reasonable hope of benefit without imposing excessive risks and burdens on the patient or excessive expense to family or community.”
  - Vatican’s Declaration on Euthanasia

- “Life and physical health are precious gifts entrusted to us by God. We must take reasonable care of them, taking into account the needs of others and the common good.”
  - Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2288
Catholic Tradition

- Ordinary and Extraordinary Means
  - Benefits
    - Restoration to relative health
    - Pain relief
    - Notable increase in physical mobility
    - Return to consciousness
    - Enhanced ability to communicate
  - Burdens
    - Excessive pain
    - Great cost
    - Grave inconvenience
    - Psychological repugnance (*Vehemens horror*)
Implications of the Catholic Tradition

- Patients should be provided with whatever information necessary to help them understand their condition
- Patients should be given the opportunity to prepare for death
- Patients need spiritual support
- Telling the truth
Implications of the Tradition

Appropriateness of good pain management, even where death may be *indirectly* hastened through use of analgesics

Palliative and hospice care
Respecting the Person: Our Responsibilities

- Accepting mortality
- Preparing for death
  - We die the way we have lived
  - Catholic Tradition: Re-affirm a way of life already embraced
Respecting the Person: Our Responsibilities

- Preparing for death
  - Develop the virtues necessary at end of life
- Patience
  - Learned attentiveness to God’s call and presence
  - Understanding our dependence
- Autonomy
Respecting the Person: Our Responsibilities

- Importance of presence
  - To accept dependence, need a community that is dependable
  - To learn trust, need a community that is trustworthy
Respecting the Person: Our Responsibilities

- Importance of presence
  - To give up control, need a community of care that is not afraid to give physical and spiritual comfort
  - To understand that my life has meaning, need community that does not abandon me
- Role of nurse and medico-social worker
Respecting the Person: Our Responsibilities

- Develop a sense of limits

“Life and physical health are precious gifts entrusted to us by God. We must take reasonable care of them, taking into account the needs of others and the common good.”

- Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2288
“I have done what was mine to do. May Christ teach you what is yours.”
The Catholic Ethical and Spiritual Tradition

- Catholics need help to face death with the confidence of faith in eternal life: this is the basis for our hope

- Catholic nurses are part of a community of respect, love, and support to patients and families as they face the end of life

- We must always care

- Relief of pain and suffering are part of caring and healing