



To the joint committee on end of life choices.

The practice of end of life choices have become even more clear to me as I am chaplain to the Little Sisters of the poor in Glendalough, and am privileged to participate in the end of life of our residents. My name is Gordon Howell and I am a catholic priest. I can be reached on [redacted] should there be a need.

* I am convinced that the end of life choice that is assisted by care and love in the form of nursing enables the dying soul to experience the value that they are as an human being, made in the image and likeness of God. Recently one of our number decided to stop chemo in favour of quality rather than quantity of life. This I consider allows the person to prepare for the final journey with deliberateness and dignity rather than prolonging life at all costs.

* Of course the fact that the care and love that is a part of this nursing makes a considerate difference to the patient. There is more chance they will experience their uniqueness and giftedness in a caring situation rather than in an institution where these values are absent.

2. * Any change in our laws that would allow assisted death would seem to support the premise that death is the end and nothing more exists after life. The principle that all life is sacred and belongs to God is negated by any law that would see the introduction of assisted death. Once enacted in law then no life is safe as step by step expediency would prevail despite protestations to the opposite.

* Once the state places herself above what I believe to be God's law and commandment 'you shall not kill', then as we have seen in the past no one is safe.

* The assisting of the dying to do so with dignity and value also requires a quality of palliative care that should be embraced and supported by Government despite costs. This will support the idea that every human being is of value even though at times this may not be obvious.

* Society benefits from the care of the dying as those who work in this area experience all sorts of questions emotions and angst and love which is a part of being human and enriches us all as we share the journey of life on this planet.

3. Indeed as the parents of many sick or disabled children will attest that the love evoked by caring for their child far surpasses the pain and difficulty entailed on caring for them and that this sickness or disability brought out love that they believe would otherwise not evolved.

* I am saying that any law that has to do with assisting the dying should do so to help them die with as much dignity and care and love and allowing them to be as free from pain as is possible but no life is to be ended by any law which permits deliberate killing.

I hope this helps this committee in their deliberations.

(Fr. Gordon Howell)