

YOU HAVE THE **RIGHT** — TO BE — **CARED FOR**

#SayNOtoMAID



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OTTAWA, Inc.

A Pastoral Word from your Archbishop

As your Archbishop, I am deeply aware of the questions, fears, and uncertainties that many people face when dealing with serious illness, suffering, or the end of life—whether for themselves or for someone they love. These moments touch us all, and they deserve compassion, clarity, and care.

This pamphlet is offered to help explain the difference between palliative care and Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID), using simple and respectful language. It is not meant to judge or blame, but to inform, to accompany, and to encourage thoughtful reflection. As a Church community, we believe that every person deserves to be cared for with dignity, tenderness, and hope, especially during times of vulnerability.

Understanding Palliative Care and Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID)

Palliative care is a specialized approach within the Canadian healthcare system that focuses on comfort, dignity, and quality of life for people living with a serious or life-limiting illness. It can be provided at any stage of illness and alongside other medical treatments.



A Pastoral Message

To all who are living with illness, caring for a loved one, or facing difficult decisions, please know that you are not alone. Our Church wishes to walk with you, to listen, and to support you with understanding and compassion.

May we continue to build a society where care, presence, and solidarity are at the heart of how we respond to suffering. May we never forget that dignity does not disappear with illness, and that love has the power to bring comfort even in the most challenging moments.

With my prayers and blessing,

The purpose of palliative care is not to cure disease, but to relieve suffering and support the whole person—physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. It helps manage pain and symptoms such as shortness of breath, nausea, or anxiety, while also offering support and guidance to families and caregivers.

At its heart, palliative care reflects our shared responsibility to care for one another. It affirms that every life has value and that no one should face illness, frailty, or death alone. Through presence, listening, and practical help, palliative care offers reassurance and human connection.

Palliative care is not “giving up.” Many people in Canada receive palliative care while continuing other treatments. Its goal is to help people live as fully and comfortably as possible for as long as they live.

Palliative care can be provided in many settings: at home through home-care services, in hospitals, in long-term care homes, or in hospices when additional support is needed. Care is flexible and adapts to each person’s needs, wishes, and circumstances.

Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID), by contrast, intentionally brings life to an end. Palliative care takes a different path. It does not hasten death but walks with the person through illness with gentleness and respect, focusing on comfort, dignity, and care until natural death.

Choosing palliative care means choosing accompaniment, support, and compassion—trusting that every life remains worthy of care until the very end.



✠ Marcel Damphousse
Archbishop of Ottawa-Cornwall