

POPE FRANCIS CONDEMNS EUTHANASIA AS UTILITARIANISM, NOT FREEDOM

VATICAN CITY --- The Catholic News Agency reported that Pope Francis said that Euthanasia is a way of treating the human person as an object; while it may appear to give freedom, it is really a rejection of hope. "The practice of euthanasia, which has already been legalized in several countries, only apparently aims to encourage personal freedom," he said. "In reality," he continued, "it is based on a utilitarian view of the person, who becomes useless or can be equated to a cost, if from the medical point of view, he has no hope of improvement or can no longer avoid pain." "If one chooses death, the problems are solved in a sense; but how much bitterness behind this reasoning, and what rejection of hope involves the choice of giving up everything and breaking all ties!" he declared. Pope Francis stated that medical technology is not being used for its right purpose, the service of the human person, when it "reduces him to a thing," or makes distinctions between who is not deserving of treatment because of supposedly being "a burden" or "a waste." The contrary approach is a commitment to accompany a patient and his loved ones at all stages, trying to alleviate suffering through palliative care, or the family environment of hospice, he argued. This "contributes to creating a culture and practice more attentive to the value of each person." The countries with legal euthanasia are the Netherlands, Belgium, Colombia, Luxembourg, and Canada. Assisted suicide is legal in the Netherlands, Switzerland and Germany, and in the U.S. states of Washington, Oregon, Colorado, Hawaii, Vermont, Montana, Washington, D.C., New Jersey, California, and Maine (starting January 1, 2020). Pope Francis encouraged medical personnel to "never lose heart for the misunderstanding you might encounter, or before the insistent proposal of more radical and hasty roads," adding that their work includes raising awareness in a society "which is not very aware and is sometimes distracted." Francis described a sort of "Pandora's box," in which everything is explained except hope. "And we have to go look for this," he said. "How to explain hope, indeed, how to give it in the most limited cases." In the audience, the pope praised the association's focus on providing the best care for each individual patient, according to his or her unique biology, calling it "an oncology of mercy," because personalizing care puts one's attention on the individual, not only the illness, he argued. He encouraged medical workers to take Jesus as their example, also stressing the importance of Christ for those who are sick. Jesus, he said, "helps them to find the strength not to interrupt the bonds of love, to offer their suffering for brothers, to keep friendship with God." "Inspire everyone to be close to those who suffer, to the little ones above all, and to put the weak in the first place, so that they can grow a more human society and relationships marked by gratuitousness, rather than opportunity," he urged.