



16 November 2020

Ms. Judy Look
President
Alberta Mackenzie Catholic Women's League
331 Woodside Bay SW
Calgary, AB T2W 3K9
abmkprovpres@gmail.com

Dear Ms. Look,

Thank you very much for your letter of 14 October 2020 regarding Bill C-7 (on the expansion of "Medical Assistance in Dying") and for the accompanying copy of the letter from the CWL Alberta Mackenzie Provincial Council to the Prime Minister on that same issue.

As President of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCBC), I know that I speak for all Bishops in Canada when I say that your efforts – the collective efforts of all your members – to defend life from conception to natural death and to witness to the Gospel are crucially invaluable and urgently needed in our times. I have no doubt that your courageous commitment and witnessing to the truth are very pleasing to the Lord. By His grace, I pray in particular that your recent letter to the Prime Minister on Bill C-7 and your postcard campaign to Members of Parliament may enlighten the hearts and minds of our political leaders, so that they may see more clearly the darkness which must be avoided and the good which must be welcomed, grasped, and promoted.

Personally, I have long thought that the federal government's legalization of euthanasia and assisted suicide belies the perennial human need to come to terms with the mystery of pain and suffering, but mistakenly does so without reference to God, and hence, in the absence of life's ultimate meaning and purpose. Your quotation from Saint John Henry Newman, a beautiful passage of which I was happy to be reminded, is an eloquent statement of the fact that, while it is quite natural to flinch from "pain and suffering", or even from "perplexity and sorrow", every person has been created for some "purpose," "service," or "work" which "God has not committed to another".

From this it follows, as you have correctly intuited, that each person's unique purpose or mission in life, which is God-given, must be at the heart of a true account of meaning, especially in the face of human suffering. To make sense of suffering in this way opens the door not only to hope (against despair), but to a fuller understanding of the sanctity of life and the holiness to which we are all called, in spite of – sometimes paradoxically on account of – the limitations imposed by particular circumstances, which God perhaps permits but does not necessarily ordain.

I am truly grateful to you for sharing with me your Council's reflections on such profound and important matters, and I commend you for taking inspiration from the rich, eloquent, and truth-filled words of Saint John Henry Newman. Be assured that I will draw on the contents of your letter both to inspire myself in regards to how the CCCB can do more to change people's hearts, so that Canada's culture may be defined by life and not death, as well as to how clergy, religious, and laity across Canada can be even greater witnesses of the Gospel, both in word and deed.

As we near Advent, let us pray for each other and for the Church, that we, together, may bring Christ's light to shine wherever there is sin and darkness and to whoever needs healing and hope, especially those who are seriously ill and dying.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Richard Gagnon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

+ Richard Gagnon
Archbishop of Winnipeg
President of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

Cc: The Most Rev. Jon Hansen, C.Ss.R., Bishop of Mackenzie-Fort Smith
The Most Rev. William McGrattan, Bishop of Calgary
The Most Rev. Gerald Pettipas, C.Ss.R., Archbishop of Grouard-McLennan
The Most Rev. Richard Smith, Archbishop of Edmonton
The Most Rev. Paul Terrio, Bishop of Saint-Paul
The Most Rev. Stephen Jensen, Bishop of Prince George andCWL National Spiritual
Advisor
The Rev. Andrew Bogdanowicz, Spiritual Advisor