



Vision statement on euthanasia for mental suffering in a non-terminal situation

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The Organization of the Brothers of Charity continues to stand by its vision statement on euthanasia for mental suffering in a non-terminal situation.

In recent weeks, paths have been explored to get both parties to the table. However, this has not yet produced any results. In the meantime, we will continue to request establishing a dialogue so that we would have a chance to explain our vision statement and our argumentation.

One of the debates that has arisen over the past few months in response to our vision statement is whether this vision is still consistent with the doctrine of the Catholic Church. We emphatically believe so. The text has come about starting from the Christian frame of thought as we apply it within the organization. In this, we always take into account the shifts and evolutions within society. We have considered the following elements: recognition of the exceptional, proportional view of ethics, deontological view and ideologization, and choice of conscience. (*see attached text*)

We wish to emphasize that with the new vision statement we continue to put the inviolability of life first and not just regard it as equal to the value of autonomy. The vision originated with the aim of providing the best possible care.

In our facilities, we deal with patients' requests for euthanasia for mental suffering in a non-terminal situation with the utmost caution. We take unbearable and hopeless suffering and patients' requests for euthanasia seriously. On the other hand, we want to protect life and ensure that euthanasia is performed only if there is no more possibility of providing a reasonable treatment perspective to the patient.

To achieve this, we initiate a two-pathway support. On the one hand, we clarify the request for euthanasia and we test the request against the provisions of the act on euthanasia. At the same time, together with the patient we seek possibilities for treatment, recovery, life support, and meaning in life. Our caregivers can take on these two pathways themselves, but they can also fully choose the life perspective pathway and appeal to a (LEIF) physician outside the facility for the euthanasia request pathway.

We make the connection between both pathways by applying due care requirements. These requirements specify and concretize the provisions of the act on euthanasia (for example: Is the patient competent during the request for euthanasia? Is the medical condition hopeless? Is there no other reasonable solution?) In the future, an evaluation committee of people from inside and outside the facilities will review whether the physician's decision meets the due care requirements.

In our facilities, we respect the freedom of physicians whether or not to perform euthanasia, and the freedom of other caregivers whether or not to assist. This freedom is guaranteed by law. If consideration is given to perform euthanasia in the facility, there is another additional point of concern in a residential context. In that case, every effort must be made to prevent as much traumatic impact on fellow patients as possible.

As an organization, we do not want to respond to the decisions taken by the three brothers in the media. In the end, they were asked a very personal, individual question, which, according to us, does not need be discussed in the media. We would like to ask everyone to respect that.