



# Assisted Suicide & the Cure of Souls

*As ancient patterns of life give way, the task of caring for those whom God loves must adapt.*

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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1. What does Archbishop Thomas Cranmer's homily, the "Exhortation Against the Fear of Death," say about a Christian death and how does Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) complicate this belief? What constitutes an ethical death?

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2. Hartin argues that MAiD does "nothing that could not be done with a guillotine or a bullet." The difference with MAiD is "how dying appears to those who are present." How does MAiD change the appearance of death, and why does that matter? Does this change make MAiD a more moral way of dying than other forms of suicide?

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3. Permissive MAiD legislation increases the personal agency one has in determining their lifespan. Do you think having more agency over your own death is morally acceptable, or is it problematic? Why do you think so?

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4. According to Hartin, "for most of human history, [the] burden of care was borne with love and grace" as a sacrifice parents make for the well-being of young children, and children later make for their elderly parents. Does the rise in medically assisted death stem from a change in how we understand this sacrifice? If so, what do you think has caused the change?

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5. Hartin warns that individuals might opt for MAiD as a way to spare their loved ones from having to care for them, but that such a sacrifice is not, in fact, truly Christian. Why not? For potential caregivers, is there always a moral obligation to take on the burden of care, or are there some exceptions?

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6. Hartin urges pastors to not abandon MAiD patients but rather walk with them and "be a physical reminder of the judgment and mercy of God" in hope of repentance. Do you agree with Hartin? What role should the Church play in the final moments of those who have opted for MAiD?

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## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING:

Michael W. Higgins, "Encouraged to Die?," January 2023:

<https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/canada-euthanasia-douthead-MAiD-mentall-illness>

Paul Baumann, "Living & Walking with Alzheimer's," May 2022:

<https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/living-walking-alzheimers>

Gilbert Meilaender, "Pathos, Bathos, and Euthanasia," August 2017:

<https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/pathos-bathos-and-euthanasia>

Cathleen Kaveny, "Peaceful & Private," March 2010:

<https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/peaceful-private>