

Dear Padre,

My aunt has terminal cancer. Her doctors have advised her to stop chemotherapy and begin palliative care, but she says that's equivalent to assisted suicide. Is that what the Church thinks?

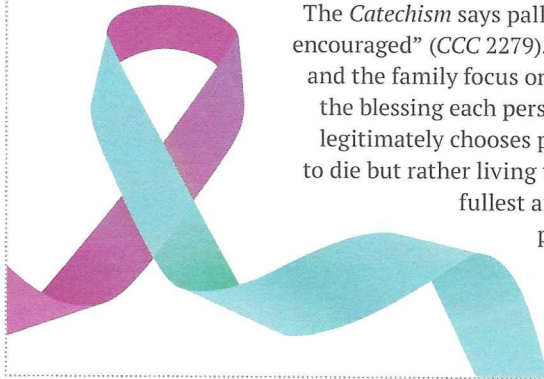
Palliative care doesn't prolong life, but neither does it cause life to end. The bishops are quite clear that palliative care is neither euthanasia nor assisted suicide, both of which are always sinful.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says treating or not treating a patient in a way that will cause death is always murder (CCC 2277). However, a patient's choice to discontinue "burdensome, dangerous, extraordinary" treatment "can be legitimate" when it's done not to cause death, but in recognition of "one's inability to impede it" (CCC 2278). But even when death seems to be close, "ordinary care" that would be given to any sick person cannot be interrupted (CCC 2279).

Palliative care does not cause death. It gives terminally ill people spiritual support and relief from their physical symptoms. An excellent resource on this topic, "Killing the Pain, Not the Patient: Palliative Care vs. Assisted Suicide," is available at usccb.org.

The *Catechism* says palliative care "should be encouraged" (CCC 2279). It helps the dying person and the family focus on the gift of life and the blessing each person is. The patient who legitimately chooses palliative care is not waiting to die but rather living those last moments to the fullest and as comfortably as possible.

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A WORD FROM *Pope Francis*

Even if we know that we cannot always guarantee healing or a cure, we can and must always care for the living, without ourselves shortening their life, but also without futilely resisting their death. This approach is reflected in palliative care, which...opposes what makes death most terrifying and unwelcome—pain and loneliness.

MESSAGE TO WORLD MEDICAL
ASSOCIATION, NOVEMBER 7, 2017



Calendar

Monday

OCTOBER 31
Weekday
Phil 2:1–4
Lk 14:12–14

Tuesday

NOVEMBER 1
All Saints
Rv 7:2–4, 9–14
1 Jn 3:1–3
Mt 5:1–12a

Wednesday

NOVEMBER 2
Commemoration of
All the Faithful Departed
(All Souls' Day)
Any readings from
no. 668 or from the
Masses for the Dead

Thursday

NOVEMBER 3
Weekday
Phil 3:3–8a
Lk 15:1–10

Friday

NOVEMBER 4
St. Charles Borromeo,
Bishop
Phil 3:17–4:1
Lk 16:1–8

Saturday

NOVEMBER 5
Weekday
Phil 4:10–19
Lk 16:9–15

Sunday

NOVEMBER 6
Thirty-second Sunday
in Ordinary Time
2 Mc 7:1–2, 9–14
2 Thes 2:16–3:5
Lk 20:27–38
or 20:27, 34–38