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February 2012

Dear Monsignor/Father

Every year since 1992, the Church celebrates the World Day of the Sick on the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, February 11. Pope John Paul II wanted this day to be an occasion to reflect upon the mystery of suffering, to become more aware of our sick brothers and sisters, and to honor doctors, nurses and all who practice the healing arts.

This year, World Day of the Sick is especially challenging for us in Massachusetts. On Election Day this coming November, the citizens of Massachusetts will be asked to vote on "*An Initiative Petition for an Act Relative to Death with Dignity*". This Act, if approved, would legalize Physician Assisted Suicide (PAS) in Massachusetts. Those who support PAS will frame the issue in terms of palliative care for the terminally ill. Intentionally causing a person to die, or providing a person the means to take their own life, is not an expression of care and concern. It is a determination that a person's life no longer has value and is better ended. The risk that PAS presents to the infirm elderly, the disabled and the seriously ill cannot be overstated.

In this Parish Guide you will find specially prepared materials to assist you to educate the faithful in your parish about end-of-life decision making, particularly physician-assisted suicide. Please use them to help our people to understand that Catholic teaching does not expect or require unnecessary prolongation of life or acceptance of medical treatments that are unduly burdensome or ineffective. Above all, help them to see that the solution to pain and suffering at the end of life is effective pain management and the care and love of friends and family, not the termination of life through lethal drugs.

As Catholics we have the responsibility to defend the principle that each of us has the right to live each day until the time we are called to eternal life. Please know of my gratitude for all that you do to care for the sick and the dying in your parish and to evangelize the faithful about this most serious threat to human dignity. Together, let us make the commitment to promote a culture of life and love in the name of our Lord.

Asking God's blessings upon you and all whom you hold dear, I am,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

*+ Sean O'Meara*

Archbishop of Boston

