



Archdiocese of Winnipeg

Office of the Archbishop

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September 6, 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I would like to encourage you to support the “Call for Conscience” Campaign, which supports **Bill 34 - the *Medical Assistance in Dying (Protection for Health Professionals & Others) Act***, currently being considered by the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. This campaign is organized by the Coalition for Health Care and Conscience, a Canadian Christian-based organization. As you may know, with the passing of euthanasia/assisted suicide legislation in Parliament in 2016, provinces are now implementing what is called “Medical Assistance in Dying” (MAID). The government of Manitoba has introduced Bill 34 to protect doctors, nurses and other health care professionals from having to provide, refer, or assist in the provision of MAID against their conscience.

This Bill is likely to be debated in the fall, and therefore the opportunity for action is time sensitive. I am asking you, the faithful of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg, to take part in the efforts of contacting our MLAs to let them know that you support Bill 34, and that you would like them to do the same. This is an important issue for the future of health care in Manitoba and for the right of people of faith to freely practice medicine. Unfortunately, in Ontario, the College of Physicians and Surgeons has voted to make referrals for MAID a provincial policy. In Manitoba there is currently a great deal of pressure from powerful and well-funded advocates of assisted suicide and euthanasia to do away with the conscience rights of doctors and nurses as well. Support for Bill 34 is not a partisan issue as it is clearly about protecting the conscience rights of doctors, nurses, and other health care professionals from being forced to choose between their conscience and their career.

I invite you to use the template letter to your MLA provided at the Sunday Masses on September 23rd, 30th and October 7th or better yet, use the template as a model for your own personalized letter. These letters are to be addressed to your local MLA with your signature at the bottom. Please send the letters to Patti Fitzmaurice at, Micah House, 1039 Main St. Winnipeg, MB, R3W 3R2. She will distribute your letters directly to the relevant MLA's. All letters must be sent by October 15th. Additionally, you may also support our conscience rights campaign by:

- Visiting your MLA personally to let your views be known to him/her.
- Visiting the website: www.canadiansforconscience.ca/manitoba, and emailing the template letter to your MLA, which can be personalized. (Please do so by October 15.)
- Viewing and sharing the excellent 3 minute video called “Call for Conscience” (available at: canadiansforconscience.ca/Manitoba). This short video features several Canadian physicians sharing their concerns regarding conscience rights and their hope for Bill 34 to be passed. The video will also be available on our Archdiocesan website.

Lastly, and most importantly, I ask for your prayers for the success of this campaign, that our Lord Jesus Christ may aid our province of Manitoba to continue to be a place where the diversity we celebrate as a society makes room for people of conscience and of faith.

It is my hope that many of you will participate in this collective effort, in communion with other Manitoba dioceses and with other Christians in our province as well as people from various faith backgrounds, who share our values of respect for life. For any questions, please contact Patti Fitzmaurice at the Office for Social Justice at the Archdiocese of Winnipeg: sjustice@archwinnipeg.ca ; 204-589-5393.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, starting with a cross symbol and followed by the name "Richard Gagnon" in a cursive script. The signature ends with a long horizontal flourish.

+ Richard Gagnon
Archbishop of Winnipeg