

Archbishop Alexander K. Sample – Pastoral Statement on Assisted Suicide

Death can be a frightening prospect. Coupled with suffering, it can be even more frightening. What is the proper human response in the face of death? How can we find meaning in an earthly existence that ends in death?

Assisted suicide offers the illusion that we can control death by putting it on our own terms. It suggests that there is freedom in being able to choose death, but it fails to recognize the contradiction. Killing oneself eliminates the freedom enjoyed in earthly life. True autonomy and true freedom come only when we accept death as a force beyond our control. Our lives and our deaths belong in the hands of God who created and sustains us. Through the suffering, death and Resurrection of His Son, Jesus, we know that death is not the final word. Eternal life awaits all those who entrust themselves to God.

Life is a gift from God, and we have only one opportunity to live the life we have been given. Every moment of life is precious, and every moment of life worth living.

Assisted suicide sows confusion about the purpose of life and death. It suggests that a life can lose its purpose and that death has no meaning. Cutting life short is not the answer to death. Instead of hastening death, we encourage all to embrace the sometimes difficult but precious moments at the end of life, for it is often in these moments that we come to understand what is most important about life. Our final days help us to prepare for our eternal destiny.

We stand in solidarity with all those who are suffering and dying, and all those who are struggling to find meaning in life. Don't give up hope! We are with you. As friends, families and neighbors we pledge to surround you with our love and compassion until the sacred moment when God calls you home. And together with you, we look forward to that day when God will wipe away every tear from our eyes and there will be no more mourning, no more suffering, and no more death (Rev. 21:4).

May the peace of Christ be with you all.