



The World Federation
of Right to Die Societies
Ensuring Choices for a Dignified Death



Geneva, November 2018

OPEN LETTER TO POPE FRANCIS

In July 2015 the World Federation of Right to Die Societies (WFRtDS) asked its 50 member societies to provide information about what they saw as the most common arguments against voluntary euthanasia in their respective countries, and what they thought were the arguments in favour of assisted dying. Societies from three continents (Europe, America and Australia) participated and provided information.

They identified that the main opposition to voluntary euthanasia came from religious leaders and religious political parties.

In a statement published on its website, *SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH: DECLARATION ON EUTHANASIA* the Vatican makes clear why it opposes euthanasia:

Euthanasia's terms of reference, therefore, are to be found in the intention of the will and in the methods used. It is necessary to state firmly once more that nothing and no one can in any way permit the killing of an innocent human being, whether a fetus or an embryo, an infant or an adult, an old person, or one suffering from an incurable disease, or a person who is dying. Furthermore, no one is permitted to ask for this act of killing, either for himself or herself or for another person entrusted to his or her care, nor can he or she consent to it, either explicitly or implicitly. Nor can any authority legitimately recommend or permit such an action.

The World Federation of Right to Die Societies finds that the main argument against such statements from the Pope is that all religious arguments are only valid for religious believers; such religious rules and restrictions should never be imposed on all people most of whom live in secular countries; and religious beliefs should not dictate laws.

It is clear however that politicians from all countries who are religious are influenced by the strict dictates of the Declaration on Euthanasia even to the extent of ignoring their own country's laws that prohibit laws being made on the grounds of religious practices or beliefs. This is wrong.

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Those who believe that they belong to God and that only God has control over their life may choose to wait for the arrival of death. But the law should not be used to enforce this belief on anyone else.

Religions will always have standing and authority for those who believe their teachings. This should be sufficient. They should not seek to impose their beliefs on others and make everyone die according to their religious observances. They should especially not use their power improperly to require believing politicians to enact laws that include religious practices and beliefs that others do not hold.

The World Federation of Right to Die Societies affirms that everyone has the right to die with dignity, peacefully and without suffering. Unless it is self-imposed by a religious person who believes in it we reject the religious view that only God has control over life.

We therefore ask the Pope to remove the following sentence from the Declaration on Euthanasia.

Nor can any authority legitimately recommend or permit such an action.

The World Federation of Right to Die Societies refers readers to the full text of the Declaration at the following website address.

<http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/resources/life-and-family/euthanasia-and-assisted-suicide/vatican-document-on-euthanasia>

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