

EDITORIAL

REJECTING THE BMJ'S MYTH OF NEUTRALITY ON ASSISTED SUICIDE

The British Medical Journal announced in June that it is now "neutral" on the issue of Physician Assisted Suicide and has called for medical organisations to switch to neutrality on this issue.

Neutrality is a myth. To be neutral on a moral issue is to accept that you might do it or support it in some circumstances. It would be unthinkable to be neutral on rape, genocide, or persecution. So too intentional killing is simply not something that one can legitimately be neutral upon. Neutrality is therefore a myth. To be neutral is to accept that we may kill our patients.

The CMA is bound to stand up and to protect the vulnerable and those who have no voice. We are reminded that Baroness Finlay told the House of Lords in 2003 that "a sense of duty to die is all too easy to create and all too difficult to detect." And yet Baroness Warnock speaks for those who seek permission to kill when she states that the "elderly who are a burden have a duty to die".

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Baroness Finlay

It is 2000 years since St Lawrence, commanded by the greedy and jealous Emperor Sixtus to bring him the treasures of the Church, obediently brought the lame the sick and the vulnerable before the Emperor. We all know that St Lawrence was roasted on a spit for that, famously asking to be turned over as he was "done on that side". We too, as Catholic doctors and nurses will always share St Lawrence's special duty of care and protection of the vulnerable, the weak and the defenceless. We will always remember that in around the bed of any sick person, the doctors, the children, the nurses and many others are powerful, while the sick and dying person is weak and frail.

Blessed Father Jerzy Popiełuszko a priest, while being sought by the Polish Secret Police famously said that "Truth never changes. It cannot be destroyed by any decision or legal act. Our slavery stems from our surrender to the rule of the lie, our failure to unmask the lie and to protest against it in everyday life." It is not known whether he died before he was thrown into the River Vistula, but it is known that the Secret Police murdered him because of his opposition to their injustice.

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Blessed Father Jerzy Popiełuszko  
Priest and Martyr

We firmly reject the BMJ's call to legalise assisted suicide. Killing is wrong and the campaign for killing will merely put at risk the lives and welfare of many vulnerable and elderly people.