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Samaritanus **Bonus: Letter on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide**

**Congregation for the
Doctrine of the Faith**

With the legalization of assisted suicide and euthanasia in many countries and questions concerning what is morally permissible regarding end-of-life care, the Vatican's doctrinal office released a letter offering "a moral and practical clarification" on the care of vulnerable patients. "The church is convinced of the necessity to reaffirm as definitive teaching that euthanasia is a crime against human life because in this act one chooses directly to cause the death of another innocent human being," the document said. The letter

"The Christian must help the dying to break free from despair and to place their hope in God."

by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith was approved by Pope Francis in June and released to the public Sept. 22. Cardinal Luis Ladaria, congregation prefect, said at a Vatican news conference that "in order to receive absolution in the sacrament of penance, as well as with the anointing of the sick and the viaticum," patients who have asked for assisted suicide must demonstrate their intention to reverse their decision to end their life. The church's ministers can accompany patients who have made these end-of-life directives, the letter said, by showing "a willingness to listen and to help, together with a deeper explanation of the nature of the sacrament, in order to provide the opportunity to desire and choose the sacrament up to the last moment." However, it added, "those who spiritually assist these persons should avoid any gesture such as remaining until the euthanasia is performed that could be interpreted as approval of this action." The letter follows, copyright © 2020 by Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

Introduction

the good Samaritan who goes out of his way to aid an injured man (cf. Lk 10:30-37) signifies Jesus Christ, who encounters man in need of salvation and cares for his wounds and suffering with "the oil of consolation and the wine of hope."¹ He is the physician of souls and bodies, "the faithful witness" (Rv 3:14) of the divine salvific presence in the world.

How to make this message concrete

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