



# NCPD

NATIONAL CATHOLIC PARTNERSHIP ON DISABILITY

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September 15, 2011

**Tuesday, September 20, 2011**

**Web Seminar on Physician-Assisted Suicide Legislation**

**Based on June 2011 US Catholic Bishops' Statement, *To Live Each Day with Dignity***

Washington, D.C. The National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD) will host a web seminar ("webinar") on **Tuesday, September 20, 2011 from 4-5 p.m. EDT** that will explain the moral and ethical objections to current and proposed state legislation authorizing physician-assisted suicide (PAS). *Threats to the Lives of People with Disabilities, Part II: Physician-Assisted Suicide* will detail the policy statement on the subject approved by the US Catholic Bishops at their General Assembly in June 2011. The webinar will be captioned and participants will have the opportunity to ask questions and respond to polls.

Participants in the September 20 training will learn about current legislative efforts, and how to counter them from a theological perspective based on Scripture and Catholic Church teaching. The medical and personal impact of such legislation will also be discussed and participants will have the opportunity to ask questions of the presenters. The webinar will be live captioned. All registered participants will have access to an online resource toolkit suitable for parishes, clergy and others interested in defending the dignity of human life from conception to natural death. The webinar is free to NCPD affiliate member (arch) dioceses and webinar partners, and is offered for a modest fee to others wishing to participate. For more information or to register for the webinar, go to [www.ncpd.org](http://www.ncpd.org).

The NCPD webinar is being developed in collaboration with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and its Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, and is based on *To Live Each Day with Dignity: A Statement on Assisted Suicide*. The statement details longstanding Church

teaching on the life and dignity of the human person, and reflects on how this teaching relates to people with terminal illness, chronic conditions, and disabilities. The NCPD webinar will consider specifically how physician-assisted suicide legislation poses a particular threat to those who have a disability.

Presenters for the webinar include **Richard Doerflinger**, Associate Director of the USCCB's Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities. Moral Theologian **Fr. Dan Mindling, OFM Cap.**, academic dean of Mount Saint Mary's Seminary, will explain how to view this legislation through the lens of sacred scripture, Catholic theology and Church practice. Providing a personal perspective on living with a disability will be **Sr. Janice McGrane, SSJ**, author and disability advocate. **Jerry Freewalt**, Program Director in the Office of Social Concerns for the Diocese of Columbus, and former Board Chair of NCPD, will moderate the hour-long information and resource session.

Speaking about the resurgence of the PAS movement, **Daniel Cardinal DiNardo**, Archbishop of Galveston-Houston, said in June that the Church "needs to respond in a timely and visible way to this renewed challenge, which will surely be pursued in a number of states in the years to come." Cardinal DiNardo is Episcopal Moderator of NCPD and chair of the Bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities. This webinar will equip the Catholic faithful in providing such a response. Doerflinger explains, "Supporters of PAS speak in euphemisms to conceal how radical their goal is—creating a legal system where certain people's suicides are to be assisted, not prevented like suicides by anyone else." He further noted that "we undermine the value of people's lives when we declare that the rest of us can see no reason why *they*, in particular, shouldn't be allowed to kill themselves."

Sr. Janice began advocating against PAS "when I realized how vulnerable people with disabilities are to being coerced or choosing PAS themselves. Studies indicate that, surprisingly, fear of pain is not the primary reason people give when asked if they would choose PAS. Rather, disability-related reasons such as 'losing autonomy,' 'losing dignity' and 'burden on family' are more often cited." Fr. Mindling points out that "We have dignity because we are created in the image of God. No disability diminishes this dignity, no illness obliterates it, nothing can separate us from the Love of God in Christ."

The NCPD webinar, *Threats to the Lives of People with Disabilities, Part II: Physician-Assisted Suicide* is supported by partnerships from the USCCB Secretariat of Pro-life Activities, the USCCB's Office of Justice, Peace and Human Development, and the Knights of Columbus. The webinar is being developed in consultation with the National Catholic Office for the Deaf (NCOD), the National Apostolate for Inclusion Ministry (NAfIM) and the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM), Justice & Peace.

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Since 1982, NCPD has served the U.S. Catholic Church by providing resources, training, consultation and advocacy for the estimated 14 million U.S. Catholics who live with disability. NCPD's online training seminars offer rich formation opportunities for parishes, dioceses and partnering organizations. The USCCB refers to NCPD matters dealing with access to faith for persons with disabilities. Visit [www.ncpd.org](http://www.ncpd.org) for more information on NCPD's programs and services.