

## Respect Life Article for December 4, 2022

**A Patient's Passing** – The Christian moral tradition affirms the sanctity of life, recognizes the reality of death, distinguishes between “*killing*” and “*letting die*”. We should never act with the deliberate intention of ending someone’s life, and this includes never withdrawing ordinary care. We are not always required to make heroic efforts to sustain the life of a terminally ill or mortally wounded person, and we are asked to determine when further interventions to sustain life are futile. To abandon an infant outdoors on a freezing day is killing, not letting die. To stop feeding a person, we are killing him, and not letting him die. A feeding tube and IV for hydration represent “ordinary care,” and removing these is not allowed. Taking a patient off a ventilator is permitted, because it represents “extraordinary care,” as determined by the mainstream of the Christian tradition. Withdrawal of life support feels different from giving terminally ill patient lethal injections (or aborting genetically defective children in the womb), but the logic is the same. At risk is loss of the distinction between *killing* and *letting die*, and we are seduced into thinking that mercy killing (the euphemism for euthanasia) is the same as a humane recognition of the fact that medical technology cannot always save us. Pope Francis has pointed out that mercy comes not in killing, but in “accompaniment.” To comfort the dying is a powerful act of mercy, and it is never merciful directly to intend someone’s death. Five years ago, Charlie Gard, an English infant stricken with a rare degenerative disease, died following a British Court’s ruling that the state had a duty to protect the best interests of the child—and in Charlie’s case, the child was best off dead! This chilling argument is the basis for a regime of compulsory, state-sponsored euthanasia. Also, here is the question of who decides all this – parents or government? Does society really have a positive duty to end Charlie’s life? It is urgent for us, the faithful, to know our Church’s teaching and thoughtfully promote the Church’s contrary view.

Read Rusty Reno, editor of First Things, a leading journal on Religion and Public Life:  
<https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2017/07/je-suis-charlie-once-more>

### Quotes

- “Having received the gift of the Gospel of Life, we are the people of life and a people for life. It is our duty to proclaim the Gospel of Life to the world. To proclaim Jesus is to proclaim life itself. Gratitude and joy at the incomparable dignity of the human person impel us to bring the Gospel of life to the hearts of all people and make it penetrate every part of society.” USCCB Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, “*The Gospel of Life: A Brief Summary*.”
- “Jesus calls each of us to ‘care for the other as a person for whom God has made us responsible’ (EV 87). ...The encyclical *The Gospel of Life* recognizes the full range of threats against human life, from poverty and malnutrition to murder and war. Particular emphasis, however, is placed on threats to life at its beginning and end—precisely when it is most in need of protection. In modern times, children in their mothers’ wombs and those approaching the end of their lives are certainly among the ‘least of these’ in our world’s estimation.” Excerpt from *Evangelium vitae*, © 1995, Libreria Editrice Vaticana. — USCCB Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities,

<https://respectlife.org/live-the-gospel-of-life>

### Our Prayers

- For all the faithful: May the Lord help us build a culture of life in vigilant expectation of His return; *We pray to the Lord*
- May God help us prepare the way of the Lord by acting with tenderness and compassion, especially toward the most vulnerable among us; *We pray to the Lord*