

Life Is For Everyone

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On the occasion of the *National Week for Life and the Family*, May 8 to 15, 2016, several events were held throughout Canada. The *Week for Life and the Family* is an initiative of the Canadian Catholic Conference of Bishops and is sponsored in Manitoba by the Tri-Diocesan Committee for Life and the Family. Opening events in Winnipeg included the Gospel for Life and Late Night with the Bishops. The theme for 2016 - "LIFE: Life Is for Everyone".

On Monday, May 9, many people from Winnipeg and other areas of the province gathered at Holy Eucharist Ukrainian Catholic Church for a Tri-Diocesan Evening of Prayer. Praying of the Rosary in several languages began at 6:30, followed by a beautiful and sacred celebration of the Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom concelebrated by His



(photo : left to right : Archbishop LeGatt, Archbishop Huculak and Archbishop Gagnon)

Grace Metropolitan Archbishop Lawrence Huculak, His Grace Archbishop Albert LeGatt of Saint Boniface, His Grace Archbishop Richard Gagnon of Winnipeg, and several priests and deacons of the Eastern Rite. The Mass for Life is an annual Eucharistic Celebration for all of life from conception to natural death.

Immediately after the Mass for Life, everyone walked over to the Holy Eucharist Parish Centre for refreshments prior to a candid chat with Winnipeg's three Catholic Archbishops. Host, Spencer Katerynyuk, skilfully addressed profound and intense questions around the issue of life to the archbishops. The February 2015 Canadian Supreme Court decision in *Carter vs. Attorney-General of Canada* placed the issue of physician-assisted suicide and its regulation foremost in

the minds of many. We hear pros and cons from various sources that serve to confuse many people. Some of the language used to promote physician-assisted suicide draws on the words “mercy and compassion”. What does our faith call us to do? How can we advocate for and support alternatives to euthanasia?

By evening's end, the large crowd was thankful for some very informative and thought provoking Catholic responses to assisted suicide.

The archbishops made it clear that life is a gift given to each of us by God. No one has the ability to create life without God. A good example given by Archbishop Gagnon was that if we

had the power to create life, we could turn an inanimate object, such as a stone, into a living thing. It logically follows that if God gives life, only He can take it. No one of us have the authority to take a life.

Archbishop LeGatt pointed out that a belief in the action of assisted suicide removes dignity and replaces it with pride. The decision to “go out on our own terms by picking the time we want to die” is tainted with pride. Physician assisted suicide is not tied in with God who authors life.



The archbishops unanimously agreed that suffering of one close to us is an opportunity to come together, support one another and work with them and for them in a time of great need.

Another issue raised was the fact that it is of utmost importance that the conscience rights of health care workers is protected. Passing the bill of Physician Assisted-Suicide as it stands may compromise the rights of people in the health care field forcing them to resign.

Sickness, suffering and death are an inevitable part of human experience that remind us of our limits. Rooted in charity, health and social services are called to respect the dignity of the individual and to foster trust. In the face of death, the Church witnesses to her belief that God has created each person for eternal life. Therefore, suffering and death are not a final end, but rather, a passage transformed by the promise of the resurrection.