

Deadly dosage: Assisted suicide stirs debate

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ishes in Washington conducted voter-registration drives in churches after weekend Masses, Lagried told the *Catholic Courier* by phone from her Seattle office.

This summer, the state's four Catholic bishops — including recently retired Archbishop Raymond G. Hunthausen of Seattle — signed a declaration reiterating the church's teaching against "legalized medical killing" and suicide. The declaration also asked some pointed questions of the initiative's proponents.

The bishops wrote: "Each of us will be answering a critical question which will affect the way we view and treat terminally ill people: 'Should physicians be allowed to assist in the suicide of their patients?'"

"The significance of that question has deliberately been clouded by euphemisms and slogans which hide the stark reality and implications of I-119," the bishops continued. "The real issue at hand is whether we as a society, will endorse suicide, assisted suicide and the direct taking of a life as an appropriate means of dealing with dying people."

Susan Gilmore, a reporter for the *Seattle Times*, also wondered whether the thousands who had signed a petition bringing I-119 to the polls were completely aware of what they were supporting.

"I think when (I-119's supporters) did the signature gathering, I think a lot of people didn't know what the initiative was," she told the *Catholic Courier* in a phone interview from Seattle, where she has been covering the issue.

Gilmore speculated that many of those

who signed petitions for I-119 actually believed the law would only have enabled terminally ill patients to choose whether to withdraw such life-sustaining procedures as nutrition and hydration. Indeed, I-119 covers such issues, but it's the bill's "aid-in-dying" provisions that have drawn the fire of euthanasia opponents.

"I-119 has been marketed as a vote for 'choice' — a choice about controlling one's own death," Washington's bishops wrote. "In an imperfect health care system with diminishing financial resources, what kind of choice is I-119 really proposing? How many people, upon learning of a serious illness or disability, will feel they have an 'obligation' to remove themselves from this life? ... Is this a signal to the frail among us that their lives are simply not worth living?"

Cheryl K. Smith, staff attorney for the Oregon-based Hemlock Society, acknowledged the validity of concerns such as those raised by the bishops. But she noted that critics of physician-assisted suicide could answer those questions by studying a group of people already bearing the financial burden of staying alive.

"Are we seeing people pressured to make decisions on life support?" she asked rhetorically during a phone interview with the *Catholic Courier*. "That's what's really costly. I guess I'd look toward what's happening to people on life support. I've not seen anything written about people like that."

Despite agreeing that supporters of voluntary euthanasia for the terminally ill need to examine closely the implications of their

position, Smith maintained that each person has a right to commit suicide when faced with terminal illness.

"I see it as an issue of choice," she said. "Each individual looks at their own religious beliefs and makes the decision."

Opponents of euthanasia maintain, however, that the "choice" to commit suicide may be made for all the wrong reasons. In particular, Dr. Ona pointed out that doctors and patients often have a relationship that mimics that of parent and child. In such a relationship, a doctor — even with good intentions — may unwittingly persuade a patient to take his or her own life, he commented.

"From my reading, patients can be easily manipulated," Ona said. "That's the slippery slope you have to worry about." He added, for example, that elderly people often "get afraid of being a burden."

Dr. Patricia Wesley, an assistant clinical professor at Yale University who practices psychiatry in New York City and New Haven, Conn., alluded to similar concerns in a speech she delivered on Quill's case on Sept. 14 at St. Mary's Hospital. The speech was part of the forum "On Death and Dying," which was co-sponsored by the Catholic Physicians' Guild and the St. Thomas More Lawyers' Guild.

In particular, Wesley pointed out that Quill told his *New England Journal* readers that he had referred to the Hemlock Society when his patient asked for help in finding a "safe way" to die.

"It is not a neutral act to refer a patient contemplating suicide to the Hemlock Society," Wesley said. "It is putting a loaded

gun into the hands of a desperate person."

The *Catholic Courier* attempted to arrange an interview with Quill, but his secretary said time constraints made it impossible for him to respond to any questions in time for publication.

Wesley's judgment of Quill's actions were not mirrored by the legal system that cleared him of criminal wrongdoing. However, one area judge criticized the decision to clear Quill with the same vehemence Wesley used to denounce his actions.

Rochester City Court Judge John Manning Regan, who also spoke at the St. Mary's forum, later told the *Catholic Courier* that he was baffled by the grand jury's decision to clear Quill.

"The problem I have is that the article in the *New England Journal* is in and of itself an admission of guilt," Regan said. He noted that such an act is a felony that carries a sentence of three to seven years for those convicted.

The judge attributed the grand jury's decision to the "political climate" engendered by the case of Quill, whom Regan said had been made a "hero" by the local press.

Regan denounced the doctor's actions and the activism of euthanasia supporters as setting a dangerous precedent for the role of physicians in society.

"What you are doing is investing the power of life and death into a professional group who are not equipped to deal with these questions of life and death," the judge concluded.

Service

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(1968-70, 1972-73); and Holy Trinity (1975-81). She served as both teacher and principal at St. Mary Our Mother, Horseheads (1962-68). She ended her teaching career at St. Joseph's, Wayland (1982-83).

Since 1983, Sister Lahr has been involved in spirituality ministry at Emmaus House and the SSJ Spirituality Center.

Sister Victoria Woerner was part of the English department at Nazareth Academy for 38 years, serving as a teacher (1944-77), department head (1970-75) and teacher's assistant (1977-82).

Prior to serving at Nazareth, Sister Woerner taught for two years at St. Agnes High School (1942-44). She also taught American literature at Nazareth College during the summer of 1951.

She later became local coordinator of the Nazareth Academy Convent from 1983-88. Since 1988, she has been performing volunteer congregational services at the motherhouse.

Celebrating 25 years

Since 1968, Sister Christel Burgmaier has served in Paranaigua, Brazil.

In addition to her work as a public health nurse, she has served as a hospital nurse and catechetical coordinator. Sister Burgmaier has also served in parish ministry through pastoral work with children and the poor.

After founding the Morning Star Foster Home in 1986, Sister Jeanne Morreall has since served as a foster parent.

Prior to founding the home, Sister Morreall taught at Nazareth Hall (1970-71); St.

Mary's, Elmira (1971-73); and St. Lawrence, Rochester (1984-85); and served as principal and teacher at Our Lady Queen of Peace (1973-84).

Sister Mary Ann Sutera has spent 22 years as a teacher. She has served the last 15 years at Christ the King, Irondequoit.

Prior to teaching at Christ the King, Sister Sutera taught at Sacred Heart School (1969-73) and St. Lawrence (1973-76), both in Rochester.

Sister Sutera has been actively involved in parish life at Christ the King. In addition to teaching summer classes, she has served on the liturgy committee for 10 years and the parish council for five years. In addition, she has served as head of Eucharistic ministers at the parish for 12 years.

Sister Marguerite Dynski is also known by another title: Dr. Dynski.

A 1975 graduate of the State University of New York at Buffalo Medical School, Sister Dynski has been in private practice in general surgery at Rochester General Hospital since 1980.

Since 1983, Sister Dynski has also been a clinical associate professor of surgery at the University of Rochester. Before beginning her surgical studies, Sister Dynski served as a medical technologist at St. Joseph's Hospital, Elmira, from 1970-71.

Since 1986, Sister Patricia Trovato has been an educator and counselor in the Teen Outpatient Program at Park Ridge Chemical Dependency, Greece.

Sister Trovato's teaching career spanned 17 years at Rochester Catholic schools: Blessed Sacrament (1968-71, 1974-75); Corpus Christi (1971-74); St. Monica's (1975-83); and St. Augustine's (1983-85).



Mercy

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Nazareth College of Rochester; and at St. Michael's in Toronto, Canada.

Since 1984, Elmira native Sister Mary Clare Bollow has served as a pre-school teacher at Guardian Angels, Rochester.

Between 1980-84, Sister Bollow taught at Our Lady Queen of Peace, Rochester. She later worked as the office manager at Our Lady of Mercy High School from 1968-76.

Sister Bollow earned her bachelor's degree in English from the State University of New York College at Brockport in 1980, and a master's degree in elementary education from Nazareth College of Rochester in 1985. She currently lives at Andrew Center at the St. James Convent in Rochester.

Sister Joanne Deck has been serving as a missionary in Santiago, Chile since 1985. She is currently the Mercy director of formation in Santiago, and pastoral administrator of Capilla (Chapel) Santa Elena in that city.

A Rochester native, Sister Deck taught from 1971-84 at St. Thomas the Apostle and St. Salome's, Rochester; Corning Catholic School North, where she was also vice principal; and the former Cardinal

Mooney High School in Rochester, where she also served as a guidance counselor.

Sister Deck holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from the State University of New York College at Geneseo (1970), and a master's degree in education with a focus on guidance counseling from the University of Dayton, Ohio (1980). She also studied the Spanish language at Cochabamba, Bolivia, in 1984.

Sister Sheila Stevenson is currently associate professor of dental hygiene at Monroe Community College, Rochester, where she has been teaching since 1976.

From 1970-75, Sister Stevenson was a dental hygienist, working at the Rochester Neighborhood Health Center, the Wayne County Rural Comprehensive Health Care Program in Sodus, and in Geneva schools doing research study with school children.

Sister Stevenson holds a master's degree in dental public health from Boston University (1976), a bachelor's degree in social sciences from the University of Rochester (1972), and an associate's degree in dental hygiene from Monroe Community College (1970).

In addition, Sister Stevenson served as the congregation's vocation director from 1982-88. She was also director of the congregation's Camp Silver Birch from 1974-88.

Knights mark club's anniversary

ROCHESTER — The Knights of Columbus Council No. 178, 670 Thurston Road, is currently celebrating its 50th year of sponsoring the First Friday Luncheon Club.

Organized to promote devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the luncheon was started in the fall of 1942. George P. McKay, former Catholic Activity Chairman of No. 178, founded the club with the approval of then-Grand Knight Thomas J. O'Connor. The former head of the Knights was also serving as editor of the *Catholic Courier-Journal* at the time.

The club currently meets the first Friday

of every month at 11:45 a.m. for Mass at the Thurston Road building.

On Friday, Oct. 4, 1991, Father Paul Wohlrab, council chaplain and priest-in-residence at St. John the Evangelist Church in Spencerport, will celebrate Mass. Following the Mass, Father Wohlrab will speak at a luncheon served by the Ladies' Auxiliary. The luncheon will take place in the basement dining room.

The Mass and luncheon are both open to the public.

For information, call Ed Miller — current chairman of the club — at 716/288-0535.

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