

Dear Padre,

My aunt has terminal cancer. Her doctors have advised her to stop chemotherapy and begin palliative care, but she says that's equivalent to assisted suicide. Is that what the Church thinks?

Palliative care doesn't prolong life, but neither does it cause life to end. The bishops are quite clear that palliative care is neither euthanasia nor assisted suicide, both of which are always sinful.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says treating or not treating a patient in a way that will cause death is always murder (CCC 2277). However, a patient's choice to discontinue "burdensome, dangerous, extraordinary" treatment "can be legitimate" when it's done not to cause death, but in recognition of "one's inability to impede it" (CCC 2278). But even when death seems to be close, "ordinary care" that would be given to any sick person cannot be interrupted (CCC 2279).

Palliative care does not cause death. It gives terminally ill people spiritual support and relief from their physical symptoms. An excellent resource on this topic, "Killing the Pain, Not the Patient: Palliative Care vs. Assisted Suicide," is available at usccb.org.

The *Catechism* says palliative care "should be encouraged" (CCC 2279). It helps the dying person and the family focus on the gift of life and the blessing each person is. The patient who legitimately chooses palliative care is not waiting to die but rather living those last moments to the fullest and as comfortably as possible.

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A WORD FROM Pope Francis

Even if we know that we cannot always guarantee healing or a cure, we can and must always care for the living, without ourselves shortening their life, but also without futilely resisting their death. This approach is reflected in palliative care, which...opposes what makes death most terrifying and unwelcome—pain and loneliness.

MESSAGE TO WORLD MEDICAL
ASSOCIATION, NOVEMBER 7, 2017



Our Parish Community

October 30, 2022

Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

Wis 11:22—12:2

2 Thes 1:11—2:2

Lk 19:1—10

"For God So Loved the World..."

When we hear this phrase from John 3:16, we think of God's love for human beings—and rightly so. However, today's first reading reminds us that God's love is much broader. This reading offers us a glimpse into God's love of all natural creation. The Greek word translated "world," the word found in the passage from John as well as today's reading, is *kósmos*, a word we think of today as "universe." So we could say: "God so loved the cosmos."

The author of the Book of Wisdom insists that God loves whatever God has made; that the power of the Creator is matched by the Creator's love; and that this love is manifested through mercy to all. We are accustomed to hearing how God cares for us with holy abandon. This reading expands that love to include a tiny grain of sand or the morning dew. An even more daring statement claims that God's imperishable spirit is in all things. How else could anything exist? This fact is the basis of what is referred to as "the intrinsic value of the entire natural world," which means that everything has unique value simply because it was created by God—not because we can use it to enhance ourselves.

This kind of thinking might be new to many. However, it calls us to revere elements of nature like trees, flowers, wolves, and even mosquitos, because they are creatures of God. Our faith insists that "God so loved the cosmos." —Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

FOR Reflection

- ★ Read the first reading slowly and thoughtfully. What new thinking does it suggest for you?
- ★ Think of how dependent you are on earth, water, air, and plants, for example, and give thanks.

For you [the Lord] love all things that are and loathe nothing that you have made;
for you would not fashion what you hate.

WISDOM 11:24

