



4 April 2024

Last Fall and specifically at the October Priests' Seminar as a presbyterate we examined questions surrounding death, dying, and the current practice being promoted known as Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID). We focused on *Horizons of Hope: A Toolkit for Catholic Parishes on Palliative Care*, which was designed to help people make informed decisions regarding end-of-life issues, and the broader issues of suffering and our response as family, friends and Catholic Christians.

Palliative care options and education are not just for the elderly who are faced with making a difficult and personal decision. As a community of faith, everyone is involved, and we need to support one another. Children, adults, those with a "life-limiting" diagnosis, and the friends and families who have contact with these persons all need to know the Gospel of Life and the Church's teachings for themselves or those whom they love. Recent legislative attempts to broaden the definition of who "qualifies" for MAID makes it clear that we need to reach out to the suffering, to be compassionate communities rooted in God's mercy and love, to bring Our Lord's message of hope to our people and the world.

As a follow up to the Priests' Seminar in 2023, we are offering a two-part webinar series that will orient participants to *Horizons of Hope*. They will be led by Dr. Moira McQueen and Sr. Mary Rowell, CSJ on April 25 and May 2, from 7:00 p.m – 9:00 p.m. I am asking Pastors to please consider three action items to prepare for these webinars:

1. Ask at least one parishioner/volunteer to attend both sessions (April 25 and May 2). This needs to be someone or a team who can assist in implementing the Horizons of Hope program in the Parish. They may register at [bit.ly/HOHW-RegisterAprMay2024](https://bit.ly/HOHW-RegisterAprMay2024).
2. Think about how best this program can be implemented in your parish. Perhaps it would be better to collaborate with a neighbouring parish, or even cluster several parishes. You will need to discern this possibility with your team and faithful.
3. In addition to implementing Horizons of Hope perhaps you want to include it as part of other parish initiatives and outreach programs, what might that look like?

The webinars will be offered again on October 3 and 10, from 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. if you wish to send participants at that time.

I would like to thank the Pastors and all priests in parishes, healthcare institutions and other specialized ministries who labour so diligently in the vineyard of Our Lord for undertaking this important life-long project. As shepherds our goal is to tend to our people with care, compassion, and understanding. Fear, foreboding, and apprehension need not dictate our response as we navigate our way home to Our Lord or give witness to the inalienable dignity of life. We have a message of hope and love that must be communicated, and people who are in need of our care and to know the benefits of palliative care as well as the morally unacceptable practice of euthanasia and assisted suicide. Thank you in advance for your attention and cooperation.

Sincerely Yours in Jesus with Mary,

Most Reverend Francis Leo  
Archbishop of Toronto