

The Catholic Women's League of Canada



Antigonish Diocesan Council

Ignite Your Passion, Empower His Mission

TO: Parish Council Faith Chair
FROM: Diocesan Faith Chair, Doreen Boudreau
DATE: April 9, 2026
SUBJECT: **MAiD Awareness Sunday: April 18-19, 2026**
MEMO: #11 (2024-2026)
CC: Parish Council Presidents, Diocesan Officers, Life Members, Provincial Secretary
(for distribution to provincial counterpart)

Sisters in the League:

I am writing to you today with an urgent message and a request from Bishop Kirkpatrick that requires your attention and response.

In Canada, medical assistance in dying is now legal. What started out as a way to end the life of an individual who was terminally ill with no prospect of recovery to “speed up the process” so to say, is now being expanded to include persons whose sole reason for ending their God-given life is a mental illness. Mental illness is treatable. It is not a terminal illness. We should be offering help, not death.

As stated in the Catechism, “Human life must be respected and protected absolutely. From the first moment of conception until death.” (CCC 2270)

Vulnerable patients are already being offered MAiD in Nova Scotia, sometimes even before asking for it and doctors face disciplinary measures if they don't participate.

Bill C-218, a private member's bill, was introduced in the Canadian Parliament in December 2025 and is in second reading this April. The bill seeks to amend the Criminal Code to permanently exclude mental illness as the sole condition qualifying for MAiD. If it does not pass, legislation will take effect on March 17, 2027, permitting MAiD for individuals whose only underlying condition is a mental illness.

In March 2026, Alberta introduced Bill 18, the *Safeguards for Last Resort Termination of Life Act*, an act to prohibit MAiD where mental illness is the sole qualifying condition. We pray that Nova Scotia will take similar steps and implement similar protections.

Bishop Kirkpatrick urges all parish communities to stand in defence of human life. The Third Sunday of Easter, April 18/19, will be designated as MAiD Awareness Sunday or Dignity Sunday to raise awareness of the importance of protecting life at every stage and of opposing the expansion of MAiD to include mental health as the only qualifying condition.

Parishes are encouraged to share the provided informational materials, pray for those affected, and contact the Honourable Brian Comer, Provincial Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, as well as your local MP, to express your support for Bill C-218. (see sample letter from Bishop Kirkpatrick attached) You may wish to use this letter as a guide to write your own letter.

Read Bishop Kirkpatrick's Pastoral Letter and learn more:

<https://antigonishdiocese.com/medical-assistance-in-dying-a-catholic-response/> as well as the various position statements that follow the letter.

On numerous occasions, the CCCB has stated its opposition to “MAiD” and explained its reasons, while encouraging and promoting humane and compassionate alternatives that address chronic pain, suffering, and terminal illness. These alternatives include comprehensive and accessible palliative care, as well as better support for persons living with mental illness.

Let us also promote and advocate for increased access to palliative care. National Hospice Palliative Care Week is May 3–9. I invite your council to participate in 12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care using the national resources:

- 12 Hours of Care for Palliative Care (2025) found in the members section of the national website and
- The Supplement to 12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care found in the March 2026 Service Communique #2 at <https://www.cwl.ca/communique-02-service-2/> (The Supplement to 12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care is attached).

I would also like to remind everyone that spring online sessions for the **Dying with Christ – Living with Hope** series offered by the Christian Medical and Dental Association of Canada (CMDA) will take place during April, May and June 2026. Registration is available at:

<https://cmdacanada.org/event/dying-with-christ-living-with-hope-spring-series/>

For those especially who suffer from mental illness and cannot see their way clear to good health: *“Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is despair, let me bring hope.”* (Prayer of Saint Francis)

I pray that Our Lady of Good Counsel will give us the guidance and the courage to stand up for what is right.

Your sister in the League,

Doreen Boudreau, Faith Chair

Enclosed:

Sample letter

Supplement to 12 Hours of Care for Palliative Care 2025