



Ethically Speaking...

Newsletter of
THE CANADIAN CATHOLIC BIOETHICS INSTITUTE
AT ASSUMPTION UNIVERSITY

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Ethically Speaking...

provides news and information from the Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute at Assumption University.

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Assumption putting Catholic Bioethics Front and Centre!

In November of 2014, Assumption University launched the Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute at Assumption University. CCBI-A, as it is fondly referred to, "is affiliated with and shares the resources and expertise of the Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute in Toronto", notes Fr. Leo Walsh, Vice President, Academics Assumption University and Executive Director of the Institute. The Institute was a response to the growing need in our community for resources and education in the field of bioethics generally, but in particular Catholic Bioethics and the CCBI-A is answering the call.

Although Healthcare professionals may encounter complex ethical questions in their day to day practice, each and every one of us will face those same dilemmas. Whether we are a son, daughter, parent, young, elderly, rich or poor, we will all be confronted with difficult ethical decisions at some point in our life, particularly in healthcare. The Institute's role is to provide resources, education and services to help everyone in the community deal with emerging ethical questions in health, science and life.

The institute purpose is threefold:

- To provide leadership in Catholic bioethics education, research and service
- To raise and respond to ethical issues in healthcare with respect to compassion and justice
- To assist patients and families, professionals, policymakers and leaders grapple with ethically complex issues that arise in medicine, research and life sciences

How do we do this?

- Education (public and professional)
- Consultation (consumer and clinical)
- Advocacy, policy development and outreach activities
- Research and publications

For more information contact :

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For People in the Pews Lecture Series (Windsor)

One of the goals of CCBI-A is to help Catholic lay people increase their awareness and understanding of Church teachings regarding bioethical issues. For People in the Pews (FPIP) is an 'everyday bioethics' lecture series designed to do just that. As science and medicine become more advanced, we find ourselves confronted with moral questions that may challenge Catholic teaching on the dignity of human life or social justice. When unexpectedly confronted with these moral dilemmas, we find ourselves at a loss and may seek guidance. Understanding bioethical principles and Catholic teaching in such matters is increasingly important. FPIP offers everyone the opportunity to know and grow in their understanding of bioethical prin-

ciples and better understand the impact of new developments in medicine and technology on moral and ethical life issues.

FPIP is an excellent educational series for parishes and fits well into Advent or Lenten schedule. A parish may host or co-host FPIP with neighbouring parishes. The program is also suitable for many other organizations and groups such as hospice, long-term care Women's groups, Senior Centres, Retirement groups as well as offering seminars for clergy, chaplains, educators etc. It may be a scheduled one day event or over consecutive days/evenings.

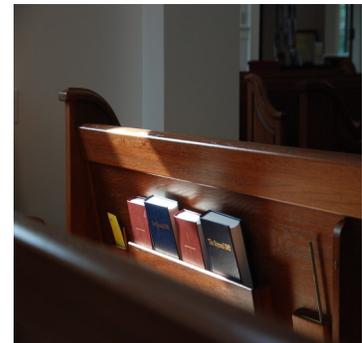
The normal schedule is two hours one evening for four weeks. (Other arrangements to suit the parish are

possible.). Sessions aim to inform participants about complex bioethical issues, and encourage discussion and dialogue about Catholic teaching on topics such as reproductive technology, palliative care, advance care planning, euthanasia and physician assisted dying. For more information or to book a presentation contact:

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At the Hour of Our Death...Advance Care Planning

Advances in medicine and technology bring with them new and complex questions regarding treatment and moral decision-making. As a people of faith we must remember not to let the struggle over such questions overshadow what should be grace-filled moments in the dying process. Those grace-filled moments include, attending to our spiritual needs, healing broken relationships and saying our good-byes. Our Catholic faith offers both a long tradition of reflection and Church teaching to help guide us through these difficult and complex issues.

Difficult decisions may be made easier if we take the time to express our wishes before we become ill.

There may come a time when our ability to communicate or even reason is compromised and we will not be able to make medical decisions for ourselves. We have the



ability to plan in advance and ensure our wishes about treatments, our values and our religious beliefs are known and honoured at this most sacred time.

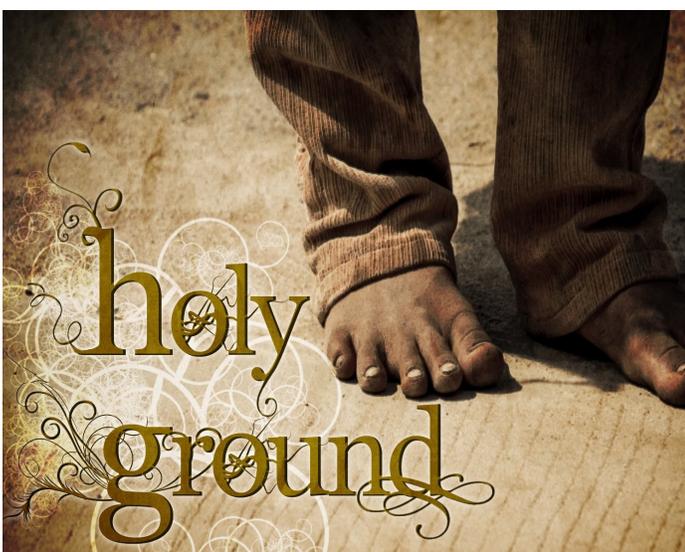
Advance Care planning allows us to choose who will speak for us and what wishes are to be respected. These wishes can be either in writing or verbally given and they must be honoured when they are

known. When advance care planning, it is important to prayerfully reflect on Church teaching and the principles of our Catholic faith. It is also important to choose someone who is both willing and able to carry out your wishes should you no longer be able to speak for yourself. Under the law your SDM must make health care decisions in accord with your wishes, including your moral and religious beliefs, provided they are known. The best time to create an advance care plan is now—before you become seriously ill. This way you can consider all options carefully, through the lens of your faith. Take time to reflect on your beliefs and most importantly have the conversations with your loved ones.

Walking on Holy Ground: Stories from the Front Line

The patient sat on his bed listening to the words coming from his physician. He was faced with a difficult decision about treatment. Should he agree to chemotherapy in the hopes of extending his life for a few months? But to what end? He had witnessed the agony both his brother and father had endured during treatment and wasn't sure it was worth the pain or burden.. But then he thought of his loving wife and children and wanted to spend as much time as possible with them. His heart was torn. Many patients find themselves in this very circumstance. The experience is intimidating for many and more often than not, they are overwhelmed and their greatest fears are left unspoken.

As the physician ended the consult, he asked "is there anything else I can do for you?" One would think that it was the perfect way to end a consultation. In fact the words were part of a script often used when training healthcare professionals in communication.



"No thank you Doctor, I appreciate what you've done for me." He reached out and shook the physician's hand before leaving. Later that morning I went back to see the patient, but he had been discharged and much to my surprise the nurses informed me that he had declined further treatment. The next day I phoned him at home to see how he was doing and we had a long conversation about his decision. He told me he saw what his brother had gone through a year before and did not want to be a burden to his wife and children. I asked why he hadn't raised that concern when he was with the Doctor. "Well, he said, "it was at the front of my mind but I didn't want to bother him."

"Why would you think that?", I asked in all sincerity. Well he looked in a hurry and he was looking down writing, as he moved toward the door, and when he said is there anything else. I felt like he had already spent too much time talking to me.

That encounter taught me a great deal about actions and how the power of one small word can change the outcome of a patient's experience. Since that time, I have made a subtle alteration to my own way of asking if patients need anything. I now ask, "Is there *something* else I can do for you today?" "Is there *anything* else?" feels like a dismissive question - a polite 'customer service' phrase, like when we ask people "how are you today", and we really don't want an answer. By responding with "Is there something else?" signals to the patient that I have an intuitive understanding of a concern that may still be on their mind. How remarkable that life changing decisions can turn on a single word or behaviour, even when we believe we are acting in a compassionate manner.

Each and every encounter with a patient is "holy ground". Those working in healthcare have the privilege to walk along side patients and families who are at their most vulnerable. We must never forget this work is noble work; in each encounter we have the opportunity to bring holiness and compassion to the experience. Sometimes it only takes a simple word or gesture.



News, Events & Updates:

St. Paul's Parish hosted the CCBI-A at all mass on Sunday May 3rd, to share an important message about Advance Care Planning. The brief talk was well-received by many parishioners who stopped to ask questions and chat after mass.

CCBI-A Staff were invited to speak on Catholic Morality and Bioethics for the Grade 12 students at **Holy Names High School**, Principal Brendan Roberts and Head of Religious Studies, Luis Alvarez, graciously provided the opportunity to speak to young people about the importance of morality and ethical decision-making.

"It's important to provide students with the foundation needed to address the serious medical and ethical issues of the 21st Century by equipping them with principles specific to the fields of health care and the life sciences," notes Fr. Leo Walsh.

"We need to teach students not only h.

ow to make wise personal decisions, but we also need to enable them to promote ethical policies and practices which advance the common good and foster greater respect for the human person. It's important that young people learn to think and reason logically through com-

A Message from the Executive Director:

In *The Windsor Star* (Sat., May 30, 2015, C6), there is an article taken from the *National Post*, which deals with the treatment or non-treatment of very premature babies ("The Survival of the Fittest"). The article reveals confused thinking among medical personnel which often results in the unnecessary death of children. This is but one example of the need for clear and moral guidance.

CCBI-A will provide moral guidance based on the Bible and human reason, relying on the official teaching of the Catholic Church. We reach out to people of faith and to all people of good will. We will never achieve uniformity of thought, of course. What we hope to do is to give people of good conscience solid reasons for their actions which will leave them peaceful before the Will of a loving God.

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