



CANADIAN CATHOLIC BIOETHICS INSTITUTE
INSTITUT CANADIEN CATHOLIQUE DE BIOÉTHIQUE

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Dear Friends,

CCBI sends best wishes for Summer 2009, along with two important issues of *Bioethics Matters*: “Freedom of Conscience and Human Rights” refers to the operation of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, as a “starter” for our ongoing research into Human Rights Commissions and implications for conscience rights; and “Update: Breakthroughs in Stem Cell Research” looks at some interesting developments in the world of stem cell research, indicating that those developments may be good news for those of us who oppose embryonic stem cell research, but acknowledge the desire for ongoing research that respects human life at all stages, both in its goals and in its ways of achieving those goals. We remain hopeful!

Over the last months, CCBI has been heavily involved in bioethics education and research, with speaking engagements in many areas on diverse topics. We are always glad to be of service to school boards, hospitals, and churches, and to be engaged in developing awareness of the importance and relevance of bioethical issues.

Recent activities include in-service talks to teachers and to principals, high school in-class discussions, presentations on an interfaith panel and other religious and secular groups, talks to geneticists and genetic counsellors, chaplains, priests’ seminars and parish groups, and appearances on TV and radio programmes. We have been working with other groups to produce a brochure on organ donation, and have had requests for many consultations by and with other associations and individuals concerning the revision of ethics guidelines, hospital policies, Powers of Attorney for health care, and so on.

We are gravely concerned by attempts to remove conscience rights from people whose rights need to be protected, and therefore CCBI is organizing a symposium on “Conscience and the Good of Society” with the Catholic Civil Rights League and the Archdiocese of Edmonton. The symposium will be presented in Toronto on October 3, and in Edmonton on October 6, 2009. We hope to involve as many health care professionals as possible, as well as those in any occupational field disturbed by some Human Rights activities in their province.

Another major area of concern is the introduction of a Bill to legalize physician-assisted suicide (PAS) in Canada. The third introduction of this Bill indicates a high measure of Parliamentary support. CCBI continues to inform people of the inherent wrongness of euthanasia and PAS and their dangers for society in our “For People in the Pews” (FPIP) program. Over the last three years we have presented FPIP many times in many areas, and, while challenging questions to Church teaching sometimes arise, I have never heard anyone suggest that either euthanasia or PAS is desirable for human beings. Far from it: the response is a clear support of the Culture of Life, and an emphasis on wanting to “live life to the end” as Pope John Paul II so movingly said.

We advocate working towards providing true compassion and solidarity for people. We recognize the need for effective pain control and good hospice and palliative care, and are truly encouraged by personal stories from those who have given so much time and love looking after sick or elderly parents and spouses. We remain convinced that most people are good, loving, individuals who want to do the right things for others and know that killing them before their time is not, and never can be, an answer to end-of-life concerns.

Moira McQueen
Executive Director