

MICHAEL C. BARBER, S.J.  
BISHOP OF OAKLAND



2121 HARRISON STREET,  
OAKLAND, CA 94612  
510.267.8316

“The Church values human life as a gift of God. We are called not only to preserve life, but care for those who are sick and suffering. Accompanying a dying person with compassion and love are essentials of Christianity. When it comes to medical treatment, the Church has always taught that we are required to use ordinary or proportionate means to preserve life. We are NOT obligated to prolong life by every possible means and at all costs. We are allowed to die a natural death. We also recognize the need for the proper management of pain. The Church’s compassionate position lies between the extremes of “assisted suicide” and using “expensive, intrusive, disproportionate and extraordinary” means to keep us alive. We respect a person’s right to refuse disproportionate medical treatment. A person’s informed treatment decisions must be respected. It is so easy to treat the sick, the dying, and those with disabilities as a burden. I urge all Catholics to educate themselves on the issue using the resources available from parishes, the Catholic press, and the diocesan website. The sick, elderly and dying deserve our love and support until the moment God calls them to Himself. They deserve better than killing, whether at the hands of their physician, or by their own hands.”

+ Michael Barber S.J.

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Bishop of Oakland  
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