

SUPPLEMENT TO ADVANCE DIRECTIVE
of
PAMELA K. CLIENT

I, **Pamela K. Client**, being of sound mind, have executed an Advance Directive. I am now signing this supplement in that document for the purpose of expanding upon the specific terms in that document and to help my family, friends and advisors to understand my wishes and to relieve any party responsible for my care of the emotional burden of making these important decisions for me.

If the time comes when I can no longer take part in decisions for my own welfare, I would like Catholic teachings to guide my agents, including my priest, in making the decision as to when medical therapies, procedures, equipment, etc. be withheld or withdrawn. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church states,

2278. “Discontinuing medical procedures that are burdensome, dangerous, extraordinary or disproportionate to the expected outcome can be legitimate; it is the refusal of “over-zealous” treatment. Here one does not will to cause death; one’s inability to impede it is merely accepted. The decisions should be made by the patient if he is competent and able or, if not, by those legally entitled to act for the patient, whose reasonable will and legitimate interests must always be respected.”

The key principle in this statement is that one does not will to cause death. When a person has an underlying terminal disease, or their heart, or some other organ, cannot work without medical assistance, or a therapy being proposed is dangerous, or has little chance of success, then not using that machine or that therapy results in the person dying from the disease or organ failure they already have. The omission allows nature to take its course. It does not directly kill the person, even though it may contribute to the person dying earlier than if aggressive treatment had been done.

With regards to artificially provided nutrition and hydration, it may be removed if it will allow me to die from an underlying condition, rather than unnecessarily prolonging my suffering, it may be removed. If my body is no longer able to process food and water, there is no moral obligation to provide nutrition and hydration and I will die from the disease or organ failure before starvation or dehydration could kill me. If I am brain dead and cannot breathe without the aid of a respirator, then the respirator should be removed and I should be allowed to die naturally.

However, when the withdrawal of nutrition and hydration is intended to kill the person, or will be the immediate and direct cause of doing so, quite apart from any disease or failure of their body, then I believe that withdrawing food and water would be an act of euthanasia, a grave sin against the natural law and the law of God.

Having witnessed the recent deaths of Terri Schiavo and Pope John Paul II, I have realized the following: I am not afraid of dying and I am not afraid of suffering before death. I believe there is value in redemptive suffering, such as the pain a cancer patient feels before death. I am willing to go through that, although I do not preclude the use of pain medication to make me more comfortable until natural death occurs. I believe that the withdrawal of food and water in the Terri Schiavo case is an example of euthanasia. I believe all life has value, even if it does not have the “quality of life” that our society is so concerned with these days. For example, there are many who no doubt felt that Melissa’s quality of life for many years was minimal in their eyes, but we always knew her life had a great deal of “quality” and value, despite the pain she suffered. It was only until she became brain dead from lack of oxygen for an extended period, that we felt she had no quality of life anymore and that God was calling her home.

Pope John Paul II was suffering from Parkinson’s disease and the quality of his life was probably considered to be “minimal” by many, but I believe there was a great deal of quality to his life as he showed the world how to die with dignity. He was willing to suffer the pain and disability the disease caused, including a feeding tube and tracheotomy towards the end. It was only until his kidneys and other organs failed that his natural death occurred. As he wrote in his Encyclical Evangelium Vitae, he made it clear that “by euthanasia in the true and proper sense must be understood an action or omission which by its very nature and intention brings about death, with the purpose of eliminating all pain”; such an act is always “a serious violation of the law of God, since it is the deliberate and morally unacceptable killing of a human person (n. 65). [Pope John Paul II, To the Congress on Life-Sustaining Treatments and Vegetative State, 20 March 2004).

Another primary purpose of this document is to insure that I get to stay at home until I die, if that is what I wish, if that is what my agents want and if it is not a burden to my agents or others for me to die at home. I also ask that my body be present at a Catholic Funeral Mass and that I be buried in the ground in the plot next to Melissa Ann Client at Belcrest Memorial Park in Salem, OR.

My health care agent has the authority to make any and all medical decisions on my behalf should I ever be unable to do so for myself. I have discussed my wishes with my agent (and with my alternate agent) who shall base all decisions on my previous instructions. If I have not expressed a wish with respect to some future medical decision, my agent shall act in a manner that he/she deems to be in my best interests in accord with what he/she knows of my beliefs and the teachings of the Catholic Church. If the agent is unclear about these teachings, I would like the agent to consult with a Catholic priest before making any decisions.

My agent has the further authority to request and receive all information regarding my medical condition and, when necessary, to execute any documents necessary for release of such information. My agent may execute any document of consent or refusal to permit treatment in accord with my intentions. My agent may also admit me to a nursing home or other long-term care facility as he/she deems appropriate and to sign on my behalf any waiver of release from liability required by a physician or hospital.

As a member of the Catholic Church, I believe in a God who is merciful and in Jesus Christ Who is the Savior of the World. As the Giver of Life, God has sent us His only-begotten Son as Redeemer so that in union with Him we might have eternal life. Through His death and Resurrection, Jesus has conquered sin so that death has lost its sting. (I Cor. 15:55). I wish to follow the moral teachings of the Catholic Church and to receive all the obligatory care that my faith teaches we have a duty to accept. However, I also know that death need not be resisted by any and every means and that I have the right to refuse medical treatment that is excessively burdensome and would only prolong my death and delay my being taken to God. I also know that I may morally receive medication to relieve pain even if it is foreseen that its use may have the unintended result of shortening my life.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Pamela K. Client

Witness: _____ Witness: _____