

CATHOLIC GUIDANCE FOR HEALTH CARE AGENT

Dear Health Care Agent,

Thank you for agreeing to ensure my complete care during a serious medical crisis if I am unable to advocate for myself or make decisions. While my legal medical directives authorize you to act on my behalf, this letter provides additional guidance and clarification on my desired approach to care, without intending to revoke or alter those directives.

As a devout Roman Catholic, I believe my body is entrusted to me by God, and my medical decisions should align with His principles and boundaries for human life and care.

Given the complexities and unpredictable nature of medical situations that may require life-prolonging procedures (as detailed in my medical directives), it is challenging to specify every potential scenario in advance. Therefore, I entrust you to make decisions regarding life-prolonging treatments using these guidelines:

1. I desire that all my medical decisions be made in harmony with the teachings of the Catholic Church. Please review the *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services, Sixth Edition*, from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, for additional guidance.
2. I desire for you to speak with my doctors and my trusted clergy members who understand my Catholic values for input and direction if I am experiencing a complex medical situation involving life-prolonging procedures.
3. I believe I have a moral obligation to use ordinary or proportionate means for preserving my life, which offers me a reasonable hope of benefit, but I also reject any life-prolonging procedures that are insufficiently beneficial or excessively burdensome or impose excessive expense on my family or the community.
4. If I am in a *persistent* vegetative state where I can reasonably expect to live indefinitely with proper care, I desire to receive artificial nutrition and hydration as a basic human right. However, I specifically reject this life-prolonging procedure if it cannot reasonably be expected to prolong my life, or if it becomes excessively burdensome for me, or would cause me significant physical discomfort, for example, resulting from complications in the use of the means employed. In no case should the removal of artificial nutrition and hydration be done for the intent or purpose of causing my death.
5. I desire that I receive spiritual and pastoral care during a life-threatening medical event, including supportive visits from family and clergy, the administration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick as often as is deemed helpful, and the Sacrament of Viaticum.

Thank you again for agreeing to be my health care agent. I trust you to make medical decisions on my behalf, guided by professional advice, Catholic spiritual teachings and guidance, and prayer. While I hope you will make the best choices possible under the circumstances, I also want you to have peace of mind. Please do not dwell on the decisions you made or wonder about what could have been done differently. Please live your life in peace.

Name:

Date:

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Additional Requests Regarding My Spiritual Care (Check all that apply)

- Any decisions concerning my health care should be consistent with the relevant teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

- If I become hospitalized, immobile, severely ill, or terminally ill, I direct my Health Care Agent to make arrangements for a Catholic priest to visit me so that I may receive the Sacraments of Healing of the Roman Catholic Church. Thereafter, I wish to receive frequent visits from any Catholic priest for purposes of regularly receiving the Sacrament of Confession (offered at least once per week). I also wish to daily receive the Holy Eucharist (or if that is not possible, at least on Sundays).

- According to the Diary of St. Faustina, the Lord revealed that when people pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy in the presence of the dying, Jesus will stand between the Father and the dying person, not as the just Judge but as the merciful Savior (Diary of St. Faustina, 1541). I wish for my Health Care Agent or any other person to pray with me and over me while I am sick, especially the Chaplet of Divine Mercy and the Holy Rosary. If I am not able to participate in the prayers, I would still like these prayers to be prayed in my presence. I also would like scripture to be read to me at my bedside (preferably the Book of Psalms and the Gospels) and to be included in the prayers of the faithful during Mass.

- My Health Care Agent shall ensure that I have received the final Sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church and, at the discretion of the Catholic priest administering such Sacraments, the Apostolic Pardon of the Roman Catholic Church as well.