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An undated photo shows a Carmelite sister combing a resident's hair at Ozanam Hall in Bayside

An undated photo shows a Carmelite sister combing a resident's hair at Ozanam Hall in Bayside, the New York borough of Queens. (OSV News/Courtesy of Becket)



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A federal court says New York nuns don't have to assist in killing their patients just yet.

You read that right.

As of Aug. 5, New York state's Medical Aid in Dying Act is in effect, [meaning residents](#) who have six months or fewer to live can now get a prescription to end their life.

But, thanks to a lawsuit brought on the nuns' behalf by the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, Catholic hospitals and nursing homes are exempt. For now.

The ruling from the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of New York [July 30 grants the nuns](#), the Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm, a temporary order that keeps the state of New York from requiring them to offer euthanasia to the people in their care. Benedictine Sisters who run St. Joseph's Home for the Aged, the Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne, the Little Sisters of the Poor, Catholic Health and the Catholic Diocese of Rockville Center joined in the lawsuit.

What have we come to?

The New York law is not a simple permission slip for doctors to give more morphine. It requires all healthcare providers to either provide patients with suicide medication, if they request it, [or transfer them](#) to another healthcare facility that will. The law requires doctors and nurses to present the benefits of all options (including hospice, palliative care and suicide) to their patients and either provide the drugs for them to kill themselves, if the patient chooses that option, or refer them to another medical professional or facility willing to do it.

Here is the kicker: The nuns are safe for now, but anyone else who won't abide by the law risks losing their individual and/or facility licenses and ending up in jail.

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If you think it incredible that the state of New York is arguing that Catholic medical professionals — for whom assisted suicide is morally unacceptable — must help people kill themselves, think again. Many, if not most, of the people the nuns care for at their institutions are poor, even indigent. They may not have families. They may receive some public assistance. Many in society consider them unneeded. Is the state of New York making an economic recommendation?

The Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm, while based in New York, [manage 19 facilities](#) in eight states and one in Ireland. Some of these facilities, including the six

they manage in New York, house Catholic priests as well as religious sisters and brothers. And now the state threatens to force nuns to tell them about "medical aid in dying"?

It is bad enough that New York has joined the increasingly long list of U.S. states allowing euthanasia. For now, 13 states and the District of Columbia allow it, but the infection is spreading. Before long, Congress may decide to join the dozen or so countries around the world that think so-called assisted dying is a good thing. The scary part is that most of the other countries approving some form of euthanasia have a high percentage of Christian, even Catholic, populations. Roughly [62% of the U.S.](#) is Christian; can that stem the tide here?

There is genuinely something wrong in a society, any society that requires, even allows, euthanasia. Some tout the so-called benefits of what they term choice. Every so often, one or another group, such as Compassion & Choices, Death with Dignity or The World Federation of Right to Die Societies, picks up where the leader in assisted suicide, Jack Kevorkian, who died in 2011, left off, arguing in court and in the media that euthanasia is a good thing.

Society has come to the point where people even ask what's wrong with suicide.

New York needs to reply to the lawsuit by Sept. 8, the Catholic feast of the Nativity of Mary, the mother of Jesus. The nuns' response is due on Sept. 15, another Marian feast, the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows.

One can only hope that sanity prevails. The life you save may be your own.