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SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

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Joint Declaration of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life and the Pontifical Academy for Life on the case of Mr. Vincent Lambert

In full agreement with the affirmations of the Archbishop of Reims, H.E. Msgr. Éric de Moulins-Beaufort, and the auxiliary bishop, H.E. Msgr. Bruno Feillet, in relation to the sad case of Mr. Vincent Lambert, we wish to reiterate the grave violation of the dignity of the person that the withdrawal of nutrition and hydration would constitute. Indeed, the “vegetative state” is certainly a burdensome pathological state, which however does not in any way compromise the dignity of those people who find themselves in this condition, nor does it compromise their fundamental rights to life and to care, understood as the continuity of basic human assistance.

Nutrition and hydration constitute a form of essential care, always proportionate to life support: to nourish a sick person never constitutes a form of unreasonable therapeutic obstinacy, as long as the person is able to receive nutrition and hydration, provided this does not cause intolerable suffering or prove damaging to the patient.

The suspension of such care represents, rather, a form of abandonment of the patient, based on a pitiless judgment of the quality of life, expression of a throwaway culture that selects the most fragile and helpless people, without recognizing their uniqueness and immense value. The continuity of assistance is an inescapable duty.

We therefore hope that solutions may be found as soon as possible to protect Mr. Lambert’s life. To this end, we assure the prayer of the Holy Father and all the Church.