
COVID-19 Coronavirus: English Catholic Bishops, “scarcity of resources” makes “prognosis and likelihood of benefit overriding criteria”

(London) In a statement to the Catholic faithful of England and Wales about the coronavirus crisis, the Bishops' Conference addressed the difficult issue of how to “choose” among COVID-19 patients those who have a right to intensive care. According to Bishops John Sherrington, Paul Mason and Richard Moth, responsible for the bioethics and mental health area, “demand on NHS resources is outstripping supply and those responsible for our care and well-being are facing challenging decisions. What may well be on all of our minds is what provision will be available if I, or a loved one, is in need of treatment and life-support in these circumstances”. “While we would all agree that the allocation of resources must be done as fairly as possible, the criteria of fairness must be clear and shared by us all. These principles apply both morally and in the law which governs our expectations and rights on health and social care”. “Until the current pandemic”, the statement from the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales goes on to say, “resources have always been allocated according to medical need and benefit to the patient. Today this approach must be complemented by maximising scarce resources for the common good, and so prognosis, and the likelihood of benefit become the overriding criteria”.

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