

National Donor Sabbath: Sacred Text & Policies

Roman Catholic Church

Pope John Paul II

Encyclical: For a new Culture of Human Life (Par.86) (March 25, 1995)

“Over and above such outstanding moments, there is an everyday heroism, made up of gestures of sharing, big and small, which build up an authentic culture of life. A particularly praiseworthy example of such gestures is the donation of organs, performed in an ethically acceptable manner, with a view to offering a chance of health and even life itself to the sick who sometimes have no hope.”

“Blood and Organ Donors” (August 2, 1984), The Pope Speaks, 30:no.1, 1985, pp. 1-2.

“Above all, I appreciate the purpose which has united and mobilized you: namely, to promote and encourage such a noble and meritorious act as donating your own blood or an organ to those of your brothers and sisters who have need of it. Such a gesture is the more laudable in that you are motivated, not by a desire for earthly gain or ends, but by a generous impulse of the heart, by human and Christian solidarity - the love of neighbor, which forms the inspiring motive of the Gospel message, and which has been defined, indeed, as the new commandment.

In giving blood or an organ of your body, may you always have this human and religious perspective: may your gesture be made as an offering to the Lord, who identified himself with those who suffer, either by sickness, accidents on the highway, or mishaps at work. May it be a gift made to the suffering Lord, who in his passion gave himself completely and poured out His blood for the salvation of mankind.

If you also include this supernatural intention, your humanitarian gesture, already so noble in itself, will be elevated and transformed into a splendid testimony of Christian faith, and your merit will certainly not be lost...”

“Many Ethical, Legal, and Social Questions Must Be Examined in Greater Depth” (June 20, 1991), Dolentium Hominum, Vatican Press, 1992, n.3 pp.12-13

“With the advent of organ transplantation, which began with the blood transfusions, man has found a way to give of himself, of his blood and of his body, so that others may continue to live. Thanks to science, and to the professional training and commitment of doctors and healthcare workers, whose collaboration is less obvious but no less indispensable for the outcome of complicated surgical operations, new and wonderful challenges are presented. We are challenged to love our neighbor in new ways; in evangelical terms, to love ‘to the end’ (John 13:1), yet within certain limits which cannot be exceeded, limits laid down by human nature itself.

“Above all, this form of treatment is inseparable from a human act of donation. In effect, transplantation presupposes a prior, explicit, free and conscious decision on the part of the donor or of someone who legitimately represents the donor, generally the closest relatives. It is a decision to offer, without reward, a part of one’s own body for the health and well being of another person. In this sense, the medical action of transplantation makes possible the donor’s act of self-giving, that sincere gift of self which expresses our constitutive calling to love and communion.”