

**PCSLife Conference**  
**Houston Methodist research Institute**  
**September 16-18, 2018**

**Welcome and Introductions: Mons. Paglia**

My dear friends,

Personally and on behalf of the Pontifical Academy for Life, I welcome all of you to the “Palliative Care and Spirituality for Life Conference,” two days of intense study that are part of the wider PAL-LIFE project for the dissemination and implementation of palliative care throughout the world. First of all, I want to thank Dr. Mauro Ferrari, President of the Houston Methodist Research Institute that is hosting the Conference, and Prof. Eduardo Bruera, chair of the Department of Palliative, Rehabilitation & Integrative Medicine at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, who so generously contributed their skill and experience to ensuring the value and success of our discussions.

This Conference has also seen the conferral of its Nineteenth Annual Award by the Marialuisa Lectureship for Life Award, an organization committed to educating researchers, physicians, nurses, caregivers and the community at large about the importance of symptom management and human accompaniment for cancer patients.

It is an honor to see such prestigious institutions so passionately involved—with mind and heart—in the Academy’s PAL-LIFE Project.

We are all aware of the importance that palliative care can have, both within the medical profession and outside of it, in today’s circumstances where marginalization, discrimination, and the elimination of the weakest among us—those suffering from a serious, disabling or incurable diseases—threaten to become the rule. In the face of the “throw-away culture” that has become so pervasive in society, we are working to promote a “palliative care culture” that can oppose calls for euthanasia and assisted suicide, and that leads society to commit itself more completely to care for others and to offering loving accompaniment until the end of earthly life. In my view, this is a situation that is even more drastic than what was encountered in decades past with respect to

the destruction of the environment.

That's way, it is crucial to think more intensely about the great anthropological questions and the enormous ethical challenges we face with regard to the end of earthly life. It is in this context that we will explore the contributions offered by palliative care to human needs that arise from movements of the human spirit. We will study not only clinical experience, but also the human sciences and the indispensable word of truth that religion can offer about the great mystery that is life.

Today the palliative care community recognizes the important role of religion, given religion's ability to reach the peripheries of humanity, those who in each community are the most in need. Now, while this is true as far as it goes, religion can do much more, and it does. Religions, and above all different Christian traditions, are not just one means for increasing the availability of palliative care, they are themselves the true force of palliative care. Holistic attention to the person does not spring from merely human thinking, and still less from the dominance of economic issues in our contemporary culture. That dominance results in the "throw-away culture"—nothing more. Only a "religious" reading of human existence and reality, whether explicit or not, allows us to perceive and affirm a good that goes beyond our merely human calculations. Only a "wider" way of thinking lets us realize that human life, even when it is fragile and apparently losing out to illness, is intangibly precious. Palliative care incarnates a vision of man that is profoundly religious, and it is this vision that is the true soul and the true force of palliative care.

I hope that our two days together can help palliative care be equal to the many challenges it faces in its care for the dying, and can become even more well known among the public at large.

Certain that we will work well together and learn much from each other, I wish all of you a successful and rewarding conference.

Thank you!