Vincent Lambert was a French man who died in July 2019 after a French court ruled that his doctors could withdraw his feeding tube effectively starving him to death. Lambert had been in a persistent vegetative state following a motorcycle accident 11 years earlier. In recent years, Lambert had become the face of Euthanasia in France.

Lambert’s case made international headlines for two reasons: The first is that while Catholic teaching does allow for patients to forego “extraordinary life-sustaining treatment” which would keep them alive and prolong their suffering, in Lambert’s case, the withdrawn treatment was a simple feeding tube and water. Lambert’s condition was stable, meaning he was nowhere near death before the removal of his water and feeding tube.

The second reason the Lambert case made such a stir was that his family was divided over the course of action to take. His wife was in favor of allowing Lambert to die, insisting that he would not want to be kept alive, while his parents fought for the entire 11 years to keep their son alive.

Lambert’s situation was further complicated after video had circulated on social media of the quadriplegic lying in his hospital bed with his eyes open and appearing to respond to his environment and those around him. One newspaper article was titled “Vincent Lambert Cries After Being Told He Will Be Euthanized.” Some of his doctors contested that the video was “misleading” and was not an accurate representation of his cognitive abilities.

* Jesuis Vincent Lambert is French for “I am Vincent Lambert”
For Further Discussion

1. When clear directions by the patient are not available, who do you think should be allowed to make important medical decisions for them? Why?

2. Does anyone in your family have advanced directives? Who could you ask?

3. This year’s USCCB Respect Life Theme is “Christ Our Hope: In Every Season of Life.” Discuss the many ways we can bring hope to those around us in the various difficult seasons of their lives.

4. Would you feel more comfortable having a trusted loved-one make medical decisions for you or having your doctors follow your written instructions?

5. As technologies and treatments continue to improve, more and more patients are emerging from situations that once seemed hopeless. How should families and doctors know when to have extraordinary hope and when to allow the natural process of death to occur?

Advanced Directives

Advanced Directives are specific instructions adults can give while still healthy regarding the type of care they would like to receive in the event they are incapacitated.

Advanced directives outline what life-sustaining treatments they would receive in different scenarios as well as who can make decisions for them.
Vocabulary

Match the vocabulary words from the reading about Vincent Lambert to the correct definition below. Instead of looking up the meaning of the word right away, re-read the section containing the word and see if you can decipher the definition from context.

1 _____ Persistent
2 _____ Euthanasia
3 _____ Extraordinary
4 _____ Quadriplegic
5 _____ Cognitive
6 _____ Incapacitated

a. Related to the mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses
b. Continuing firmly or obstinately in a course of action in spite of difficulty or opposition
c. Deprived of strength or power; debilitated. Prevented from functioning in a normal way
d. Unusually great, specially employed
e. The painless killing of a patient suffering from an incurable and painful disease or in an irreversible coma
f. A person affected by or relating to paralysis of all four limbs
Respect Life

"Christ Our Hope: In Every Season Of Life"

Help direct the person in need to a local resource or ministry that can share Christ’s love and bring hope. The websites are provided to help you get the answers and for you to learn more.

Jillian finds herself pregnant unexpectedly. She wonders how she could ever care for a baby while completing college.

George becomes ill and his children live too far away or cannot help him. His wife has passed. He is starting to feel lonely and depressed.

Miguel and María are not citizens and are concerned about deportation. They are active in their parish and community, and are trying to do things the legal way. Their Spanish is rough and they feel living in Mexico would be more “foreign” than living in the U.S.

Shortly after Frank lost his job, his family suffered the traumatic loss of their home in a fire. He feels like a failure for not being able to support his family.

Jill finds herself pregnant unexpectedly. She wonders how she could care for a baby while completing college.

George becomes ill and his children live too far away or cannot help him. His wife has passed. He is starting to feel lonely and depressed.

Miguel and María are not citizens and are concerned about deportation. They are active in their parish and community, and are trying to do things the legal way. Their Spanish is rough and they feel living in Mexico would be more “foreign” than living in the U.S.

Jim and Susan have been having problems in their marriage. Just yesterday, Jim used “The D-word” for the first time.

Anne doesn’t want to leave her children guessing about what she would want in the event she is near death and unable to communicate with her doctors.

After losing her best friend, Payton lost interest in soccer and even stopped hanging out with her friends. Her parents have noticed and have begun to worry.

Marlene loved her parish and used to be very active. Recently, she has spent weeks in the hospital battling infection. She misses parish life.

WEB SITES
- Bella Medical Clinic, Oshkosh
  www.bellamedicalclinic.org
- Thompson Center on Lourdes, Appleton
  www.thetcol.org
- Catholic Charities, Green Bay
  www.newcatholiccharities.org
- Knights of Columbus, your local parish
  www.kofc.org
- Retrouvaille, various locations
  www.helpourmarriage.org
- Fox Valley Advanced Planning Partnership, Appleton
  www.fvacpp.org
- Center for Grieving Children, Appleton
  www.bgclubfoxvalley.org/center-for-grieving-children
- Extraordinary Ministers of Communion,
  Your local parish,
  www.stpiusappleton.org/sites/default/files/2018-02/20180204B.pdf (Read “visit the sick” on page 4)
Supplemental YouTube video from EWTN News on Vincent Lambert:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=2emeYMSoXiY
(Length: 4:12)

Reading for the Teacher: “Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Healthcare”
(Read Here) www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/
health-care/upload/Ethical-Religious-Directives-Catholic-Health-Care-

To expand on the activity matching people to resources:
• Ask students to find risk factors or warning signs in the various websites they explore.
• Ask what else students learned about the various ministries and programs beyond what they needed to know to match them correctly.
• Role-play conversations they might have with people in need or to practice directing them to these resources.
• Invite someone as a guest speaker from one of the ministries or organizations.

To further expand on the USCCB Respect Life Theme: visit their website at www.usccb.org/about/pro-life-activities/respect-life-program