

through tissue donation. Sign up today to become an organ and tissue donor at <http://www.donatelifecalifornia.org/>

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20-year-old David Perez, was critically injured in an automobile accident on December 12, 2005 in Victorville, CA. David clung to life for five days and died December 17, at Arrowhead Regional Medical Center.

Because he had registered as an organ/tissue donor while getting his driver's license just a month before his death, seven people directly benefited from David's decision.

The only certain thing in life is that life will end. Death is certain, death is inevitable. Every day brings proof that you and I will die. Walking among us in the daily dance of life, death gives no announcement of his coming.

People die everywhere: in bed, on the street, in hospitals, and in their easy chairs.

People die at every age of life. Young as well as old, babies as well as grandparents, healthy as well as sick, no year of life is spared. If you want striking proof of this, read the obituary notices in any city newspaper.

Death, then, is a fact. In reality, it is the only fact of life. It is not always a happy or

cheerful thought. Nevertheless, we must face it bravely and intelligently. We talk of death, we think of death, not with the idea of frightening ourselves, not with any morbid idea of looking at something gloomy just for the sake of being gloomy. No, we face it, as we want to face all facts and realities.

Organ donation is one way of benefitting others after we have met death. According to Donate Life California, a nonprofit Organ and Tissue Donor Registry dedicated to saving the lives of thousands of Californians awaiting life-saving transplants, “Right now more than 18,000 Californians wait for an organ transplant. That’s nearly 20 percent of those waiting across our country. Tragically, one third of them will die - waiting.”

What is the position of the Catholic Church on organ donation for the purpose of transplant? What moral principles are involved? What would motivate one to be an organ donor?

Pope John Paul II sums up the position of the Church in these words: The Gospel of life is to be celebrated above all in daily living, which should be filled with self-giving love for others. . . . Over and above such outstanding moments, there is an everyday heroism, made up of gestures of sharing, big or 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 of life

itself to the sick who sometimes have no other hope (*Evangelium Vitae*, no. 86).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, "Organ transplants are not morally acceptable if the donor or those who legitimately speak for him have not given their informed consent. Organ transplants conform with the moral law and can be meritorious if the physical and psychological dangers and risks incurred by the donor are proportionate to the good sought for the recipient. It is morally inadmissible directly to bring about the disabling mutilation or death of a human being, even in order to delay the death of other persons" (No. 2296).

There are many kinds of organ transplants. The types relevant to the question are inter vivos and postmortem (cadaver) transplants. Inter vivos transplants refer to those that take place among the living. They would include a donation such as bone marrow. Postmortem transplants refer to donations given after death. These donations typically involve an organ necessary for sustaining life. These would include donations of vital organs such as a heart, lung, liver, or kidney.

Since the time of Pope Pius XII, the Church has explicitly stated that both types of transplants are licit, based upon the principle of fraternal charity, but only when certain requirements are met. Remembering that the end does not justify the means, these requirements include:

1. The necessity of informed consent legitimately given by the donor or one who speaks for him.

2. The physical and psychological risks incurred by the donor must be proportionate to the good sought for the recipient. The donor must be aware of these risks and the proportionate good.

3. To destroy the healthy functioning or intrinsic beauty of one's body, even to delay death of another, is morally wrong.

Everyone, regardless of their age or health condition is urged to sign up on the Donate Life California Registry, because at the time of death, medical professionals will determine a person's eligibility to become an organ and tissue donor. Even cancer patients can potentially donate, and there are cases of organ donors in their mid-seventies and older.

David's step-father, Larry Kinney, speaking for himself and David's mother Terri, said, "His death has given others a chance to live. We really hope others will look into this donor program, David made it his wish to be a donor and he is a hero. This is an opportunity; no matter who you are, you will be a hero."

You have the power to donate life. Your generosity can save up to eight lives through organ donation and enhance another 50