The Archbishop of Paris, Michael Aupetit, has asked priests of his archdiocese to offer Mass for the intention of Vincent Lambert, the 42 year-old quadriplegic man nearing death in a French hospital after doctors withdrew food and water on Sunday.

“Dear brothers,” the archbishop wrote July 9, “it is now the time for contemplation, for compassion, and for prayer for Mr. Vincent Lambert. Either today or tomorrow I suggest that you celebrate Mass for his intention and entrusting him to the Lord, the God of mercy. This intention can also be extended to all of his relatives.”

Aupetit’s request to the clergy of Paris comes three days after doctors withdrew water and feeding tubes from Lambert on Sunday. Since then, Lambert has been under what his doctors are calling “profound and continuous sedation.”

Several media outlets have reported the Lambert “wept” when his family informed him of the doctors’ intentions.

Lambert’s parents have said that his death is now inevitable and the withdrawal of food and water has produced “medically irreversible” consequences.

“It’s murder in disguise, it’s euthanasia,” Lambert’s father told French media on Monday.
Euthanasia is illegal in France. However, a 2005 law allows physicians to refrain from using “disproportionate” treatments “with no other effect than maintaining life artificially.”

In 2015, the European Court of Human Rights approved the removal of Lambert’s life support, arguing in a 12-5 decision that the choice to stop his intravenous feeding did not violate European rights laws.

Vincent Lambert, 42, has been a quadriplegic and severely disabled for more than 10 years, after he sustained severe head injuries in a 2008 traffic accident.

Since then, Lambert has been at the center of a protracted court battle over whether to have his food and hydration removed. Lambert’s wife and six of his eight siblings have supported the removal of life support, while his parents, reported to be devout Catholics, have fought against it. His wife said Lambert had told her he would not want to be kept alive if in a “vegetative state,” but this was never put in writing.

On June 28, The Court of Cassation ruled that a lower court did not have the legal competence to order his feeding tubes be reinserted. On July 2, doctors informed Lambert’s family via email that they would withdraw food and water.

Archbishop Aupetit has consistently advocated for Lambert and his family. In May, the archbishop compared Lamberts case to that of former F1 racing champion Michael Schumacher, who sustained similar injuries to Lambert after a skiing accident in 2013.

“Despite the celebrity of this Formula 1 champion, the media have not seized his medical case and he can enjoy highly specialized care in a private environment,” Aupetit said.

“Today there is a very clear choice facing civilization: either we consider human beings as functional robots that can be eliminated or scrapped when they are no longer useful, or we consider that the essence of humanity is based, not on the utility of a life, but on the quality of relationships between people which witness to love.”

Also on July 9, Pope Francis tweeted a prayer in apparent reference to Lambert’s case.

“We pray for the sick who are abandoned and left to die,” the pope wrote. “A society is human if it protects life, every life, from its beginning to its natural end, with which is worthy to live or who is not.”

“Doctors should serve life, not take it away.”