



A PASTORAL LETTER

Our Witness to the Value of Human Life

To be read at all Masses on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity

30th May 2021

On Trinity Sunday, the Gospel reminds us that Christ commissioned His Church to call every human being to share nothing less than the life of the Holy Trinity.ⁱ His commission was to baptise all the nations *“In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to observe all the commands I gave you”*.ⁱⁱ

There is a commandment that God wrote into our hearts from the beginning: *“You shall not kill.”* This command has guided our society from the start and favoured the development of a civilisation that protects the most vulnerable. The inheritance of Judeo-Christian teaching has inspired people to the most outstanding care and compassion for the sick and the suffering. During these past fourteen months, we have witnessed these same values at work in the mobilisation of society and countless heroic acts to protect the most vulnerable.

And yet, a Bill was quietly introduced into Parliament last Wednesday, which seems the more sinister, in seeking to remove legal protections from some of the most vulnerable members of society. A mere six years after Parliament overwhelmingly rejected legalisation for assisted suicide citing the need to protect the vulnerable, we are faced with a new attempt to make those who have always been ‘care-givers’ into ‘life-takers.’ The attempt to change the law has been introduced by the Chair of what was formerly the *Voluntary Euthanasia Society*, removing any doubt as to the ultimate purpose.

I write to alert you to the struggle which lies ahead in defence of the value of human life and the moral vision which has long underpinned the care of the sick. However limited the first proposals may be, a moral line would be crossed if those in our medical and nursing professions are called to assist in killing patients; and a long-standing legal shield is removed from the sick, the aged and those nearing the end of their lives.

This change to the law will be proposed on grounds of compassion in order to alleviate human suffering. All of us are united in wishing to see the relief of human suffering. In imitation of Christ Himself, the Church has always lived a preferential love for the sick and suffering. It was the Church which founded the first hospitals and hospices. However, where the Euthanasia lobby differs from the care Christianity has always inspired, is by proposing killing as means to end suffering.

The parliamentary battle over the issue is expected in the Autumn. We cannot be complacent over what is at stake should the softening of opposition in government and parliament and the proactive campaigning in the media succeed in lulling consciences. If there were any doubt about the consequences, we have only to look at what has happened elsewhere. Even though definite legal safeguards were initially guaranteed, countries that compromised the sanctity of human life in this way have seen euthanasia and assisted suicide extended to ever new groups. These now include those suffering from mental illness and even children.

On Monday, I issued an appeal to everyone who values the sanctity of human life and wants the best care and support for the sick and the dying, to oppose this latest proposal to force our society across the line from caring to killing. May we be ready in the name of the Most Holy Trinity to raise our prayers and voices in witness to value of every human life and for the protection of those who are most vulnerable. We do so with the assurance given in the Gospel today, *“Know I am with you always; yes, to the end of time”*.ⁱⁱⁱ

Entrusting our witness to the value of human life and our commitment to the care of the dying to the prayers of Saint Joseph,

+ Mark

Bishop of Shrewsbury

ⁱ Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church no. 735

ⁱⁱ Mt. 28: 20

ⁱⁱⁱ Mt. 28:20