



BISHOP MARCUS' MESSAGE TO THE FAITHFUL OF THE DIOCESE REGARDING THE RECENT PASSAGE THROUGH PARLIAMENT OF PROPOSED LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ came that we might have life and have it abundantlyⁱ.

Within just a few days of each other, possibly the most morally bleak in our nation's recent history, the House of Commons passed legislation that we might have death: the possibility of death to an unborn child right up to the moment of its birth and the possibility of clinically assisted death to someone at the most vulnerable point of their lives, both without any criminal sanction.

Behind late term abortions lies a brutal reality which, if the public of our nation were to see and understand in all its graphic detail, would be repulsed at the thought of it. The awful truth is that many do not want to know about that reality, and it is a horror which much of the mainstream media seems reluctant to unmask. The care of pregnant women who are vulnerable is of course our moral duty, but this does not oblige the removal of legal protections and the loss of human rights to the unborn child.

The argument for compassionate treatment of those who are close to death and suffering unbearable pain is undoubtedly something few would contest. But the outcome of such an argument should be the provision of public resources which are poured into a country-wide system of palliative medical care and nursing, not the reallocation of funds from our National Health Service to finance a national service to assist suicide.

Although our many personal approaches and appeals made direct to Members of Parliament have planted some seeds to change and soften hearts, as is evidenced by the smaller majority which passed the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill at its third reading, it is hard to understand why the protests of so many professional associations failed to persuade that majority about the inadequate protections in the legislation.

Neither the amendment to the Crime and Policing Bill decriminalising abortion up to birth, or the proposal to legislate for state funded assisted dying, were featured in the government's manifesto; nor were they preceded by the public consultation which should accompany such momentous changes to our national legislation. Both pieces of legislation, if enacted by parliament, will only foster a growing 'culture of death'.

However, love is stronger than death. We are people of hope and our duty to defend and promote life does not end with the changing of laws.

The much-admired founder of the hospice movement, Dame Cicely Saunders, said "Suffering is only intolerable when nobody cares." This moment is a call for us to redouble our loving care for all contemplating difficult and painful choices affecting the beginningⁱⁱ or end of this earthly lifeⁱⁱⁱ. We can do this both as individuals and as a community, by continued peaceful and persuasive campaigning, by supporting those striving to develop the highest quality of palliative medicine – and especially by prayer, compassionate counsel and accompaniment of those in distress, so that all people may recognise in themselves and others a unique soul loved by God.

My heartfelt thanks go to all across our diocese who have written to their Members of Parliament and sought their support in opposing these legislative changes. We must remember that this legislative process is not yet completed. It is important therefore that we continue our efforts to contest these changes as they proceed through the House of Lords.

May our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who came that we might have life, give light and hope to our world, and strengthen our resolve to proclaim with courage and conviction His Gospel of love and life to all around us.

✠ Marcus
Bishop of Leeds

23rd June 2025

ⁱ Gospel of St John 10:10

ⁱⁱ Charities which support vulnerable pregnant women, include the Gianna Project run by Catholic Care in the Diocese of Leeds (<https://catholic-care.org.uk/services/community/gianna-baby-bank/>), and LIFE (<https://lifecharity.org.uk/>) a national organisation.

ⁱⁱⁱ St Gemma's Hospice (<https://www.st-gemma.co.uk/>)