

**ST MARY'S PARISH HALIFAX
CLARENCE HOUSE, HX1 5DH**

21st June 2025

Dear Friends,

This week, our nation crossed a sombre threshold. Parliament has passed legislation decriminalising abortion up to the moment of birth, even at 40 weeks and has advanced measures to legalise assisted suicide. These laws wound the dignity of human life, betraying the most vulnerable: the unborn, the sick, and the elderly. As your Parish Priest, I write this letter to you with a heavy heart (as this news broke after the bulletin went to print).

Naturally, we must approach these issues with compassion. Many women, of course, have faced the pain of abortion, often in desperate and difficult circumstances. Their choices now belong to the past and deserve compassion, not judgment. Our focus must be on protecting life moving forward.

As Pope St John Paul II warned in *Evangelium Vitae*, “A nation that kills its own children has no future.” How can we claim to be a just society when a child at full-term can be lawfully murdered moments before birth? When the sick and elderly are offered death as a solution to perceived suffering? Or doctors can raise the idea of suicide with adults with cognitive disabilities? Meanwhile, we now live in a country where it is a criminal offense to pray, even silently, outside an abortion clinic or to offer resources that point towards adoption services and childhood support centres. This is not compassion, it is the work of the Evil One.

Until recently, we lived in a society in which we took pride in our duties and obligations, towards others and the wider common good. Now, we only hear about the ‘right’ to choose and the other ‘rights’ I claim for myself. Rights are important but, in reality, rights have corresponding responsibilities and are never limitless.

In this case, there is no real right to choose life or death when palliative treatment and other social care options are outrageously underfunded and undervalued. Even the Health Secretary himself has admitted as much and voted against the measure on these grounds. Today, with this bill, the responsibility to care for the dying has given way to a perceived ‘right’ to die. The ‘right’ or duty to die will now supersede all other options, insofar as other options are even available to some. There has been much talk of making sure that pressure is not brought to bear upon vulnerable individuals and yet nothing has been said about the pressure that the weakest will undoubtedly now place upon themselves.

We have cause for concern these days not only with these measures, but with also with other policies which have adversely affected the poor and elderly, or which are anti-life and anti-family. The latest policy of removing funding from the aid and development budgets to spend on weapons of war is particularly heinous. Even the Minister for International Development

herself resigned in protest at this grotesque move earlier this year. We are in a dire situation where only the light of the Gospel, the fire of the Holy Spirit and the good witness of God's people can come to our aid.

What has happened in Westminster this week is nothing short of a moral outrage. Pope Benedict XVI once wrote, "A society is judged by how it treats its weakest members." By this standard, we are failing and failing miserably. Our laws increasingly silence those who defend life, targeting instead our prayers and witness. Yet, as the Body of Christ, we are not powerless in the face of this moral crisis. As your Parish Priest I urge you to respond with courage and with faith.

Pray fervently. Offer Rosaries, make Holy Hours and fast for the soul of our nation. Prayer is our first act of trust in God's mercy.

Vote with discernment. None of us can allow party loyalty to override moral clarity any longer. We must examine how each individual MP votes on life, family and truth. A politician who votes in favour of abortion or assisted suicide promotes harm, not neutrality and is underserving of our vote.

Speak boldly. In your homes, schools and workplaces; be a compassionate, truthful voice for the unborn, the disabled, the dying and the poor.

The culture of death is advancing all around us and yet Christ's light shines in darkness. Let us be that light, through prayer, action and love. Together, we can and must build a culture of life, rooted in the Gospel, that cherishes every human soul, rejects violence and places the last first.

May God help us all.

Yours in Christ

Fr J. Hilton