

RECENTLY DIED

Please pray for the eternal repose of the following:

Mrs Ann Marie Audriana Nicholls R.I.P. – The Funeral Mass will be celebrated at St Mary's on Friday 5th November at 12pm.

Mr Peter Hoole R.I.P. – The Funeral Mass will be celebrated at Holy Family on Monday 8th November at 12.30pm.

Mr Michael Oake R.I.P.



Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light
shine upon them.
May they rest in peace. Amen.
Amen.

Pray for the Sick

Holy Family: Catherine Driscoll, Kay & Paul Parris, Bernard Perry, Mary Bodman, Valentine, Collette Griffin, Vivian Miller, Brian Webster, Henry Fernandez, Hanna Marengi, Susanna, Martin, Chris Collins, Joseph Stancombe, Zaid Saffo, Peter Macpherson.

St Mary's: Fr Christopher Delaney, Bethan Williams, Jean Allen, Madison Lane, Marian Lamb, Nadasiri Ifada, Cecily Hughes, James Church, Anthony Jackson, Tom Hopkins, Margaret Griffiths, Joanne Coakley, Helen Ward, Carina Foster, Ben Foster, Maria Sullivan, Mary D'Alpa, Patricia Sadka, Mary Williams, Donald Rees, Michael McLoughlin., Jacob Callaghan.

SICK & RETIRED CLERGY FUND

Next weekend there will be a Retiring Collection after all Masses for the Sick and Retired Clergy Fund. It was not possible to make this appeal in 2020 because of the pandemic so it is even more important that we give generously this year.



CHANGE OF HOUR THIS WEEKEND

Don't forget that the clocks go back an hour this weekend!



Parish Contacts

The Priory 67 Talbot St. Canton, Cardiff

tel: (029) 20 230 492

Parishes of St. Mary's and Holy Family
new email address is: canton@rcadc.org

Canon Peter Collins

e-mail: peter.collins@rcadc.org

Deacon Professor Maurice Scanlon

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tel (029) 2021 2651

Deacon Christian Mahoney

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Monsignor Canon John Maguire

Retired Priest in Residence at Holy Family

Website: cardiffwestcatholics.org.uk

Bank details for standing orders, which are directly linked to the respective parish accounts are as follows:

Account name: Archdiocese of Cardiff

Sort code: 20-18-23 (for both)

St Mary's Acc No: 03285375

Holy Family Acc No: 63656861

St Mary's SVP contact number 07731847622.

Parish Safeguarding Reps

Mrs Ellery Hennessy (Holy Family)

Mr Jack Meggitt-Phillips (St Mary of the Angels)

Primary Headteachers:

Holy Family

Mrs Louise Mills Tel: 20565354

St. Mary's

Miss Claire Russell Tel: 2022 5680

Secondary Headteachers:

Corpus Christi

Mr Patrick Brunnock Tel: 20761893

Mary Immaculate

Mr Huw Powell Tel: 2059 3465

St David's 6th Form College

Mr Mark Leighfield Tel: 20498555

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION AND MASS FOR THE FIRST FRIDAY OF THE MONTH AT HOLY FAMILY

Next Friday 5th November there will be Mass at 7pm in Holy Family Church for the First Friday of the month. Mass will be preceded by the Sacrament of Reconciliation from 6pm to 6.45pm. This will be a regular monthly feature of our services from now on.

Holy Family & St Mary of the Angels

Keyston Rd, Fairwater CF5 3NP Kings Rd, Canton CF11 9BX
31st October - 7th November 2021 Solemnity of All Saints (Cycle B)

Readings for the Solemnity of All Saints

Apocalypse 7:2-4, 9-14.

This vision describes the scene leading up to the final destruction of the world which follows the opening of the 'Seventh Seal'. The dramatic imagery depicts an apocalyptic annihilation of all that does not accord with God's providential grace. Before the final destruction, the 'Elect', who have passed through persecution, must be gathered into the Kingdom. They have suffered martyrdom for the sake of the Lamb and will be brought into the 'Tent' (the presence) of the Lord. Drawing on strands from a number of sources in the Old Testament, the image of the Lamb should actually be interpreted in terms of the Shepherd Messiah. "I saw a huge number, impossible to count, of people from every nation, race, tribe and language; they were standing in front of the throne and in front of the Lamb, dressed in white robes and holding palms in their hands."

"Amen. Praise and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and strength to our God for ever and ever. Amen."

"These are the people who have been through the great persecution, and they have washed their robes white again in the blood of the Lamb."

Psalm 23.

Such are the men who seek your face, O Lord.

I John 3:1-3.

Even though we rightly declare that the nature of God is transcendent and ultimately incommunicable, God nonetheless addresses us as his children who share something of his identity. At the end of time, we will be granted a glimpse of the reality of the Godhead. We shall see him as he really is. The very contemplation of God is a transformative experience. Through the Incarnation and Redemption, God has communicated with us fully. The fullness of the Godhead has been revealed. "Think of the love that the Father has lavished on us, by letting us be called God's children; and that is what we are."

Alleluia. Alleluia!

Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest, says the Lord.

Alleluia!

Matthew 5:1-12.

We could properly describe the Sermon of the Mount as Christ's manifesto. Matthew is the great gatherer of material and he structures his account into five great discourses. As we listen to the Beatitudes we are meant to see Christ 'enthroned' upon the mountain, a teacher like Moses of old. The Sermon on the Mount constitutes the longest of the discourses and it presents the minimal requirements for access to the Kingdom. All Christians must strive to conduct themselves in accord with the content of this teaching. We should properly translate the beginning of each saying with the phrase 'how blessed' (rather than 'how happy') for the original wording denotes a peace and contentment that can only be derived from God himself. Each of the eight sayings are bracketed with blessings, beginnings and endings. Matthew crafts a reversal of worldly values which is reminiscent of the expressions deployed by the prophet Zephaniah. The virtues and values of the Kingdom are to be embraced in the midst of persecution, so there is nothing timid or passive here. The Christian will need to possess formidable strength and tenacity, but without any hint of aggression.

"Blessed are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven."

Holy Family Masses

Sunday: Solemnity of All Saints (31st October)

6pm Vigil Mass For the People of the Parishes

11am Terry Donovan

Tuesday: All Souls (2nd November)

9.30 Intentions of the Holy Father

7pm November Dead List

Thursday: (4th November)

9.30am

Friday: (5th November)

6.00-6.45pm Sacrament of Reconciliation

7pm Mass for the First Friday of the Month

Sunday: 32nd Sunday of Ordinary Time (7th Nov.)

6pm Vigil Mass November Dead List

11am Bob Bastian/Bella & Lynn's Intentions

St Mary's Masses

Sunday: Solemnity of All Saints (31st October)

10am Stan & Frances Trigg

12pm Will Johnson (1st Anniversary)

6pm Phyllis Shannon RIP

Monday: Weekday in Ordinary Time (1st Nov.)

9.30am Kathleen Lewis

Tuesday: All Souls (2nd November)

9.30am Maria & David Lewis

12.15pm November Dead List

Wednesday: Weekday in Ordinary Time (3rd Nov.)

9.30am Bob Partridge RIP

Thursday: St Charles Borromeo, Bishop (4th Nov.)

7-8pm Adoration & Benediction

Friday: Weekday in Ordinary Time (5th Nov.)

9.30am S Sueref

12pm Funeral Mass for Mrs Ann Marie Audriana Nicholls

Saturday: St Illtud, Abbot (6th November)

2pm Celebration of First Holy Communion

Sunday: 32nd Sunday of Ordinary Time (7th Nov.)

10am Jimmy & Laurie Tobin

12pm November Dead List

1.30pm Sacrament of Baptism

6pm Eddie McCarthy

Dependent upon my timetable, the Angelus and Prayer During the Day will be live-streamed at 12pm and Evening Prayer live-streamed at 7pm from Monday to Friday.

Confessions will be celebrated in children's liturgy room on Saturday from 10am to 11am. Access via the Church.

FEASTS OF THE WEEK

Thursday 4th November – Memoria: St Charles Borromeo, Bishop.



St Charles was born into a wealthy aristocratic family in 1538 at the Castle of Arona on the banks of Lake Maggiore. He studied first at Milan and then at the University of Pavia where he obtained doctorates in civil and canon law in 1559. Charles was universally recognised for his spiritual devotion and for his intelligence. He was also diligent, possessing an enormous capacity for hard work. His Mother belonged to the powerful Medici family. His uncle was Cardinal de Medici who was elected as Pope Pius IV in the same year that Charles defended his two doctoral theses. Pius IV called his nephew to Rome and bestowed upon him the Red Hat of a Cardinal. Charles was not yet a priest and had merely received the clerical tonsure at the age of twelve.

The Pope conferred many honours upon his nephew and even appointed him as Archbishop of Milan at the tender age of twenty-two. Having appointed Charles to Milan, the Pope nonetheless insisted that Charles remain in Rome to assist him. Charles had to delegate the government of his diocese to deputies. Charles began to work diligently for the good of the Church, founding the Pontifical Academy for Literature. Charles became what we would now describe as the Secretary of State – effectively Papal Prime Minister. Charles was instrumental in re-convening the Ecumenical Council of Trent for what would be its final session in 1562. He was proactive in applying the teachings of the Council and was pivotal in drafting the text of what would become the Roman Catechism (Catechism of the Council of Trent).

Charles was eventually ordained to the priesthood and consecrated as a bishop in 1564. In 1565 he attended the deathbed of his uncle Pius IV. With the election of Pius V to the Papacy, Charles was enabled to take up residence in his diocese. Charles proved to be a great Pastor of his diocese: he conducted visitations, reformed the organisation of the diocese, improved the education of the clergy, sponsored renewal of religious orders and congregations, sponsored widespread catechesis of children. We should note how supportive he was of the then newly established English College at Douai, the seminary established to prepare priests for the English and Welsh Mission in the post-reformation environment. We should take particular note of the fact that the Cardinal Archbishop of Milan chose a Welshman as his personal Confessor, Rev Dr Griffith Roberts. He ministered to his people personally in the midst of the famine of 1570 and in the midst of the plague in 1576. In 1580 he was visited by a group of young Englishmen, priests who were making their back to England. Two of these were Ralph Sherwin and Edmund Campion who would soon be martyred in their homeland.

Charles Borromeo laboured for the faith in the troubled times of his age. He died on the 3rd November 1584, worn out by his efforts at the age of just 46. His influence on the Counter-Reformation ranks alongside the work of St Ignatius Loyola and St Philip Neri. He was canonised in 1610.

Saturday 6th November – Memoria: St Illtud, Abbot.

We have no definite date for the birth of St Illtud (Illtyd/Hildutus) but we know he died in the early sixth century. He is acknowledged and honoured as founder and Abbot of the Monastery located in the Vale of Glamorgan that we identify as Llanillud Fawr (Llantwit Major). The Life of St Samson claims that Illtud was a disciple of Germanus of Auxerre. Illtud is said to have been the most learned Briton of his age. The earliest extant manuscript describing the life of Illtud only dates from 1140 – much later than his actual lifetime – and is unreliable in most of its details.



REFERENCE FOR CANDIDATES FOR FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

*** N.B. FIRST HOLY COMMUNION MASS FOR ST MARY OF THE ANGELS WILL BE CELEBRATED ON SATURDAY 6TH NOVEMBER AT 2.00 PM.

*** N.B. FIRST HOLY COMMUNION MASS FOR HOLY FAMILY WILL BE CELEBRATED ON SATURDAY 13TH NOVEMBER AT 2.00 PM.



NOVEMBER DEAD LIST ENVELOPES – THE MONTH OF THE HOLY SOULS

*** NOVEMBER DEAD LIST ENVELOPES.

The month of November commences with the celebration of the Solemnity of All Saints followed by the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed. November also brings us to Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday when we commemorate the Fallen of the Wars. November is traditionally dedicated as a month of particular remembrance for all our departed relatives together with all the forgotten souls. The last of the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy is to bury the dead and the last of the Seven Spiritual Works of Mercy is to pray for the living and the dead. The November Dead List Envelopes will be available from this Sunday. Place your own personal list of the faithful departed in the envelope together with your stipend offering for return before the 1st November. A sequence of Masses will be offered during November for those named on the lists.

THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS 2023

Pope Francis has called 'FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH: COMMUNION, PARTICIPATION AND MISSION.'

The process of consultation was meant to commence next Sunday, World Mission Sunday. Due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic over recent months, along with the vast majority of dioceses we will launch the consultation on the First Sunday of Advent. Reflections and submissions will be gathered by the end of February. It is hoped that the preliminary period of preparation would present two concrete actions that could be addressed between the beginning of Lent and the conclusion of Eastertide, the Solemnity of Pentecost. Let us consciously pray for the Universal Church and for our Archdiocesan Family as we embark on this journey. Let us pray that our two Parish Communities will respond fruitfully to the invitation set before us by the Holy Father.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THOSE WHO WERE CONFIRMED ON SATURDAY

Over twenty of our young parishioners celebrated their reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation on Saturday afternoon. Due to pandemic disruptions, Archbishop George was unable to conduct the celebration in the summer of 2020, nor was he able to visit us during the summer of 2021. It was a privilege for me to celebrate the sacrament with our young people having been delegated permission by the Archbishop. It is only through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that we can bring our faith to its maturity.



REPLENISHING THE TEAM OF READERS AT ST MARY'S

I am most grateful to Anji Minoli for her efforts in contacting those parishioners who were already on the Reading Rota in order to structure provision for the coming months. Anji is also looking to recruit new volunteers for the Rota as we need more coverage for all Masses at St Mary of the Angels. A number of newcomers have already come forward. If you would like to contribute to the Ministry of the Word then please contact Anji at zampetto1215@gmail.com

RE-ESTABLISHING AND REPLENISHING THE TEAM OF WELCOMERS IN BOTH PARISHES

During the past eighteen months our cohort of volunteer stewards attended to our compliance with COVID Protocols but also provided a warm welcome to parishioners as they arrived for Mass. Now that the stewards are no longer operational, we need to re-establish and replenish teams of welcomers. There are a number of practicalities that require attention: providing a warm welcome together with any necessary directions; distributing and collecting hymnals and missals (as and when this becomes possible); conducting the offertory collection (the collection baskets/boxes will soon be carried and presented to people in the benches) and overseeing any retiring collection. If you are willing to participate in this important ministry then please send a message to the parish email.

Archdiocese of Cardiff "The God Who Speaks": Scripture Study Day

The next Scripture Study Day will be given on Saturday, November 6th from 11am-12.30pm. **On November 6th, Deacon Philip Manghan will be giving a talk on "The Gospel of St. Luke"**. Deacon Philip hails from St. Mary's Bridgend. He will be familiar to many people for his knowledge of the Scriptures and his friendly and engaging speaking style. He will bring our study of the four Gospels to an excellent end. Details of the programme of talks for the year can be found on the Archdiocesan website <https://rcadc.org/events>.

You can access the talks on the day via Zoom at: <http://tinyurl.com/RCADCscripture>

Meeting ID 863 9669 5727 **Passcode: 068790**

Contacts for enquiries: Madeleine Walters at madeleine.walters@rcadc.org or Kate Duffin at kate.duffin@hotmail.co.uk

SICK AND RETIRED CLERGY FUND APPEAL NEXT WEEKEND 6-7th NOVEMBER

The pandemic has shown how important priests are in supporting parish communities during a crisis. But just as we have relied on priests during the pandemic, so they rely on us in their retirement. The Sick and Retired Clergy Fund appeal is our opportunity to say thank you.

While priests and parish volunteers have responded valiantly to the COVID-19 crisis our usual fundraising activity has been curtailed. The Sick and Retired Clergy Fund appeal did not run in 2020 because of the pandemic. We are therefore launching the appeal this year in the knowledge that it is *doubly* important.

Parish priests generally retire from the administrative burdens of parish life at the age of 75, often having given 40-50 years of service to their community. This is well beyond the retirement age of most lay people. As they live independently, retired priests support themselves with the help of the Sick and Retired Clergy Fund.

The Fund ensures that priests enjoy a dignified retirement. It supports independent living providing them with a suitable home alongside other services. Above all, it makes certain that their social and health care needs are met. Our priests rely on the Fund having devoted their lives to furthering the mission of the Church and bringing people closer to Christ.

No doubt you will recognise the handsome face on the Gift Aid envelopes this year; Fr John has found a new calling as the Sick and Retired Clergy Fund 'poster boy.' He is certainly a good advertisement for our retired clergy being able to enjoy a full and active retirement.

If you would like to support the Sick and Retired Clergy Fund appeal you can find gift aid envelopes at the back of both churches. Alternatively, you can give online at www.rcadc.org/donations.

Message from Archbishop George

Archbishop George writes:

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Once again, I commend to your generosity the annual appeal for the support of the sick and retired priests of the Archdiocese of Cardiff. I know how grateful you are for the ministry of your priests over the years. This collection is an opportunity to thank them in a practical way for their years of dedicated service to the people in their care. As always, I am grateful for the support, encouragement and love shown to our priests.

Please keep us all in your prayers.

+ George Stack

Archbishop of Cardiff & Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Menevia

FINANCE & PROPERTY

Parish Offertory Collection at St Mary's:

24th October - Gift aid £20.50 Loose £449.04

World Mission Sunday - £319.06

St Mary's Standing Orders per week amount to £600.00 of which 90% is gift aided.

Parish Offertory Collection at Holy Family:

24th October - Gift aid £336.00 Loose £245.58

World Mission Sunday - £141.36

Holy Family Standing Orders per week amount to £250.00 of which 95% is gift aided.

BANK DETAILS FOR STANDING ORDERS

Bank details for standing orders, which are directly linked to the respective parish accounts are as follows:

Account name: Archdiocese of Cardiff

Sort code: 20-18-23 (for both)

St Mary's Acc No: 03285375

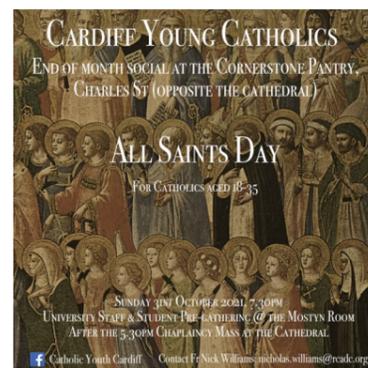
Holy Family Acc No: 63656861

NEW ELECTRONIC DONATION STATION AT ST MARY'S

Our new electronic donation station is now operational at St Mary of the Angels. It is currently located within the entrance porch. The display screen offers clear instructions for use. You can make a donation securely either by the contactless method or by inserting your card and using your PIN.

BIBLE ALIVE NOVEMBER EDITION

The monthly 'Bible Alive' magazine provides daily meditations on the Gospel readings together with reflections on any feasts. Each edition also contains a few articles on spiritual themes. The cost is £3 per copy.



A NOTE FROM DEACON MAURICE ST VINCENT'S COMMUNITY CENTRE, ELY BRIDGE



I'm very pleased to report that the refurbishment and refitting of the former St Clare's Church is now complete with major financial support from the SVP and the Welsh Assembly via its Communities and Facilities Programme. Henceforth it will be known as St Vincent's Community Centre, Ely Bridge and the SVP have appointed a manager, Nathan Harding, who took up his new role a few weeks ago. There will be an official opening by Archbishop George at the end of November. We will hold a meeting of volunteers at St Vincent's in the near future to discuss things further. If you think you may be able to help in any way as a volunteer in this exciting new venture, please contact Deacon Maurice: mfscanlon@hotmail.co.uk or 07747038274

APPEAL FOR BAGS FOR LIFE

Reaching Out are asking for your assistance! They are in need of large, strong Bags for Life in order to deliver food parcels. Do you have any that are surplus to requirements? If so, would you please bring them to either church and they will be passed on to the appropriate person. Many thanks.



FINANCIAL UPDATE

*** OUR PARISHES, IN LINE WITH THE PATTERN EXPERIENCED IN ALL PARISHES ACROSS THE ARCHDIOCESE, HAVE EXPERIENCED A 40% LOSS OF INCOME OVER THE MONTHS SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE PANDEMIC IN THE SPRING OF 2020. DURING THE FIRST LOCK-DOWN, THE LOSS OF INCOME WAS IN THE REGION OF 70%. FOLLOWING FURTHER CONSULTATION WITH BOTH PARISH COUNCILS, I WILL SOON PRESENT A DETAILED ANALYSIS OF OUR FINANCIAL SITUATION, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE CONTEXT OF SOME ESSENTIAL WORKS AND POTENTIAL PROJECTS.

DEFIBRILLATOR TRAINING

Please remember that you can put your name down for training whether you are a parishioner of Holy Family or St Mary's. We are in the process of arranging training at both parishes in November with a parishioner who is qualified to deliver such training. Contact canton@rcadc.org.

COP 26 GLASGOW – THE UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CLIMATE CHANGE

The Holy Father Pope Francis was the contributor to ‘Thought for the Day’ within the Today Programme on Radio 4 on Friday morning. Although His Holiness will not be attending the Glasgow Conference in person, he will be sending a major address to the assembly. The Holy See’ delegation will be led by the Secretary of State.

The Bishops’ Conference, through CAFOD (our national Catholic agency for overseas development), are asking that we pray for the leaders who will soon gather in Glasgow for COP 26. We are asked to pray for the most positive outcomes on behalf of the people of our planet who are most at risk from the devastating effects of major climate change.

In his Encyclical Letter ‘Laudato Si’ (*14), Pope Francis states the following: “I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affects us all.”

COP 26 is the United Nations climate change conference being held in Glasgow between the 31st October and the 12th November. It will be attended by leaders from over 200 countries to discuss climate change and how to tackle the global ecological crisis. The conference follows on from a series of summits, including the Paris climate talks in 2015, where countries pledged to work together to keep the global temperature rise below 1.5 degrees centigrade (i.e. above pre-industrial levels). If we exceed this threshold, millions of the most vulnerable people in our communities at home and abroad will be at risk of the devastating effects of climate change.

For more information visit: cafod.org.uk/cop26

A Prayer for the COP 26 Climate Talks.

Loving God, we praise your name with all you have created. You are present in the fabric of the whole universe, and in the smallest of creatures. We acknowledge the responsibilities you have placed upon us as stewards of creation. May the Holy Spirit inspire all political leaders at COP 26 as they seek to embrace the changes needed to foster a more sustainable society. Instil in them (and in us) the courage and gentleness to implement fairer solutions for the poorest and most vulnerable, and to commit their nations to the care of OUR COMMON HOME. We ask this through Our Lord Jesus Christ your Son. Amen.



A LETTER FROM BISHOP JOHN SHERRINGTON TO FELLOW BISHOPS REGARDING THE DANGERS POSED BY BARONESS MEACHER’S ‘ASSISTED DYING BILL 2021’

Bishop Sherrington is an Auxiliary Bishop in the Archdiocese of Westminster and is a Moral Theologian. In the next few weeks, we face an unprecedented attack on the sanctity of life with Baroness Meacher’s ‘Assisted Dying Bill 2021’ which passed its Second Reading in the House of Lords on Friday 22nd October. The term ‘Assisted Dying’ is euphemistic, the truth is that the bill seeks to introduce Assisted Suicide. If legalised, this Bill would allow a terminally adult, with less than six months to live, to be assisted in committing suicide.

The context of the debate is fundamentally different from the Marris Bill in 2015. Dignity in Dying are running a vigorous campaign, which is highly mobilised. They have some national papers on side and are using strong, personal and emotional narratives to win hearts and minds. They also have a high presence on social media and are encouraging their supporters to write to Peers. Those in favour of the Bill are using language to confuse the issue and call it a compassionate and caring approach to obscure the actual reality and consequences of such legislation. As Pope Francis has said, ‘Physician-assisted suicide is part of a “throwaway culture” that offers a “false compassion” and treats a human person as a problem ... True compassion does not marginalize anyone, nor does it humiliate and exclude – much less considers the disappearance of a person as a good thing.’ He criticised ‘those who hide behind an alleged compassion to justify and approve the death of a patient.’

We continue to argue for good palliative care and its important values, including spiritual ones, which are part of this approach. However, this language is being manipulated by Dignity in Dying. Importantly, at this stage we need to argue the dangers of the introduction of Assisted Suicide, which includes the safety of people who are vulnerable due to external pressures, and later liberalisation of the law which is evidenced by other countries which have introduced Assisted Suicide. Many voices from the world of disability-rights and other allies are also very fearful and fighting this bill. The Bill would also fundamentally change the relationship between the Healthcare Professionals and the Patient from treatment and care to providing the lethal means to commit suicide.

It is possible that the Bill will pass to Committee Stage without a vote in and be returned to the Lords for Third Reading and then, if passed, be sent to the Commons. There will be pressure on the Government to provide time for this.

To prepare for these events, I ask your engagement and that of your dioceses over these next weeks. First, to ask you to call people to pray that the Bill will be defeated. Second, to ask that people write to the Peers from their personal experience and share stories which will argue the reasons for opposing the Bill as well as narrate the importance of precious time during the final stages of life. Healthcare and legal professionals should write giving reasons why they oppose the Bill. Peers engage with personal correspondence and not to campaigns. Third, to ask parishioners to engage and share stories and reasons against the Bill on social media.

In this way, the Church will be a prophetic voice: a voice of clarity and truth amidst the great confusion around this bill.

Even though the Bill has passed its Second Reading in the House of Lords. I still believe it would be beneficial for parishioners to contact individual peers, to hopefully express their opposition to any proposal to legalise assisted suicide. As previously indicated in the advice received from the Bishops’ Conference, such correspondence will have a greater impact if it communicates personal experience of the moral issues that are at stake.

BRIEFING.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH REMAINS OPPOSED TO ANY FORM OF ASSISTED SUICIDE. IT IS A CRIME AGAINST HUMAN LIFE, AND WE CANNOT DIRECTLY CHOOSE TO TAKE THE LIFE OF ANOTHER, EVEN IF THEY REQUEST IT.

We must scrutinise and continue to challenge this proposed legislation in the months ahead. We must reaffirm our support for high quality end-of-life care, which includes spiritual and pastoral support for the one who is dying and their family.

SOME REFLECTIONS FROM THE PROPHETIC VOICE OF POPE ST JOHN PAUL II THAT ARE RELEVANT TO THE DEBATE ON ASSISTED SUICIDE

PROTECTING THE MOST VULNERABLE. Such proposed legislation arrives at a time when we have a growing elderly population, persistent exclusion and inequality for disabled people and a very real health and social care crisis. Experience during the pandemic is also pertinent, especially the number of care home deaths and the use or ‘misuse’ of ‘Do Not Attempt Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation’ notices for elderly and disabled people. This context coupled with the textual vagueness of the Bill raises a number of serious questions about law and society’s ability to protect the most vulnerable. How can the law ensure that a person is free from pressure from ending their life prematurely due to societal attitudes and perceptions about ‘quality’ or ‘worth’ of life? How can the law ensure a person is acting voluntarily and not out of a sense of ‘being a burden’ to family, to health and social care services and to society?

THE EXPERIENCE OF OTHER COUNTRIES. Oregon, Belgium, Canada and other jurisdictions are held up as examples as to why the U.K. should follow suit in legalising assisted suicide. Yet, evidence in these countries overwhelmingly indicates that the introduction of laws for a ‘small number of cases’ inevitably leads to exponential growth in those seeking ‘assisted dying’: Oregon has seen a 1075% increase in ‘assisted deaths’ between 1998 and 2019, Belgium has seen a 925% increase between 2002 and 2019 and Canada has seen a 648% increase between 2016 and 2020. Similarly, an expansion of grounds upon which ‘assisted suicide’ is permitted follows suit with its legislation. Laws have been expanded in some jurisdictions to include assisted suicide for children, non-terminal illness (including non-terminal psychiatric illness). Laws are also being challenged with regards to allowing the elderly to request assisted suicide when their life is ‘complete’ or if they have dementia. Evidence shows that liberalisation of these laws seems to always follow. This is a serious risk, and can we expect the situation in the U.K. to be any different?

INVESTING IN CARE AND NOT ENDING CARE. Faced with suffering and illness, our response should be one of true compassion. This finds expression in high-quality and holistic end of life care for the one who is dying and their family. Rather than assisting suicide and bringing care and life to an end, we should be working to ensure people have access to the best end-of-life care when they need it. Organisations and medical professionals have done much good work in debunking myths and popular perceptions around end-of-life care and what a ‘good death’ can and does look like, but there is much more to be done here. The provision of quality palliative care should be a priority and reality for all who have need of it. ‘Assisted Dying’ could be seen as a quick and cheap alternative to proper end-of-life care. Can we expect a full range of choice to be given to us, in the event of terminal illness, should this Bill make the statute books? It is interesting to note that those who work most closely with people at the end of their lives are often those most opposed to assisted suicide within the medical profession.

RESOURCES.

The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales: <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/life-issues/>
In July 2021, the Bishops’ Conference Department of Social Justice hosted a webinar with Baroness Ilora Finlay of Llandaf and Robert Preston, which provided a very useful and rational guide to this complex and sensitive issue: <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/a-rational-guide-to-the-assisted-suicide-debate/>

If you would like a FREE copy of the book entitled ‘Death By Appointment: A Rational Guide to the Assisted Dying Debate’ by Baroness Ilora Finlay and Robert Preston, please contact Collette McGovern at the Conference Secretariat. The book provides an excellent evidence-based approach to the issue: collette.mcgovern@cbcew.org.uk

‘The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Dying Well’ promotes access to excellent care at the end of life and stands against the legalisation of assisted suicide. Their website provides up to date political news and resources on the issue: <https://www.dyingwell.co.uk/>

‘Living and Dying Well’ provides excellent information on research and analysis of the evidence surrounding the ‘assisted dying’ debate: <https://livinganddyingwell.org.uk/>

‘The Art of Dying Well’ hosts a variety of resources for helping people to think about death and dying: <https://www.artofdyingwell.org/>

Throughout his pontificate St John Paul II spoke with a prophetic voice on many subjects that affect the human condition. Among his many great encyclical letters is ‘Evangelium Vitae’ (The Gospel of Life), written in 1995. I offer just a few quotations from this text.

“The Gospel of Life is at the heart of Jesus’ message. Lovingly received day after day by the Church, it is to be preached with dauntless fidelity as ‘good news’ to the people of every age and culture.”

“One of the specific characteristics of present-day attacks on human life consists in the trend to demand a legal justification for them, as if they were rights which the State, at least under certain conditions, must acknowledge as belonging to citizens. Consequently, there is a tendency to claim that it should be possible to exercise these rights with the safe and free assistance of doctors and medical personnel.”

“A radical view goes so far as to maintain that in a modern and pluralistic society people should be allowed complete freedom to dispose of their own lives as well as the lives of the unborn: it is asserted that it is not the task of the law to choose between different moral opinions, and still less can the law claim to impose one particular opinion to the detriment of others.”

“... we have what appear to be two diametrically opposed tendencies. On the one hand, individuals claim for themselves in the moral sphere the most complete freedom of choice and demand that the State should not adopt or impose any ethical position but limit itself to guaranteeing maximum space for the freedom of each individual, with the sole limitation of not infringing on the freedom and rights of any other citizen. On the other hand, it is held that, in the exercise of public and professional duties, respect for other people’s freedom of choice requires that each one should set aside his or her own convictions in order to satisfy the demand of the citizens which is recognised and guaranteed by law; in carrying out one’s duties the only moral criterion should be what is laid down by the law itself. Individual responsibility is thus turned over to the civil law, with a renouncing of personal conscience, at least in the public sphere.”

“At the basis of all these tendencies lies the ethical relativism which characterizes much of present-day culture. There are those who consider such relativism an essential condition of democracy, inasmuch as it alone is held to guarantee tolerance, mutual respect between people and acceptance of the decisions of the majority, whereas moral norms considered to be objective and binding are held to lead to authoritarianism and intolerance. But it is precisely the issue of respect for life which shows what misunderstandings and contradictions, accompanied by terrible practical consequences, are concealed in this position.”

“The Gospel of Life is for the whole of human society. To be actively pro-life is to contribute to the renewal of society through the promotion of the common good. It is impossible to further the common good without acknowledging and defending the right to life, upon which all the other inalienable rights of individuals are founded and from which they develop. A society lacks solid foundations when, on the one hand, it asserts values such as the dignity of the person, justice and peace, but then, on the other hand, radically acts to the contrary by allowing or tolerating a variety of ways in which human life is devalued and violated, especially where it is weak or marginalised. Only respect for life can be the foundation and guarantee of the most precious and essential goods of society, such as democracy and peace. There can be no true democracy without a recognition of every person’s dignity and without respect for his or her rights.”