



DIOCESE OF PAISLEY

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The Lord is My Shepherd - Compassion and Hope at the End of life

Day for Life Sun 16 June 2024

Dear Brothers and Sisters, today the Catholic Church in Great Britain and Ireland marks our annual Day for Life established by Pope Saint John Paul II in 1995 to foster recognition in our consciences, our families, our Church and in civil society of the value of human life at every stage and condition. It is a Day that draws our attention to the seriousness of abortion and euthanasia but also to other aspects of life deserving our consideration.

Over the years the Special Collection taken up at Masses has helped us support survivors of sexual abuse and those with addictions, as well as caring for refugees and asylum seekers, even though our largest grants continue to fund traditional pro-life concerns such as abortion and euthanasia.

This year a Bill has been introduced in the Holyrood Parliament to allow assisted suicide in Scotland for sixteen-year-olds and over, proposing that doctors hand a lethal concoction of drugs to patients to kill themselves.

In countries where assisted suicide has been legalised, palliative care provision has stalled and hospices refusing to offer assisted suicide have had their funding stopped, including Catholic hospices. This is why three quarters of palliative care doctors in Scotland said they would refuse to participate in assisted suicide, and just under half will resign if required to administer it.

In countries with assisted suicide, supposed safeguards have soon eroded to include people with arthritis, anorexia, autism and dementia, and even little children. Assisted suicide sends a message to disabled people that they are a burden and puts pressure on the vulnerable to



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opt to die, as in Oregon where half of those who chose assisted suicide felt a burden on their families, communities and healthcare system. When the elderly and disabled are worried about being a burden, our response should be to commit ourselves to providing care and compassion to help them have a life worth living.

As Catholics, we offer just such a vision to our loved ones who are suffering and approaching death in the hope of eternal life. Our faith teaches us that there is no such a thing as a useless life, and to reverence the gift of life to its natural end. Our Gospel calls us to protect the vulnerable from a culture that would pressure them into assisted suicide and support them with appropriate treatment and the best of care so that their last days can be times of grace, intimacy and love. Jesus did not send the sick away and Our Lady remained at the foot of the Cross as Her Son died, as a model of compassionate presence to the very end. People close to death often go through darkness and pain, but experience shows they can come to a more complete understanding of their lives in treasured last moments accompanied by spiritual care and their loved ones.

This year our Day for Life focusses on compassion and hope at the end of life. We hear Fr. George sharing his experiences as a hospital chaplain, especially his encounter with Francis, a lapsed Catholic and convicted drug dealer with terminal cancer and not long to live. Fr. George accompanied Francis to reconciliation with the Church and a beautiful death, leading him beyond his Calvary to the Kingdom the LORD had prepared for him since the foundation of the world.

Today's Day for Life is an invitation to us renew our calling personally and as a society to care for others at the end of their lives, and to help our culture to see the end of life as an occasion for spiritual growth filled with grace and love.

With assurance of prayers,



Bishop John Keenan