



DIOCESE OF PAISLEY

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Feast of Our Lady, Queen and Mother 2024

Dear Fathers,

The Assisted Dying Bill Diocesan Collaboration with the Campaign Against Assisted Dying

I want to ask you to give particular attention to the Assisted Dying Bill which is before the Scottish Parliament and to do whatever you can in the weeks ahead to draw it to the attention of your parishioners and encourage them to be active in opposing it. The crucial Stage One of the Bill could be voted on by the end of the year, so the call to action is urgent.

Responding to the Government Consultation, the Scottish Bishops expressed absolute opposition to the Bill and grave concerns about its consequences for the elderly, sick and vulnerable noting how, in jurisdictions with legalised suicide like Canada, the Netherlands and Oregon, around half of those who opted for it consistently did so through fear of being a burden on their families or the State. The Bishops warned that if 'death on demand' becomes normal practice, there will be a cultural expectation upon the elderly, disabled and vulnerable to take it up. They also gave evidence on how quickly safeguards have been eroded in the above jurisdictions, and how the Royal College of General Practitioners and the Association of Palliative Medicine, that is those professionals most directly affected by it, are opposed to the Bill. The Bishops argued that assisted suicide undermines suicide prevention, the provision of palliative care and trust in doctors, and also warned that the Bill as it stands, can in practice extend to sufferers of diabetes, dementia and anorexia.

MSPs will now consider the Government Report on the Consultation and decide whether to proceed in principle. Should they do so, there will be no way back from some form of State sanctioned euthanasia in Scotland.

Undecided MSPs are now the key to fortunes of the Bill, and these will only be influenced by the engagement of the public. This means convincing around 60 of the 129 MSPs to vote against it. If they hear nothing from us, they will feel free to vote as they think or, just as bad, to abstain.



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To this end, our Diocese has opted to work in the weeks ahead with the **Campaign Against Assisted Dying (CAAD)** which is endorsed by our Bishops' Parliamentary Office.

CAAD believes the best chance of moving MSPs to vote against the Bill is by using the democratic process available to our parishes to engage our MSPs in their surgeries, message them at Holyrood and hold public meetings. CAAD has already been building such alliances of groups who share their concern, engaging in grassroots dialogue across Scotland through public meetings, conferences and community networking and working with the Church to develop lobbying networks.

The first step is to gather parishioners around our Deaneries in meetings that will equip them with knowledge, support and confidence to build starter groups to share information with friends, neighbours, family, parishioners and local politicians. CAAD will supply all the resources and support our parishes need. They assure us an effective diocesan network can be activated to make a decisive impact on the vote over the coming months, if we all play and active part.

We have organised the following meetings in each of our deaneries and I would encourage you to go along and bring your parishioners. I will attend all of them.

East Ren: St. Joseph's Hall, Clarkston, Mon 9 September at 7.00pm.
Inverclyde: St. Mary's Hall, Greenock, Tue 10 September at 7.00pm.
Renfrewshire: St. Mirin's Hall, Paisley, Wed 25 September at 7.00pm.

Many thanks for your help at this critical time for our people and nation.

With every blessing,



+ **John**