



CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF ENGLAND AND WALES

The Bishops of England and Wales have been consistent and outspoken in their opposition to the legalisation of assisted suicide, and we are shocked and disappointed that MPs have voted in favour of the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill. This Bill is flawed in principle with several provisions that give us great cause for concern.

The Catholic Church believes in promoting a culture of life and compassionate care. Allowing the medical profession to help patients end their lives will change the culture of healthcare and cause legitimate fears amongst those with disabilities or who are especially vulnerable in other ways.

We are also concerned about the future of palliative care, not least because experience suggests that, unless there are explicit protections, hospices may be required to co-operate with assisted suicide. If this were to happen, the future of many Catholic institutions could be under threat.

This is not the end of the parliamentary process, and we should not lose hope. We ask the Catholic community to continue to pray for members of parliament whilst they consider this legislation and to pray that government will act to promote and protect life from conception until natural death.

We have expressed the view, during this debate, that genuine compassion involves accompanying those who need care, especially during sickness, disability and old age. The vocation to care is at the heart of the lives of so many people who look after their loved ones and is the sign of a truly compassionate society. As we stated after the second reading, it is essential that we nurture and renew the innate call that many people have to compassionately care for others.

The Bishops of England and Wales believe that improving the quality and availability of palliative care offers the best pathway to reducing suffering at the end of life. We will continue to advocate for this, and we ask the Catholic community to support those who work tirelessly to care for the dying in our hospices, hospitals and care homes.

Archbishop John Sherrington

Archbishop of Liverpool

Lead Bishop for Life Issues for the Bishops' Conference.