



**OUR LADY & ST. CHRISTOPHER'S CATHOLIC CHURCH**

**PARISH PRIEST:** Canon Michael Gannon VG

52 Barrack Hill, Romiley, Stockport SK6 3BA

T. 0161- 430 2704. E. michael.gannon7@ntlworld.com

---

12<sup>th</sup> November 2024

Lisa Smart MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Dear Lisa

**Assisted Dying Bill**

I am writing to request that you vote against the above Bill at its second reading in the House of Commons on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2024. A great many people have grave concerns about this Bill, as the practice of assisted dying, or suicide, violates the prohibition of the intentional killing of another person and will undermine society's respect for the value and dignity of human life.

There are many reasons why this proposed legislation should not be passed into law such as the fear that vulnerable people have of becoming a burden, a fear that can be exploited through undue influence, subtle pressure and coercion. Indeed, when the seriously ill are told that they can choose to end their lives, it gives the impression that they might be better off dead.

Whilst it is proposed that those who are terminally ill with a prognosis of no more than six months to live, will be eligible, and whilst also recognising the safeguards that will be put in place, the eligibility criteria could in time be extended to include those, for example, who are lonely or mentally ill; this is the slippery slope argument that so many fear the proposed legislation will lead to.

Moreover, once the limit of six months is accepted why not extend it to nine months, a year, or even longer? I am convinced there will be pressure to extend the eligibility criteria, which is a concern for me.

I also believe that if the Bill were to be passed into law it would jeopardise the funding and provision of palliative care. We know that palliative care in the UK is world-leading but is currently struggling financially and hospice beds are being closed. Only a matter of months ago, a parishioner told me when her husband had been discharged from hospital and admitted to a local

hospice that she had "got my husband back." It was a tribute to the wonderful care and attention that he received from the staff and was a great comfort to her and her family when he died a short time later. I suggest that this is an example of how to die well with one's dignity preserved, and a major reason why hospices should be financially well resourced than is the case at present.

I also fear certain dangers given the state of the NHS and social care. Even if someone accepted that assisted suicide was ethically acceptable in principle, they might think that to be implemented safely, certain circumstances must be in place. If people are offered lethal drugs within days but then have to wait months for the health and social care they needed, or are even refused this care, assisted suicide is not what Health Secretary Wes Streeting calls a real choice. This, sadly, is the case in Canada where some people are choosing to end their lives only because they cannot afford to live or feel they have no other options.

I would also have concerns about doctors and nurses and their involvement in assisted suicide. It is known that the majority of UK doctors, especially those working closely with dying patients do not support assisted suicide. For a medical professional to assist somebody take their own life is incompatible with their role as healer since they have the obligation to preserve life. This does not, of course, preclude the giving of medication for the relief of pain and suffering which may have the effect of shortening life. The intention here, of course, is not to end life but to provide relief from pain and suffering.

I also understand that the right to conscientious objection is not total under the Bill's proposals, which is worrying. While a medical professional has no duty to participate directly in assisted suicide, they would be obliged to refer patients to willing practitioners.

I wish to thank you for taking the time to read this letter and once again please to urge you to vote against the Bill at its second reading on 29<sup>th</sup> November. Many MPs are still undecided about how they will vote which reflects the worries and concerns they have about the implications of their vote and the future consequences for our society especially for its weakest and most vulnerable members.

Yours sincerely



Canon Michael Gannon  
Parish Priest

