

Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales:

Oppose Assisted Suicide

We are calling on Catholics in England and Wales to unite in prayer and compassionate action to oppose assisted suicide.

In early September 2024, when parliament returned and a Bill on assisted suicide – so-called assisted dying – started its passage through the House of Lords, our Lead Bishop for Life Issues, Bishop John Sherrington, called for Catholics to **unite in prayer and compassionate action**.

That call is urgently renewed now as, on 29th November, the House of Commons will vote on a Bill on assisted suicide tabled by Labour MP Kim Leadbeater. ***This is another attempt to legalise assisted suicide and we need you to contact your MP to voice your opposition.***

Act Now! Contact your MP: The charity *Right to Life UK* has a simple online mechanism to do this. It takes little more than a few minutes to input your postcode, make sure the suggested text suits your viewpoint and submit your message to ask your MP to stop assisted suicide being rushed into law.

Contact your MP via the Right to Life UK website

Pray: We are a praying Christian community and, as Bishop Sherrington says, the legalisation of assisted suicide undermines the sanctity and dignity of human life. “The Catholic Church accompanies those suffering and nearing the end of their lives with hope and affection, but also reminds them that their life is precious until the very last breath,” he says. “In preparation for these challenging debates, let us offer our prayers for those facing the end of their lives, that they may receive the care and support they need to live their final days with respect for their dignity.

“Let us also pray for our politicians and our country that wisdom and compassion may guide their decisions. I also urge all Catholics to become better informed about the serious problems associated with the legalisation of assisted suicide.

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Why do we oppose the use of the phrase “assisted dying”, which is commonly used by proponents of assisted suicide and euthanasia?

Replacing the word “suicide” with “dying” conflates the wrongful and intentional act of deliberately ending a life with the natural process of dying, implying that helping to deliberately end a person’s life is as normal and as familiar as assisting somebody by caring for them as they are coming towards the end of their lives. True assisted dying means caring for those coming towards the end of life with love, companionship and support. Similarly, calling assisted suicide “dignity in dying”, as campaigners for assisted suicide and euthanasia do, implies that there is something undignified about living with severe disabilities or that physical or psychological discomfort denies the innate dignity of every human life.

Clarity of language is central to effective public debate on important moral issues, and we know from polling that public support for assisted suicide can depend on which term is used.

Day for Life

Day for Life is the day in the Church’s year dedicated to raising awareness about the meaning and value of human life at every stage and in every condition.

The Catholic Church teaches that life is to be nurtured from conception to natural death. In England and Wales, Day for Life is celebrated on the third Sunday of June each year.

A BRAINSTORM OF REASONS AGAINST ASSISTED SUICIDE AND EUTHANASIA

- It's wrong to kill each other.
- Sanctity of life.*
- Destroys doctor-patient trust. Completely changes the ethic on which healthcare is based in our country.
- Asks doctors, care people, and the family to kill.*
- No safeguards are strong enough.
- Threatens, and terrifies, those of us living with disabilities and life-limiting conditions.*
- Judges some lives to be less dignified and less worth living than other lives.
- Predicated on a history of eugenics and Nazism.*
- 'Right to die' quickly becomes 'Duty to die'.
- Pressure on elderly to die.*
- Underfunding in NHS already; medicalised killing becomes cheaper than care.
- Canada's MAID programme is an actual real-time example of what goes wrong.*
- Loss of healthcare workers, especially doctors, on conscience grounds.
- Fails to offer hope and palliative options to our most vulnerable loved ones.*
- Is selfish in its implication that an individual's preference should become a right that has the power to dismantle the social contract to care for each other and to uphold life.
- Dangers of relinquishing our right to life to the State.*

CARDINAL VINCENT NICHOLS on assisted suicide:

- A slippery slope:
 - A right to die can become a duty to die
 - Being forgetful of God belittles our humanity

SOME USEFUL WEBSITES

<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/cardinal-calls-on-catholics-to-take-action-to-oppose-assisted-suicide/>

<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/reasons-to-oppose-assisted-suicide/>

<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/faqs-assisted-suicide/>

<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/home/our-work/life-issues/the-art-of-dying-well/>

<https://righttolife.org.uk/knowledgebase/assisted-suicide-and-euthanasia>

<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/hospice/>

<https://livinganddyingwell.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/LDW-Press-Release-July-2024-2.pdf>

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2024/09/07/end-of-life-care-assisted-dying-health-secretary-streeting/>

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