

## Address to Care Not Killing

Ladies and gentlemen,

It's a great pleasure to be here tonight, and to feel so at home! Not so much in this particular venue, lovely though it is, but among you, people of like mind, people who have supported in various ways the "Care Not Killing" campaigns.

I want to start tonight by thanking the organisers of this event, and pay a special tribute to our own Parliamentary Officer, Mr John Deighan, whose energy and dedication helped us as bishops, and you as supporters, to understand the threats to human life which have occurred recently in various parliamentary motions.

I think that for most of us the most vivid example of the threats surrounding us, was Margo MacDonald's *End of Life Assistance* Bill last year.

It is typical of the problems we face that, here was a bill being introduced to parliament with an apparently compassionate motive, sponsored by a likeable, hard working MSP, herself affected by a serious illness.

I do not think for a moment that Margo was ill-intentioned in what she proposed, but she was profoundly mistaken, and I believe, naive to think that such legislation could be introduced without drastically affecting the doctor patient relationship, and without finally destroying the basic premise of our society - "thou shalt not kill".

As a priest and bishop, and now Archbishop, I have been involved in pro-life campaigning for over 40 years. I have taken part in meetings and parliamentary protests, I have written articles and spoke at rallies, and over those years it has been painful to recognise that, more often than not, our side – the pro life side – has been on the losing end of the ultimate vote.

And so it is all the more important that when we do have a success, we analyse it and celebrate it, and use it to prepare for the next rounds of arguments.

And success we had last year, when the Scottish Parliament defeated Margo's Bill by the overwhelming majority of 85 to 16. I believe the coalition established by Care Not Killing, of which the Catholic Church was a key member, played a decisive role in that success.

John tells me that through the hard work of volunteers such as yourself, 22,000 postcards were delivered to MSPs making them aware of our concerns. That kind of postbag clearly has an effect!

I want to thank you tonight, and through you, thank your friends and colleagues who helped in that great effort.

But I am afraid I have to ask you to prepare yourself once more for another struggle ahead.

As you may know Margo MacDonald pledged, as soon as her bill was defeated, to re-introduce it in the new parliament. That new parliament is now sitting, and so we must be prepared for the battle ahead when Margo will try again to make Scotland the only part of the United Kingdom, where doctors are asked to assist in the killing of their patients.

The danger for us is battle-weariness. We could be forgiven for thinking, "Not again!"

But , I am afraid to say, we do not have that luxury.

Just as previous generations won small battles, bit by bit to change the culture which regarded slavery as acceptable, or racism as acceptable, so our generation is required to keep on insisting that Care, not Killing, is the answer to illness, weakness and old age.

Alas today, modern man and woman is most often swayed, not by convincing appeals to logic and reason, but by emotion and hype. We need to understand

that and ensure that our arguments are just as punchy, just as direct and just as appealing as the opposition's.

Much will be made of compassion for those who wish to end their lives because they find them unbearable.

Compassion means, literally, to "suffer with". And nothing we say must give the impression that we are heartless, unsympathetic, lacking an understanding of how hard life can be, of being uncaring – which is why we use the slogan "Care not Killing."

We have to show that there is an alternative to assisting someone to end their life; that alternative is assisting him or her to continue to live as long as nature allows.

Palliative medicine does not keep an individual alive aggressively or beyond what the patient is ready to accept in resisting nature. It seeks rather to alleviate pain, indeed to remove it completely, along with the fear that it will prove unbearable. With the patient experiencing such relief, the comforting presence of family and friends, and the assurance of continued loving care, the patient is able to face with serenity what we must all face as part of our human condition.

The alternative not only counters the leaning towards suicide, but protects all patients from the fear that their condition will be judged by others as unsupportable – and what is of huge significance – maintains trust in the medical profession which is dedicated to healing and relieving pain and not to assisted killing.

We are fundamentally opposed to any attempt to re-introduce a variant on Margo MacDonald's Bill, knowing there is a better way – and I might suggest a more deeply compassionate way of addressing the needs of the terminally ill – we should not introduce into society a measure which contradicts a millennial tradition of care, ultimately based upon love of our neighbour and respect for the law of God.

To do so would be to undermine the trust which should continue to be the bedrock of the doctor/patient relationship and create a new culture which all too readily would undermine the most fundamental of human rights – the right to life itself.

Tonight I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the commitment and strength you showed in seeing off the most recent attack on life here in Scotland. The magnitude of that victory gives us great grounds for hope,

But I ask you also to steady your arm for a new battle which lies ahead. We need you once more. We need you in ever greater numbers. We need your support, your financial assistance and your ideas.

Care not Killing is an alliance which draws together people from all backgrounds and all walks of life. What unites us is a profound respect for life, and a determination not to allow our country to have its ethical foundations shattered by a piece of profoundly selfish, foolish and dangerous legislation.

With your help we won before.

With your continued support we can win again.

Thank you very much.