

NOVEMBER DEVOTIONS

Since the 16th century Catholic piety has assigned entire months to special devotions. As a reminder of our duty to pray for the suffering faithful in Purgatory, the Church has dedicated the month of November to the Holy Souls. The Holy Souls are those who have died in the state of grace but who are not yet free from all punishment due to their unforgiven venial sins and all other sins already forgiven for which satisfaction is still to be made. They are certain of entering Heaven, but first they must suffer in Purgatory. The Holy Souls cannot help themselves because for them the night has come, when no man can work (John 9:4). It is our great privilege of brotherhood that we can shorten their time of separation from God by our prayers, good works and especially the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Praying for the dead, especially for those we have known, is a requirement of Christian charity. Our own prayers and sacrifices can be offered up to relieve their suffering. Some or all of the following prayers can be incorporated into our daily prayers during this month.

Some Prayers

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen. - One of the most commonly recited of Catholic prayers in times past, this prayer has fallen into disuse in the last few decades. Prayer for the dead, however, is one of the greatest acts of charity we can perform, to help them during their time in Purgatory, so that they can enter more quickly into the fullness of heaven.

For the souls in Purgatory: My Jesus, by the sorrows Thou didst suffer in Thine agony in the Garden, in Thy scourging and crowning with thorns, in the way to Calvary, in Thy crucifixion and death, have mercy on the souls in purgatory, and especially on those that are most forsaken; do Thou deliver them from the dire torments they endure; call them and admit them to Thy most sweet embrace in paradise. Our Father, Hail Mary, Eternal rest etc. (Taken from Catholic Culture Website)

INDULGENCES

Noon 1st Nov to Midnight 2nd Nov Plenary Indulgence for Holy Souls by visiting a Church, reciting the Our Father and Creed and fulfilling the normal conditions. 1st November to 8th November Plenary indulgence for Holy Souls by visiting cemetery and there praying for the dead and fulfilling normal conditions. (Normal Conditions = Holy Communion that day, Prayers for Pope that day and confession ten days before or after.)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

A Bill has been introduced to Parliament which proposes a radical change to the law. If passed it will allow a terminally ill person the possibility to seek lethal drugs from their doctor, so as to end their life prematurely. Proponents of this change in the law speak of 'assisted dying', but let's be clear, this Bill isn't about giving people access to palliative care to relieve their suffering, and it isn't about a patient having the right to decide to stop life-prolonging treatment; people in this country already have these rights. No, this Bill is about allowing a doctor to assist a person to take their own life, to help someone commit suicide, without criminal consequences. This Bill is about assisted suicide.

As Catholics we can never support assisted suicide, in any situation or any circumstance. The Commandment, 'You shall not kill' makes clear that to deliberately kill or assist in the killing of an innocent human person is a grave violation of the moral law. This commandment demands that we value and safeguard human life at every stage of life, until its natural end. It is never permissible to take the life of a human being, even if a person requests it. Life is a gift from God, to be treasured and protected in all its vulnerability, and it is God alone, the author of life, who will call us back to Himself at the appointed hour. This respect for the sacredness of life and the dignity of the human person is foundational to our care for the sick, the aged, and the most vulnerable in our society.

The Church has always been a strong defender of the sanctity of life at all stages, but especially when life is at its most vulnerable: at its beginning and its end. This Bill has the potential to initiate a paradigm shift in how we understand, value, and protect the sacredness of every human life, and so to profoundly affect the very fabric of our society. Laws to legalise assisted suicide strike at the foundation of the legal order; the right to life sustains all other rights, including the exercise of freedom. While real and emotional descriptions of painful suffering in dying and death resonate powerfully with all of us, the ardent desires of a few cannot outweigh our obligations to the greater common good, which includes protecting the lives of all, especially the most vulnerable. Supporters of this legislation argue that the elderly, disabled and other vulnerable persons will be protected through a careful framing of the Bill, with stringent safeguards and strict criteria. But evidence from other jurisdictions, where assisted suicide has been legalised, shows the very real danger that, once legalised, the initial criteria can quickly become broadened.

Canada, with a similar health system to ours, provides a salutary tale in this regard.



So called 'medical assistance in dying' was introduced in a similar way to this current Bill, yet five years later it has been rapidly expanded to include chronic illness, disability, mental health, and it has even been offered to patients for reasons linked to old age, disability, and other social issues. In New Zealand, within just a year of being legalised, evidence is emerging that people are choosing euthanasia due to financial concerns, or because they felt a burden to their family, or because they felt alone and abandoned. Once exceptions are made, the evidence is clear that such legislation knows no end.

Furthermore, one can only imagine the moral and emotional pressure this Bill will place on our hard-pressed doctors and other medical professionals. The need for medical care is born in the vulnerability of the human condition, and it encompasses the responsibility to care for and promote human life, underpinned by the principle to 'do no harm'. This Bill risks changing forever the relationship between patients and doctors, those to whom we have always looked for medical advice and care in times of need. Whilst some would argue that doctors have a duty of compassion and a duty to relieve their patients' suffering, incurable cannot mean that care comes to an end, and compassion cannot extend to taking the life of another person. In this respect, palliative care constitutes a precious and crucial instrument in the care of patients during the terminal stages of illness.

The excellent work of hospices across our country bears witness to what it means to holistically accompany, and compassionately care for, a person in their final days. Britain founded the modern hospice movement, and so it a very sad reflection on our society that access to hospice care is a postcode lottery, and that hospices in this country are so poorly funded and so heavily reliant upon charitable donations. It should also be noted that in many countries where such laws have been introduced there has been a gradual decline in funding for palliative care. Whilst it is never morally licit to take the life of an innocent person, whatever the situation or circumstance, we must also be deeply concerned by the particular context in which this Bill is being introduced. It arrives at a time when cost cutting measures are being sought by the government, and public services are under enormous pressure.

Our greatly valued NHS is at breaking point, social care provision is struggling, winter fuel payments are being withdrawn from many pensioners, and access to high quality palliative care is at best patchy and seriously underfunded. There is also a growing elderly population who need care and support, many of whom already feel a burden to their families and public services, alongside disabled persons who struggle to get the support they need in daily life. As many have pointed out in this debate so far, a right to die runs the risk of very quickly turning into a duty to die, and even more so given the current state of our society.

In just over a month's time, on Friday 29th November, this Bill will receive its second reading. This is the moment when there will be a general debate, and MPs can vote on it in the House of Commons. So, I urgently encourage you to write to your MP and share your concerns about this Bill. There are tools and resources on the diocesan website to help you to do this. Please join with me in praying and working to help ensure that this bill will not be passed into law.

+Bishop Patrick Bishop of Nottingham



B

IMPORTANCE OF MASS INTENTIONS

Mass intentions increase during November with the tradition of offering masses for the souls of the faithful departed especially of those near and dear to us. But often during the year there are many free slots because masses have not been requested. There is no greater gift that we can give and nothing as powerful as offering mass for a person or an intention.

"A great Doctor of the Church, St. Anselm declares that a single Mass offered for oneself during life may be worth more than a thousand celebrated for the same intention after death," and "Pope Benedict XV tells us, 'The Holy Mass would be of greater profit if people had it offered in their lifetime rather than having it celebrated for the relief of their souls after death. ... The fruits of the Sacrifice of the Mass are in effect much greater efficacy [sic] during one's life than after one's death because the application which is made to those well-disposed among the living is more direct, more certain and more abundant.'"

Spiritual Thought for the Week

"The Solemnity of All Saints is our celebration: not because we are good, but because the sanctity of God has touched our life. The Saints are not perfect models, but people through whom God has passed. We can compare them to the Church windows which allow light to enter in different shades of colour. The saints are our brothers and sisters who have welcomed the light of God in their heart and have passed it on to the world, each according to his or her own "hue". But they were all transparent; they fought to remove the stains and the darkness of sin, so as to enable the gentle light of God to pass through. This is life's purpose: to enable God's light to pass through; it is the purpose of our life too." Pope Francis 1st November 2017

ONE MONTH TO STOP ASSISTED SUICIDE BILL

The most vulnerable in our society are at risk. MPs will vote on whether to introduce an extreme assisted suicide law on 29 November. To protect the vulnerable from this radical law change, contact your MP and ask them to vote NO.

Take action now - it only takes 30 seconds to contact your MP using the tool here: www.righttolife.org.uk/mpcontactnow



C