

BISHOP OF PORTSMOUTH

Rt. Rev. Philip A. Egan BA, STL, PhD



MESSAGE FROM BISHOP PHILIP EGAN to the Clergy and Laity of the Diocese on the House of Lords vote on the Crime and Policing Bill March 2026

Dear Friends,

Last week, the House of Lords, in a misguided and sinister move, backed legislation to decriminalise abortions up to birth. Although the current legal limit of twenty-four weeks will remain for doctor-induced abortions, it will soon be legal for mothers themselves, if they wish, to kill their unborn child at any moment up to full term. This is a truly shocking development. When abortion was first legalised in 1967, abortions in England and Wales were few and far between, yet by the end of the 1990s, almost 175,000 a year were taking place. Today there are over 300,000 a year – one in every three babies conceived. Abortion has been normalised, even though we know that as well as destroying the baby, abortion greatly damages the mother.

This new legislation is deemed a triumph by pro-choice activists. In reality, it is a terrifying development. It is a further advance for the culture of death. "Thou shalt not kill" is an instinctive principle written into every human heart, one that grounds the laws that govern every civilised society on earth. It is the teaching of all major religions, and it is fundamental to Christian morality and Catholic social teaching. The new legislation sets aside this principle with the same false and emotionally-charged logic campaigners use for assisted suicide and euthanasia. It is a logic that diminishes the dignity of human life. It is a logic that brazenly empowers the strong to determine the life or death of the weak. More, the prospect of late-term abortions taking place at home raises the real danger of premature babies being delivered alive but then furtively being terminated. Have we now returned to the morality of the Roman Empire, which permitted infanticide, especially if a baby or child was handicapped, weak or of the wrong sex?

As Catholics, we know that every human being has been created and willed by God. This is why we must calmly but insistently work to protect the unborn child in the womb and to protect women from abortion. We must continue to witness

to the truth about human life and campaign to change people's hearts and minds. We must also support and pray for women who have had abortions and for those who find themselves in a difficult situation. I ask: Have we really done everything we can to make our voices heard above the clamour for death?

We are people of life. This week we keep the Solemnity of the Annunciation when the Blessed Mother conceived the Christ-Child in her womb. Please offer the Rosary for the abolition of abortion and in celebration of motherhood. Every Saturday in the Church's year is dedicated to Our Lady, so let's remember this intention in prayer every Saturday too. Let us also bring this matter in prayer to our annual diocesan Day of Prayer and Reparation for Life on 23rd October. And why not join me for this year's March for Life in London later in the summer?

In Corde Iesu

+Philip

Bishop of Portsmouth

19th March 2026

Solemnity of St. Joseph