



19th October 2018

My dear people

The words *rejection* and *dejection* may express the feeling of this weekend's readings, especially the first, which is also Good Friday's.

Rejection and *dejection* may also capture the mood of those concerned about the *Termination of Pregnancy Bill*, which passed the Queensland Parliament last Wednesday evening.

However all is not doom and gloom. I watched much of the parliamentary debate. The sincerity and integrity of the members who spoke on either side of the question was quite impressive.

People spoke from deeply held convictions. As I said in my letter last week, some view this as strictly a women's health and a women's rights issue and it was this view which prevailed.

Others saw it in other terms: as a life issue for the child *in utero*.

It would have been better had these distinct issues been clearly separated: Firstly decriminalising a woman undergoing a termination – a proposition with which most people would agree – and this would probably have passed almost unanimously in Parliament.

Secondly, the public health issues and conscience considerations could then have been more carefully considered.

However as it was presented it became *all or nothing* or *winner takes all*, with any amendments being strongly voted down.

So we have ended up with the broadest abortion legislation: termination on demand up to 22 weeks, after which it can still be done with the vague involvement of one other doctor - right up to the point of birth, considering *the woman's current and future medical, psychological and social circumstances!*

There is no provision for doctors and medical staff, who have conscience issues with abortion, to opt out of direct involvement. In fact doctors are compelled to refer patients to practitioners who do

perform terminations, and when confronted with an emergency they themselves are actually obliged to perform the abortion even though they would regard this as the destruction of a human life!

Perhaps nowhere else does abortion legislation go so far and have so few checks and balances.

Because the law has changed and made abortions so readily available (while it has been argued that this may actually reduce the number of abortions?), this does not change in any way our moral understanding: that from conception a unique human being is developing with the mother and needs every assistance and no hindrance to come to birth with its own ever-developing personality.

In difficult circumstances and faced with such serious choices a mother needs every assistance. As a Christian family we should re-double our efforts supporting agencies, which offer emotional and practical support to such mothers, such as:

Chloe's Place (Cairns Pregnancy Help Inc T/as)
1A/117 Anderson Street, Manunda:
Phone Support: 1300 848 080 (9am to 9pm)
Website: www.chloesplace.com.au/
Opening Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 9:00am to 2:00pm (by appointment).

What actually happens now this legislation has been passed should be closely monitored. Yet this law makes no provision for that. There is no collecting of statistics either before or after the 22 week stage.

The medical and nursing professions themselves now need to act and react to the needs of their members, especially those confronted with situations which go directly beyond their deeply held conscience beliefs.

All of us need to be concerned and active (becoming involved in political parties) to influence the sort of society in which we live and which a younger generation will inherit.

So as people of faith there are always grounds of hope, that the *Kingdom will come*, that light will overcome darkness and life will triumph over death.

Yours truly in Christ,



+ James Foley
BISHOP OF CAIRNS