

## No rationing of children's cancer care

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"The parents deserve to have hope until it becomes clear that survival is impossible," added Prof. Donnelly.

His comments also come as a judge ruled that doctors could stop providing life-support treatment to a brain-damaged 11-month-old boy, against his parent's wishes.

Mr Justice MacDonald on Monday ruled that doctors could stop providing life-support treatment to Isaiah Hastrup after Specialists at King's College Hospital said it was "futile, burdensome and not in his best interests".

They had asked a judge to give them the go-ahead to provide only palliative care. However, Isaiah's mother, Takesha Thomas, and father Lanre Haastrup, who are both 36 and from Peckham, south-east London, wanted treatment to continue.

Miss Thomas, a Pentecostal Christian, had previously argued that it was up to God, not doctors, to decide when her son dies.

Last week Miss Thomas told the judge how she accepted that her son was severely disabled but added that his life was "worth preserving".

"I am a Pentecostal Christian," she said. "For me, I don't think it is right to say who should live or who should die."

"If God wants to take the person, He will."

# Bishop demands prison reform after scathing inspectors report

### Prisoners' dignity must be at centre of a new penal system says Moth

Nick Benson

We must keep human dignity at the centre of our criminal justice system, the Bishop for Prisons has urged.

Bishop Richard Moth warned that the entire criminal justice system is in urgent need of widespread reform following recent developments concerning HMP Liverpool and HMP Nottingham.

Last month the Chief Inspector of Prisons issued Justice Secretary David Gauke with an urgent notification letter, demanding that action be taken in order to improve HMP Nottingham.

In addition, in one of its most scathing reports in years, HM Inspectorate of Prisons also condemned the 'squalid' state of HMP Liverpool.

"With the Chief Inspector filing an Urgent Notification over Nottingham after eight self-inflicted deaths in the last two years, and with reports that Liverpool is facing the worst conditions in living memory, it is clear our criminal justice system is in need of widespread reform," said Bishop Moth.

He suggested that in order to deliver



significant prison reform, society must examine the question of who it sends to prison and why.

"The prison population continues to grow, yet custody is used more and more," Bishop Moth said.

He pointed out that the Director of the Prison Service has recognised that in Liverpool, the pressure of rising numbers contributed to a decline in decency.

"In his recent visit to Chile, Pope Francis visited a women's prison,

telling the inmates that 'losing our freedom is not the same as losing our dignity,'" the bishop added. "The challenge for us all is to build a criminal justice system that meets the human dignity of all people."

Bishop Moth also pointed out that while the Government has committed to increasing staff levels by 2,500 by December 2018, a lack of experience among staff remains a concern.

The new Minister for Prisons, Rory Stewart, recently drew attention to

the importance of Governor empowerment, arguing that there needs to be a renewed focus on basic operational management.

However, Bishop Moth stressed that this alone would not solve the issue.

"While this is important, it is essential to recognise that Government empowerment alone will not solve the problems in our prisons. It is important to ensure that the deregulation of prisons does not contribute to further variation in quality."

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## Back Baroness' Bill to save right to have Catholic conscience

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The Bill was welcomed by the Catholic Church in Scotland, with Anthony Horan, Director of the Church's Parliamentary Office calling for similar legislation in Scotland.

"This Bill could restore the fuller right of conscientious objection that was lost when the UK Supreme Court ruled that Glasgow midwives Mary Doogan and Connie Wood did not have a legal right to object to involvement in the abortion process," he said.

"It is quite astonishing that anybody would deny another this basic right of conscience, a denial which flies in the face of Article 9 of the European Convention of Human Rights which protects the 'right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion'."

Mr Horan noted that while the Bill only applies to England and Wales, its progress should be of interest to people in Scotland, where, he said, a similar bill could hopefully be presented to the Scottish Parliament.

"Conscientious objection is a widely respected concept with considerable international and national laws, guidance, and conventions protecting the right, a Scottish Bill would bring Scot-

land into line with international norms," he said.

Under the existing law, some medical professionals are not protected from unjust discrimination. GPs, as well as many nurses, midwives, pharmacists, and other medical professionals have limited statutory conscience protection.

As a result, some areas of the health-care profession are becoming increasingly inhospitable for those with certain deeply-held moral, philosophical or religious views.

Mary Doogan, one of the two midwives in the Greater Glasgow Health Board case, expressed her joy seeing the Bill pass its second reading.

"I am very glad to see that there is finally Parliamentary action taking place to restore the conscience rights of those who work tirelessly day in and day out to serve and care for others," she said.

"As medical professionals, we owe patients not only our efforts but also our best moral judgement, and this Bill would allow us once again to practise with the greatest integrity. I fully support this important legislation and commend it to Parliament and the wider public."

## Ireland ends Good Friday alcohol ban

An Irish TD has criticised his country's parliament after it voted in favour of lifting a 90-year ban on pubs selling alcohol on Good Friday.

The Dáil has passed legislation to allow the sale of alcohol on the holy day as Minister of State David Stanton said removing the ban would help Irish tourism. "Tourism makes a great contribution to our economy and this is particularly true during holidays, such as the busy Easter period," he said. "In addition changing demographics and increasing diversity in our population have led to a reduction in traditional religious practice."

"The Government considered that it was a time to end the Good Friday restrictions."

However, Independent TD Maureen O'Sullivan asked why society seems unable to function without alcohol for 24 hours, adding that the bill went against the Government's policy of trying to reduce alcohol use.

"Are we saying that the only tourists we want are those who can't last 24 hours without buying a drink," she asked. "What message are we sending out? I actually think we could do with a few 'Good Fridays' in the year."

The Pioneer Total Abstinence Association said it was disappointed by the news, saying "For over a century Ireland has held a self-denying ordinance in honour of Christ's death."