

Cora challenges culture of death

Continued from Page 1

"This policy was introduced with the reasoning that the cost of the screening is justified by the money saved from looking after a child with Down's. We should call this what it is, unjust direct discrimination. Our culture is becoming dangerously comfortable again with eugenics."

Lord Alton praised his friend, Lord Shinkwin of Balham who, he said, "has fought with great eloquence against disability discrimination in the House of Lords, noting especially that there is no more fundamental right than the right to life".

"Those of us who respect and welcome every God-given aspect of children such as Cora have a duty to act on this issue," said Lord Alton. "It's not enough to exclaim that a child with Down's syndrome is cute on a River Island catalogue; we should take active care to assess the voting records of our representatives and hold them to account on this issue alongside praying for change."

"Maybe it will be Cora's generation that showcase their unique 'genius' and prompt the social shift our society desperately needs."

"We need a long overdue debate about British laws which allow the killing of a Down's baby up to and even during birth, as evidenced by the recent Church of England Synod decision to challenge society's attitudes towards people with Down's," Lord Alton added.

Westminster Cathedral opens its doors for Travellers' Mass



Photo: Westminster Flickr

Members of the Travelling Community pictured at a Mass in their honour at Westminster Cathedral on Saturday, 24th February. The main celebrant was Bishop Paul McAleenan, the Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster and Bishop for Ethnic Chaplaincies.

Headteachers have to take lead on faith

Cardinal Nichols has told headteachers that their task "is to give a powerful witness in our society today."

He made his remarks in an opening address to the annual Westminster diocesan headteachers' conference. During his speech the cardinal explored the nature of leadership in a Catholic institution, reminding heads that they are "leaders of communities that take their character and their way of life from the gift of Catholic faith, whatever the proportion of Catholics who may be present".

"Being Catholic means being open to the whole and being dedicated to the unity of the whole," he said, adding that it also means, "being ready always to embrace the other".

The characteristics of Catholicism

"should be imprinted into the life of a Catholic school," he noted.

Cardinal Nichols explained that a Catholic headteacher "can never 'go it alone'". Rather, the role of a Catholic leader, he said, is "to strive to see the whole, to see and serve the strengths and to expand that sense of belonging". At a time of "increasing fragmentation", this is a "vital witness".

Leadership involves realism about current circumstances, to which "structures of co-operation between schools" are a "measured and appropriate response".

Leadership also requires a vision. The "vision of education" in Catholic schools, he said, has to be comprehensive and "run through the school like a strong rhythm".

According to this vision, education "always helps pupils to explore and embrace what it means to be human" and "to develop a personal commitment to building a better society, to serving a common good, no matter the pathway in life they may choose".

He added that education should seek to express an "openness to the transcendent", where "Christ is the centre and fullest expression of our human nature".

These characteristics, he said, are "fundamental to a sound and healthy life" and are the "deeper foundations of what is spoken of today as 'British values'. A formation which strives to enable a person to achieve their best and use it in the service of society is the heart of citizenship."

Memo from CAFOD

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International Women's Day - Thursday 8 March

The theme for this year's International Women's Day is #PressforProgress. That means calling for equal pay, more women in management roles. It means education for girls as well as boys. And ensuring women live as long as men.

One woman who is pushing back against inequality and oppression is 58-year-old Margarita in San Salvador, El Salvador.

Two years ago, Margarita lost her eldest son when he was killed by a gang in the city. She found the grief almost too much to bear and couldn't leave her home.

Thanks to CAFOD's support, Margarita and her neighbours are learning how to come to terms with violence in the neighbourhood. Not just gang violence, but domestic violence and violence between neighbours.

"I'm not going to say that I don't still feel," Margarita said, "because I'm still human. But compared to what I was feeling, they have helped me. A lot."

Your Lent donation can help more women around the world - cafod.org.uk/lent



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Tougher abuse sentencing rules welcomed

A Church expert on domestic abuse has heralded new sentencing guidelines which treat crimes as more serious if they are committed in a domestic setting.

People who subject spouses, partners or family members to abuse will face tougher punishments than those who commit similar offences in a non-domestic context.

Nikki Dhillon-Keane, a member of the Domestic Abuse Working Group which was originally set up by the Bishops' Conference and is now a part of Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN), welcomed the new guidelines, which now reflect the severity of domestic abuse related offences.

"Unlike many other crimes, domes-

tic abuse is likely to be part of an ongoing pattern of abuse," she told *The Universe*.

Ms Dhillon-Keane also said it was "extremely important" that the guidelines also recognise non-physical forms of abuse.

For the first time court guidance makes clear that domestic abuse is no longer confined to person-to-person contact as culprits increasingly torment their victims using social media and digital tracking devices.

"Psychological abuse is extremely serious and potentially deadly; suicide is a higher cause of death than murder for domestic abuse related deaths," said Ms Dhillon-Keane.

The approach to severity marks a

significant shift from the existing position, which has applied since 2006.

Instructions for judges and magistrates currently state that offences in a domestic context should be seen as 'no less serious' than others.

The new guidelines for court sentencing say: 'The domestic context of the offending behaviour makes the offending more serious because it represents a violation of the trust and security that normally exists between people in an intimate or family relationship.'

'Additionally, there may be a continuing threat to the victim's safety, and in the worst cases a threat to their life or the lives of others around them.'