

Life is a gift from God

“Christians believe that life is a gift from God. We believe that the choice to end life is not a choice which we should make, however painful and distressing the circumstances” says the Rt Rev David Chillingworth, Bishop of St Andrews, Dunkeld & Dunblane.

Delivering this morning's Thought for the Day (BBC Radio Scotland) Bishop David referred to last night's controversial programme on Sky in which Craig Ewart's last moments of life were filmed, and said “For nearly 20 years, I served as a hospital chaplain. I have cared for many people in the last days and weeks of life. We have sat, talked, prayed, questioned and raged together at what illness does to people. I have watched devoted and caring doctors living in the space between, ‘Thou shalt not kill’ and ‘Thou shalt not strive officiously to keep alive’. They relieve pain and preserve human dignity. They recognise that a secondary effect may be to shorten life. Some of the most glorious moments in my experience of life, faith and the love which grows within relationships have been in those situations. That's what the hospice movement has taught us”

“The work of the hospice movement and its faith-based roots has taught us about the 'good death' - about the medical, emotional and spiritual process through which a person comes to accept the approach of the end of life and the way in which their loved ones can become part of that process of healing and acceptance. I fear that, however well-intentioned, the introduction of choice in this area will bring a degree of wariness and caution to the relationship between the patient, their family and their medical advisors. This should be a place for unconditional love and support.”

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