



will answer: 'Because abortion is murder.' Now, we can never know the entirety of the story of any person. Even within your immediate family there may be secrets kept deeply hidden. How much more true this is, of those we encounter causally in our town or village. Imagine, then, that in the run-up the referendum someone makes the statement that abortion is murder, not knowing the story of a man to whom they are speaking.

They know him. They know his family. What they do not know is that his daughter has had an abortion. Where there is a murder, there must perforce be

have been winning it since 1983 and before. But what good has it done us? What good is it to win an argument when no one is listening?

Having faith, then, in the power and truth of what we have to say, we must ensure that we do not place any obstacles between it and the listener. We must be sensitive to the person before us and do nothing that might throw up a barrier of anger or resentment. This touches not simply on the words we use but on how we use them. It is increasingly difficult to engage the public with fact or reasoned argument. Our attention spans get

small or incremental move. The progressive left often ridicules the concern that their proposals are the start of a slippery slope, even though social policy for the last fifty years has been a history of disastrous slippery slopes. In this case, ironically, they are right: what we're dealing with now is not a slippery slope, but a jumping headlong off the cliff.

The Constitution is the reservoir of our basic laws. It is also where we, as a nation, express our higher ideals and aspirations. Law in general, and the Constitution in particular, are an attempt to define natural laws and to spell them out in language as best we can. That attempt will never be perfectly successful, and the law recognises this. Basic natural rights are prior, anterior and superior to positive law, i.e. to any particular way of spelling things out. Such basic rights are inalienable and imprescriptible, that is, they cannot be alienated or taken from the human person, nor can any act or law be passed which detrimentally impacts on these rights.

If we repeal the Eighth Amendment, then the fate of certain types or classes of human being will be decided by Dáil Éireann, as they will have lost the specific protection of the Constitution. Not all the effects of this change will be seen at first, but the principle will have been established. Our TDs in the Dáil will frame laws that define who is human enough to deserve the protection of the law and who is not quite human enough. This will not be a small matter, an incremental matter, but a sea change in the moral ethos of our country.

*The final part of this item will appear in next month's Intercom.*

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Not in anger; never in anger.  
Not in judgement or in a personal attack,  
but in truth and love.'*

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a murderer: his daughter. Whatever possibility might have existed for a fruitful engagement is gone. No father or mother will hear their child called a murderer and then continue listening to whatever else the accuser has to say.

Not all religious people are pro-life. Not all pro-life people are religious. In the middle we have the majority, not particularly religious and not really sure where they stand on the life issue. These are people who can be persuaded, who at the very least can have the seed of doubt sown. However, if the first argument they hear is that abortion breaks the fifth commandment then the possibility of success with follow-up arguments becomes far slimmer indeed.

I know that this offends some people – I have been told so on several occasions. I've been told that I am asking people to lie, to obfuscate, and to deny their faith. I don't think I am asking anyone to do that. It might be more accurate to say that I'm asking people to be wise as serpents in addition to being as harmless as doves (see Matthew 10:16). Mostly, I ask people to reflect honestly on how human beings are and how we behave and react; not on the world as it should be, or as we would like it to be, but on the world as it is.

I repeat my earlier injunction: first, do no harm. When I said it didn't matter whether or not we won the argument, it is not because I don't think it is winnable. In fact I think we win it all the time. We

shorter and our leaders seek out the sound bite and the ten-word answer.

The music is now as important as the message. We all love a beautiful aria, *Caste Diva* or *Nessun Dorma*. At least we love the tune, the music, even if we are blissfully ignorant of the lyrics. The task facing us is to have the right arguments, expressed in the right words, *communicated in the right tone*. We then have a chance of being heard. We speak kindly, gently. Not in anger; never in anger. Not in judgement or in a personal attack, but in truth and love.

All of that said, we must understand that removing the Eighth Amendment from the Constitution is anything but a

‘ True peacemakers are those who love, defend and promote human life in all its dimensions ... Life in its fullness is the height of peace. Anyone who loves peace cannot tolerate attacks and crimes against life. Those who insufficiently value human life and, in consequence, support among other things the liberalisation of abortion, perhaps do not realise that in this way they are proposing the pursuit of a false peace. The flight from responsibility, which degrades human persons, and even more so the killing of a defenceless and innocent being, will never be able to produce happiness or peace. ’

Pope Benedict XVI