

Joint Pastoral Letter from the Bishops of Hallam, Leeds & Middlesbrough

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

You will realize that during the course of the last few years Catholic Care has been making strenuous efforts to secure its rights as an adoption agency in order to continue to supply a beneficial service to the three Dioceses of Hallam, Leeds and Middlesbrough. Since 1963, this agency has assisted placing of some of the most vulnerable children to the care of loving families in our region.

However, in 2006 the passing of the Equality Act affected this good work. This new law asks us to operate our adoption agency with disregard to the Church's teaching on marriage and family life. It has been designed to widen the pool of people who are able to legally adopt which includes same-sex couples. Despite the fact that Catholic Care has been able to find caring families for a vast number of needy children we are being invited either to stop our adoption work or stop being a Catholic charity altogether. This has had the effect that most Catholic adoption agencies, depending on their circumstances, have either closed or transferred their adoption activity to other charities. Neither of these options is acceptable to us or to the Trustees of Catholic Care. Indeed, our position has been widely supported not only within the Catholic Church but also from very many others outside.

Since 2007 Catholic Care has been involved in a legal battle to stay open as a Catholic adoption agency and to operate according to our beliefs in marriage and family life. Precisely because we wish to do everything possible to remain open the next stage in this legal process will take place in the High Court this week. Our position is that it is in the interests of children to continue our work. We are not judging other agencies that accept same sex couples for adoption, but feel strongly that we should not be forced to do so, nor is there a necessity for this to happen. We believe that this is a legally justifiable position to take and that it is a reasonable response to a legitimate end.

Our adoption service has been at the heart of the local community for over 100 years. It has been praised and widely appreciated by local authorities and social services, as well as the children who have benefited from this work and the couples who have sought to adopt them. Children have a right to a family life. There are too many children awaiting adoption and Catholic Care has a vital and a special role in helping very vulnerable children by finding loving families for them. If Catholic Care is forced to close its adoption service it is children who will lose an effective and well respected resource in the Yorkshire region.

As we write to you today, we wish to thank you for your generous support of Catholic Care and for your shared concern with us over this state of affairs. Above all, we seek your prayers especially as the High Court case begins on Wednesday. May Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, patroness of our three dioceses, intercede for us to the Lord that the good work Catholic Care has undertaken for so long may continue.

Devotedly,



Bishop of Hallam



Bishop of Leeds



Bishop of Middlesbrough

To be read after the Post Communion Prayer at all Sunday Masses on 26/27 February 2010
in the Dioceses of Hallam, Leeds and Middlesbrough.