

Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill Statement from HE Keith Patrick Cardinal O'Brien

Scotland's leading Roman Catholic churchman has urged MPs to use their time wisely over the summer to reflect on the vital importance of their decisions on the proposed embryology Bill.

Cardinal Keith Patrick O'Brien was speaking in the wake of the Government's surprise decision to delay the crucial vote on the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill until the autumn.

Cardinal O'Brien, who is in Lourdes leading the annual St Andrews and Edinburgh Archdiocesan Pilgrimage, told pilgrims at the French shrine gathered to mark the 150th anniversary of the apparitions of the Virgin Mary to St Bernadette, "I have already written to all our MPs about this Bill, particularly regarding the use of their consciences, and now again I call on them in this special way to consider the great importance of their decisions.

"As I have already said earlier, this Bill is a monstrous attack on human rights, human dignity and human life.

"This delay now gives our MPs time and I urge them all to use that time wisely to reflect on the consequences of their actions and their decisions.

"We are facing a crisis in society and we must ask ourselves *is human life important to us or is it not?*"

Cardinal O'Brien also took the opportunity to speak out once more against the UK's horrifying abortion rate figures, which, at present, amount to 200,000 each year.

He said, "By the time I retire in five years time, approximately another ONE MILLION babies could have been killed in the womb in our country. Another million so cruelly put to death in their mother's womb.

"Our Lady and Bernadette both thought of themselves as small cogs in the hands of Almighty God.

"But those who think themselves small cogs are indeed important, whether the unborn in the womb, one million precious cogs as I have already indicated, whether the sick in a wheelchair, young or old, every single person is important in the life of our Church, in the life of the world.

"Prayer and penance was the message of Lourdes 150 years ago and it is as important now as it was then.

"As I told MPs when I met them on a recent visit, "The Church has no easy answers to the issues which confront us, but we can offer a reminder of the foundational values on which any just society must be built, values which uphold the dignity of all human life, which assert the necessity of supporting family life, of recognising the limits of subsidiarity and the demands of solidarity.

"I now call on all of our MPs to search their hearts and their consciences in this extra time in which they have been given and to decide whether or not the value of human life really matters or whether or not it is simply one more commodity to be cast aside in our throw-away society."