



## Beatification of Cardinal Newman 'likely this year'

THE beatification of a Victorian Cardinal tipped to become England's first saint for more than a generation looks likely within the next few months, a senior figure in the Catholic Church said last night.

Fr Paul Chavasse, who heads the cause for the canonisation of Cardinal John Henry Newman, said he believed that the likelihood of beatification of the clergyman in the next few months – a key step on the path to sainthood – was now "very high."

"He is a giant in so many ways, theologically and spiritually and, as John Paul II called him, a 'sure guide' for people, in so many ways, he is a model for people in the Church today," he said.

"Particularly in an age where the faith is so often under attack, belittled, or ridiculed or just

plain ignored."

Fr Chavasse, who is provost of Birmingham Oratory, made his remarks in advance of the formal blessing and dedication of a new mosaic of Cardinal Newman at Westminster Cathedral in London.

The cardinal who converted from Anglicanism to Catholicism died in 1890 and is buried in a cemetery in Rednal, Worcestershire.

His remains are to be exhumed in secret and placed in a sarcophagus at the Birmingham Oratory, his memorial church, in preparation for his expected beatification later this year.

The Vatican is close to attributing a miracle to Cardinal Newman, concerning the case of Jack Sullivan, a deacon from the US diocese of Boston, Massachusetts, who was cured of a crippling spinal disease after praying to Cardinal Newman.

## Young hurlers aiming high



■ **QUIET SPOT ON CALVARY:** Conrad McDonnell (13) looks on at the fun during the North Antrim Board Hurling Camp

PICTURE: Hugh Russell

# We have unique chance to pick compassion ahead of abortion

The abortion debate in Northern Ireland has reached another critical crossroads, says **Karen Jardine**

**L**IKE a wound which never quite heals the debate on abortion provision in Northern Ireland has reopened. On Monday afternoon the TUC passed a motion expressing their overwhelming support for the introduction of the 1967 Abortion Act to Northern Ireland.

On Tuesday, Alliance for Choice launched their campaign to support the efforts of a cross-party group of MPs who aim to make this a reality.

Days before the parliamentary summer recess this group of MPs – none of whom represent a constituency in Northern Ireland – tabled Amendment NC30 to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill (HFE). The amendment, if passed, would extend the 1967 Abortion Act to these shores.

Those who support the amendment claim that, as Northern Ireland is part of the UK, it follows that legislation here should be brought into line with legislation there.

They also suggest that on issues of, for example, equality, or more recently the age of consent, it has been up to politicians at Westminster to make sure the correct decisions are made.

However, over the years, Northern Ireland has been treated separately from the rest of the United Kingdom

in many pieces of legislation.

For example, legislation outlawing religious hatred was introduced here many years before the Religious and Racial Hatred Act was passed at Westminster.

Furthermore, abortion cannot be easily compared to other issues as, in the opinion of a significant proportion of Northern Ireland's population, it is a matter of life and death. The amendment also blatantly disregards the wishes of the DUP, SDLP, Sinn Fein and the Ulster

**"I believe that we can all recognise that abortion in many ways represents a sad, even tragic choice"**

Hillary Clinton

Unionists, who specifically wrote to all MPs at Westminster earlier this year respectfully requesting that no attempt be made to use the HFE Bill to introduce the 1967 Abortion Act here.

The four leaders of the largest Christian denominations in Northern Ireland have also, in a letter to all MPs, supported the political parties in their assertion that the law on abortion here should be a matter for debate and decision at the Northern Ireland assembly.

These are not the only concerns. Seeking to extend the 1967 Abortion Act here, as an amendment to the HFE Bill, undermines the democratic integrity of our fledgling political

institutions. Neither Conservative nor Labour governments have seen fit to extend the act, even though they have been responsible for criminal justice for more than 35 years.

It is highly inappropriate to seek a radical revision of Northern Ireland's abortion laws by tabling an amendment to an already controversial and complex bill not least because it is common practice for an adequate period of consultation to take place prior to significant changes to devolved or reserved legislation.

There will be those who, having seen the origins of this article, will already have dismissed it as the 'typical position' of evangelical Christians and Catholics.

They will argue that the 1967 Abortion Act should be extended, that it is not compulsory and those who wish to use it should be given that choice.

However, even Hillary Clinton – viewed by many as the preference for pro-choice campaigners in the race to become the Democratic presidential nominee said in 2005: "I believe that we can all recognise that abortion in many ways represents a sad, even tragic choice to many, many women."

Leading American Christian author Jim Wallis, who regularly critiques the politics of both the right (including the religious right) and the left, recently wrote: "To suggest that the only issue at stake in the abortion debate is protecting the 'choice' that women have in their reproductive rights is simply not enough."

"That is to neglect or even deny the existence of another life, a growing life at stake in the decision."

"The long-term impact on women

who, at the time of this most difficult decision, ignore the thought of that other should make us all more sober about how morally and psychologically profound that 'choice' really is."

There are those who argue that the law here is inadequate to deal with the so-called 'hard cases'.

Questions about pregnancy resulting from rape or incest or cases of severe foetal abnormality are not insignificant.

However, to argue that we need the 1967 Abortion Act to handle these

**"It must surely be the concern of all right-thinking people... that the number of abortions which are carried out is so high"**

Lord Justice Nicholson

undoubtedly difficult and sensitive circumstances is akin to using a sledgehammer to prise open a nut.

Department of Health statistics show that in 2006, only one per cent of the 198,499 legal abortions in England and Wales were due to foetal abnormality.

The law on abortion in Northern Ireland is presently being clarified by guidance produced by the Department for Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

Legislation allows for termination of pregnancy "for the purpose only of

preserving the life of the mother".

The guidance, resulting from a successful application for judicial review by the Family Planning Association, is undergoing a period of consultation which ends on Monday September 22.

Competent guidelines will ensure that the law is upheld while at the same time treating women facing a crisis pregnancy situation with dignity, respect and compassion.

But this cannot be the concern only of government. The Church and community have a vital role to play in supporting single parent families and those who are desperate in the face of difficult unwanted pregnancies.

Northern Ireland's position gives its people a unique opportunity to show the rest of Britain that they can care compassionately and effectively for women in need, without resorting to abortion.

It is difficult to disagree with Lord Justice Nicholson who, when making his final comments in the Court of Appeal judgment during the judicial review, said: "This judgment is written in the hope that the department will seek to reduce the number of women and girls going away to seek an abortion and to encourage those seeking an abortion in Northern Ireland to make a different choice."

"It must surely be the concern of all right-thinking people in the United Kingdom that the number of abortions which are carried out is so high."

■ **Karen Jardine is public affairs and development officer with the Evangelical Alliance in Northern Ireland**