

YOUR REFERENDUM UPDATE

The vote against the right to life was a wound to the soul, perhaps the darkest day in Ireland's history. A terrible cruelty has been inflicted on the most innocent in our society - helpless preborn children. Worst of all, two thirds of the Irish people are complicit in this cruelty. It bears their stamp: every abortion is one they voted for.

All of you who worked, campaigned and prayed to protect life, however, should hold your head high. You fought the good fight to protect mothers and babies and your conscience is clear.

Thank you, from the bottom of our hearts for your heroic efforts. Now we need your insight and your ideas as we reflect, plan, pray, and rebuild the culture.

My very dear Friend,

The result of the abortion referendum was utterly devastating. We have lost something precious and beautiful and we are all broken-hearted. The fall of Ireland's pro-life protection was a wound to the soul, and the complicity of the people is a dark stain on the nation. It feels like an unexpected and traumatic death, because that's what it was, the death of decency and kindness and compassion. But we must now pick ourselves up off the floor, and we must fight on, because no referendum can ever make abortion right. We must also keep the path lit so that, together with the next generation, we can rebuild the culture.

In this report to you, then, we will examine:

- **Why the referendum was lost**
- **How the media, not the Yes campaign, repealed the 8th – with Google's help**
- **The strengths and weaknesses of our fight to Save the 8th**
- **The role of the Church in re-establishing a culture of life**
- **What must we do now – we want YOUR opinions and YOUR ideas**

Every one of you who took part in what was an inspiring, brilliant and heroic NO campaign should hold your head up high. You fought to protect both mother and baby, and to save entirely innocent children from abortion.

You stood up against the greatest injustice in the world, and time will show that you are on the right side of history. That should make you proud, and we are proud to stand with you and with

723,632 people who voted for life and against abortion.

The dedication and commitment of so many ordinary people was nothing short of heroic. Many of you volunteered two years of your lives to knock on doors and talk to people. In every constituency, you joined local canvass teams and gave everything you could to help fight against the campaign for abortion in Ireland. Over four thousand of you volunteered to canvass, leaflet, put up posters, hold street stalls and much more. Tens of thousands of you donated money, came to events, prayed, and supported us in every way you could.

We are forever grateful, and you should know that, although our hearts are broken, your work was not in vain. Many people will come to regret their vote, and will remember the truth that you shared with them when the reality of what repealing the 8th means becomes apparent.

This country has lost something beautiful and precious; but, we did not lose on May 25th, the unborn child did. They lost their right to life because so many voters were cowed and bullied and deceived – but we will always be their voice. We will fight on for those babies and for their mothers, because if we do not speak for them no-one will. Fulton Sheen said "Moral principles do not depend on a majority vote. Wrong is wrong, even if everybody is wrong. Right is right, even if nobody is right." We must always defend the right to life of innocent babies, even if we stand alone.

But we do not stand alone, and this movement has been energised by the huge influx of new members throughout the country, and of young people who gave this fight their all, and will continue to do so.

Know this too: in keeping abortion out of Ireland for 35 years, you have saved hundreds of thousands of lives. That is no small achievement, and you should feel very proud that, because of you, Ireland protected preborn babies long after many other countries had fallen.

History has shown us, time and time again, that evil eventually destroys itself. Abortion, too, will destroy itself. As Tim Jackson wrote: "But this will not be the last word. Whilst the deconstruction of the island of saints and scholars is nearing completion, the architects in their haste have forgotten to ask: who will inherit the land – is it those who kill their young or those who welcome each as gift?"

We have lost this battle, but we are not defeated. We live to fight another day and together we will fight for both mother and child. We will never be deterred in that work.

WHY THE REFERENDUM WAS LOST

As the date of the abortion referendum drew near, successive opinion polls began to show that support for the Yes vote was slipping. In fact, abortion campaigners revealed that their own polls had led them to believe that the final result would be very tight, and they were hoping for a very slim victory at best – perhaps 52% to 48%.

Yet 66% of people eventually voted to repeal the 8th Amendment and remove all constitutional protection from it. The size of the vote took absolutely everybody by surprise – including the media, political commentators and their allies in the Yes campaign. Pollsters from every market research company have said privately that they did not expect this result.

Opinion polls have consistently shown that only a third of Irish people consider themselves to be 'pro-choice', and this was mirrored in our experience at the doors. So why did voters tell our canvassers, and a succession of opinion polls, that they would vote No to abortion on demand, but then go on to support the repeal of the 8th even though they were aware of what might follow?

The exit polls (which sought responses from a total of 7,000 voters exiting voting centres) provide some insight into how voters came to this decision.

There were three main factors that led to the shocking result of the referendum:

- 1. It was more a vote against the 8th Amendment than a vote for abortion – because voters had been persuaded by the media claim, made repeatedly and persistently for the past five years, that the 8th was harming and even killing women. The relentless media campaign making this claim was bolstered by the blatant lies of pro-abortion doctors in the months before the vote..**
- 2. Voters were also repeatedly told that there was “no other way” to help women in the most difficult circumstances – such as in pregnancy after rape, or when the baby had a life-limiting condition, always referred to as a ‘fatal abnormality’ by the media. Many voted against the 8th on that basis, and closed their eyes to the inevitable consequences of what will follow.**
- 3. There are now also greater numbers of people (still a minority of the electorate but more than previously existed) who think abortion should be legal for any reason at all. This culture shift towards a more extreme and callous position was boosted in part by anger at the Church but also by other factors, and was expressed in a swing in favour of legalised abortion, particularly amongst younger voters and female voters.**

1. The media had convinced people of the lie that the 8th Amendment was killing women

The repeal of the 8th Amendment was primarily achieved by the Irish media who have not only openly campaigned in favour of legalising abortion for decades, but also collaborated fully in convincing Irish people of the false claim that our ban on abortion had killed women and must therefore be overturned.

To understand the effect of the near-total media bias, it's important to realise that media diversity is almost non-existent in Ireland, with news and opinion coverage on the issue across the national print, TV and radio outlets being almost universally supportive of a liberal abortion regime. Media bias in Ireland is really quite extraordinary, and the groupthink which prevails on abortion means that this was, from the beginning, an unfair and wholly skewed debate. Many online news platforms were also openly campaigning for repeal of the 8th. Comprehensive [research](#) by the Life Institute showed that 90% of news items on abortion printed in The Irish Times, during a three year period, were biased in favour of abortion, and similar patterns can be seen elsewhere. Media bias in Ireland is really quite extraordinary.

However, the media would not have succeeded in shifting the majority of middle-ground voters towards repealing the 8th without the fake-news storm they built around the tragic death of Savita Halappanavar.

Voters told exit pollsters that they had changed their minds on the abortion issue, not during the campaign, but five years previously, precisely the time when they were repeatedly told by the media that Ms Halappanavar died because of the 8th Amendment.

Many people voted against the 8th, then, because they had been fed an endless claim that it was killing or seriously harming women - a claim that senior political figures such as the Health Minister and an Taoiseach repeated throughout the campaign.

The lie that Savita was killed by the 8th Amendment was repeated so often that it became deeply embedded in the public narrative, more deeply, perhaps, than we had realised. A shift had taken place in the mindset of middle Ireland. A search of the website of RTE (the nation's largest news provider) for example, using the terms 'Savita, abortion' yields an astonishing 19,800 results since 2013. In contrast, a search using the terms 'Savita, sepsis' yields only 66 results, while only 114 results are found when searching for the terms 'Savita, medical misadventure' - even though three independent inquiries found that medical misadventure after a delayed diagnosis of sepsis caused her death.

Pro-life groups and representatives worked hard to explain the [real facts](#) but the media's insistence that she had died because of the 8th was overwhelming. People had decided the 8th Amendment was responsible for her death, despite all the evidence to the contrary, and they then voted to remove the 8th despite the consequences.

Compounding this misinformation were the misleading statements made by Dr Peter Boylan and others, not just during the campaign but over the past five years. The media never challenged them on the many lies that were told, even when Dr Boylan, for example, claimed

that another woman, Mrs Sheila Hodges had died because of the 8th, despite the fact that Mrs Hodges tragically lost her life to cancer which went untreated before the 8th Amendment even became law. When Boylan was subsequently asked to stand aside from his role in the Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists by a large group of Obstetricians who felt his role was compromised by his campaigning, the media did their best to bury that story.

Women were told – repeatedly and for many years – that they would be denied treatment for cancer and other conditions in pregnancy under the 8th, even though that was not the case. Pro-abortion doctors were given endless airtime to spread fear and misinformation, while pro-life doctors received far less time and were constantly challenged, even when they pointed to rock-solid facts such as Ireland's very low maternal mortality rates. Emotion, as we have so often seen, trumps facts and logic every time.

In the days before the vote, with support for repeal slipping, the media ratcheted up the claim that the 8th put women's lives in danger and therefore had to be repealed. Posters with Savita's image were erected around the country and the media sought out emotional statements from Savita's family calling for a Yes vote. It became impossible for the truth to be heard.

Perhaps the greatest irony in this tragic result is that official statistics show that Ireland, without abortion, was one of the safest places in the world to be pregnant, yet abortion has been legalised here because of media managed to convince the people of a lie around the death of a pregnant woman from sepsis.

2. Voters were persuaded by the media's focus on the 'hard cases'

- and they were repeatedly told that there was "no other way" to help women in the most difficult circumstances, such as in pregnancy after rape, or when the baby had a life-limiting condition (always referred to as a 'fatal abnormality' by the media). Many people voted against the 8th on that basis, and closed their eyes to the inevitable consequences of what would follow.

RTE's exit poll shows that only half of voters support the abortion-on-demand provision of the Government's bill even up to 12 weeks- and that support may be over-stated because the poll over-estimated the Yes vote by several percentage points, and because voters always seek to re-affirm their actions. It's clear from more than a decade of opinion polls that people opposed abortion on demand, yet they voted for a measure giving politicians the power to legalise abortion without restriction.

It's likely then that the people voted to repeal the 8th because they had been told so often, and for so long, that the pro-life amendment was causing rape victims to suffer, and that it had denied care to women where babies were terminally ill – had a 'fatal abnormality' to use the media's cruel phrase.

Minister Simon Harris and others told voters that repealing the 8th was the 'only' way to help women in these desperate situations and that Ireland was 'cruel' and 'uncaring' as long as the 8th was law. Again, the media never challenged these statements, but rather amplified them endlessly.

Many voters did not favour the 'pro-choice' position, but their vote will be used to that end. On

their conscience be it.

There can be only one conclusion, however, as to why voters lied to pollsters and to canvassers about their intentions: they know in their hearts that abortion is wrong. What most people, including Yes campaigners, saw as a soft No was actually a reluctant Yes. It was interesting to see many of those voters who had been persuaded to vote Yes subsequently express disgust and dismay at the cheering, gloating mob of abortion supporters in Dublin Castle, who banged drums, danced in conga lines, and pumped their fists in the air as they exulted in legalising abortion. The fact that the support was reluctant, and the eventual realisation of what legalised abortion always brings, will be part of the long build towards re-establishing a culture of life, where both mother and baby will be protected again.

Women will now suffer under an abortion regime which sees not just babies as disposable, but which tells them that they are on their own when they need help and support. That, too, is on the conscience of all those who voted Yes and on all those who lied to ensure that abortion be legalised.

3. There has been an undeniable culture shift amongst some voters,

and there are now also greater numbers of people (still a minority of the electorate but more than previously existed) who think abortion should be legal for any reason at all. This culture shift towards a more extreme and callous position was boosted in part by anger at the Church but also by other factors, and was expressed in a swing in favour of legalised abortion, particularly amongst younger voters and female voters.

The attitudes of some voters have hardened in relation to the preborn child. There are substantial numbers of people – at least 33% of voters – who are aware of the humanity of the baby, but they believe that the same baby can be killed if that preborn boy or girl gets in the way of any aspect of their lives, including the occasions where the child is simply inconvenient. It is a selfish, and often unfeeling, worldview.

This decline in compassion is also sometimes accompanied by a near-visceral hatred of the Catholic Church, and a desire to use a vote to punish the Church and to kick against what is viewed as an oppressive past. Sadly, with this distorted thinking, it is the child who bears the ultimate price of losing her life. This is a culture which does not truly respect women and does not respect human life. For some voters, abortion is simply a useful service for a lifestyle which has no objective morality at its core.

As the Yes campaign gloated and cheered for abortion along with Health Minister Simon Harris and Taoiseach Leo Varadkar in Dublin Castle on the day of the count, writer and commentator Peter Hitchens made a telling observation on Twitter.

“It is impossible to argue that any of those cheering and smiling are unaware of the humanity of unborn children, widely made known by ultrasound scans and the saving of premature babies at very early stages. Nor that they are unaware of the extreme violence involved in abortion. How then can they smile and cheer, knowing that the campaign they have supported and brought to success will undoubtedly mean many more violent abortions of unborn humans?”

To convince many middle-ground voters, abortion campaigners also built a narrative around the women of Ireland living as second-class citizens, oppressed and unfairly treated by society. In the final ten days, the scandals around cervical cancer where the State failed women, and two shocking murders of women, may have led to a swell of public anger misdirected at the 8th Amendment. The tragic irony is that the attitudes and actions of those who have disregarded and harmed women are only served by the availability of abortion, but that was lost on voters. Abortion does not free women from oppression, but it serves exploitative, sleazy men like Harvey Weinstein and others all too well. Again, that will become clear in the days and years ahead.

Culture swings and shifts happen both ways however, and those of us who love and protect every baby and every mother have a natural advantage in rebuilding the culture of life: we will not have aborted the future generations who can swing back the pendulum.

A note on turnout and family voting

Turnout in the referendum favoured the Yes vote. At 64%, it was lower than expected for an issue that has caused so much public debate for so long. Again, the exit polls showed that women voted in higher numbers than normal, while turnout was down for men, many of whom had clearly been persuaded that they had no right to vote on this issue.

A team of Irish and international observers from UK-based NGO Democracy Volunteers (DV) and Canadian NGO Sustainable Development Assistance International (SDAI) monitored the referendum on the 8th Amendment. They observed "a notable amount" of so-called family voting, which involves two or more people sharing a polling booth.

The observers told the Journal that this "can limit voters' right to a secret ballot as it involves two voters, usually partners, sharing a polling booth". Family voting includes sharing the same polling booth when voting, looking at how another individual has voted and even filling in someone's ballot paper on their behalf.

In terms of ballot boxes allegedly not being sealed properly, the spokesperson said: "Boxes may be marked by our observers as improperly sealed because they are entirely unsealed, because they are sealed but the keys are not attached to the ballot box as is required, or because they are sealed but not tightly enough to prevent ballot papers being placed in, or removed from, the box."

The Irish electoral register is a shambles, and it is grossly overstated by up to 500,000 people, according to a previous Newstalk investigation. This has been ignored by successive governments and should be a matter for concern.

THE YES CAMPAIGN DID NOT WIN THE VOTE – THE MEDIA DID

“Pat Leahy [political editor of the Irish Times] says that definitely there was media bias in favour of a Yes vote.” MacGuill Summer School, July 2018

We know that a full 33% of our people had the wisdom and the courage to vote against the cruelty of abortion, and that another 33% are recklessly supportive of ending human life for any or for most reasons. Many in the remaining 33% voted Yes because of a never-ending barrage of media propaganda and lies which worked to legalise abortion, not just for the duration of the campaign but for decades.

Despite claims to the contrary after the win, serious commentators know that the Yes side ran, at best, a mediocre campaign. The need to sideline extremists in groups like ROSA and the desire to ‘lock Ruth Coppinger in a room’ for the duration of the campaign (as repealers told the Irish Times), led to a late launch. Messaging was vague and lacked the colour and momentum of the marriage referendum, and the ground campaign for a Yes was almost non-existent, relying mostly on students making noise in the last couple of weeks.

In fact, just 7 weeks ahead of the vote, political correspondents were urging the Yes side to wake up, with the Irish Times writing of “alarm at apparent lack of urgency in repeal campaign” while noting the “well organized anti-abortion campaign is weeks ahead in its postering and canvassing”.

The media need not have worried. Their unrelenting push for repeal won the Yes vote in the end. Building a viable and influential alternative media platform must now be a priority for everyone who is concerned about the ongoing attack on traditional values and religious freedom.

6 ways the Irish Media, not the Yes campaign, repealed the 8th. Google played a part too.

- 1.** They worked for five long years to convince people of the lie that the 8th Amendment had killed Savita and would kill other women. As stated above, a search of RTE’s website, using the terms ‘Savita, abortion’ yields an astonishing 19,800 results since 2013. In contrast, a search using the terms ‘Savita, sepsis’ yields only 66 results, while only 114 results are found when searching for the terms ‘Savita, medical misadventure’. Similar results can be seen on other media platforms, and almost every current affairs discussion on abortion during the campaign was prefaced by a video report suggesting that the 8th Amendment had killed Savita.
- 2.** They **focused almost exclusively on the ‘hard cases’** but never on the reality of abortion. Think of the Late Late Show features promoting abortion for so-called ‘fatal-foetal abnormalities’, and the relentless media focus for the past five years on the most difficult cases imaginable, where abortion was constantly portrayed as the ‘only’ option. The brave families who spoke out to defend their sick babies and seek a better alternative than abortion were often treated with open hostility in interviews, while the extraordinary courage of Miss C, a rape victim who called for a No vote, was conveniently ignored by a media desperate to ensure repeal. They also did their very best to avoid, at all costs,

talking about the horrific reality of abortion.

- 3. The media also willingly colluded with the Yes campaign in relation to **how debates should be held, not just in the tone, but in the format of those debates**.** This was truly astonishing.

Abortion campaigners wanted to avoid head-to-head debates at all costs in the referendum. This was their stated preference and the media were only too happy to oblige. This inevitably led to the softest interviews possible with the Yes side (the Pat Kenny Show on Newstalk failing to challenge Dr Louise Kenny who had made the claim that the 8th had 'put women in the grave'), while pro-life spokespeople were treated with naked hostility and aggression (think Pat Kenny interviewing Maria Steen, or Matt Cooper's belligerence towards John McGuirk or towards every pro-life spokesperson on every programme).

The media also eagerly acquiesced to Simon Harris' instructions on what questions should be asked of the No campaign. Harris said: "I hope that during this campaign, journalists won't just ask me about the proposals that would follow a referendum, but will also ask the other side: 'Well, what is your alternative proposal for a woman, for a child that has been raped? Are you genuinely saying that that child has to carry that baby to full term? What is your alternative proposal to the mum and dad who travelled to the UK today and have to bring their baby back in the boot of their car?'"

His instructions were followed to the letter. These questions were repeatedly asked of the No side by the media, who did their best to ensure that the debate focused only on the hard cases and not the reality of abortion or the proposal, while no such hard questions were ever asked of the Yes campaign. A key example was RTE News' final interview of the campaign with Dr Peter Boylan where a series of soft questions avoided asking about the humanity of the baby or how abortions were carried out, and where Boylan was allowed to insist that the 'only way' to help women in hard cases was by legalising abortion. In contrast, the No campaign was repeatedly asked if they wanted to force rape victims to carry babies, while the reality of the actual wording of the proposed legislation was denied.

- 4. They were openly hostile to the No campaign, and never challenged the Yes side.**

Every factual claim made by the pro-life movement was denied by the media. Just one example was when The Irish Times wound itself in knots trying to deny the fact that one in five babies are aborted in Britain – a figure confirmed by the UK's Office of National Statistics. The Journal.ie went so far as to change their own previous fact-check which had found the statistic to be true, and to then issue a 'revised' check supporting their contention that the figure was now untrue. Orwell's Ministry of Truth has nothing on these people.

RTÉ's Prime Time also went to great lengths to try to prove that abortion rates went down when abortion was legalised. The reality – that those rates inevitably climb higher – was airbrushed out by the Irish media. Almost every media outlet denied the reality that the government's proposal allows for later-term abortion, because they were very well aware that polls showed most people were opposed to this.

In stark contrast, the claims of the Yes side in relation to maternal safety and other issues were never seriously challenged at all.

- 5. They covered up the mistakes of the abortion industry, and the campaign errors of the Yes side.** Aisha Chithira travelled from Ireland to a 'safe, legal' abortion clinic in Britain. She bled to death after the abortion, but the Irish media covered up her death just as they under-report or ignore anything that might reflect negatively on the abortion industry.

In a similar vein, they also ignored the errors of the Yes campaign, particularly when their spokespeople misspoke or revealed a mindset that would not find favour with middle Ireland.

On RTE's Prime Time, Clare Daly denied the humanity of the preborn child and [made horribly offensive remarks about babies who were miscarried](#). If the No side had made a remark which was this offensive the media would have led a carousel of condemnation to influence voters, but, as usual, they buried Daly's misstep. Simon Harris and others repeatedly misspoke about what was actually in the abortion bill without any consequences. Yes campaigners were vicious on social media and thuggish in real life, tearing down half of the No posters and threatening pro-life volunteers. The media ignored all of that and more.

- 6. Their news reporting was massively biased in favour of abortion for the past decade or more.** Comprehensive [research](#) by the Life Institute showed that 90% of news items on abortion printed in The Irish Times, during a three year period, were biased in favour of abortion, and the same bias is seen right across the Irish media. The senior political correspondents we spoke to during the campaign acknowledged that journalists, from most media outlets, were almost all in favour of legalising abortion, to the point where many of them openly campaigning on the issue.

Then there was **the Google factor**. The Yes campaign openly acknowledged that they had repeatedly asked Google to adopt a policy to limit the reach of the No campaign's message—telling The Irish Times that they were on to Google about the matter once a week. The media helped this push by pretending that they were concerned about outside interference (but not from George Soros, of course) and 'fake news'.

To the delight of abortion campaigners, Google then banned all advertising on the referendum. This meant that the No campaign was restricted in being able to use Google and YouTube to get vitally important messages across to key voter sections ahead of the referendum. This was an unprecedented move by Google to help one side in a referendum. Google claimed that they were playing fair by banning advertisements from both sides, but that's nonsense. The Yes campaign didn't need Google; they have RTE.ie, Independent.ie, IrishTimes.ie, TV3.ie, Newstalk.ie, and many 'news' outlets giving millions of euro worth of free advertising day after day to abortion supporters.

What can we do against such a media onslaught? We can begin by realising that participating in such a biased, and, often hateful, media is just one small part of what we need to do. Establishing a serious media vehicle to speak to, and for, the 33% is a better option.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE NO CAMPAIGNS

Abortion campaigners had almost the entire political, media and civil establishment on board to push abortion, as well as millions in foreign funding, and millions more in domestic funding channeled through domestic NGOs. Any neutral observer, however, would acknowledge that all the NO groups fought the better campaign, with better posters, leaflets, speakers, roadshows, and colour – and a far superior ground campaign. The Yes side, in contrast, was a mostly unimaginative, fairly lacklustre affair, relying on celebrity endorsement rather than any compelling messages, and failing to muster significant numbers for a national effort at the doors. The NO side was out first, reached further, debated better and, in a fair fight, this would be a different result. But the persistent fear that the 8th was killing women, a fear created by years of media lies and misinformation, proved too difficult to overcome.

Many of the incredibly selfless pro-life volunteers who gave so much time to the Life Canvass may be feeling especially frustrated at the result. They may take some comfort, however, in the recent revelation that, according to the Edmund Burke Institute, a major poll of some 28,000 voters in 2016 indicated that more than 80% of people, at that time, supported repeal of the 8th. The Canvass and the campaigns at least solidified the pro-life message so that 33% of people understood enough about the issue to vote No.

The Life Canvass was not a wasted effort, moreover, because it left people better informed, and while it might have been impossible at this time to shift the false narrative that the 8th was harming women, those conversations will not be forgotten as we begin the long process of taking back the culture. Those interactions have planted seeds which will yet bear fruit.

It was a campaign marked by the spirit of those volunteers, imbued by decency and kindness, by joy and good humour. You are the very best of people, and it has been the honour of our lives to know you and to work with you, and to call you our friends.

A movement with such heroic and noble people at its core is not going away and will, in the fullness of time, bring this country back to life.

723,632 people voted NO. That leaves 33% of the electorate who need a political voice – and it's worth pointing out that no single party presently in the Dáil commands the support of a third of the electorate.

The fight goes on. Killing babies was wrong last week. It remains wrong this week. It will be wrong next week, and the week after. Abortion will never be right. It will never be a compassionate solution. It will never fix one woman's problem or cure a single disease.

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN RE-ESTABLISHING A CULTURE OF LIFE

In the aftermath of the referendum, Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan of Waterford told the media that he “will continue to fight for a good Ireland and a decent Ireland where everyone is respected, born and unborn”. He also addressed an important point when he observed: “What is the critical thinking of the Irish, do we think things through? Do we accept that there is an objective morality, or do we make up our own? I think many people make up their own and this is really frightening because it means that those who are strong and powerful will dictate to the less powerful and the weak.”

Bishop Cullinan is correct: Irish people have not been taught to think critically, and the subjective morality which has replaced the informed conscience of a mostly Christian nation can only lead to further harm to the most vulnerable.

Many priests and bishops spoke up strongly both before and after the referendum to give guidance to voters, but it was too late to fill the vacuum which had been left by the failure to inform people at schools or in churches for at least two decades.

The Church has a crucially important role in rebuilding the culture. It needs to be aware that this can only be achieved by a leaner, stronger Church which seeks to speak firstly to the faithful, rather than being a platform to be abused by people like Minister Josepha Madigan who led Fine Gael's abortion campaign, and then seeks a leadership role in her parish for her own benefit and to the confusion of the congregation.

WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

It is easy, at times like these, to fall into despair. But we cannot mourn forever. We need to pick ourselves up, and get ready to fight for unborn babies, and their mothers, in the months and years ahead.

G.K. Chesterton said that "hope means hoping when everything seems hopeless", and we are a people of hope.

In a couple of months, abortion cheerleader-in-chief, Simon Harris, will introduce his monstrous abortion bill to the Dáil. There are brave TDs, like Mattie McGrath, Peadar Tóibin, Carol Nolan and others, who are raising their voices to seek amendments already.

Pro-life doctors are speaking out to say they will not participate in the death of one of their patients. Thankfully, the National Association of GPs say that a very large majority of their members will not perform abortions, and also believe that doctors must not be forced to refer women for abortions where they do not wish to participate in ending a baby's life. These pro-life doctors must be supported in every way as they continue their good work.

Plans for a serious collaboration to establish a new media platform are being put in place. Crisis pregnancy supports, like that provided by Gianna Care, must now be expanded to provide real alternatives to abortion.

Abortion campaigners and the government and the media all think that you will now go away and be forgotten. That is what they want. They want a clear field so that they can implement a horrendous abortion regime with no opposition whatsoever. We cannot and will not let that happen.

In the coming months, we will gather and regroup, meet and discuss, listen and learn. We will build this way forward together.

Since 1983, the Irish people have constantly heard that the 8th Amendment was the cause of all ills. But the 8th is gone, and now those who fought to have abortion legalised will be accountable for the regime they establish. That needs not just our opposition, but our endless scrutiny.

In his poem, *The Mother*, Pádraig Pearse wrote that, despite the weariness of much sacrifice, "yet I have my joy, my sons were faithful, and they fought."

You were faithful, and you fought. Together we will fight on to restore the beauty that Ireland has lost.