

#### PROMOTING THE SANCTITY OF LIFE

AUGUST 2014 VOLUME 30 NUMBER 2

## Vera

#### A POEM BY KIRSTEN DUE

Lord, can't you see how hard I've worked And I've never asked for pay Slaving in the kitchen To serve you night and day And now how could you leave me When I've done so much for you And all I've ever asked for Is that you would serve me too I've done more than the others And now I'm all alone Left like Jonah in this bitterness When you destroyed his leafy home I thought that all my deeds Would have purchased me much more But now I see you've left me ragged With less even than the poor For you have made me bitter I cannot swallow food And the doctor dares to tell me That you are kind and good I tell her you have left me She takes off her gloves and gown And holds me by the hand That I once knew as your own And I tell her you have left me And she tells me you are Love

And smiles at me with tears That are yours shed from above And I tell her you have left me In this place of living dead And she tells me of your son abandoned And that he was left instead And I whine that you have left me Despite my slavish deeds And she speaks of your forgiveness And your son who intercedes And you tell me things I once knew When I was just a little girl And you tell me that all suffering Is a love-thing of this world Though sight will never know it And now my sight is dim I catch the Spirit's whisper Of you who suffered all my sin And you tell me by this cancer You are calling me to Home Where you my Bride-groom will receive me And take me as your own Where you my Lord will be my God

And I will worship as your Bride And know Christ my tender saviour Never once had left my side



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## **Editorial**

#### KIMBERLEY PFEIFFER

Well, these recent months have certainly been full of controversial bioethical issues. Euthanasia Bills continue to pop up in parliaments around the world. Locally, a draft bill was presented in federal parliament (p4). It was briefly reported in the media but seems not to have gone much further. Abroad, a Physicianassisted suicide Bill was put forward by MP Lord Falconer in the UK which has received particularly interesting commentary in opposition. One noteworthy position was presented by Georgetown Professor John Keown emphasising palliation measures over the killing of patients. His report is available at:

http://www.carenotkilling.org.uk/resources/reasons-for-rejecting-falconer.

Meanwhile, controversial Australian Euthanasia advocate Dr Philip Nitschke and head of Exit International has recently had his medical license suspended by the Medical Board of Australia. Exit International is also under investigation for its role in suicide coaching three non-terminal individuals who took their own lives. Nitschke plans to appeal his suspension and Exit has reported to have already raised significant funds to finance his legal battle.





International surrogacy has received much attention in recent weeks with abandoned surrogate Baby Gammy capturing the hearts of the Australian public. An Australian charity set up to finance Gammy's short and long term needs has raised over \$200,000. Gammy's story has rendered to the surface the messy moral and legal complexity that is commercial surrogacy.

As the limits continue to be pushed it can be overwhelming for Christians who a hold to the Godgiven dignity of every human life. But perhaps there are unique opportunities here for our message? For what these extreme cases certainly do is get people's attention. While routine abortion and surrogacy arrangements don't raise too many eyebrows, these cases do. Our task then is surely to point out, always in love, that while extreme they are only the logical outworking of a worldview which does not see every human being as intrinsically valuable.

Let us pray for Phillip Nitschke, for baby Gammy and his parents, and for hearts to be turned to life, and to the God who has given it.

#### ...a little more about Kirsten Due

Dr Kirsten Due lives in Cairns with her husband, Rev. Dr. Noel Due, where Kirsten works as a GP. Kirsten has a sub-specialty in Palliative Medicine and extensive experience in psychiatry and psychology (in which she has her first degree).

Kirsten and Noel together offer training seminars that address the overlap between the medico/pastoral worlds on topics including: trends in Palliative medicine; Dealing with families in crisis; Depression, anxiety and related issues; Grief and bereavement; shame, self-harm and related issues.

Kirsten wrote the poem "Vera" while working on a palliative care ward when she was looking after a lady who was dying of throat cancer. She had been a "church goer" all her life and was exceptionally bitter at her diagnosis. She caught a nasty infectious disease while on the ward which meant her room was isolated from visitors and other patients until the virus had passed and anyone who attended her had to wear full protective clothing - masks, gloves and gowns.

Dr Kirsten Due is author of "in-hope-against-hope", an interactive website supporting those who love and care for the dying.

http://inhopeagainsthope.wordpress.com





## Speakers for the 2014 Lutheran For Life Conference have now been confirmed:

Euthanasia: Darrin and Vanessa Kohrt

**Abortion:** Jo Ellsum

Marriage: Reid and Christine Matthias

Reproductive Technology: Frank and Anne Rasenberger

RSVP: Saturday October 26

### Palliative Care seminar

approach was a highlight of the seminar.

#### PR JOSHUA PFEIFFER

On Saturday May 24th about fifty people gathered at St Paul's Lutheran Church in Nundah for a Palliative Care seminar lead by Dr Kirsten Due. The seminar was hosted by Zion aged care home and attended by staff from many different Lutheran Community Care facilities in South East Queensland. There was a good mix of chaplains, nurses, managers and other allied health staff. Dr Kirsten Due is resident in Cairns where she works as a GP. She has a speciality in Palliative medicine and extensive experience in Hospice care. She is an active Christian and married to a Lutheran Pastor, the Rev Dr Noel Due, and together they offer various training opportunities around Queensland. Dr Due also has her first degree in psychiatry and psychology. All this means she is able to bring a particularly

as well the medical and clinical issues. Attendees feedback suggested this well rounded

Lutherans for Life proudly claim the 'Pro-life' label. However sadly we know that so often in our society groups like ours are seen as negative, obsessed with being *anti*-abortion and *anti*-euthanasia. While this stereotype should surely be challenged, it can be a good reminder for us also of the need to keep the pro in pro-life. We need always be looking for the positive activities we can be involved to help those in difficult life and death situations. This may be the help and support needed for a young single mother feeling it's all too much to have a baby, or the older person feeling like they don't want to face that final stage of life and the pain therein. Surely engaging in good quality Palliative Care which takes serious the spiritual needs of people as well as the physical ones, is a truly *pro*-life activity to be encouraged.

holistic approach to palliative care which takes seriously the spiritual and emotional dimensions

## End-of-Life issues in the Public Square

DRAFT EUTHANASIA BILL TABLED IN AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL PARLIAMENT

DR ROB POLLNITZ

Green Senator Richard Di Natale has made public a new draft bill called the Medical Services (Dying with Dignity) Bill 2014 to allow lethal doses, with the usual so-called safeguards we have seen in the various state bills. He writes that the federal Parliament has the power to legislate regarding medical services, and argues that providing a lethal dose can be defined as a medical service in a law that will withstand a challenge if it conflicts with state law. To quote George Orwell - "Political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable." Senator Di Natale plans to move for a Senate inquiry on his draft bill. He notes - "I think we

haven't got the numbers right now." Mature readers may recall the federal 1996 Euthanasia Laws Act which overruled the NT law to allow euthanasia. (noeuthanasia.org.au, 24<sup>th</sup> June 2014)

## NEW ALLIANCE FORMED IN NEW ZEALAND TO OPPOSE EUTHANASIA AND PROMOTE PALLIATIVE CARE

The Care Alliance (Te Manaaki Haumi) is an umbrella organisation to bring together a wide range of voices from the palliative, medical, youth, aged, disability, bioethics and faith sectors who are opposed to euthanasia. The alliance began in 2012 when a NZ Labor MP proposed a flawed End of Life Choice Bill which was later withdrawn. "As long as there is a political intent to legalise euthanasia in New Zealand, we need to be vigilant", said Care Alliance co-founder and MP Maggie Barry. (carealliance.org.nz, April 2014)

# Commercial Surrogacy and Human Trafficking

KIMBERI EY PEFIFFER



The recent drama surrounding baby Gammy has opened the Pandora's box that is commercial surrogacy, particularly its relationship to human trafficking. Thailand's military government has now banned all surrogacy arrangements - especially the arranging of children born of Thai women to be taken out of the country by other parties - regardless of whether the baby is genetically related to those parties or not. This has left many Australian and British couples with gestating babies in Thailand in a place of emotional and legal uncertainty.

Children sold into the slave trade - including the sex industry and paedophila rings - is a serious problem in Thailand. Infants are also commonly sold to wealthy people who are unable to conceive or adopt children of their own.

### So what does commercial surrogacy have in common with human trafficking?

Couples seeking a surrogate mother to help them have a child are often sincere; usually their infertility is burdensome, nor is it something they chose. Often these couples are emotionally exhausted from their journey through failed IVF cycles and adoption wait lists. Although this is sad and unfair this is not the primary moral concern about surrogacy. What commercial surrogacy and human trafficking have in common is the assumption that human life can be commodified: can be bought for a price. Usually surrogacy advocates use the language of financial compensation rather than financial gain. However a close examination of the transactions that occur and the way in which they happen shows that international surrogacy is riddled with both moral and practical problems.

Like the slave-trade, surrogacy capitalises on family poverty. In both scenarios desperation and economic pressures force parents to seek profit from the sale of a child. However, the financial reward is rarely enough to benefit the family's long-term financial situation. This is confirmed when the birth mother returns to engage in another round of

surrogacy. In India, women are separated from their families to live in a home provided by the clinic with other gestating surrogates. It is hard to imagine that these women would freely choose to do this had their families not been in financial need.

In surrogacy arrangements, like some infant trafficking rings, the birth mother has her capacity to bear a child commodified. Pregnancy and birth in these circumstances is dissociated from the role it plays in motherhood and in the relationship between a mother and child.

A child is bought for a price. In India, it costs about \$25,000 (AUD) to procure a child. This fee is divided between the agent, the IVF clinic and hospital, the cost for housing and feeding a gestating surrogate mother and finally some reward is received by the mother's family. Purchasing a child for a fee offends that child's dignity - a monetary value can never be placed on the head of any human being.

Furthermore surrogacy, like human trafficking, fails to preserve the identity of the child and instead purposefully fragments the gestation, genetic and social aspects of the family. It implies that anyone or any group of people have the right to a child, whether they be single, de facto or married, heterosexual or homosexual.

Finally, commercial surrogacy is set up to meet the terms of a contractual relationship. Like human trafficking, an agent acts as a buffer between the commissioning couple and the birth mother. The agent ensures that the baby is received from the birth mother, given to the commissioning couple and that the fee is collected. The agent inhibits any direct relationship between the respective sets of parents and ensures that the commissioning parents have no further obligations to the birth mother after the baby has been received. This dishonours the role of the birth mother in a child's identity, actively exploits a woman for her child-bearing capacity and ignores the significance that bearing children has both in a mother's history and that of her children.

## Snippets

DR ROB POLLNITZ

## Asylum seeker families with babies secretly moved to Christmas Island

On the 11th June at least five two-month-old babies and their families were forced to leave Adelaide's Inverbrackie detention centre at 3 am without access to legal advice. Lawyer Jacob Varghese, representing 26 Australian-born asylum seeker babies and their families, said the parents were living in daily fear that they would be moved to Christmas Island. A spokeswoman for the Immigration Department claimed the detainees were moved from Inverbrackie to Christmas Island for medical reasons. Minister Scott Morrison has announced a \$2.6 million education package for school-aged children at the Christmas Island detention centre, to cope for up to 150 children, an increase from the 56 children currently attending school there. (smh.com.au, 16 June 2014)

The writer is a paediatrician of 40 years experience and cannot think of any genuine medical reason for moving any person from mainland Australia to Christmas Island. Visiting physicians have been concerned by the lack of health services for children with special needs and for pregnant women in offshore detention. On the 12<sup>th</sup> June the Australian College of Physicians issued a media release calling on the Federal Government to remove every child from detention to a community setting to protect their health. This is one of 25 recommendations made by the College in their submission to the Australian Human Rights Commission Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention (racp.edu.au)

## "Yes" to euthanasia brings a seismic shift in values

This is the title on an article written by Australian born and Canadian resident Prof Margaret Somerville in response to Quebec's Bill 52 to legalise euthanasia noting its many problems.

The bill is now before the national government of Canada and appears likely to be rejected.

Prof Somerville is a most articulate author on the dangers of permitting lethal doses, and her work is always well worth reading

(mercatornet.com/careful/view/14206, 10th June 2014)





#### Sudan releases Christian woman Meriam Ibrahim from death row

The Sudan government has released a woman sentenced to hang for the crime of converting to Christianity in response to what it called unprecedented international pressure.

Meriam, 27, was born to a Muslim father and an Ethiopian Orthodox Christian mother, and married a Christian US citizen, Daniel Wani. During her trial Meriam said she had never been a Muslim. Her Muslim father had been absent and she was raised as a Christian by her mother. Under Islamic sharia law, a Muslim woman cannot marry a non-Muslim man, and any such relationship is considered adultery. At her trial in Sudan Meriam was found guilty of both adultery and apostasy, ordered to recant, and given a death sentence. She gave birth to a baby girl last month in a women's prison near Khartoum. The sentence sparked an international outcry, with formal protests from Western governments and about 1 million people signing a petition on the Change.org website. Marie Harf of the US state department has urged the Sudan government to repeal its laws making religious conversion a crime, before its request to have sanctions lifted can be considered.

(ABC News, 24 June 2014)

#### Australian judge warns of psychological effects of commercial surrogacy on children

Justice Paul Cronin of the Family Court of Australia has expressed major concerns about the effects of international surrogacy arrangements on children born through the procedure. He warns that children could easily encounter an identity crisis when they become aware that they were conceived via commercial surrogacy. "Whatever things people say about the future and their intentions, one has to be somewhat cynical about just how those things will unfold for a child born into this commercial arrangement .. I have no idea what this child will face in 15 years time if cultural issues arise or his issues about identity become a crisis." (bioedge.org, article 10904)





IVF consultation under way in Australia

Our National Health and Medical Research Council is planning a review of the ethics and clinical practice of assisted reproductive technology. No changes have been proposed as yet, and it seems likely that a discussion draft will be released in late 2014. Regular readers will be aware that the Australian regulations tend to be permissive, and are likely to remain so. The emphasis has been on providing a baby for any consumer with the cash, including singles and samesex couples. The provision that the welfare of the child is of paramount concern is ignored. Issues to be reviewed include compensating egg and sperm donors, confidentiality for donors, storage limits for frozen embryos, adoption of frozen embryos, sex selection, and legalising commercial surrogacy. (nhmrc.org.au, 22nd April 2014)

#### Religious Freedom - No (One)

In a majority 2-1 verdict the Victorian Court of Appeal has found that the Christian Brethren Church discriminated against Way Out, a suicide prevention group working with gay and lesbian youth, when their Philip Island youth camp refused to take a booking from the group.

The two judges found this decision breached the Equal Opportunity Act. That Act does allow religious groups to discriminate because of "genuine religious beliefs or principles." However, the court ruled 2-1 that the Christian Youth Camps (CYC) were not entitled to any exemption. It is reported that Way Out planned to teach 60 rural youth attendees that homosexual practice was a normal and natural way of life. CYC claim they refused the booking because this teaching was contrary to their own fundamental beliefs.

A later report notes that CYC has appealed this decision to the High Court of Australia. Prof Neil Foster commented - "(this decision) has the potential to have a serious impact on narrowing freedom of religious exercise in Australia."

(<u>theage.com.au</u> 16th April 2014, christiantoday.com.au 29th May 2014)

#### Religious Freedom - No (Two)

On the 24th April the law society of Ontario Canada voted not to admit to its ranks graduates of Trinity Western University (TWU), a Christian institution, for the sole reason that the TWU covenant reserves sexual intimacy for heterosexual marriage. Other provinces may follow suit. Back in 2001 the Supreme Court of Canada approved the TWU covenant, but many of Canada's top lawyers believe that public opinion and the legalisation of same-sex marriage have altered the climate enough to overturn that decision. For such lawyers, Christians are now seen as bigots who pose a public threat. Equality rights are seen to override religious freedom, with socially accepted ostracism of Christians by professional bodies. Princeton law Professor Robert George comments - "Powerful forces and currents in our society press us to be ashamed of the Gospel - ashamed of the good, ashamed of our faith's teachings on the sanctity of human life in all stages and conditions, ashamed of our faith's teachings on marriage as the conjugal union of husband and wife .. For all who seek to be faithful, it's Good Friday. We are no longer acceptable. We can no longer be comfortable. It is for us a time of trial, a time of testing by adversity."

(newsweekly.com.au, 21st June 2014, CERC, 28th May 2014)

#### Religious Freedom - Yes (One)

A federal judge in Denver USA has ruled that the Colorado Christian University does not have to fund access for its staff and students to abortifacient drugs in their healthcare plan, as this would violate their religious beliefs under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

Before this ruling, CCU faced millions of dollars in annual fines starting on the 1st July for breaching the Obama healthcare plan (CCU has 5,500 students). In the coming month the US Supreme Court is slated to hand down its decision in the Hobby Lobby case against the Obama mandate.

(lifenews.com, 20th June 2014)







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