

ROWANS HOSPICE

I thank you very much indeed for inviting me today to visit Rowans Hospice. Before I became the Bishop of Portsmouth last autumn, I had already heard your name and the excellent high standards of care you provide for those suffering from cancer and terminal illness. As you say in the philosophy behind your Mission Statement, you aim "to deliver the very best in specialist palliative care to hospice and hospital in-patients, and to those living at home" and you do this whilst respecting the "individuality of each person and offer[ing] the freedom to express and practise religious, spiritual, philosophical and cultural beliefs." Our city is very proud of you and profoundly grateful for all you do to look after the needs of those in the last stages of life.

When he was on earth, Jesus Christ Our Saviour, spent much of his Public Ministry among the sick and the terminally ill and the Church has continued that mission of His, paying special attention to the pastoral care of the needs of the dying. The Catholic Church proclaims and wishes to defend the infinite dignity of every human person from conception to natural death which is why, from a Christian perspective, the work of Rowans Hospice is absolutely consonant with the message of Christ. Moreover, as Catholics, we believe Jesus offers every human being the gift of eternal life in a life of happiness after this one in heaven with God, the angels, the saints and our loved ones who have gone before us. Consequently, the spiritual care of the dying is central to the Church's mission as a preparation for the life of eternity. I am delighted that Rowans enables that spiritual care in that specific sense of the word not only by providing a supportive ethos but specifically through the work of its chaplains.

Dear friends, thank you so much for inviting me today. Thank you for the fantastic work you do. May God bless you always. I will pray for you, patients and staff, that the Lord will make your work flourish and that your care will continue to bring happiness and peace to many many people, patients and relatives, not least in the last hours of life.