

Thursday is UN World AIDS Day. Here is one reason why that should be of concern to us all

IN early September, my father died.

With some justification, my mother, sister and myself, believe he was killed by the incompetency of the British government.

He was a severe haemophilic - a condition in males which delays the clotting of the blood for significant periods - and he was infected by haemolytically contaminated blood products passed by the Department of Health as being fit for use in trying to control the condition.

Last week, the Independent broke the story that 12 British men had died from the debilitating liver disease, Hepatitis C, brought on by the infected blood products, my father was one of them.

Correctly the newspaper gave the mechanics of the situation and also clearly indicated that the haemophilic families are furious with the Department of Health. But behind all those desperate medical reports is a family - left homeless, fatherless and grandfatherless.

The Church also has suffered. Dad had always been a figure man. All his life he tried to marry his accountability with his devotion for the Church. In 1988, when St. the Archdiocese of Liverpool's Finance Department gave him that chance.

Labour of love
For three years he encountered a labour of love. Rather than 'the stretch of the rat race' he said, 'I now go into work and there's a crucifix and a picture of the Pope on the wall'.

But by 1991, Dad had become so undermined by his haemophilia that he left the Canal Offices one Friday in early December to enter hospital for an operation - a hefty undertaking for a haemophilic - and he never returned.

By late January his operation hadn't worked, the medics wondered why. They tested. Then they discovered that he had developed chronic carbons of the liver, caused by the Hepatitis C - which is of the same viral strain as Chlamydia and Yellow Fever - and we were told that we'd lost him.

Now we've lost him. At only 59.

Dad's case is linked with many. Haemophilia is a genetic disorder that affects male children. Dad was one of three haemophilic brothers. The other two are well dead.

They didn't contract liver disease from the blood products. No, they got AIDS instead.

In the early 1980s AIDS and HIV arrived in the news reports - a deadly connection was deduced that infected patients had pre-

The killer with no regard for innocence

by GREG MURPHY who lived this story

bly donated blood. They had and like him in the slaughter haemophilic like Dad had been injected with it so as to stem the intense agonies of their blood disorder - if a joint, in Dad it was his elbow and his knee, doesn't stop bleeding internally it callously erodes the bone.

Waited five years

For five years we waited to hear whether the death sentence had been passed on us. I crad myself to sleep at night wondering which of the hundreds of hospital visits, at last in the morning, when I had gone along with Dad to keep him company, had administered the fatal injection.

That was how it was. In those pain, unable to sleep. Dad would simply ring the hospital, he would tell us, ask them to get an injection ready and he'd

be there in 20 minutes for a cure-all. Some cure-all.

But Dad was lucky. In 1986 we discovered that Dad hadn't contracted HIV - haven't been so bombarded with prayers that this miraculous escape could make sense to us. But as I said, his other two poor suffering brothers, with wives, children and grandchildren too, weren't so lucky.

The mental anguish was sheer hell. Worse was that you couldn't tell anyone because of the stigma. We heard reports that neighbours in a street in Newcastle found out that the man at No 22 was haemophilic - so they carried and started his loved ones with 'AIDS lives here'.

I was watching TV in work one day, whilst a civil servant, and the newscaster was talking of how hundreds of haemophilic families were demanding the government accepted responsibility for the deaths of their loved ones.

Unbelievably the girl sitting next to me said: 'They get all they deserve. They chose their lifestyle. If they want to be parents then they must accept the consequences. If you ask me it's God's vengeance against the Gays'.

Obviously because haemophilia began with B - in her mind it was another form of homosexuality. I still know the girl quite well and shared a Christmas drink with her last year. She's blissfully unaware of her lack of empathy.

So for three years we thought Dad had been given a new chance of life, he wasn't going to die after all. Mum and Dad finally got to go to the Vatican. Dad witnessed two more grandsons - one a haemophilic - coming into the world. And he

was able to see the take my bride.

But then it was all snatched away. And we still couldn't tell anyone the truth. In early 1992 we were told his time was short. It was that he had cancer. The Archbishop believed he had cancer.

There seemed little point in hiding what was really wrong. Then in August this year another very big hit. Dad had non-melanoma skin cancer.

No transplant

Plans for a possible liver transplant had been broken up. Dad had been diagnosed with cancer after all - brought on directly by the liver condition.

I could hardly inform people that Dad had got worse because he had developed cancer. Their advice would have been



Pray for the repose of the soul of

WILLIAM AUGUSTINE MURPHY

Born 7 November 1934

Died 3 September 1994

VIEWPOINT Living with peace

ANN DIAMOND of Castledawson, Co. Derry, examines the sudden reality of peace after 25 years of fear.

PEACE is a word which is misused in Irish society today and also throughout the world.

Peace is not brought about by the absence of conflict or the presence of justice, these are only social conditions which help one to live safely and comfortably.

To say that the majority of people in Northern Ireland have lived without peace for twenty-five years would be an insult to their Christianity.

Most of my fellow countrymen and women lived in peace during the troubles and will continue to live in peace, now the 'troubles' have ceased.

However, for the perpetrators of the obscene injustices carried out by a few - it may prove initially a little bit difficult to live with peace.

Living with peace shall challenge the thinking of those, who down through the years, used and supported religious differences so as to further their own political aims.

This partnership of the Church's past and present is a challenge to the Church's future.

It was their words, re-echoing the words of an innocent Man on a cross - 'Forgive them Father for they know not what they do' which perhaps may have helped to change the entrenched political views of their representatives.

It was in this power to forgive that I recognised the glory of the resurrected Lord.

True peace, the peace in the individual heart, has been the most powerful of all forces in securing an end to hostilities in this land, a land once traumatised by barbarism is now serene with hope.

The editor welcomes contributions for this column. No more than 450 words, please, on topics of current news value.

Address to: VIEWPOINT, Catholic Times, St James's Buildings, Oxford Street, Manchester M1 5PP.

A fresh test tube scandal

LIFE has strongly criticised the last of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority that has apparently resulted in up to 100 babies being implanted in the 'wrong' mother (Sunday Times, 28.11.94).

LIFE, Trustee Nicola Scarbrick said: 'Every few weeks there are media stories about artificial manufacture of babies resulting in misery for the parents and presumably the children. Stereotype deals that go so far as to suggest that mothers artificially made pregnant in the late 50s and 60s; black mothers pregnant with white babies; the whole designer culture of picking and choosing the sex and genetic make-up of a child - all these scandals arise from the failure of the HFEA to control the assisted conception industry.'

'The one case told that 1% of the 10,000 women who have had 'test-tube' babies may have been implanted with the wrong embryos. Some are now taking legal action, having had abortions of the 'wrong' baby. Others have accepted the baby, but what will the child feel who finds out he or she is the 'wrong' child?'

It seems extraordinary that, knowing the low success of IVF, anyone achieving pregnancy by this method could then have an abortion for whatever reason. 'It should be a condition of all assisted conception treatment that abortion is not an

*AN appeal has been made for 25 religious sisters who can help AIDS sufferers and their families.

The Mercy House Foundation is a charitable organisation based in North Wales, founded in 1987, and offering a residential regime care for people affected by HIV/AIDS and their families. The Foundation is currently trying to raise the money necessary to purchase, refurbish and staff a new Family Resource Centre which will be the only support available to sufferers in Rhyl.

Sharon Davies, founder and director of the Foundation, said: 'I would like to appeal to any Religious Sisters who may be interested in going up 12 months of their time and help to develop a Catholic Christian response by being a valued member of our volunteer commitment to HIV/AIDS. The sisters will live at the centre and share in all the pastoral, administrative, spiritual and catering work. Full training will be provided.'

AS an official at Archbishop's House, Westminster, last week, reflecting Cardinal Hume's new book, *Remaking Europe*, in the same week as the Pope's new book *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* was possibly a publishing oversight.

But, as the Cardinal's source suggested, it doesn't make it any less an achievement, and indeed when considering the rudiments of the book - this is a sense of the future of a whole continent - it deserves to be noted on the nation's book stand.

Remaking Europe may indeed be its heaviest but the book's subtitle, *The Gospel in a Divided Continent*, serves more alternative purpose about what has within from Cardinal Hume's pen.

The first thing to acknowledge is that the Cardinal is eminently qualified to comment, and although the book's format serves more to inform than to convert, it is derived from some of his best given during his 8-year presidency of the European Bishops' Conference, it should not be forgotten that this Anglican Benedictine has seen more key European

power to do - there are more than enough examples to show that there is research and knowledge of subject. De Spina, comparatively viewed as one of the continent's most stable nations. But it is important for the Churches to stress the moral imperative to help them in need. They should also emphasise the potential of the Catholic faith from communities embracing immigrants. How much our little Spain, for instance, has helped the Jewish community first-hand and right up to now.

The Cardinal has to address the rise in nationalism depicted as a 'cancer' promoted by the 'deviation of a national identity into a false godhead'.

Rightly the Cardinal frequently asserts that the European solution - which he insists can be achieved - rests on the Church's duty to be a 'catalyst'.

It would be wrong to suggest that this book is an easy read, but it is clearly not meant to be taken easily.

For all Europeans with the Gospel at the forefront of their minds the Cardinal's book is well worth considering. It is a book that Europe's future is of no significance to you it's even more so for me.

Many similar situations approach - Bosnia, the fall of the Communist bloc, general acceptance of the fall of the Berlin Wall, and it is easy to be the Cardinal's as being long on rhetoric, but that would be a grave injustice.

Indeed though the Cardinal often makes a broad view, he does not lose sight of the fact that it is all his faith, his belief



The Gospel in a Divided Continent

BASIL HUME

