



Michael Bell Award 2025

Individual

Citation for Dr John Edwards

1. Introduction

Dr John Edwards is a former teacher at The Becket Roman Catholic Secondary School in Nottingham, England. He has been an active pro-life advocate for over 30 years supporting individuals and groups to work for pro-life causes from conception to natural death. He and his family have endured harassment from the pro-abortion lobby in the UK as well as from local government and the police. Throughout, his commitment and dedication has been unwavering, and nothing has deterred him from providing support to people affected by abortion.

Dr Edwards is the Pro-Life Co-ordinator for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Nottingham, and he is a director of the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC), the world's first and the UK's largest pro-life campaigning and educational organisation. Its activities have expanded beyond opposition to abortion to include the current campaign to challenge the UK parliament's decision to introduce assisted suicide.

2. Personal Experience

Some years ago, Dr Edwards and his wife were subjected to pressure from medical practitioners to consider an abortion when pre-natal testing resulted in a misdiagnosis that suggested that their unborn son may have been born with an abnormality or disability. They resisted the pressure and chose to continue the pregnancy, and their son was perfectly healthy, and has achieved academic and professional success. The personal experience was a catalyst for their lifetime commitment to advocacy for the sanctity of life, together with practical support and advice for parents faced with similar challenges and pressure to agree to abortion.

3. 40 Days for Life Vigil

Since 2018, Dr Edwards has organised what is now an annual high-profile vigil - **40 Days for Life**. Every day during Lent, a vigil is maintained

outside an abortion clinic in the city of Nottingham. This was introduced with the aim of offering prayers and support for unborn babies, women, and men affected by abortion. Nottingham City Council (the local government agency responsible for administering the City and its services) sought a legal court injunction against Dr Edwards, to prevent him from organising and participating in the vigil. The Council alleged that he had been engaging in anti-social behaviour that could alarm those visiting the abortion clinic. However, the presiding judge dismissed the application for the injunction, stating that the Council's action was unjustified. Dr Edwards had emphasised the peaceful nature of the vigil and the importance of free speech. The UK Government has, since then, legislated to introduce strict legally enforceable exclusion zones around abortion clinics, preventing even silent prayer. Despite this, Dr Edwards and his supporters continue to hold their peaceful prayer vigils near the abortion clinic but outside the exclusion zone. The fact that these acts of witness continue results in ongoing media and public interest and raises the profile of pro-life campaigning.

4. Pro-life Chain of Witness

Dr Edwards arranges an annual Pro-life Chain in Nottingham which is part of a nationwide act of witness commemorating over 10 million unborn babies whose lives have been ended by abortion since the implementation of the Abortion Act in the UK in April 1968. The Nottingham chain involves volunteers forming a human chain and displaying pro-life placards across the whole span of both sides of the world-famous Trent Bridge, which is a major traffic highway into the city. Drivers of vehicles are encouraged to sound their horns in support of the pro-life chain.

5. March for Life

Dr Edwards actively participates in activities arranged by March for Life UK, a Christian pro-life organisation. He also promotes its activities and facilitates participation by people in the Diocese of Nottingham. This includes arranging transport and widely publicising the annual March for Life campaign and rally in London. This culminates in a march by over 10,000 pro-life supporters through central London and a campaign rally at the UK Parliament.

6. Pregnancy Support Initiatives

Dr Edwards has taken a leading role in establishing a pregnancy support centre based at a Roman Catholic church in Nottingham. The centre within a Nottingham church is named after St Collette, a patron saint of women seeking to conceive, and expectant mothers. This centre helps women facing unplanned pregnancies, offering free pregnancy testing kits and alternatives to abortion. It provides practical support through

counselling and the provision of baby formula, equipment and clothing etc.

7. Advocacy and Church Engagement

As the officially appointed pro-life coordinator for the Diocese of Nottingham, Dr Edwards advocates for greater involvement of church leaders in pro-life issues. He emphasises the need for coherent and effective moral leadership from clergy to address the concerns of the pro-life movement. He continues to express concerns about societal attitudes toward abortion and the pressure exerted on parents to consider abortion, especially when prenatal diagnoses suggest potential disabilities in unborn children. Dr Edwards regularly arranges apologetics training to assist pro-life campaigners to effectively respond to those who promote abortion.

8. Medical Malpractice in Nottingham

An official investigation into medical practices at the Queen's Medical Centre, a major teaching hospital in Nottingham, two cases have been revealed of pregnancies being wrongly terminated based on misdiagnosis resulting from pre-natal testing. In a third case, an abortion was due to be carried out just one day before reaching the legal limit of 24 weeks but the misdiagnosis was corrected.

9. Recommendation

Through his unwavering dedication, Dr John Edwards continues to champion pro-life causes in Nottingham and throughout the UK, offering support to those affected by abortion and advocating for a culture that values and protects life from conception to natural death. The Knights of St Columba and the Diocese of Nottingham strongly recommend that Dr Joh Edwards should be considered a worthy recipient of the Michael Bell Award.

Fraternally

Ron Lynch PSK KSG