Abortion is “a huge moral mistake which this country will live to regret” The introduction of abortion in Ireland has been described by the Primate of All Ireland as “a huge moral mistake and one which this country will live to regret”.

Speaking to the Irish Independent, Archbishop Eamon Martin said he was calling on people to continue to witness to the fact that there are two lives worthy of protection.

He stressed that the Church’s position on abortion hadn’t changed and that people needed to be helped to understand that there are two lives, and this was more necessary than ever.

The Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy Act, Dr Martin underlined, was “the introduction of an unjust law and a law that doesn’t bind anyone.”

“Therefore, we would see it as perfectly legitimate for somebody who in conscience feels this law is unjust for them to resist it and to oppose it.”

The Primate of All Ireland also said he was “saddened and disappointed by the conduct of the legislative process”, notably the “gloating” that came across in some of the exchanges in the Oireachtas.

“I would have liked to see more debate in the chamber; I thought that it became narrow and it became hostile.” He would have liked to have seen more issues debated in the Dáil chamber on the particularities of the legislation.

He told Catholicireland.net that before the referendum the Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, who is himself a medical doctor, was asked if he saw a woman expecting a baby as two patients and that the Taoiseach responded that it depended on whether the unborn child was a wanted child.

“For me, that sums up in some ways the horror of the reality of this now. It almost appears as if the unborn child is only a baby, is only a human life, if it is a wanted child. If it is not wanted it loses its right to life.”

He said the various amendments that were proposed were trying to address some of the concerns many people had that abortion might be introduced for disability or race or gender.

“Many people believe and have good scientific reasons to believe that pain relief should be provided particularly in later term abortions; many people who voted in the referendum were of the impression that abortion was simply going to be limited to 12 weeks and even so, that is quite liberal. Now we discover that abortion will be made available right up to birth in cases of disability.

“There are a lot of things that would worry people about the legislation – I think we are in a new place.”