

On the General Election 2010

Voting for the Common Good

The forthcoming election is an opportunity to ask ourselves what kind of society we want to live in. More fundamentally, this leads to the question “What do I want from life?”

In elections, there is a strong temptation simply to vote for the party that will benefit me the most or that fits best with my preconceived ideas, or alternatively to react with apathy. Looking at our own experience we recognise that narrow self interest ultimately won't satisfy us, and that we want to live in unity with others, not individualistically. To build on this intuition, everyone needs a “place” that can educate them. For us, the Church provides this place.

For a society to flourish, it needs people who are involved in civil society. Many people are motivated to give more to society by their religious beliefs and tradition. The state should recognise and facilitate this involvement, with the awareness that attempts to restrict religious faith to the sphere of private devotion risk harming our society. Only a society which defends the freedom of the Church and other religious groups to live according to their beliefs is able to defend the freedom of the person.

We find that the “Choosing the Common Good” document from the Catholic Bishops' Conference helps us face the election in a more human way. The document explains the common good as “the whole network of social conditions which enable human individuals and groups to flourish and live a full, genuinely human life”. This principle leads to concrete positions on issues such as

- the dignity of human life, including the unborn, disabled people and the elderly
- the need for a moral dimension to the financial system, not just the interplay of the free market and government regulation
- supporting marriage and the family as key building blocks of a stable society
- responsibility for the poor, both in the UK and abroad, and for the environment we will leave for future generations
- supporting groups of people who freely work together – independently of the government – for the benefit of others

To begin to make this education our own, we should consider the parties, and the individual candidates, in the light of the various aspects of the common good, and vote accordingly. Even a small step that educates us towards the common good is worth taking, as “the more we strive to secure a common good corresponding to the real needs of our neighbours, the more effectively we love them” (Benedict XVI)

Communion and Liberation UK