



Time to Vote

The political parties have now all launched their manifestos outlining their aims for the next session of Parliament. The economy is understandably high on the agenda with a variety of proposals on improving the employment situation in Scotland. The Church recognizes the independence of people to support different approaches to solving challenges such as the financial crisis or how to best use the resources available for the health service. The point of interest for following the values of Christianity is that the objectives in tackling problems

and the means for doing so are morally acceptable. There are different economic theories for example, on how to best deliver a decent standard of living for everyone. The Church helps analyse the aspects of the social interactions around social problems to help reveal the impact on people. Pope Benedict showed in the encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* that everyone has to be responsible for their economic choices because they affect other people. Economists and politicians can build on those principles to deliver workable policies for government. Some issues however involve politicians proposing to act in ways which are fundamentally unjust and the Church has a duty to voice opposition to such plans. Unfortunately some of the parties

have pledged to act in this way in relation to marriage by giving their support to redefining marriage such that it would no longer be an institution built on the union of a man and woman and intrinsically connected to the procreation of children. The Labour party has stated in its



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manifesto that it doesn't want Scotland to be left behind on that particular agenda. They propose to have a consultation on redefining marriage and also on having civil partnership ceremonies conducted in Churches. The SNP has proposed a consultation on same-sex marriage, whilst the Liberal Democrats have gone even further and have pledged to make these changes in law, as has the Green party. The family is the foundation of society and it is sad that so many politicians are cavalier in their treatment of it. They fail in fact to uphold the expectations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which recognises, as does the European Convention of Human Rights, that marriage is

between a man and woman. This also reveals a worrying aspect of our society that human rights as established in the wake of the atrocities of the Second World War are now at the mercy of the influential in society. The rights can therefore be manipulated to mean whatever the politically powerful want them to mean.

This then is a dark omen for democracy and shows that political and legal structures in themselves are not adequate to maintain a civilization. What is necessary is that people within any system must be motivated by justice and open to reason. Reason is capable of recognizing the natural goods of human

society. Catholic social teaching is a way of explaining these natural goods in the context of Christian charity. Natural reason and experience are confirmed by the Christian faith in recognising the good of the family but many other truths of the wellbeing of people and society need to be re-asserted. As we get to an election it is important that voters and candidates are aware of these so that they can be of authentic service to society. The Catholic Parliamentary Office has therefore created a website to make important aspects of Catholic social teaching easily accessible. Please make use of the website and the other resources it identifies to familiarize yourself with the issues and to help pass that information on to others.

www.catholicvotersguide.org

The Referendum on the Voting System

On the same day that we elect members of the Scottish Parliament we will also have the opportunity to vote for a change in the system for electing politicians to Westminster. At present the candidate in any constituency who gets the most vote wins. This first part the post system is easy to understand and administer. Critics however claim that it means that the views of many voters and often the majority therefore have no influence on the member representing them in Parliament. A new system of voting is being proposed which

will use a different system to give a weighting to the views of those who have not voted for the most successful candidate. This Alternative Vote (AV) system works by allowing voters to indicate their other choices of candidates. If one candidate doesn't get 50% of the vote then the second preferences on the voting cards of those who voted for the lowest scoring candidate are transferred to the other candidates and that bottom candidate is eliminated. This process continues until one candidate has a majority. Supporters of this system claim

that it is fairer since more voters have an influence and candidates must therefore appeal to a wider group. Opponents point out that those coming second or third in the first vote could end up elected.

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Questions for Candidates

There are many issues which Catholics will have different political views on whilst sharing the same fundamental principles which defend the rights of every person and the wellbeing of society. There are however other issues which are directly opposed the values of Christianity but are being campaigned for in society. It is important to hold candidates to account on such issues and the following questions will be of help in evaluating the views of candidates. Our election website provides useful information on a wide variety of subjects.

Family

Will you defend marriage as the union of a man and woman which is to be recognised as the foundation of family life and properly supported and encouraged by the government?

Catholic Schools

Will you support the right of parents to have their children educated in accordance with their beliefs and for the continued support of Catholic schools in Scotland?

Religious Freedom

Will you support the right of people to manifest their faith in society and to advocate their beliefs without fear of intimidation for not conforming to government moral beliefs?

Right to Life

Will you oppose the use of resources for providing abortion, abortifacients and programmes which promote sexual relationships outside marriage?

Employment

Will you ensure that the right to work is respected and that every effort is made to create the proper conditions to increase employment, especially for the young who are presently disproportionately suffering from unemployment?



VISIT OUR WEBSITE

www.catholicvotersguide.org

Faith and Politics

An event held in the House of Lords examined the role of religion in politics.

Chief Rabbi, Lord Sacks argued that a big society needed religion but that troubles arise when religion is part of the State.

Retired Bishop, Lord Harries proposed that there needs to be an understanding of the difference between a secular society and a secular age. Society should be free for religion rather than free from religion, he argued.

However, Lord Parekh noted the clash of some secular and religious values and cited the overriding of religious values in the face of equality provisions meant that "gay couples should be able to marry or enter into civil partnership and adopt children." He observed that "If some religious people said that racial or gender equality went against their deeply held beliefs, we would rightly disregard it."

Some clarity is needed on these points; they do not examine the foundation of secular values. The Catholic Church proposes that

reason must be applied in public life and reason has a role to play in examining whether it is reasonable that marriage should be re-defined. It cannot be a socially promoted value simply by relying on the blind faith of secularism. It is possible for example to look at the evidence about the stability of relationships or on the mental and physical impact of different lifestyles. There is no religious value put forward by mainstream Christians which would be expected to be left un-examined in this way. Christianity does help in creating a secular society in the positive understanding of this term because it is open to reason and its starting point is the dignity of the human person. When conscience is respected and placed in a context of supporting the common good people can be free to follow their belief systems within society whilst expecting proper analysis of issues based on promoting the wellbeing of all people. The



secular society which wishes to be free of religious values is the kind that crushes

opposition not by using reason but simply by using political might to impose on everyone the values preferred by those with power and influence.

There is little doubt that when it comes to the question of homosexuality there is a great level of influence at play which has prepared politicians to accept blindly a set of values that generations before would have found bewildering. An interesting article written by homosexual activists gives an insight into how this influence was brought to bear gradually over the last few decades and can be found at http://library.gayhomeland.org/0018/EN/EN_Overhauling_Straight.htm

Current Legislation

- Certification of Death (Scotland) Bill (Ex)** Passed 16 March
- Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses (Scotland) Bill (M)** Fell 23 March
- Damages (Scotland) Bill (M)** Passed 3 March
- Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Bill (M)** Passed 16 March
- Double Jeopardy (Scotland) Bill (Ex)** Passed 22 March
- Forced Marriage etc. (Protection and Jurisdiction) (Scotland) Bill (Ex)** Passed 22 March
- Local Electoral Administration (Scotland) Bill (Ex)** Passed 16 March
- Long Leases (Scotland) Bill (Ex)** Fell 23 March
- Patient Rights (Scotland) Bill (Ex)** Passed 24 February
- Private Rented Housing (Scotland) Bill (Ex)** Passed 17 March
- Property Factors (Scotland) Bill (M)** Passed 3 March
- Public Records (Scotland) Bill (Ex)** Passed 16 March
- Reservoirs (Scotland) Bill (Ex)** Passed 9 March
- Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill (Ex)** Passed 2 March

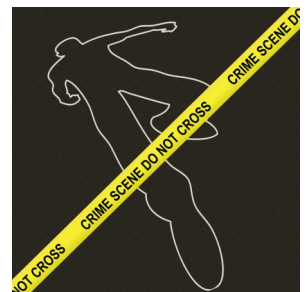
(Ex) = Executive Bill; (M) = Member's Bill; (C) = Committee Bill; (P) = Private Bill; (H) = Hybrid Bill.

Respond to Death Campaign

Campaigners for social change have become adept at winning legislative change by their clever use of media. The arguments and evidence for their case need not be too good but if the media and some influential politicians are on side then they wage a war of attrition to move step by step towards their goal. This is what we are witnessing in the campaign for assisted suicide. A group has been formed by pro-assisted suicide campaigners and has adopted the title of the 'Commission on Assisted Dying'. It was inspired by the group 'Dignity in Dying' which was formerly, and more appropriately, named the Voluntary Euthanasia Society. It is chaired by Lord Falconer who has attempted to soften the law on assisted suicide through the House of Lords and is funded by the author Terry Pratchett whose appeal for the introduction of assisted suicide was given a high profile on the BBC. There is little doubt that the group will

deliver a report calling for the law to be changed. Some groups have refused to participate in providing evidence to the enquiry being conducted by the Commission because they do not want to give it legitimacy, however part of the enquiry is calling for members of the public to answer a questionnaire and pro-suicide groups have strongly encouraged their supporters to respond. One thing we have learned from the campaign over Margo Macdonald's bill in Scotland is that the pro-suicide groups do not have large numbers of supporters; their numbers were dwarfed by the huge numbers of those actively opposed to any form of killing. Our difficulty is that the movement for euthanasia and assisted suicide is supported by small numbers of influential people who are used to having their own way and make use of their positions of influence. The media does not reveal this picture of the

situation but instead emphasises the cases and arguments put forward by the pro-suicide groups. Very little, if any, serious coverage of the abuses of euthanasia and assisted suicide laws in other countries is highlighted. The extent of abuse of vulnerable people by carers is also ignored in respect of the threat that assisted suicide laws would be to such people. To balance the public response to the questionnaire, opponents of assisted suicide can also respond at the following website before 2nd May: www.commissiononassisteddying.co.uk/submission-of-evidence



Churches VOTE

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT ELECTION 2011

www.churchesvote.org

Churches across Scotland united to create a central online resource for the election. The site includes films of the party leaders who were interviewed specially for the project. The Catholic Parliamentary Office joined with other organisations and religious denominations to prepare the resource which provides useful information such as on the policy positions of the parties and how to run a hustings.

The Christian institute has released a useful election guide which can be found at www.christian.org.uk/wp-content/downloads/scottish-election-briefing-2011.pdf

Two Christian parties —The Scottish Christian Peoples Alliance and the Scottish Christian Party are standing in different parts of Scotland and can be voted for on the second vote in some regions. See their websites at www.scotland.cpaparty.org.uk and www.scottishchristianparty.org.uk

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Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in and he saw and believed. *John 20:8*

Recommended Reading



Quo Vadis by Henrik Sienkiewicz is a masterpiece of Christian literature set amidst the Roman persecutions of the newly born Church. The dramatic story helped win its author the Nobel prize for literature. It is now widely available free in electronic formats.

The Social Agenda of the Catholic Church is a collection of extracts from Church documents helpfully collated into important social teaching topics. It provides helpful information for anyone who wants to apply their faith in a myriad of aspects of life. The text is also available in electronic format free on the internet at www.thesocialagenda.org



Consultations (with closing date)

UK Pandemic Influenza Strategy (17/06/2011)
Officers of Court - Business Organisation (30/06/2011)
Review of taxi and private hire car licensing best practice for licensing authorities 2007 publication (17/06/2011)
Forced Marriage: Statutory Guidance (01/07/2011)
Consultation on Agricultural Holdings (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill (30/06/2011)
Consultation on Seal Haul-Out Sites (21/06/2011)
Consultation on Amendment of Rule 58 of The Mental Health Tribunal For Scotland – Power to Decide Case Without a Hearing (16/05/2011)
New Lanark World Heritage Site Management Plan Consultation (17/06/2011)
General Permitted Development Order (01/07/2011)
The Historic Environment (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 2011 - Consultation on Draft Regulations (14/06/2011)
Orkney Island Cheddar - Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) Application (28/06/2011)
Traditional Ayrshire Dunlop - Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) Application (28/06/2011)
Introducing Choice in Verification of Building Standards (10/06/2011)
Extension of Permitted Development Rights and Permitted Changes of Use to Finfish and Shellfish Developments (17/06/2011)
Consultation on the Draft Code of Practice on Non-Native and Invasive Non-Native Species (09/06/2011)
Consultation on the introduction of a processing fee for Intercountry Adoption (15/06/2011)
Scotland's National Marine Plan (07/06/2011)
Children and Families Common Core of Skills 2011 (15/06/2011)
Transposition of Directive 2009/126/EC on Stage II petrol vapour recovery during refuelling of motor vehicles at service stations (03/06/2011)
Pedestrian Protective Barrier Guidance Review (03/06/2011)
Financial eligibility and contributions in criminal legal aid (01/06/2011)
London 2012 Olympic Games – Advertising and Street Trading Regulations – Hampden Stadium, Glasgow (30/05/2011)
Land Maintenance (06/06/2011)
Succession Law: Financial Thresholds for Prior Rights and Small Estates (23/05/2011)
Ownership and control of firms providing legal services under the Legal Services (Scotland) Act 2010: a consultation paper (11/05/2011)
Compulsory Purchase Circulars (06/05/2011)
A Consultation on the Future of Policing in Scotland (05/05/2011)
Safer Communities: A Consultation on the Future of the Fire and Rescue in Scotland (05/05/2011)

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