

Tuesday Reflection 27.10.2020

Last Tuesday we were looking at the need for us as Catholic Christians to develop ‘informed consciences’ as we work towards the establishment of the Kingdom.

This work necessarily involves an engagement with politics; unfortunately, there is a reluctance on the part of some to engage with politics.

In his *Fratelli Tutti*, his latest Encyclical, Pope Francis demonstrates very clearly the need to involve ourselves with what he describes in Chapter 5 as ‘a better kind of politics’: “The development of a global community of fraternity based on the practice of social friendship on the part of peoples and nations calls for a better kind of politics, one truly at the service of the common good”. Francis is however quick to realise that “politics today often takes forms that hinder progress towards a better world” (154). This politics concerns itself with “posturing, marketing and media spin. These sow nothing but division, conflict and a bleak cynicism incapable of mobilising people to pursue a common goal” (197)

The ‘better kind of politics recognises “the urgent need to combat all that threatens or violates fundamental human rights. Politicians are called to “tend to the needs of individuals and peoples. To tend those in need takes strength and tenderness, effort and generosity in the midst of a functionalistic and privatised mindset that inexorably leads to a ‘throwaway culture’... It involves taking responsibility for the present with its situations of utter marginalisation and anguish, and being capable of bestowing dignity upon it”. It will likewise inspire intense efforts to ensure that “everything be done to protect the status and dignity of the human person”. Politicians are doers, builders with ambitious goals, possessed of a broad, realistic and pragmatic gaze that looks beyond their own borders. Their biggest concern should not be about a drop in the polls, but about finding effective solutions to “the phenomenon of social and economic exclusion, with its baneful consequences: human trafficking, the marketing of human organs and tissues, the sexual exploitation of boys and girls, slave labour, including prostitution, the drug and weapons trade, terrorism and international organised crime. Such is the magnitude of these situations, and their toll in innocent lives, that we must avoid every temptation to fall into a declarationist nominalism (*i.e. get tied up in ‘political correctness - MT*) that would assuage our consciences. We need to ensure that our institutions are truly effective in the struggle against all these scourges”. This includes taking intelligent advantage of the immense resources offered by technological development.” (188)

As Catholic Christians we are being called not only to do everything we can in our own lives, to support organisations working towards the Common Good but also to espouse this ‘better kind of politics’ by calling our politicians to account and taking every opportunity to promote our vision of a world based on the Gospel and elaborated in Catholic Social Teaching.