**Restoring Faith in Public Life**

*The votes of faith communities could be decisive*

The Catholic Union of Great Britain has said that the run-up to the Election provides “a time for reflection and careful consideration of how public policy issues… impact upon our common welfare and good.”

In a leaflet called “Restoring Faith in Public Life”, which was sent out to nearly 1,500 parishes in time for Low Sunday (11th/12th April), the Catholic Union highlights several issues that should affect the way Catholics vote. The four-page document also seeks to help voters consider how they should cast their ballot on 7 May, by raising important issues, asking faith-led questions and suggesting points of reflection.

**Catholics must weigh up the issues**

According to the document, Christians “should weigh up the issues in the light of Gospel values and the teachings of the Church before casting their votes.” It also asks Catholics and people of faith to “consider the voting options open to them” and “the kind of society they would like to live in.”

The leaflet also highlights problematic laws that run contrary to Catholic teaching. Referring to the recent Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act, for example, the document says: “The 650,000 signatories of a petition organised by Coalition for Marriage [against the Act] were completely ignored. Church teaching on marriage in Catholic schools is now problematic.”

On the same theme, the Catholic Union leaflet later says: “We have seen the redefinition of marriage and exposure to discrimination of those who support traditional marriage… Yet research overwhelmingly supports traditional marriage as the safest environment for the nurturing and upbringing of children.” It then asks: “What are your comments on this?”

Other problematic issues mentioned in the leaflet include Lord Falconer’s attempts to introduce an Assisted Dying Bill, a recent narrow interpretation by the courts of the ‘conscientious objection’ clause in the Abortion Act, and Parliament’s vote to allow ‘three parent babies.’

When deciding which party to vote for, the document also asks Catholics to take into consideration matters such as immigration and human rights, the Church’s role in education, and how society should care for its most vulnerable members.

**Christians have failed to involve themselves in politics**

Speaking prior to the distribution of the leaflet, the Chairman of the Catholic Union, Robert Rigby, said: “The Catholic Union believes that when people of faith become more involved in democratic issues they fulfil their basic rights and duties, not only to vote, but to engage with the candidates who are putting themselves forward for election and so make their voices heard in the political realm.”

He added: “On the whole, in the past, Christians have failed to involve themselves in political issues which often involve their religious beliefs. The result has been the erosion of religious freedom and the loss of traditional family values, and indeed of human rights.”

Noting that the results of the Election will probably “be close”, the Catholic Union suggests that “the votes of faith communities could well be decisive.”

ENDS