



Archdiocese of Southwark  
Commission for  
*Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation*



JPIC Update April 2010

## **THE GENERAL ELECTION      A message from the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales**

Shortly we will be choosing our next Government. It is an important responsibility and all Catholics should use their vote. There are questions to be asked about the party you are considering voting for, and about the particular candidate. This message sets out some of the considerations we should all have in mind when making those choices. As Bishops we are not advocating any particular political party. That is not our role.

There are limits to what any Government can do on its own. On their own, targets, rules and regulations cannot improve the quality of our shared life. People do that. They do it by choosing the common good rather than pure self interest. We are all responsible and we need to put our moral values to work in a spirit of neighbourliness and mutual support. That is what happens in a crisis, but we need to see it every day as well. We depend on each other. And we need a Government that draws out what is best in all of us, and which aims to serve the common good.

So the fundamental question we each need to ask ourselves in deciding who to vote for is not who will best serve me, but who will best serve the common good of all of us.

This is about restoring trust at the heart of our society: trust in each other and in our institutions to do the right thing by choice, not by constraint.

In early March 2010 we published a pamphlet "Choosing the Common Good" which explores these ideas more fully. We encourage you to study and discuss it. It can be obtained from Alive Publishing or downloaded from [www.catholicchurch.org.uk](http://www.catholicchurch.org.uk)

Below we note some specific issues and questions which we believe are particularly important. We encourage you to ask Parliamentary candidates where they stand on these issues.

We also ask you to pray for God's guidance on the choices we all make, and for His guidance for our future Government and for all those who are called to serve society as Members of Parliament.

### **Some issues and Questions for Parliamentary Candidates**

Here are some issues and questions which may help inform your decision on who to vote for. They are open questions with no single 'right' answer. But from the responses given you may form a better idea of how far any particular candidate will be addressing the needs of the common good. You may well, of course, have other questions of your own to ask. This list is not exhaustive.

Firstly in valuing **life**. That means opposing abortion and euthanasia, and life-cramping poverty, and the neglect of the elderly.

**What does respect for life mean to you? Do all lives have the same value? Older people and the infirm ... the severely disabled ... the unborn?**

**Families** are the basic building block of any stable society. Marriage provides the best context for bringing up children and must have the clear support and encouragement of Government.

**What will you do for marriage and the family? What practical measures will you take to encourage and support stable family life and the institution of marriage?**

**Migration** is not about numbers, it is about human beings. Wherever the Government sets the boundary on who can or cannot live here, it must apply its rules with fairness, decency and respect for the individual.

**What beliefs and values underpin your approach to migration? And how will you show them in practice?**

Our care for each other is also shown in how we support the development of the **world's poorest people**, and how we use – or abuse – the **environment** we share. We must be good stewards of God's creation, not selfish exploiters of it.

**What do you think is our responsibility to the poor, in this country and overseas? What is our responsibility to safeguard and protect the environment?**

Our faith is at the heart of our lives. **Religious belief** is not just something private: it helps create a society that wants to see everyone flourish. It has a contribution to make and must be allowed to do so in accordance with its teachings.

**What do you think is the place of religion in society?**

Whoever you decide to vote for, from whichever political party you decide to support, send back to Parliament someone who understands and will work for the common good.



You can e-mail questions to your local candidates direct from CAFOD web site.

# OUR SPRING ASSEMBLY

## Grassroots Social Justice

SATURDAY MAY 22nd 10.30 AM - 4.00 PM

Speakers from organisations working quietly in our parishes including Ascent, CAFOD, CWL, Knights of St Columba & SVP

keynote speaker

**Rt Hon John Battle**

All Welcome

Admission Free

### UK becomes first country to ban 'Third World Debt' profiteering.

One unexpected outcome of the dissolution of parliament was that, in the final hours, the long campaigned for bill to protect the poorest countries in the world from profiteering by so-called vulture funds became law.

Jubilee Debt Campaign welcomed the successful passage of the Debt Relief (Developing Countries) Bill, which is the world's first law to restrict the ability of Vulture Funds to sue some of the world's poorest countries for full repayment of debts that they have bought up cheaply.

Last November two Vulture Funds were awarded \$20 million in the High Court from Liberia – the second poorest country in the world - for a debt dating back to the 1970s. This law is expected to make that verdict unenforceable.

There was an outcry last month after the bill was blocked at third reading by an unidentified Conservative MP – thought to be backbencher Christopher Chope. But the Government made time for the Bill in the wash-up, after securing cross-party agreement with a sunset clause which will mean the law has to be reassessed to be made permanent in a year's time.

International support for the bill has been expressed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia, and President Bharrat Jagdeo of Guyana.

Nick Dearden, Director of Jubilee Debt Campaign, said: "This is a landmark law. With this act, the UK has become the first country in the world to stop vulture funds using its courts to profiteer from poverty. It will mean the poorest countries in the world can no longer be attacked by these reprehensible investment funds who grow fat from the misery of others. We now call on other governments, particularly the US administration, to take similar steps to outlaw vulture practices."

"We hope this is the first step towards creating a more just financial system, which operates for the great majority of people, not a tiny minority of unethical investors."

### Election Hustings:

#### **April 25th A Better World is Possible**

7.30 pm at Our Lady Immaculate Church, Ewell Road, Tolworth KT6 7DG

#### **April 26th UNA Blackheath & Greenwich**

7.30pm in the Great Hall, Blackheath Halls, Blackheath Village 23 Lee Road, SE3 9RQ.

#### **May 1st Annual Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Hartley**

1.30 to 6.30 All are welcome.

#### **May 3<sup>rd</sup> (Bank Holiday Monday) Westminster Cathedral**

Come and join fellow workers, migrants and civic leaders for a morning of reflection and celebration in honour of St Joseph the Worker 10:30 Mass preceded by a procession of representatives from London's diverse communities, occupations and civic organisations, Concelebrants: The Most Reverend Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster; Pat Lynch, Auxiliary Bishop of Southwark; and Thomas McMahon, Bishop of Brentwood.

#### **16-18 July The Hayes Conference Centre, National Justice and Peace Network**

#### **2010 Annual Conference: 'Our Daily Bread: Food Security, People and Planet'**

For booking forms contact the office or go to [www.justice-and-peace.org.uk](http://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk)

If you would like any information referred to from the internet and do not have access please ask the office to print and send it to you.