

## General Election 2019

### Message from the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales

*The Lord Jesus said: 'I have come so that they may have life*

*and have it to the full.'* (John 10:10)

This General Election is profoundly important to the United Kingdom. Catholics cannot simply “watch from the balcony.”<sup>1</sup> Conscious of the common good of every person and our society as a whole, we ask everyone to engage with the election and vote.

Honest political activity depends upon integrity. We urge all in public life to recognise that telling the truth, not making vindictive and abusive comments or unattainable promises, are essential.<sup>2</sup>

The question of the United Kingdom’s place in Europe continues to dominate political discourse. In whatever way our future relationship with our closest neighbours develops, Britain must be committed to a positive engagement as a key international partner in promoting peace, security and responsible stewardship of the planet. As Pope Francis reminds us, “good politics is at the service of peace.”<sup>3</sup>

Citizens have a duty to emphasise and help shape a politics rooted in the service of human rights and peace. The test of any policy should be its impact upon human dignity, particularly for the most disadvantaged in our society. In making judgments about how to vote, please consider carefully the following and ask your candidates how they would uphold:

- The innate dignity of every human being; defending both the child in the womb, the good of the mother and an understanding of the immeasurable good of a child not yet born?
- The dignified care for those who are terminally ill and dying while resisting the false compassion of assisted suicide or euthanasia?
- The needs of those who are frequently neglected or discarded by society such as people with disabilities, Travellers, older people, those who are homeless, those in prison and those trapped in modern slavery?
- The process of integration of migrants and refugees who have made their homes here<sup>4</sup>, challenging the global rise of xenophobia and racism that is so radically incompatible with our faith<sup>5</sup>?

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis: Address to the Community of Christian Life – Missionary Students’ League of Italy (30/4/15)

<sup>2</sup> Cf: “loving the truth means not only affirming it, but rather living it, bearing witness to it in your work.” Pope Francis: Audience with National Council Order of Journalists (22/9/16)

<sup>3</sup> Pope Francis: Message for the 52<sup>nd</sup> World Day of Peace (1/1/19)

<sup>4</sup> Pope Francis: Message for the 104<sup>th</sup> World Day of Migrants and Refugees (14/1/18)

<sup>5</sup> World Council of Churches and Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development: Message from the conference on Xenophobia, Racism and Populist Nationalism in the Context of Global Migration (20/9/18)

- The rights of those in our own communities and overseas who “can see no end to the tunnel of extreme poverty,”<sup>6</sup> providing them with assistance and confronting the structural injustices that compound their suffering?
- Care for our common home and tackle the climate emergency which threatens the future of our entire human family and is already having a profound impact upon the world’s poorest people<sup>7</sup>?
- Freedom of religion and belief, ensuring that everyone has the right to exercise their conscience and practise their creed freely without fear?
- The cherishing of marriage, recognising the essential place of the family in the service of life and of society?
- The right of parents to educate their children in accordance with their faith and support the work of Catholic schools in their contribution to society and their promotion of the common good?

Jesus tells us “I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full.” Informed by the work of our parishes, schools and charities, we should all approach this election as an opportunity to promote life, dignity and human flourishing for all.

We call on all Catholics to pray for the wellbeing of our society. May the Holy Spirit guide our choice as we seek together, and for all, “life to the full.”

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<sup>6</sup> Pope Francis: Message for the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Day of the Poor (17/11/19)

<sup>7</sup> Pope Francis: Address to meeting on the energy transition and care of our common home (14/6/19)