



# Dolen Mynyw Menevia News

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## Choosing the Common Good

Catholic Bishops of England & Wales launch their pre-election document

The Bishops recently launched *'Choosing the Common Good'* to present key themes in Catholic Social Teaching as a contribution to the wide-ranging debate about the values and vision that underpin our society.

The document anticipates the forthcoming general election, but the Bishops argue that finding a shared vision for society is more urgent than the detail of particular party policies. *"Where there is no vision, the people perish"* (Proverbs 29:18). The Bishops argue that social issues cannot be left only to government to solve, but are the responsibility of all.

*'Choosing the Common Good'* argues that the construction of a just and civil society can be achieved as the desire for love and truth is innate in all women and men. While there has been

a fracturing in trust in institutions and in each other, the Bishops argue that it is up to all in civil society to lead the re-building of this essential trust. Central to that task is the understanding that we are not self-contained individuals but inter-dependent, where human flourishing lies in the quality of our relationships and the practice of virtue.

"The virtues form us as moral agents, so that we do what is right and honourable for no other reason than that it is right and honourable, irrespective of reward and regardless of what we are legally obliged to do. Virtuous action springs from a sense of one's dignity and that of others, and from self-respect as a citizen. It is doing good even when no-one is looking."

Archbishop Vincent Nichols, president of the Bishops' Conference, said: "We encourage everyone to read this document and participate in the wide-ranging

and necessary debate about the values and vision by which we seek to construct a just and civil society. Ultimately *'Choosing the Common Good'* is about human flourishing. **It does not offer a direction on how to vote**, but forms a back-cloth to the more particular issues which may well dominate the election itself and offers an invitation to the political parties on how best to respond in all of our joint efforts to build a better society."

The application of the key themes of Catholic Social Teaching presented within the document leads to some consequences which are briefly presented.



Archbishop Vincent Nichols  
President of the Bishops' Conference  
of England and Wales

They include life itself; poverty and inequality; care of the elderly, community relations and migration; the global community and ecology, marriage and family life and the role of faith communities.

In this section, the Bishops argue that the Church has a distinct role in building a society which allows for the flourishing of all, but warns us against to privatise religion.

"The right to religious freedom means the right to live by faith, within the reasonableness of the common good, and to act by faith in the public forum. This arises from the fact that the human person is, by nature, a spiritual being, with a longing for love, truth, for beauty, for happiness."

The Bishops conclude by urging confidence in the challenges ahead, quoting Pope Benedict XVI in his most recent encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*: **"The complexity and gravity of the present economic situation rightly causes us concern, but we must adopt a realistic attitude as we take up with confidence and hope the new responsibilities to which we are called by the prospect of a world in need of profound cultural renewal, a world that needs to rediscover fundamental values on which to build a better future."**

The full text of *'Choosing the Common Good'* is available on [www.catholicchurch.org.uk](http://www.catholicchurch.org.uk)

- with some of the key points summarised below and continued on back page 12

### BRITAIN TODAY

The period before a General Election is a time to reflect on what sort of society we live in and how we would like it to be. It gives us the opportunity to renew our energies and our

work for a better future. What do we really hope for in our society today? What encourages us? What alarms us?

At a first glance, bad news seems to be everywhere. Accounts of neglect, of

cruelty and of over-stretched services are in the news almost every day. Stories of personal tragedy can give rise to a sense of outrage but also to feelings of helplessness. Fortunately there is another

side. There are also many stories of great generosity which raise our spirits and renew our sense of hope. Some come to the fore at times of natural disaster, as they did at the time of the tsunami in the Indian Ocean

in 2004, and again in response to the recent catastrophic Haitian earthquake. In both cases, and in others nearer home, the people of Britain have shown an astonishing capacity for compassion,

solidarity and generosity towards people who are facing hardship and misfortune regardless of race, religion or nationality. Where does this sort of energy, compassion and generosity come from?