



THE ARCHBISHOP
OF CANTERBURY



od at the meeting of the General Synod in York

Earlier in the afternoon, Jim Wallis, president of Sojourners, addressed the Synod.

Archbishop Justin's contribution follows below:

"To commit to speaking of the common good is not enough; we must also commit to live it, not only in the actions and the parishes, but in the whole way we live out our common life as the church. In many places we are living it out - the Bishop of Knaresborough spoke of that. But the common good is not something, as Jim has shown us, that is merely talked about; it is something that is practised.

And yet we live in a society where the concept of the general interest seems to have the greatest force. In economic terms, that basically says that the only people who are worth paying attention to are the ones who are economically active; and you calculate, you measure, so that a gain of £100 by a person with £10 million is exactly the same, economically, as a loss of £100 by a person with £120 when they started. That is the general interest.

The common good is different, because it is more than what happens when you add my good and your good together. Jim Wallis reminded us that the common good is a global community - although he didn't boast of the way, which he could have done legitimately, that Sojourners had lived out what he says. And Bishop Ismael's presence among us, from the Diocese of El Obeid in the Sudan, is a gift precisely to point us away from simply the church in this land to the common good which we find underlined in the Epistle to the Ephesians.

The common good is an ethic in the Kingdom here and now. Heather, a few moments ago, talked of how it was lived out day to day in her area, yet we sometimes feel overwhelmed and [we have] the sense that we can't turn back the flood of the general interest. But we need not despair. In our society, in three areas, we have seen recently extraordinary political change, which I would never have imagined would happen. For example, the cross-party support for the level of development aid at 0.7 per cent of GDP - how extraordinary that we've stuck to that through the worst recession since the 1930s; the Bill on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking; and the initiatives on sexual violence in conflict. None of those win votes next summer - in fact, they're certain vote-losers in some quarters.

So we need not despair, nor see only the grim darkness of unconstrained market force as the inevitable future. Yet, as I said earlier, if we approve this motion, we commit ourselves to a radical change in the way the church works, and there will be practical legislation coming forward to face that. It will change us institutionally, bureaucratically, and how we apply for monies in our budgets at every level from parish to General Synod.

Philip Fletcher spoke of this.

For the common good to be seen, it must somewhere be lived, in all its vulnerability, fallibility, tripping over each other, necessary sacrifice and huge difficulties of putting aside our personal preferences. The church is the place for such cross-shaped incarnation, and if it is, then, as Jim pointed out and Philip pointed out, people might begin more clearly to comprehend the God who made our common good his primary concern,

so that our words may carry the weight they must."

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