

TRUTH, JUSTICE, CHARITY AND LIBERTY IN THE GLOBALISED WORLD

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On 11 April 2013 we will celebrate the official publication of Pope John XXIII's encyclical, *Pacem in terris: On Establishing Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity and Liberty*. It is sometimes described as Good Pope John's last will and testament to the Church; sometimes as the Pope's letter to the entire world. This anniversary has particular significance for me because as a boy, in 1963, I came to Rome with my school – a brand new Jesuit Grammar School named for the English martyr, Edmund Campion – and, in St. Peter's, in front of Pope John, we sang *Faith of Our Fathers*. Today, we commit ourselves to retelling the story of our faith in these new times.

Each word in the title of this talk warrants an exegesis commanding an entire conference, let alone a brief paper.

I hope, therefore, that you will permit me the luxury of taking each term at its most general and commonsensical: truth is saying of a thing what it is; justice is fairness; charity is giving of one's self for others; and liberty is freedom from oppression. All are universal concepts requisite to the pursuit of the Common Good.

I am not going to use my time today to furnish you with an exhaustive defence of these statements or to set out the endless libraries of relevant academic analyses and arguments. Rather, I hope to address you from the vantage point of a politician who has had been privileged to witness first-hand, and from the local to international scale, some of the challenges posed by globalisation to truth, justice, charity and liberty as properly conceived, and to set out some ways in which we might approach those challenges.

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THE CHARACTER OF GLOBALISATION AND SOME OF ITS PROBLEMS

Globalisation as Interdependence – the Balance of Local and Universal Interests

I began my career working in deprived inner city communities. That experience nurtured an ingrained suspicion of vast or over-weening centralised institutions and bureaucracies which accrete powers to themselves.

Where globalisation – a term coined by American educationalists in the 1930s but that became popularised in the 1980s¹ – implies centralisation I am antagonistic towards it; where it means *the phasing out of the nation state* and its replacement by remote or unelected elites, or homogeneity through imposed values, I feel the urge to resist it; where it implies interdependence I would want support it.

In 350 BC, writing in the *Politics*, Aristotle emphasised the duty of every citizen to be a participator in the common life. He claimed that by nature every human being is a political animal and none should be like *Solitary pieces in a game of chequers*.²

Simply, man cannot escape the fact that he is a social, interdependent being.

True participators must remember their inter-connectedness, seeking the good of the city as a whole, yes, but, if you'll pardon the cliché, they should never forget to stay in touch with their roots.

Mahatma Gandhi understood the importance of this when he remarked that *To forget how to dig the earth and to tend the soil is to forget ourselves*.³

Speaking about American politics, a former Congressional Speaker, Tip O'Neill, once remarked that in the final analysis *All politics is local*.⁴

It's helpful to remember this when globalisation seems to equate to remote centralisation and threatens to enshrine universal privileges that are to the detriment of local needs or undermine diversity.

Rather than falling prey to a false dichotomy between the local and universal – a mistake so often the catalyst for political conflict, Aristotle's value

¹ Sheila L. Croucher. *Globalisation and Belonging: The Politics of Identity in a Changing World*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2004.

² Aristotle, line 1252B of *Politics*, in Terence Urwin, Gail Fine, *Aristotle*, Hackett Publishing, 1996, p. 290.

³ Mahatma Gandhi, recorded in the Navajivan Trust's English Weekly Journal: Har-ijan, 25-8-1946, p. 282.

⁴ Tip O'Neil, *All Politics is Local, and Other Rules of the Game*, Gary Hymel, Crown Publishers; 1st edition 1994.

of interdependence should here be writ large and sought on a global scale. The *local* needs the *universal* and vice versa. Without the universal, the local may lose sight of the obligations to its fellow man, and runs the risk of relativising its moral system to its own locality and exclusive interests.

Equally, the *universal* needs the *local*, without which its ontology is sterile and without appropriate practical application.

We ought not to undertake the folly of attempting to resolve the tension between these two polarities. Rather we ought to try to live with the tension in order that it might be generative. Rather than an either-or, winner-takes-all battle to the death between local and universal, we should aim to strike that balance, favouring a *both-and* approach which bears fruit by means of the creative tension between the two aspects.

In the context of globalisation, the trend seems often to be towards *universalisation* rather than the nurturing of a *creative tension*, bringing with it a style of politics that is unbalanced and forgetful of its roots. When politicians forget to walk the streets, to engage in the issues which affect people, to live in the communities and regions they represent, or put self aggrandisement before the duty to serve, it compounds alienation and the dislocation of politics and people.

Yet, equally, any politician who becomes preoccupied with *the narrow* or whips up localised fears or prejudice or who does not see the connection between the local and what is national and universal is equally at fault.

Globalisation and Scale: as if People Mattered

With the universalising tendency comes institutional and ideological *bigness*. But, as articulated by the British Catholic economist, E.F. Schumacher in his 1973 critique of western economics, seeing the Big Picture does not need to contradict the belief that *Small is Beautiful*.⁵

Schumacher was one of the first to examine the phenomenon of globalisation, arguing that with appropriate decentralisation there could be smallness within bigness.

How comfortably this sits with the Catholic concepts of subsidiarity, solidarity, human dignity, and utter respect for God's creation – where the man made in the image of God – *imago Dei* – always takes precedence over ideologies and systems.

⁵ E.F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered*, Hartley and Mark's Publishers, 1999.

Subsidiarity is enjoying a recent resurgence in popularity in European democracies, especially my own, where the government has incorporated something that seems very much like subsidiarity in to its flagship policy, but has named it localism.

Subsidiarity as we all understand it was developed by Oswald von Nell-Breuning, a German Jesuit theologian, whose thinking was pivotal in the publication of *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) by Pope Pius XI, and whose writing was banned by the Nazis. As many of you will have heard many times, subsidiarity affirms that however complex a task may be, or however far reaching, it should be undertaken at the most local level possible.

In an increasingly globalised world where vast corporations have more wealth and power than many nation states, how much do we need our economies tempered by this principle, which hard-wires institutions against compulsive centralisation? The contrast with totalitarian and authoritarian societies – which subjugate the individual and these mediating structures to the State – could not be greater.

Globalisation and the Crushing of the Human Spirit

To be Catholic is to be global. The word means *according to the whole*, and in every generation the Church's adherents have sacrificed their lives to live out the Great Commission from Jesus to *go out to all the nations of the world* and to *baptise all people in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit* (Matthew 28, 16-20). Worldwide there are two billion Christians. The onus is universal – it applies to all those who accept Him – and is expected to be lived out universally: *all nations*.

Yet, in 2012, in the top 16 countries responsible for the most egregious and systematic violations of religious freedom, listed by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, persecution of Christians occurs in every one of those nations. This signals how malign and hostile the global environment may be and also, despite our *interconnectedness*, how indifferent we frequently are to those who reside with us in the household of faith.

In *Dignitatis Humanae* (Declaration on Religious Freedom, on the right of the person and of communities to social and civil freedom in matters religious, promulgated by Paul VI, December 1965) the Council fathers set out the terms on which Christians may remain true to the central belief and calling of universality – eschewing violent proselytism and theocracy and insisting on respect and tolerance while firmly asserting the right of Christians to worship freely and to proclaim their beliefs. The Second Vatican Council speaks audibly to a generation which is witnessing in the United Kingdom heavy handed intolerance involving attempts to ban the

saying of prayers on public occasions to the banning of the wearing of a cross; to the imprisonment and “re-education” of Chinese Catholic bishops and the execution of converts to Christianity in Iran. Wherever it occurs, this is the crushing of the human spirit. It also diminishes those who do it and robs society of something which can be virtuous and inspirational.

Speaking, appropriately enough, in Cuba’s Revolution Square (Homily, March 2012) Pope Benedict reminded us of two things, first that religious freedom solidifies society:

Strengthening religious freedom consolidates social bonds, nourishes the hope of a better world, creates favourable conditions for peace and harmonious development, while at the same time establishing solid foundations for securing the rights of future generations.

and secondly, that we must beware of intolerance and prejudice in our own lives: *there are those who wrongly interpret this search for the truth, leading them to irrationality and fanaticism; they close themselves up in ‘their truth’, and try to impose it on others. These are like the blind scribes who, upon seeing Jesus beaten and bloody, cry out furiously, Crucify him! (Jn 19:6). Anyone who acts irrationally cannot become a disciple of Jesus. Faith and reason are necessary and complementary in the pursuit of truth. God created man with an innate vocation to the truth and he gave him reason for this purpose. Certainly, it is not irrationality but rather the yearning for truth which the Christian faith promotes.*

This yearning for truth is the antithesis of homogenisation that implies a one size fits all vacuous western modernity to be imposed throughout the world. In Catholic thought, subsidiarity and universality sit happily alongside one another; so do reason and faith – the domains of secular rationality and religious conviction. These domains are interdependent and to be civilised we need them both.

Globalisation, Personalism and Communitarianism

At the heart of all our concerns must remain the inalienable and inviolate dignity of the human person.

Whether it is an international supra organisation, a multi-national corporation or a nation state, there remains a duty not to derogate autonomy from the human person, from their family or from the many small and intermediate communities – such as the Church or voluntary organisations – which are the web and weave of society. Jacques Maritain’s ideas on personalism, as expressed in *Christianity and Democracy*,⁶ should be read along-

⁶ Jacques Maritain, *Christianity and Democracy*, translated by Doris C. Anson, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1944.

side the more recent communitarian writings of Amitai Etzioni and political philosophers such as Alasdair MacIntyre, who argues that moral and political judgements – virtue ethics – will shape our actions as moral agents and determine the shape of our communities.

In *Dependent Rational Animals* (1999), MacIntyre asserts that human vulnerability and disability are the central features of human life, and that Thomistic *virtues of dependency* are prerequisite if individual humans and their communities are to flourish as they pass from immaturity to maturity. MacIntyre says:

*It is most often to others that we owe our survival, let alone our flourishing ... It will be a central thesis of this book that the virtues that we need, if we are to develop from our animal condition into that of independent rational agents, and the virtues that we need, if we are to confront and respond to vulnerability and disability both in ourselves and in others, belong to one and the same set of virtues, the distinctive virtues of dependent rational animals.*⁷

Mary Ann Glendon in *Rights Talk* provides a prescient critique of a society where individual autonomy and selfishness has eclipsed communal duties and the service of others. She describes:

*... its penchant for absolute, extravagant formulations, its near-aphasia concerning responsibility, its excessive homage to individual independence and self-sufficiency, its habitual concentration on the individual and the state at the expense of the intermediate groups of civil society, and its unapologetic insularity, not only does each of these traits make it difficult to give voice to common sense or moral intuitions, they also impede development of the sort of rational political discourse that is appropriate to the needs of a mature, complex, liberal, pluralistic republic.*⁸

Globalisation and Economic Justice

In the colonial empires we saw early examples of economic globalisation and since the nineteenth century we have seen many trade barriers dismantled. The formation of Europe's Common Market, after the Second World War, was based on the removal of economic and trade barriers. At times of high unemployment, or during economic downturn, the attractions of globalisation and the easy entry of imports manufactured by exploited workers

⁷ Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals, Why Human Beings Needs the Virtues*, Duckworth, 1999 p. 5.

⁸ Mary Ann Glendon, *Rights Talk: The Impoverishment of Political Discourse*, Free Press, 1991 p. 14.

paid a fraction of those in the importing nation – and who are employed by corporations which have moved their activities to capitalise on lower wage regimes – reveals the less desirable side of a globalised economy.

Globalisation brings with it more migration and dislocation of populations. Where this leads to the return of earned income as receipts to families left behind – I think of Poland – it can help build an economy; where it leads to trafficking and new forms of bonded labour and global slavery, it is an anathema.

When globalisation reduces tariff barriers and stimulates the global production and trade in goods and services, and combats distorting factors such as import quotas and export fees, it appears compelling. Undoubtedly it has stimulated the economic development of many Asian economies – spectacularly in countries such as China and India. In 2009 China overtook Germany as the biggest exporter of goods in the world. But China and India also still remain home to some of the most appalling poverty in the world.

The benefits of globalisation have too frequently been over-hyped while some of the disadvantages have been ignored. Globalisation seems pretty irrelevant if you live in the DRC, North Korea, Burma, Nepal, Rwanda or South Sudan – all of which I have visited – and many remain unconvinced that countries whose main exports are agricultural goods will ever be beneficiaries. Investor rights can be made central stage while people's interest become incidental or secondary.

Globalisation and Charity

Advances in agricultural development, communication and transport have presented the international community with extraordinary charitable opportunities. Never before has it been so possible to distribute the earth's plenitude in solidarity. But those opportunities carry with them an awesome burden of responsibility.

In 1840 the Jesuit Luigi Taparelli articulated the phrase *social justice* in his work *Saggio Teoretico di Diritto Naturale Appoggiato sul Fatto* (Theoretical Wisdom of Natural Law based on Fact).⁹

He was interpreting Aquinas but the concept is rooted in Scripture. Jesus could not be clearer when he tells us that “Whatever you have done for the least of my brothers, you have done to me” (Matthew 25:40). Never forget

⁹ Luigi Taparelli, *Saggio Teoretico di Diritto Naturale Appoggiato sul Fatto*, in J. Brian Benestad, *Church, State, and Society: An Introduction to Catholic Social Doctrine Catholic Moral Thought*, Catholic University of America Press, 2011.

that religion is the single most important factor in giving: in the United States 85% of giving comes through charities inspired by their religious faith. In Europe, our great universities, schools, hospitals and modern hospices and many charitable foundations were created through Christian impulse.

We must never lose sight of the risk that the institutionalisation and internationalisation of charity poses to an authentic understanding of *caritas*, which cannot be compartmentalised or made in to an abstract, impersonal transaction between bank accounts. Something further from authentic Christian self-gift could barely be conceived. Pope Benedict's first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*,¹⁰ is a rhapsodic call to arms – urging us to give from the depths of our being and to be utterly focused on the common good and develop a spirit of service, and servant leadership, telling us that “the heart sees where love is needed, and acts accordingly” (Section 31(c)).

“Love grows through love”; (Section 18); “Love of God and love of neighbour are inseparable, they form a single commandment” (Section 18); and he insists that: “Love needs to be organised if it is to be an ordered service to the community”. (Section 24)

We need to carefully assess how international institutions measure up to such criteria. It would be a serious oversight in such a discussion on globalisation to fail to mention that contemporary charitable giving can be deeply problematic. We need to ask ourselves a few pertinent questions: for instance, by what criteria are we to ensure that those in most need are helped?

In her compelling book on the subject¹¹ one African woman, Dr. Dambisa Moyo, who worked for the World Bank and at Goldman Sachs, in the debt capital markets and as an economist in the global macroeconomics team, questions the dependency culture which has been created by many global development programmes.

International institutions should exercise caution before contributing to what the Catholic writer, Hilaire Belloc, described as “The Servile State”.¹²

Ask also, what role do international institutions have to play in discerning which causes to donate to? How ought we to ensure the efficient and equitable transmission of goods?

Nor should we lose sight of the distinction to be drawn between charity and obligation. For example, the abandonment of hundreds of thousands

¹⁰ Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, Catholic Truth Society, 2006.

¹¹ Dr. Dambisa Moyo, *Dead Aid: Why Aid is Not Working and How there is a Better Way for Africa*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009.

¹² Hilaire Belloc, *The Servile State*, London; Edinburgh, T.N. Foulis, 1912.

of elderly people is one of the United Kingdom's greatest scandals; and the thought that they should become dependent on handouts from charities is nothing short of obscene.

One of the most shocking statistics about contemporary Britain is that an estimated 1 million elderly people do not see a friend or a relative or a neighbour during the course of an average week.

Toxic loneliness and isolation will be the curse of the 21st century. Where family structures have broken down the wider community has a duty of care; this goes beyond charitable giving. This is how a just society must function.

Pope Benedict XVI insists that social teaching must

help purify reason and to contribute, here and now, to the acknowledgment and attainment of what is just. The Church has to play her part through rational argument and she has to reawaken the spiritual energy, without which justice cannot prevail and prosper (Section 28, Deus Caritas Est).

In an age where hundreds of millions in aid are pledged to developing countries in pursuit of the aggressive "family planning" programmes of supra-national institutions who happen to be controlling the budgets, these words drive home the importance of the place of the Church's voice in the international conversation. Without it, charity runs the risk of becoming devoid of meaning or, at worst, an excuse for the proliferation of malign ideologies.

Globalisation and Truth

So, to what do we have recourse when the path of this universalisation, this globalisation, seems to be progressing negatively in whatever permutation it is manifested? We must be careful not to emulate the soldiers in Vietnam who burnt down the villages, thinking it would help to free the people.

A Christian ought to respond that it is knowledge of the Truth that enables us to construe properly the meaning of justice, charity and liberty, and that such knowledge is attained by the light of human reason and Divine Revelation: "the truth will set you free" (Jn 8.32).

Some might contend that the prospect of living a political life faithful to the Truth of the Gospel is simply impossible in a confused world where subjectivity and relativism reign supreme. No doubt it is extremely difficult and will certainly entail sacrifice. Yet too often we allow its seeming impossibility to mask cowardice or the temptation for a quiet life.

This is the defining battleground between a religious faith which pits good against evil and truth against lies. And the defence of truth implies sacrifice; it will always require a price to be paid.

Just over a year ago, Pakistan's brave Catholic Minister for Minorities was gunned down by Taliban assassins. Shahbaz Bhatti once said:

*I want to share that I believe in Jesus Christ, who has given his own life for us. I know what is the meaning of the cross, and I am following the cross, and I am ready to die for a cause.*¹³

In February 1941, when the Nazis promised St. Maximilian Kolbe that they would permit him to continue his work so long as he made no social comment and restricted himself to religiosity and pietism, he responded by stating in words which sent him to Auschwitz: *No one in the world can change truth.*¹⁴

He insisted that when we had found truth we had to serve it because of *what use will be the victories on the battlefield if we are defeated in our innermost personal selves?*

As Pope Benedict remarked during his recent visit to Cuba (Homily 28 March 2012) we must be prepared to act like the three young men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego (Daniel 3) who “defied the order of the king” preferring “to face death by fire rather than betray their conscience and their faith”.

Echoing Kolbe, the Holy Father concluded: “Each human being has to seek the truth and to choose it when he or she finds it, even at the risk of embracing sacrifices”.

Not everyone will be required to give their life for their beliefs but as Blessed John Henry, Cardinal, Newman, perceptively observed:

*Good is never done except at the expense of those who do it: truth is never enforced except at the sacrifice of its propounders.*¹⁵

Globalisation and Relativism

Relativism is a doctrine which rejects fundamentally the notion that human action is, can or should be universal; it is a doctrine which dethrones truth.

We can draw some hope that relativism is, at root, incompatible with Globalisation. Globalisation needs universalising forces in order to exist.

That there exists some shared value that ought to be universalised is pre-supposed.

This exposes the deception of many of those who appear to champion relativism while playing a part in a Globalising institution.

¹³ Shahbaz Bhatti, *lifesitenews.com* reporting on an interview posted on youtube.com: www.lifesitenews.com/news/i-am-ready-to-die-said-assassinated-pakistani-christian-official-in-pre-dea/

¹⁴ Brian Roberts, *Dear Brother*, Lulu Publishers, 2006 p. 84.

¹⁵ “*Lectures on the Position of Catholics in England Addressed to the Brothers of the Oratory in the Summer of 1851*” and see Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman, Ed. Ian Ker, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, Penguin Classics, 1996.

The creed implemented by such institutions can never be your-truth-my-truth relativism – that would defeat their reason for existence entirely. Rather, a new and occasionally terrifying moral hierarchy is being promoted which sees its task to aggressively secularise and homogenise, and all under the guise of tolerance. G.K. Chesterton amusingly quipped that *Tolerance is the virtue of a man without convictions*.¹⁶

But beyond the humour is a serious warning about the danger of pitting the admirable quality of tolerance against the repudiation of Truth.

This, I believe, is what the Holy Father is getting at when he speaks of the *dictatorship of relativism*.

Nowhere is this the case more emphatically than with international organisations that are attempting to enshrine the killing of the unborn as a universal human right, even going as far as withdrawing aid from countries that do not accept their presuppositions about life in the womb.

In the domestic context, in a country like the United Kingdom, this has led to seven million abortions; to gender abortions; to the eugenic abortion of disabled babies; to calls by ethicists to permit *after birth abortion* (infanticide); to the destruction of millions of human embryos for experimental purposes; to therapeutic cloning of human embryos; to the creation of animal-human hybrid embryos; and, at the other end of the human spectrum, to the inevitable calls for euthanasia – with one of Britain's leading philosophers claiming that people with Alzheimer's are too great a financial burden both to their families and the State.

Depending on the circumstances and the situation, the belief that personal autonomy and mere choice trump all other considerations has led to infinite permutations and amendments to the Sixth Commandment. There is no right way, no correct way, just my way.

This is the real fault-line which will determine whether Globalisation is a force for good or evil. It is a fight between absolutists. The task of local and international politics is to ascertain whether the absolute values that are being promoted are harmonious with the Common Good of all mankind.

We see the gospel as public truth and that it commands our commitment, superseding all other commitments.

Our belief is that the Common Good is shaped by the universal Truth of Jesus Christ – who is Truth incarnate and whose Truth remains in His Body, the Church. How essential it is that today's Christian politicians grasp that this fact is central to their vocation.

¹⁶ G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, 1906, Bantam Doubleday, 1996.

Concluding Remarks

It is with precisely this conviction about the nature of the Truth that we can reject a system that fails to afford justice, charity or liberty to the most vulnerable in society as utterly devoid of credibility.

If Christ's truth is universal and living it is what man was made for then the success or cataclysmic failure of the progress of Globalisation hinges upon the influence of Christians – or those advocating values compatible with Christ's teaching – in the public square, locally, nationally and internationally.

To this end we all need to be more religiously literate: and those called to political life need continuing formation and the sort of fraternal global support, contact, friendships and encouragement provided by organisations such as the *International Catholic Legislators Network* (ICLN) and Pontifical Academies.

Along with our own formation, and the cure of souls, our most formidable allies in the new evangelisation will be the cultivation of a love of learning and a love of society. Faith and reason are always happy companions. We must treasure the rich deposit of faith with which we have been entrusted; know who we are; and stand for truth – it's enough.

Happily, many of the international rights instruments in existence enshrine principles with which Christians can engage favourably as they arise from Christian philosophy. I am thinking particularly of individual human dignity and equality – values so utterly revolutionary when preached by Christ.

Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful* is subtitled *Economics as if People Mattered* (*ibid.*). This makes perfect sense for those of us whose starting point is that man is *imago Dei* – that each person is unique and of infinite worth because he is crafted in God's very image. For that reason alone he matters a great deal.

It is up to those who believe in Christian Truth to prevent these principles from becoming distorted in their varying interpretations.

The great Christian apologist, C.S. Lewis brilliantly expressed this belief when he said:

*If no set of moral ideas were truer or better than any other, there would be no sense in preferring civilised morality to savage morality, or Christian morality to Nazi morality. In fact, of course, we all do believe that some moralities are better than others.*¹⁷

So, we are called to be more than savages.

Where globalisation implies conformity rather than diversity; standardisation rather than difference; over-arching rather than empowering; it should be strenuously resisted.

¹⁷ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Harper Collins, 1943.

Where globalisation opens up personal communication and connect- edness and enables free speech and human rights to prosper – through the internet for instance – it should be welcomed; but it would be foolish to pretend that these same tools can't be used to poison minds or to bolster tyranny. Today, a lie is half way round the world before you have had time to wipe your brow.

Where globalisation is indifferent to authentic Truth, Justice, Charity or Liberty or tramples on these concepts in the name of a false liberalism or shallow Western modernity it should be opposed.

Where it promotes new forms of co-operation and co-existence it should be embraced. Where it sides with private power systems, rather than social solidarity – that other great principle of Catholic Social Teaching – it should be exposed.

Where it seeks cultural homogenisation – an invented *one world religion* for instance, which would ban all others; or seeks to standardise language; or to impose the same popular culture; or to countenance only an academically mediated or politically approved form of Christianity; then diversity, respect for difference, and plurality should be advanced instead. Being serious about your own faith is good for other faiths and a vibrant public culture needs diverse voices which know what they believe.

We can take one of two paths.

One would be to emulate Pilate, who infamously asked: *what is truth?* We, too, can pretend that truth does not exist; avoid asking the question or hearing the answer; and say the responsibility for everything – from abject poverty to industrial scale abortion – belong to someone else.

Pope Benedict suggests that Pilate implies that:

*... man is incapable of knowing it or denying that there exists a truth valid for all. This attitude, as in the case of scepticism and relativism, changes hearts, making them cold, wavering, distant from others and closed. They, like the Roman governor, wash their hands and let the water of history drain away without taking a stand.*¹⁸

The alternative is to take the risk of discipleship, attempting to follow in the greatest tradition of all, walking hand-in-hand with some of the great men and women who are central to our Catholic story and identity – Kolbe, More, Stein, Bhatti and countless others whose names are often un-

¹⁸ Pope Benedict XVI, *Homily in Revolution Square, Cuba 2012* found online: www.catholicerald.co.uk/news/2012/03/27/a-society-that-rejects-god-is-hurled-into-a-void-pope-tells-cubans/

recorded, from China to Nigeria, Sudan to North Korea, the former Soviet Union and its satellites to the contemporary atrocities in the Middle East – in self-giving charity and with love for the Truth, regardless of whatever worldly consequences that might bring.