

Fifth Sunday Easter Cycle A May 18, 2014

We have all been hoodwinked into believing that the issue was all settled. Well, guess what? It is not settled after all!

I am referring to an article that appeared in the Toronto Star Friday 9th May, 2014. Justin Trudeau announced that no one will be allowed to seek a Liberal nomination unless they commit to support a woman's right to choose to have an abortion. "I have made it clear," he says, "that future candidates need to be completely understanding that they will be expected to vote pro-choice on any bills."

It is strangely ironic, even sad, that a country, like Canada, that is promoting the advance of democracy throughout the world is doing everything it can to silence the voice of conscience of those who differ from the party line right here in Canada. Where is the choice here?

Canada is now the sole country in the western world that has no laws whatever to protect unborn children. Since 1969, the lives of over 4.5 million unborn children have been terminated here in Canada. This number is fast approaching the 6 million human beings exterminated in Nazi concentration camps during the last World War. How is killing their children serving the cause and advancement of women in Canada or making for more responsible fathers?

How can we as Catholics who believe in the sanctity of life as well as the sovereignty of conscience remain silent? Happily, Cardinal Collins who will be visiting us next weekend has chosen not to remain silent. Listen to the letter he wrote to Justin Trudeau a few days ago on May 14:

Dear Mr. Trudeau,

I am deeply concerned about your decision that citizens, who in conscience, seek to assure the protection of the most vulnerable among us are not acceptable as candidates to your party.

Just last week Pope Francis sent a message of support for thousands of your fellow citizens who gathered on Parliament Hill, to peacefully affirm the right to life, and the need to protect the vulnerable. He assured them of his spiritual closeness "as they give witness to the God-given dignity, beauty and value of human life." It is worth noting that if Pope Francis, as a young man, instead of seeking to serve in the

priesthood in Argentina, had moved to Canada and sought to serve in the noble vocation of politics, he would have been ineligible to be a candidate for your party, if your policy were in effect.

Among the 2 million Catholics of my archdiocese, there are members of all political parties, including your own. I encourage all of them, of whatever party, to serve the community not only by voting but by active engagement in political life as candidates. It is not right that they be excluded by any party for being faithful to their conscience.

Political leaders surely have the right to insist on party unity and discipline in political matters which are within the legitimate scope of their authority. But that political authority is not limitless; it does not extend to matters of conscience and religious faith. It does not govern all aspects of life.

The patron saint of politicians is St. Thomas More. He came into conflict with the political authority of his day on a matter of conscience. The king claimed control over his conscience, but Thomas was "the king's good servant, but God's first." Political leaders in our day should not exclude such people of integrity, no matter how challenging they find their views.

I urge you to reconsider your position,

Sincerely yours,
Thomas Cardinal Collins,
Archbishop of Toronto

Will we, dear friends, choose to be God's good servant too?

Jesus tells us, "All who are on the side of truth listen to my voice." One of the ways we hear the voice of Christ today is through that little voice within us called the voice of conscience. Let us prayerfully examine our conscience as to whether we are in fact listening to the voice of Christ, and not merely to those voices which seek only to suppress the views of those among us who are brave enough to speak the truth as they see it.

It is God who is creator and sovereign over all. And it is to Him that we will have to give an account of how we have lived our lives at the end. Let us pray for our country and for ourselves, for the wisdom to know what we ought to do and the courage to do it.

Father Neil