***A General Election Statement***

***Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right:***

***They shall be satisfied.***

***Happy the peacemakers:***

***They shall be called children of God. (Mt.5: )***

As the election campaign continues **it is good to appreciate and say thank you** to all who served as T.D.’s and Senators and members of government in the term that is ending. In the southwest we appreciate the sacrifices that our elected representatives make in terms of travel and being away from their homes and families. All elected representatives give of their best in service of their country and their communities in the constituencies that they represent. That they represent different viewpoints, - political, social and cultural is an essential part of democracy.

**A word of appreciation and thanks** to all who are going forward for election, and to their supporters who are campaigning tirelessly on their behalf. We are called to listen and to understand their viewpoints and to realise that each has something to offer amid the complexity of the challenges our country, the E.U. and the whole world faces.

**The Dail term that is ending coped with** the Covid pandemic; wars in Ukraine, the Middle East and many other countries; climate change and biodiversity issues; and the inward migration of peoples fleeing poverty and conflicts. We have been blessed in terms of the growth and strength of our economy. At the same time, we face many very serious ongoing challenges, for example: housing all our people, major gaps in our health services, affordable and available childcare, the numbers of adults and children trapped in poverty.

It is a good time for all of us to appreciate **the fine community spirit in every town, village and rural area**. I have in mind the contribution of so many volunteers through local groups and charities and as individual neighbours and relations: - in the areas of social and health care, music, culture, the arts and sport, to name but a few.

Sadly, in recent years **the fundamental value and dignity of human life** is being undermined at both the start and end of life here in our country. It is important I speak of this subject.

“Science clearly shows that human life begins at conception. Humans in the earliest stages of development are entitled to the protections the rest of us enjoy. **Each unborn child is precious, irreplaceable and unmistakably one of us**.” (Positively Protecting Life, Love Both). Sadly, in Ireland today it is estimated that possibly one in every eight pregnancies are ended by abortion, and there is a campaign to extend the situations in which an abortion is legally permitted.

In recent weeks the Dáil voted in favour of **a “*Final Report”* that would permit *assisted suicide / assisted death and euthanasia***under specific circumstances. The report goes against the recommendations of many medical bodies who care for the dying.

Legalising and thus normalising these deaths (allowing assisted suicide) will within a short time play on the minds of people in the final months / years of their lives, and of many others with major health issues (physical, mental, psychological). Assisted suicide is often presented as something that would be rare and exceptional. Once assisted suicide is accepted in principle, it becomes very difficult to draw a line. Many countries, which began by legalising assisted suicide on a limited basis, have moved on to widen significantly the scope of that legislation. I encourage all people to make a personal decision to always speak out against legalising *assisted death / assisted suicide and euthanasia*.

Please share your views with those seeking election to the Dáil or Seanad. I welcome the fact that several candidates in the local Dáil constituencies are giving priority to these ‘prolife’ issues. In today’s world where medical advances and major progress have been made in caring for all at the beginning and at the end of life, surely, we can respect the right to life of every human being from conception in the womb to the moment of natural death.

I ask all to pray that the General Election will be conducted in a good spirit, and that that all entitled to vote will be motivated to do so.

+ Ray Browne,

Diocese of Kerry.

18th November 2024