

CHALLENGES OF WORKING FOR JUSTICE

I was pleased to read Archbishop Peter Smith's reflection upon the challenges that we need to address in today's society (October 31). He takes up the Pope's recent reminder of the demands from our faith to join with others to promote the Common Good of all, as laid out in the Social Teaching of the Church. This is not an easy task after so many years when most have thought that self-interest is the only true motivation for personal action – especially when also faced with the likely consequences of severe cuts in public spending.

It is significant that Archbishop Vincent Nichols drew upon the same passages from the Holy Father's address at Westminster when giving a public lecture on “Living the Virtues in a time of Austerity” at Leicester University on October 28. All people of faith are being asked to engage in ethical dialogue with others and present well-founded questions and proposals both in public discussion and in private lobbying.

Not all of us are well prepared to respond to the challenge! Church leaders, agencies and other organisations need to make the roots of their concerns clear and explain the relevance of just and prudent behaviour to those who may not fully share our faith experiences. Journalists, editors and educationalists need to rediscover ways of encouraging us to use the elements of analysis and reflection before leaping into action – and to be alert for what needs to be done to follow up any action.

There are a good number of relevant articles in the issue of the Universe that carried the Archbishop's text, but how many of the busy readers will accept that they should take heed and integrate these thoughts to their daily lives? Many clergy have little time to provide ongoing counsel: there is a challenge for them to encourage lay people to do this work in their parishes.

And who will provide the necessary finance to support the transformation that Pope Benedict has called for in our lands? I look forward to reading the views of other readers, as called for by the editor.

Phil Kerton
62 Lambardes, New Ash Green, Longfield, Kent Da3 8HU
(Tel 01474 873802)