

Election Time

I don't know about you but I'll be glad when this coming week is over. Don't you just love elections campaigns! And lucky us, we have not one but two elections this year! And my problem with election campaigns is that in them, we see democracy at its worst, with candidates talking up their abilities, while they belittle their political opponents, and of course, promising the world. It's as if all the electorate cares about is "What's in it for me?" And there is enough truth in that assumption to encourage our politicians to promise more and more. But is that what we really want from our politicians?

Surely we are just as interested, if not more, in the integrity and vision of our political leaders.

And the word "integrity" refers to "wholeness, and unity" and sadly we see little of that at both a State and a Federal level of political debate. Our political system encourages a black and white view of our world. Our opponents' ideas are always ridiculous, lacking in substance, and our views are always right. So at the federal level we have the Prime Minister proposing a long overdue reform of the nation's health system and rather than working together to fine-tune the reform we have a desperate search for reasons why such reforms would not work. And if the Opposition comes up with an idea for reform, such as the proposal for 26 weeks paternity leave for all workers, the Government automatically seeks to find flaws.

But I ask – does the political process have to be like this? Could there not be room for policy development that is done consensually, where our parliaments work together to produce nation building projects? Sadly however we live in a society that is more interested in petty self-serving agendas than any notion of nation building. We live in such an individualistic age that the collective is always seen as secondary. And so we get the politicians we deserve.

However, **As I See It**, people of faith, Christians, can speak a word of hope into this political arena. We follow the Christ, who came as the great Reconciler, who always listened and responded to the poor and marginalised, who sought to unite rather than divide. Jesus the Christ spoke into the political system of his age, pointing to a better way of living. Jesus' "kingdom" talk was an offer of a viable alternative to the politics of power. But the change envisaged by Jesus always starts with a change of heart, a coming closer to God and God's desire for a world reconciled to its Creator. And politicians, leaders, in that sort of "kingdom" need to be women and men of integrity in touch with their spiritual selves. And how can you tell? Well they are the ones that pay less attention to the games their political parties play, the ones who are less interested in division and more open to listening and serving the people they claim to represent.

So my advice as you prepare to vote is to look for people of integrity next Saturday, people prepared to serve rather than rule.

Tony would be more than happy to chat about the above article with anyone who wants to.

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