

Unitive Leadership

This school term I've been leading a discussion group at 'School for Seniors' called "Politics and Spirituality – Seeking a Public Integrity." The choice was deliberate, given that we are to endure two elections this year. Well, the first has come and gone, but we are still none the wiser about the result. However we do know that our politicians will have to behave in a radically different manner if we are not to endure yet another election in a year or so.

Aristotle is said to have coined the word "politics" based the word on the Greek word for "city" - "polis". He did so because he thought that politics would lead citizens to work together to achieve results for the common good or the common wealth - And at its best, that what politics can achieve. It meant in the Greek polis that citizens would listen to each other and compromise so that decisions for made for the welfare of all citizens. Now I don't know whether this ever happened. But the theory was good. And that's where integrity comes in. It's where spirituality comes in.

What is it that motivates our politicians? Is it the common good? Or is it their own or their party's ideological position?

As I watch the political theatre that we are forced to endure, brought to us by a media besotted with the conflict and discord, I have to admit that integrity in politics is hard to find. In Tasmania our political parties will have to work together. Compromise is not a dirty word. I've always thought that it was what politics was all about. Our elected leaders need to learn the art of compromise.

In the federal sphere some of us in hope watched the first of three leadership debates. The issue, one that concerns us all, our hospital system, took a back seat as the leaders scored political points, with one calling the other a liar. Perhaps the very fact that we set up combative debates is indicative where they will always end up. It's about winners and losers. Win-Win outcomes are impossible. So we score the event like a boxing contest.

As I See It, politics should always be a matter of integrity, of bringing things together, of wholeness. No individual, no political party has all the answers, are all good. This being the case, we need each other. But I wonder if such maturity, is too much for our political leaders.

Unitive leadership comes from a strong connection with our Creator, who seeks to make all things whole. Unitive leadership was what Jesus lived out in his earthly mission. It was what led him to Jerusalem, the seat of power and it was what led to his crucifixion. As we contemplate that journey to Jerusalem and Calvary this week, Holy Week, let us look for politicians of integrity who are far more interested in what unites than what divides. But a word of warning – such behaviour will be strongly resisted by those who know no other way and who lie captive to their ideological baggage that tells them that their position is the only position and the opposition is always wrong. This was the mindset that crucified Jesus.

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

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