



ANDREW ON WEDNESDAY

Respecting human life

Respecting human life is of the greatest importance to our society. The Dean Elect of the Faculty of Education, Dr Colin Borg, and myself, following consultation with a number of academics, felt that it is important that we highlight this important matter.

In a statement we issued to the media some days ago we felt that it is essential that we reflect on our communities that are over-burdened with a thinking that is solely focused on profit and money making.

On the other hand, we do commend that the theme of respect for human life features regularly in local debates especially when it comes to matters around abortion, IVF, euthanasia and other phenomenon that disquiet either the beginning or the end of human life.

However, quoting Pope Francis, we think that it is reductive not to widen the topic of respect for human life to include: *'the lives of the poor, those already born, the destitute, the abandoned and the underprivileged, the vulnerable infirm and elderly ... the victims of human trafficking'* (Gaudete et Exsultate). These words fit aptly with a situation that we are currently experiencing. Lack of respect for human life is evident in many phenomena like poverty and social exclusion, widespread racism and misogyny, and the incessant devastation of our environment and public spaces which are necessary to lead a good quality of life.

The extent to which life is being devalued is upsetting, for example, the alleged drive-by shooting on immigrant Lassibe Soulaymane in Hal Far, to mention just one. Another worrying phenomenon is the frequent death of people at their places of work, especially in the construction industry. This seems to indicate failure by the authorities to enforce rules and laws.

Lack of respect for human life is being normalized and mainstream institutions and individuals who influence public discussion and debate do not seem to be taking coercive action seriously enough.

As reflective academics we are starting to sense 'moral degradation' that as a society we do not seem to be talking enough about.

'Moral degradation' could be the result of so many reasons namely the incipient otherworldly perceived norms that people emulate, sliding social mores, the debasing of values, interests, beliefs and ethics and religious, civic deterioration, corruption and sleaze.

To add insult to injury, community, religious and political leaders leave all wanting. Lifestyle and wellbeing have been rapidly changing since the 1990s and we are facing a sea of change related to generational and perceptual transformations.

Some reflections:

Our economic wealth seems to have come at a cost to lifestyle and well-being;

Our social character is being moulded on the notion of 'success', whereby erroneously we think that having more is the ultimate value;

Our notions of self-control and restraint are fundamentally lacking;

Our economic model has induced many to consider other human beings as primarily competitors, commodities or mere means to achieve personal glory;

Our spaces are shrinking, making it even more difficult to live our hectic lives, with the inevitable tension that this creates;

Our 'so called' achievements around equality have in many cases been superficial, leading to obliviousness and insensitivity towards those individuals or groups who are being de facto marginalized and side-lined;

Our disregard for authority is shown by the lack of respect and obligation.

We are very concerned that our formal and informal education and our social welfare system is unable to respond to these issues at times making people believe that such dire situations need to be accepted as natural characteristics of human life.

We take this opportunity to call for serious reflection on the current situation, and invite government, institutions and civil society to implement the necessary changes to make our society more humane to anyone living on our Islands.

As academics we are taking a

“

Our economic wealth seems to have come at a cost to lifestyle and well-being

”

“Ghandi xi Nghid”

Prof Andrew Azzopardi
Dean Faculty for
Social Wellbeing,
University of Malta &
Broadcaster - Ghandi xi Nghid
www.andrewazzopardi.org

17 April 1969

~~Devlin is youngest ever woman MP~~

A 21-year-old woman, Bernadette Devlin, has become Britain's youngest ever female MP and the third youngest MP ever.

Standing as an independent Unity candidate, Miss Devlin wrested the seat of Mid-Ulster in Northern Ireland from the Ulster Unionists.

In a straight fight she defeated Anna Forrest, the widow of the late MP George Forrest, by more than 4,000 votes.

At the last general election Mr Forrest had a majority of just over 2,500.

It was only Miss Devlin's second foray into politics after standing against Northern Ireland's agriculture minister, James Chichester-Clark, in February's Stormont

elections.

She polled nearly 6,000 votes against Major Chichester-Clark's 9,000.

In Mid-Ulster Miss Devlin was helped by the constituency's natural Catholic majority of about 4,000 and the fact that Mrs Forrest did not campaign at all.

'Non-sectarian'

The young MP, a Catholic, has declared her sympathies with the IRA and her win has dismayed Northern Ireland's Protestant community.

However, the Queen's University psychology student has always said her approach is non-sectarian and she wants to promote unity among the people of Ireland.

A leading figure in the student civil rights movement, Miss Devlin said her political ambitions were only awakened last October after she took part in a march that was violently suppressed by the police.

After her victory, Miss Devlin who turns 22 next Wednesday, said she would raise issues concerning Ulster in the House of Commons.

"I was elected by the oppressed people of Ulster and I shall work for them," she said.

She did not yet know when she would take her seat in Westminster or where, as an independent, she would sit, Miss De-



vlain added.

Bernadette Devlin took her seat in Westminster on her 22nd birthday.

Her maiden speech was described as "electrifying" by the Conservative MP Sir Norman St John Stevas.

Her time in the House of Commons was eventful.

She once assaulted Home Secretary Reginald Maudling and accused him of lying over the events of Bloody Sunday.

She received a nine-month prison sen-

tence for taking part in the sectarian riots in Londonderry in August 1969.

However, Bernadette Devlin lost much Catholic support following the birth of an illegitimate daughter in 1971.

She did not stand for re-election in 1974 but continued to support republican causes.

In 1981 she and her husband, Michael McAliskey, survived an assassination attempt when gunmen burst into their house and shot them.