

News and Current Events :: Leading Australian politician's call for return to christian values.

Leading Australian politician's call for return to christian values. - posted by CJaKfOrEsT (), on: 2004/7/20 5:41

In recent weeks The Honorable Peter Costello MP (Australian Treasurer and likely replacement for Prime Minister John Howard, if he were to retire) has suggested that Australia needed to return to Bible-based values. At the National Day of Thanksgiving celebration on 29th May he openly spoke about the importance of faith and the Ten Commandments.

Here is that speech:

Quote:

When Jesus told his disciples that they would be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the uttermost part of the earth, the known world consisted of the Roman Empire; the Mediterranean and surrounds.

No one in the Roman world, no one in the Jewish world, knew of Australia. From the then known world of the Mediterranean, Australia was beyond even the uttermost parts of the earth.

And yet the teaching of Jesus came to Australia. It took nearly 18 centuries. And we can pinpoint quite accurately the first time a Christian service was held on Australian soil. The sermon was preached by the Rev. Richard Johnson, Chaplain of the First Fleet. It was preached on Sunday 3 February 1788 under a large tree in Sydney. His text was from Psalm 116 Verse 12: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?"

The first Australian Christian service was a thanksgiving service. It was thanksgiving for a safe passage in dangerous sailing ships, on a dangerous mission half way around the world.

Two hundred and twenty six years later we meet tonight to mark a National Day of Thanksgiving; for all the benefits rendered to us, in the modern Australia.

Of course, the members of the First Fleet were not the first people to come to Australia. The Aboriginal people were here long before that. And I am so proud that we have descendants of those first Australians who are here tonight and who we have just honoured.

But it was the First Fleet that brought the first chaplain and first knowledge of the Christian faith to Australia. This was the critical and decisive event that shaped our country.

If the Arab traders that brought Islam to Indonesia had brought Islam to Australia and settled, or spread their faith, amongst the indigenous population our country today would be vastly different. Our laws, our institutions, our economy would all be vastly different.

But that did not happen. Our society was founded by British colonists. And the single most decisive feature that determined the way it developed was the Judeo-Christian-Western tradition.

As a society, we are who we are, because of that heritage.

I am not sure this is well understood in Australia today. It may be that a majority of Australians no longer believes the orthodox Christian faith. But whether they believe it or not, the society they share is one founded on that faith and one that draws on the Judeo-Christian tradition.

The foundation of that tradition is, of course, The Ten Commandments. How many Australians today could recite them? Perhaps very few. But they are the foundation of our law and our society, whether we know them or not.

The first Commandments: Thou shalt have no other God before me; Thou shalt not make any graven image; Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain; Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy; are the foundation of monotheism.

The Commandments: Honour thy father and mother; Thou shalt not commit adultery; are the foundation of marriage and the family.

The Commandment: Thou shalt not kill; is the basis for respect for life.

The Commandment: Thou shalt not steal; is the basis for property rights.

The Commandment: Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour; and Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's property; is the basis of respect for others and their individual rights.

These are the great principles of our society. On them hang all of the laws and institutions that make our society what it is.

When Moses gave the Ten Commandments he initiated the rule of law. From the moment that he laid down these rules it followed that human conduct was to be governed according to rules; rules which were objectively stated, capable of being understood and, if necessary, enforced by the Hebrew judges. Prior to that the people of the ancient world were governed by Rulers rather than rules. The ruler was much more subject to whim and capricious behaviour. Rulers were not subject to independent review or interpretation. The rule of law is the basis for our constitution and justice system.

And so we have the Rule of Law, respect for life, private property rights, respect of others – values that spring from the Judeo-Christian tradition .

Tolerance under the law is a great part of this tradition.

Tolerance does not mean that all views are the same. It does not mean that differing views are equally right. What it means is that where there are differences, no matter how strongly held, different people will respect the right of others to hold them.

I mention this because “The Age” newspaper reported (10 May 2004) that my appearance here tonight has been criticized by the Islamic Council of Victoria. According to the President of that Council by speaking here tonight I could be giving legitimacy to parties that the Islamic Council is suing under Victoria’s Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 (the Act).

It is not my intention to influence those proceedings. But nor will I be deterred from attending a service of Christian Thanksgiving. Since the issue has been raised I will state my view. I do not think that we should resolve differences about religious views in our community with lawsuits between the different religions. Nor do I think

that the object of religious harmony will be promoted by organizing witnesses to go along to the meetings of other religions to collect evidence for the purpose of later litigation.

I think religious leaders should be free to express their doctrines and their comparative view of other doctrines. It is different if a religious leader wants to advocate violence or terrorism. That should be an offence – the offence of inciting violence, or an offence under our terrorism laws. That should be investigated by the law enforcement authorities who are trained to collect evidence and bring proceedings.

But differing views on religion should not be resolved through civil law suits.

My view on this is not new or recent. In 1994 I opposed a proposed Commonwealth Bill on Racial Vilification on the following grounds:

“The legislation is going to make certain subjects very difficult to discuss in an open way. It is going to vest a large supervisory role in Government appointees over exactly what can or cannot be said.”

At the time I was worried that ‘vilification’ legislation would inhibit free discussion of important political issues. Since then the Victorian Parliament has passed the Act dealing with racial and religious ‘vilification’. No one likes vilification.

We are an open and tolerant society. But if rival camps start sending informants to rival meetings so they can take legal proceedings against each other in publicly funded tribunals we shall not enhance our openness or tolerance.

The proceedings which have been taken, the time, the cost, the extent of the proceedings, the remedies that are available all illustrate, in my view, that this is a bad law.

We would be better to forget the litigation and work to reinforce the values drawn from the tradition that underlies our society – respect for individuals, tolerance within a framework of law, and mutual respect.

This is the legacy of our Judeo-Christian tradition.

Unfortunately today we see that legacy fraying all around us. It is almost as if the capital deposit has been drawn down for such regular maintenance that the capital is running out. The maintenance demands are unending. But we are not building up the capital required to service it.

We do not have to look far to see evidence of moral decay around us. We can see it and hear it in entertainment like rap music, in songs which glorify violence or suicide or exploitation of others.

As we speak drug barons compete for the distribution rights to sell drugs to our children in Melbourne. These rights are so lucrative that they are prepared to kill to protect their profits with 24 or 25 unsolved gangland murders in Victoria since 1998.

These barons sell young people into addiction. Drugs break up families and marriages. Many addicts end up in prostitution or burglary. These outcomes are the very antitheses of all those values set out in the Ten Commandments about how to order society.

People well known to the police apparently live in luxury with no visible means of support or explanation as to how they maintain their lifestyles.

And it seems to me that as a society we have become complacent about this issue, in some cases, the media has glamourised it.

A few weeks ago I called for a sense of outrage about what is happening in our midst. And I pledge that if Federal Tax authorities can assist in tracking and taxing the flow of money that sustains the lifestyles of these drug barons then everything that can be done will be done. We stand ready, anxious, to assist.

We have such a rich heritage. But in so many ways it is being run down. The values which it has given us - respect for life, respect for others, for property, respect for family - seem to be undermined in many ways.

What should we do?

At this point it is usual for some leading churchman from some well known denomination to appear in the media to call on the Government to fix things.

I do not want to suggest that there are no initiatives the Government should take. And what Government can do, it should do. But I do want to suggest

something much more radical and far reaching. I want to suggest that a recovery of faith would go a long way to answering this challenge. A Government should never get into religious endeavors. But if our church leaders could so engage people as to lead them to genuine faith we should be much richer and stronger for it.

The Bible tells the story of the Prophet Elijah who got despondent about the state of decay all around him. He was running for his life. He fled out to the wilderness. He sat under a juniper tree and asked to die. He felt alone and let down. He had no supporters. He thought he was the only person left that was true.

But the still small voice of God came to him and lifted him and told him that there were still thousands that had not lowered the knee to the spiritual and moral decay all around him. (1 Kings, Ch 19)

And this is the point I would like to make to those who have gathered here tonight. There are many that have not, in their hearts, acquiesced to the kind of decay which is apparent around us. They do not believe it is right. They earnestly pray for the expansion of faith and yearn for higher standards.

They will get up tomorrow and go to their places of worship in suburbs and towns across the country, affirm the historic Christian faith, and go to work on Monday as law-abiding citizens who want their marriages to stay together, their children to grow up to be healthy and useful members of society, and their homes to be happy. They care deeply about our society and where it is going.

These people will not get their names in the media. They will not be elected to anything. They will not be noisy lobbyists. But they are the steady influence, the ballast, to our society when it shakes with moral turbulence. They give strength and stability and they embody the character and the traditions of our valuable heritage. It is their inner faith which gives them strength. Our society won't work without them.

All citizens share in the heritage and the blessings that heritage brought to our country, something for which we can all give thanks. We should not take these blessings for granted. We should not become complacent. We should genuinely give thanks because we have been genuinely blessed. And each, to our own ability, should nurture the values which were so important in bringing us to where we are today and which we need so badly to take us on.

In subsequent weeks he used many public forums to reaffirm his views which have been widely reported in various media sources. In an interview on ABC television, he was quoted as saying:

Quote:

"Well, look, I gave a long speech on this the other day about the basis of law in Western societies. I think the Judeo-Christian ethic has been the basis of Western civilization. You know, where did the law come from? It came from Moses, basically, and that was the Genesis. I don't think we should pull any punches about that."

As you would expect, he has been criticized in some quarters for his views. Without getting into any political stance, it's a bit ironic that a political figure is willing to take a stand on such an issue when so many church leaders hide their views under a bushel.

Source: Answers in Genesis

Could it be that God is priming a truly Godly leader for the "Great South Land of the Holy Spirit"? :-)