

Saints of Knowledge, Love And Inspiration

Sir Peter Bottomley MP

Worthing Herald Article

13th February 2020

During the short parliamentary recess, I plan to reread the book 'What I believe'. It was written by Sir Anthony Kenny, the philosopher of happiness, as a personal account of how he developed the position of being neither a theist nor an atheist. A fond and devoted student of St Thomas of Aquinas, he can be said to prowl the frontiers of theology and religion.

Kenny writes that globalisation tends to make us all more selfish. Worryingly, he also realises that most people in the Western style developed democracies earn nearly ten times more than we need to exist at subsistence level. There is always space for us to improve ourselves; we should never give up in the pursuit of peace and prosperity.

We remember St Valentine's day each year. At Chichester cathedral and in diocesan churches St Richard's prayer will be heard. In houses across the constituency, poems of affection, care and interdependence will be shared. We do not find the meaning of life by ourselves alone - we find it with another. Whether that be a close, intimate partner or a lifelong friend or family relation. We are a pack animal at heart. St Valentine's day can remind us of this. Kenny writes that marriage and children have been the greatest source of his happiness.

One of the many positives of a General Election campaign, apart from a renewed mandate from my constituents, is to have the time to spend day-to-day in the constituency during the weeks leading up to polling day. It is not often I can visit every door over every street and every community within the space of four weeks.

The Archangel Gabriel, bringer of messages, is patron saint of postal workers and the Post Office. Our cheerful and reliable postwomen and postmen will agree with many others that we can make life easier for everyone by three easy changes. Every shop and every home should clearly mark their number or name. It is unnecessarily frustrating to see thousands of pounds spent on the refitting of a store without adding the street number. Next, we should consider normalising the use of an external post box, saving the time of walking along each driveway. Finally, if the occupier has a silent dangerous finger biting dog, fit a cage to avoid distress. We can share in gratitude for their hard, continued service when faced with storms like Ciara earlier this week. They deliver day-in, day-out, good news and bad.

One of my inspirations is St Peter who made just about every mistake until commanded to build the Church. Despite his transgressions and mistakes, he was always called into deeper goodness. We can see this spirit of positivity across our communities. We can share in gratitude for those who try to do good for others. Like climbing a mountain, we should not allow them to fall from their path because of one misstep. Instead, we should offer a hand of support and help them. A sense of community and comradeship, like that given to St Peter, is what inspires and supports people to do good.

I met once the modern day Saint Óscar Romero, who served as the fourth Archbishop of San Salvador. He spoke out against poverty, social injustice, assassinations, and torture amid a growing war between left-wing and right-wing forces. In 1980, Romero was assassinated while celebrating Mass in the chapel of the Hospital of Divine Providence - I had shared a warning with him that this

might be his fate he responded what then his role might be in this world. I joined with others at his funeral days later having witnessed the unnecessary death of many at the hands of government forces quelling the mourning crowds. His outspoken pursuit of peace came at his own detriment, but that was not his concern. Romero actively denounced violations of the human rights of the most vulnerable people. His focus was to defend the principles of protecting lives, promoting human dignity and opposing all forms of violence.

There are saints amongst us, religious or not.