

Faith Comment published in the Petersfield Post

Friday Focus - 18 September 2009: Terry O'Connor, St Laurence Catholic Church, Petersfield

Political Correctness – Good or Bad?

Political correctness, at best, might be seen as a means to meet the “charity of truth” in Pope Benedict’s latest encyclical: the principal driving force behind the authentic development of every person and of all humanity. However, mostly political correctness dabbles without improving, uses catchphrases lacking true meaning and scrabbles to make all things “risk free”. Even more sadly, it gives the appearance of protecting human rights whilst not defending the fundamental need for human dignity. Glibly, it “throws the baby out with the bath water”.

Why has political correctness gone wrong? By sidestepping Christianity (and the common teaching of other major faiths) society lacks an integrated system of moral principles. Indeed imposing such a system is seen as intolerant and therefore wrong. Of course, tolerance is essential in today’s society but political correctness has come to demand extremes of toleration, even public approval, of what earlier would have been deemed unacceptable. So our children grow up with no moral guide other than that derived from political correctness which has actually become an unbalanced, incomplete and problematic hegemony.

Pope John Paul II said that the tendencies of political correctness seem to neglect that “men and woman are called to direct their steps towards a truth that transcends them”. Protecting the weak, morally nurturing our young, supporting the building block of marriage and honouring the elderly are basic steps towards the true correctness to which our society should surely aspire.