

**RECEPTION HOSTED BY CARDINAL O'BRIEN AT THE SCOTLAND OFFICE,  
DOVER HOUSE, LONDON**

**REMARKS FROM CARDINAL O'BRIEN**

**WEDNESDAY 4 JUNE 2008**

**Introduction:**

The opportunity to meet with those who have such an important role in the civic life of our nation is a privilege. It is an occasion also when it is perhaps appropriate to raise again the nature of the Church's contribution to public discourse. There are of course Catholics who in their daily lives aim to live out their faith as good citizens but the Church also as an institution contributes directly to the great debates of our age and has done so for centuries. At times this can appear to be a sign of antagonism especially in our fast paced media intensive age but that is not so. **I represent a Church which sees its mission as a servant to peoples and communities.** This service is in promoting the values which allow the flourishing of human life and human societies.

**Message of Cardinal – Pro-Life Call:**

In my own role as Priest, Archbishop and now Cardinal, I certainly see my own role as that of being a 'servant' both to my own flock and to all people of goodwill, who are ready to listen to me. My service has led me to many parts of the world, answering that call to preach the Gospel 'in season and out of season, welcome or unwelcome'. **My message has basically been a pro-life message in the widest sense of those words:** A call to give life to those many thousands dying each day through lack of food and drink; by joining in the anti-nuclear campaign and also the campaign for a greater awareness of climate change; by entering into the debate with regard to our present abortion laws and the great moral issues coming to the fore recently with regard to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill.

I remember on one occasion when being interviewed I was asked by the interviewer: "Are you not just looking for publicity!". I have never had an easier question to answer in any interview – my answer was immediate: "Of course I am looking for publicity!". However, I went on to add that publicity is not for myself, but for those suffering throughout the world through malnutrition; for those living in poverty in our own country when it is proposed that billions of pounds be spent on a replacement for the Trident Nuclear System; when there are thousands of infants being put to death in the womb, following on our liberal abortion laws; and when there are outstanding moral issues which are in danger of passing us by into legislation in our country.

**Service is a task that I know you are all committed to.** Democracy provides us with a system capable of allowing us to contribute to that work together. It is with a political system open to frank discussion and with a place for people dedicated to service of the common good that this endeavour of living in harmony and unity is possible. We know that we face many challenges at local, national and international level and often these can seem irresolvable. The Church has no easy answer to the

issues which confront us but we can offer a reminder of the foundational values on which any just society must be built, values which uphold the dignity of all human life, which assert the necessity of supporting family life, of recognising the limits of subsidiarity and the demands of solidarity.

### **Conclusion:**

My meetings over the last two days, which continue tomorrow, are I hope symbolic of the desire of the Church to work hand in hand with all people who have the welfare of society at heart and the great responsibility of serving our fellow citizens.

I cannot conclude with better words than those of Pope Benedict XVI in his first Encyclical entitled: 'God is Love':

"The Church cannot and must not take upon herself the political battle to bring about the most just society possible. She cannot and must not replace the State. **Yet at the same time the Church cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice.** She has to play her part through rational argument, she has to re-awaken the spiritual energy without which justice, which always demands sacrifice, cannot prevail and prosper. A just society must be the achievement of politics, not of the Church. Yet the promotion of justice through efforts to bring about openness of mind and will to the demands of the common good is something which concerns the Church deeply".