



Dear Candidate,

The Catholic Bishops of England and Wales wrote a letter to Catholics raising a number of questions that they should address to their perspective Parliamentary candidates. It is only four pages long, so I hope you will make time to read the enclosed copy.

I would be interested in your response to any of the questions asked, but to save time perhaps I can highlight four which I would particularly appreciate an answer to:

- Where do you stand on assisted suicide, euthanasia, abortion and other life issues?
- Where do you stand on helping the poorest and most vulnerable people in the UK?
- Do you support parental choice for faith based education?
- What are your views about overseas aid and development?

Rev Canon Edward Jarosz

Dear Rev Canon Jarosz,

Thank you for writing to me and including the letter from the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales. I am happy to share my personal values and beliefs with you on the range of issues you outline, and would stress that I am writing as an individual rather than as a representative of the Conservative Party. Having said that, I believe that the Conservative Party policies best reflect the values that I hold.

I was brought up as a Christian and so have a firm basis for my belief in service (our duty to others), compassion, tolerance and equality as key principles. I have a positive attitude to life, based on my faith in the importance of aspiration and empowering people, rather than dependency and envy, which underpin some political ideologies. I see politics as a vocation rather than a career, and agree with your Bishops that together with leaders from faith groups and other opinion formers, politicians are responsible for the kind of society we build. I do not take that responsibility lightly.

Throughout my childhood I was a regular Church of England churchgoer and was a Sunday school teacher. Many of my Welsh relatives were Methodist ministers, and my mother was a teacher, so I believe politics, preaching and teaching are in my DNA. I am a mother of three grown up children, grandmother of three and carer to my 93 year old father, a D Day veteran, whose memories of serving our country shaped my childhood. I have experienced divorce and financial hardship, so I truly understand the importance of, and value, family and financial security.

I do see it as a duty of the state to help and support the most vulnerable in our society, but I also see it as our personal duty to share that responsibility with the state. This is what David Cameron called the Big Society, and I believe his vision comes from a strong faith in our collective responsibility, which I share.

I believe in the importance of a robust health service and better support for carers. One of my key interests as a politician is how we best provide dignity for the elderly and how we manage the challenges of our ageing society. On life issues I believe that the rights of the individual to make choices are currently respected in current legislation, and any amendments would need to be considered on the basis of new medical evidence or ethics based debate.

I am clear that we have a duty to support and improve the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable, but that help is often best delivered through community networks rather than politicians. I say this having worked for many years with social enterprises and charities, and most recently as co founder of an organisation to help homeless and vulnerable veterans. I believe that the voluntary and community sector is the bedrock on which we as a society show our common humanity, and I see great scope to enhance its role and influence.

If we turn only to government agencies to look after the vulnerable and needy, we will be a poorer society. It is that collective responsibility, that sense of sharing the burden that makes us a stronger and more just society. Government has a major role to play – and that is to create

conditions under which everyone can flourish, by building a strong economy, full employment and better public services – based on fiscal responsibility.

On the question of education: since 2010 a million more pupils are now in good and outstanding schools. I strongly support parental choice for faith based (or other) education, because a quality education is the basis for our children's future opportunities, as well as the place where children learn what it means to be good citizens with clear moral principles. We do have a duty to ensure that schools are operating to high standards and that children are not exposed to radicalisation. We need to ensure the highest standards of teaching and diversity of pupils to provide the best education and understanding of the community in which we live.

As a country, when called to give generously for humanitarian crises around the world, Britain is second to none, and that makes me proud to be British. However, in times of recession and financial uncertainty, cynical political messaging focuses on the need to look after ourselves. I believe this is both wrong and misguided. Wrong, because we have a duty as a rich nation to take a leadership role on the global stage, and improve the lot of the poorest. Misguided, because if we turn our back on countries in dire humanitarian need, the result often impacts on our own freedom and safety. Many countries where democracy is weak become breeding grounds for radicalisation and extremism.

I hope my reply is comprehensive enough to give you a sense of my position on the issues that matter most to your congregation. May I just add that in my previous role as a local councillor in Kent, I was privileged to help set up the local Interfaith organisation, which brought together the widest imaginable collection of faith groups in the spirit of mutual respect and tolerance, and a desire to better understand common issues and themes. I found it both humbling and inspiring to be a part of, and I share the desire to find solutions in a society as diverse as the United Kingdom which will allow us all to prosper.

I hope this response enables members of your community to make an informed decision in the coming election. For more details about my priorities and views, please look at my website: www.jogideon.org.

Very best wishes,

Jo Gideon

Conservative Candidate for Scunthorpe

Dear Rev Jarosz,

Many thanks for your letter and the invitation to reply to the questions you posed in relation to the election campaign.

The letter from the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales is very interesting and I commend them for encouraging people to engage in the political process.

I recognise that you may not agree with all of my answers, but I hope you will respect my being completely honest in my responses.

Where do you stand on assisted suicide, euthanasia, abortion and other life issues?

Looking at the issue of abortion first, I strongly support a woman's right to choose. I am not in favour of 'no limits' abortion though - for example, I am against abortion solely on the basis of the gender of the foetus. Therefore, I am in favour of the current law remaining in place.

Euthanasia and assisted suicide are very emotive subjects too. As a lawyer, I recognise the difficulties that the courts have had in looking at these issues. I am genuinely uncertain how I would vote on this matter - if elected and this came up, I would seek to listen to the concerns and views of constituents before voting.

I am a supporter of the NHS, and the Liberal Democrats have committed to increasing NHS funding by £8bn and also introduce better support for carers.

Where do you stand on helping the poorest and most vulnerable people in the UK?

I believe one of the key roles of a government is to support the poorest and most vulnerable. It is a tragedy that so many rely on food banks.

I am proud of the Liberal Democrat's role in increasing the minimum wage and also amending the tax system (by increasing the personal allowance) to take many people out of tax altogether and reduce the tax bills of millions of others. I want to see this continued.

I would also like to see greater take up of the living wage.

Greater affordable housing needs to be provided too. Councils need to be encouraged to build council housing (as has happened in councils where Liberal Democrats have been in power), and more affordable housing needs to be built. Also, the Liberal Democrats have proposed help for young people to afford rental deposits.

Do you support parental choice for faith based education?

I support parental choice for education and I am proud that the Liberal Democrats have committed to supporting the education budget. Education for all needs to be provided at the highest possible level.

What are your views about overseas aid and development?

I strongly support overseas aid and development. In the last weeks of the last parliament, a backbench bill introduced by a Liberal Democrat MP was enacted, committing the UK to providing overseas aid at the level of 0.7% of GDP. I view this as a minimum, and I would like to see it increased.

The tragedy in the Mediterranean recently highlights the need for increased overseas aid. We must do everything we can to help those in the world that are less well-off, be it caused by drought, famine, weather or war.

I also admire the work of charities included CAFOD.

I hope my answers will result in discussion. As I said, I appreciate that you may hold some different views, but I hope my honesty in answering your questions is appreciated.

Please do let me know if you have any further questions.

Kind regards,
Simon

Simon Dodd
Liberal Democrat candidate for Scunthorpe

18A Ethel Court
Scunthorpe

29th April, 2015

Dear Reverend Canon Jarosz

Thank you for your letter dated the 20th April which I received on Saturday 25th April.

The Letter to Catholics in England and Wales from their Bishops is a valuable and comprehensive contribution to the General Election debate. I am grateful that your covering letter highlighted four particular questions to focus on which is what I will do in my response.

Where do you stand on assisted suicide, euthanasia, abortion and other life issues?

I think these questions are the most difficult that anyone has to face. They tend to elicit strong views on the different sides of the argument and understandably so. On the last such issue relating to the use of mitochondrial DNA, after listening to the debate inside and outside parliament I ended up abstaining as I was not convinced that sufficient safeguards were in place to protect the sanctity of life though I could see the huge benefits that could be achieved for the lives of the people affected by certain genetic conditions.

I would much prefer that there were no abortions. Unfortunately we know from the past that banning abortion did not result in it not happening and more lives were put at risk by illicit activities. So, on balance, I think the current abortion rules are about right though should properly be kept under review. We should use better education, family and maternal support to bring down the number of abortions.

There is a private member's bill in the Lords on assisted suicide so this is an issue that may well be considered again during the next parliament. There have been a number of high profile cases of people who have wanted to have control over their own lives. I have a huge amount of empathy for their situation yet I am concerned that any changes in the law in this direction would put others at risk. There are complex ethical and practical issues to be considered before changing the law in this area. If the matter comes before parliament I would listen carefully to the local and national debate and be informed by that.

Where do you stand on helping the poorest and most vulnerable in the UK?

I strongly believe that society should support people in times of difficulty. Indeed my reason for being involved in politics is to make life better for others, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable. I applaud the work of the Scunthorpe Food Bank in supporting those in need but am

ashamed that in the 21st Century in one of the richest countries in the world some of our fellow citizens have to survive on the charity of others. We need to take action to reduce child poverty in the UK so that those children can have positive, fulfilling lives. We need to take steps to get rid of insecure zero hours' contracts and raise the National Minimum Wage. Those companies paying all their staff at least the Living Wage should be recognised. I am pleased that if Labour win control of North Lincolnshire Council the new administration will make sure all staff are paid at least the Living Wage. And I am pleased that a Labour Government will make sure that tax credits for those working in lower paid jobs are increased each year.

Do you support parental choice for faith based education?

Catholic schools have played a very important part in our education system for a very long while. Locally St Bernadette's, St Augustine Webster and St Bede's are very good schools that provide very good education. We need to celebrate this and the way in which their contribution to the education system supports parental choice for faith based education. I am anxious, however, that the UK doesn't go down a route of segregated education. In a multi faith world I believe people need to have understanding of other faiths and be tolerant to those of other faith. And I believe that is best achieved when people of different faiths are educated together. Within this framework children can have access to faith based education.

What are your views about overseas aid and development?

I am proud that the UK is committed to spending 0.7% of its GDP on International Aid. I have seen in Cambodia the work that is being done by the international aid agencies supported by the UK government and others to transform Cambodia's health systems. I was pleased to see that the Cambodian government had to make significant contributions itself to match the foreign aid budget and move towards being self-sufficient. In this way I believe the UK's contribution has even greater impact. The Millennium Development Goals have made a real difference to the world and it's important that the UK continues to show leadership internationally in this area.

Thank you for taking the trouble to pose the set of questions you have and thereby contribute importantly to the election debate locally

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Nic Dakin

Labour Party Candidate for Scunthorpe County Constituency.

Dear Edward,

Thank you for your letter of 20th April. Things are rather hectic at the moment with the election and all - so I hope you will forgive a hasty scribbled note in answer to your letter.

1. I am pro-life, anti-abortion (except when medically advised) - I believe in the sanctity of life of the unborn child, this same principle applies to suicide and euthanasia - I believe we have no right to take human life, but we may ease pain in terminal cases.
2. We must always help the poor, it is not only a Christian duty but it carries with it a reward - GIVE AND IT SHALL BE GIVEN TO YOU (LUKE)
3. Parental choice is fine - but must comply with the overall conditions of the country to which it applies.
4. The answer to overseas aid is the same as 2. Give etc.!

Apologies for the quick note - and I hope it helps.

Trevor Dixon
Independent Candidate for the Brigg and Goole Constituency

P.S. I believe in Jesus Christ.

UKIP Scunthorpe Brigg & Goole,
3 New Road,
Worlaby,
North Lincolnshire,
DN20 0PE

2nd May 2015

Dear Rev Jarosz,

Thank you for your letter dated 20th April 2015, and the enclosed copy of the letter to Catholics in England and Wales from their Bishops. Please accept my apologies for the delay in my reply.

You asked for my views on four particular issues.

Where do you stand on assisted suicide, euthanasia, abortion and other life issues?

I have been opposed to abortion for as long as I can remember. Whilst I am not a Catholic I believe that human life begins at the point of conception and it follows that abortion is morally wrong, unless it is absolutely necessary to preserve the life of the mother. Whilst that is my personal view, it is not of course UKIP party policy since UKIP considers this to be an issue of conscience as do other political parties. I think that those of us who are “pro-life” must also accept that general public opinion in the United Kingdom would not accept a complete ban on abortion and should concentrate on the worst aspects of the present law. On any view the time limit for legal abortion is too late and should be reduced. To me the very worst aspect of the current law is that it allows abortion *up to the point of birth* in the case of unborn children who are disabled. As a father of two disabled children I regard this as totally abhorrent. If I am elected as a Member of Parliament and have the opportunity to present a Private Members Bill I would introduce a bill to amend the law relating to abortion such that the abortion of disabled children would not be permitted beyond the time limit which applies to abortion in general.

My view on assisted suicide is rather more equivocal. My father died of bowel cancer 7 years ago. I saw him deteriorate and suffer and in the end it was a mercy that he died. If a law could be devised which would allow those with terminal illnesses and suffering from intolerable pain and degradation to their end lives with dignity, but would protect the vulnerable, then I would regard that as a good thing. However I am acutely conscious of the risk that any law permitting assisted suicide might be abused and might be the start of a slippery slope towards the killing of those who are not the position which I describe. This does appear to have happened in some other countries which have permitted assisted suicide and it is what has happened in our own country in relation to abortion – where we now effectively have abortion on demand even though that was never the intention when the Abortion Act was passed in 1967. That being the case I could only support any bill to permit assisted suicide if I were completely satisfied that there were robust safeguards in place to protect the vulnerable and to ensure that assisted suicide could only take place with the full informed consent of the person concerned and only in circumstances where the person concerned was terminally ill and suffering or likely to suffer from severe pain which could not be adequately controlled by modern medicine.

Where do you stand on helping the poorest and most vulnerable people in the UK?

There are many policies in UKIP's manifesto which would help the poorest and most vulnerable people in the UK. I would highlight our commitment to abolish the "bedroom tax" which is hitting hardest families coping with disability, our commitment to support carers by increasing the Carers Allowance to match the higher level of the Job Seekers Allowance (giving carers an additional £572 a year), our commitment to support foodbanks, and our commitment to support special schools. We are committed to scrapping income tax on the minimum wage by increasing the personal allowance to at least £13,000 a year, which would be of great benefit to the low paid. We are also committed to providing an additional £3 billion in funding for the NHS and an additional £1.2 billion a year in funding for social care. All of our policies are fully funded and our manifesto is the only party manifesto which is independently audited. Our full manifesto is available online at <http://www.ukip.org/manifesto2015>

Do you support parental choice for faith based education?

Yes.

What are your views about overseas aid and development?

UKIP considers that the overseas aid budget should be reduced from 0.7% of Gross National Income ("GNI") to 0.2% of GNI, which is the same proportion of GNI as is spent on overseas aid by the United States. It is only by making this reduction that we can fund the policies which I have highlighted above to help the poorest and most vulnerable people in the UK. The reduced budget would still be substantial, at least £4 billion a year and more than the combined overseas aid budgets of Italy and Spain, and would allow us to continue to fund the existing overseas aid programmes which directly benefit the world's poorest people: emergency relief, healthcare, inoculation against preventable diseases, and clean water and sanitation programmes.

I hope that the above is of assistance to you and your parishoners,

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Howd,
UKIP Candidate for Scunthorpe

Dear Rev Canon,

Sorry about the delay in my response, as you can imagine I am pretty busy with my election campaign. I will try to answer the questions.

1, Where do you stand on assisted suicide, euthanasia, abortion and other life issues?

The fact that the number of abortions carried out in England and Wales continues to rise should be of concern to all. Given the health risks associated with any medical and surgical procedure and many people's moral discomfort with induced terminations, it is entirely understandable that many wish to see this number significantly reduced. We do have a multi-policy strategy to reduce them. a, Adequate sex education in schools including life skills, relationships and actually caring for children. b, ensuring adequate financial and social support for parents, particularly lone parents and those with disabled children, so that women do not feel pressure to terminate a pregnancy purely because they would be unable to make financial ends meet. c, adequate provision of free family planning advice. Euthanasia, we do not have a definite stance on this but we would back patients choice in the best treatment for the individual. I think we all know that there are certain life situations when euthanasia can be the option for the least suffering.

2, Helping the poorest and most vulnerable people in the UK?

I could talk about this for a long time. The ever increasing gap between the rich and poor is disgraceful and the failed experiment of austerity isn't working for anyone apart from the richest in the UK. Then green party will not accept and further cuts, they are affecting the poorest and most vulnerable of society. We want to work towards bringing in a citizens income, guaranteeing everyone the basics they need. We want to build 500,000 affordable houses nationwide and end fuel poverty by insulating houses and creating more publicly owned energy companies. Too many people are making profit from our essential services. Legal aid will be brought back, the most poor and vulnerable need this service. Cutting legal aid, is an attack on democracy and human rights. We will also take serious action to close tax loop holes, tax the richest 1% more and redistribute this wealth. We also plan to scrap tuition fees, as everyone should have the chance to university education.

3, Do you support parental choice for faith based education?

Green Party recognises the right of parents to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Education should include a celebration and recognition of religious and cultural diversity and spirituality. Education should encourage critical engagement with, and non-dogmatic exposure to, diverse, sometimes competing, worldviews and beliefs - whether based on culture, religion or spirituality.

4, Views on overseas aid?

As the 7th richest country in the world, I think it is our social responsibility to provide overseas aid. By supporting sustainable living projects in the developing world we can create a fairer world. And then there is the very serious threat of climate change, climate change is already affecting the most poorest countries, there are 6000 deaths a year attributed to climate change, I and the Green Party feel that, it is a justice issue. We must act on averting a 2 degree temperature rise, as countries like Bangladesh will suffer even more. There will be millions of climate refugees and growing food will be impossible in many parts of the world. We are the only party to take this threat seriously. The Green Party wants to work towards creating world which is fairer, and a planet which is happier.

I have added something from our Green Christian Group, which i feel is relevant.

Firstly, the issue of **creation care**. In [Genesis 1:29-30](#), God tells the first humans that he's putting humanity in charge of the rest of creation. Christians have traditionally interpreted this as meaning that we have a duty of care to it, perhaps the most notable example being Francis of Assisi. Living, as we do, in an era where human technology is reshaping the global climate, we have to ensure that this duty is central to our political life. In the UK, the Green Party is the only political party that treats environmental issues with this level of importance.

Secondly, the issue of **poverty**. Anybody familiar with the Bible will know that it frequently talks about how God wants us to care for the poorest and most vulnerable in society. Right now, none of the other UK national parties treat this as a priority. Even Labour are talking about how they will be tougher on benefits claimants than the Tories. When austerity policies have seen record numbers of people turning to foodbanks, with a very large proportion of them saying that it is because of benefit changes, a Christian approach to the poor cannot allow us to side with the tabloid press who routinely demonise benefits claimants.

Finally, I'll mention **immigration**. Whilst this issue is less fundamental to my theology, my politics, and my party's politics than the other two, it's one of the issues that the media and politicians are talking about a lot at the moment. Labour, the Tories, and UKIP are currently playing a game of one-upmanship to see who can talk the toughest about immigration. The problem is that being anti-immigrant is a fundamentally unChristian position. One of the groups that are disadvantaged in society both now and in Biblical times are the immigrants (or aliens, as many Bible translations say). And the Bible repeatedly tells us to about welcome the aliens. The New Testament says many times, and in many different ways, that the differences between nationalities and ethnicities are nothing compared to the unity Christians should have in Christ. As [Colossians 3:11](#) says, " Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all." (ESV translation). Right now, as far as I can tell, the Greens are the only national party which are trying to say positive things about immigrants when the issue comes up.'

Yours sincerely

Natalie Hurst

Brigg and Goole

Green Party