

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY 11<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2017

Good Morning

Conflict has broken out between three Nobel Peace Laureates. First it was Malala Yousafzai and now Archbishop Desmond Tutu has taken to task Aung San Suu Kyi for her failure to condemn the persecution of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar.

Over a quarter of a million have fled to Bangladesh in the past fortnight. Allegedly security forces have been burning villages and killing residents.

Rousing himself from retirement Desmond Tutu has written to his fellow Laureate, "My dear sister, if the political price of your ascension to the highest office in Burma is silence, the price is surely too steep. We pray for you ... to intervene."

As yet we don't know her reply to the bishop, but we do know that she feels the situation has been misreported and misunderstood.

But by far the most startling comment came from a United Nations Representative, who's reported to have said,

"What we forget is that she is a politician through and through. People expect her to have that big high moral voice but she's a politician, and what's the most important objective if you are a politician? Getting elected."

That must rank as one of the most depressing quotes of the year. Not just that the UN Representative sees politicians as the antithesis of morality but she also includes in her critique the ambition to be elected.

Down the centuries and across the world people including Aung San Suu Kyi have been imprisoned for such ambition – both to elect their own leaders and to be elected.

To hear such ambition pilloried as devoid of all virtue sucks the life out of democracy.

That's not to say that there aren't some bad people that get elected, nor that some politicians don't get corrupted by power. Clearly, they should be called out.

But to damn all politicians, which is the global mood of our times, and the democratic process feels to me like slamming dangerously into reverse all our achievements.

Men and women have died to have a voice and a vote over their lives. Personally, I believe that God is in the progress towards liberty – setting us free, as St Paul put it, “from bondage, to the glorious freedom of the children of God”.

Elected leaders may not be morally perfect and need to hear the moral force of Desmond Tutu's challenge, but I should think that each of the three Nobel Peace Laureates would agree, from their own experiences, that an imperfect politician is better than a perfect dictator!

The Right Reverend James Jones KBE

