

# PRESS RELEASE: On the unrest in the UK

## WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WORLD (OR ENGLAND)?

Now that the looting and vandalism which gripped the country for several days seems to have subsided, the analyses of why it happened, and what needs to be done, have been coming in thick and fast.

Some lament the break-down of the family, the undermining of parental authority (with even well meaning parents afraid of a call from a social worker), the lack of discipline in schools, and the resulting lack of respect for authority within society. Others note that most of the rioters came from underprivileged parts of society. With no future and no hope they have been drawn into a gang culture to find an identity. Others have pointed out that the well off are no less irresponsible – citing the financial crisis caused by the greed of bankers, the MPs expense scandal, the journalists' hacking of phone messages. Our society has been described as fixated with the idea of being a celebrity, driven by wanton greed and dominated by a "take what you can culture".

All these views contain some truth. There is a consensus that we need a radical change. We need to rebuild the family – that basic unit where people learn what it means to be loved and to love. We need schools to become true places of education. We need the whole of society, the privileged no less than the disadvantaged, to put the common good first.

But in all of this, one thing seems to be missing: freedom. The personal freedom of each one of us. How do we respond? Can we really wait until society changes and new structures are introduced?

When he was asked to write an article for a newspaper on "What's wrong with the world?" the great writer and thinker, GK Chesterton, wrote a short and pointed reply: "Dear sir, I am, yours faithfully."

What then can make each one of us change? What can sustain a commitment to the common good? How is it possible without a positive meaning in life?

In his address at Hyde Park in September last year, Pope Benedict XVI asked us to learn from another great Englishman, Blessed Cardinal Newman, that we are "made in the image and likeness of God, we were created to know the truth, to find in that truth our ultimate freedom and the fulfilment of our deepest human aspirations". And that God became a man, in Jesus, to show His infinite love for each one of us, to accompany us on this adventure. So the Pope could say: "Each one of us is called to change the world, to work for a culture of life, a culture forged by love and respect for the dignity of each human person."

What's wrong with the world? I am. But there is hope that I can change. And so there is hope for society.

16 August 2011

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