

SPEAKING NOTES
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**Public Service in His Footsteps:
Some Philosophical Dimensions on Faith and Public Service**

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Abstract

From the earliest works of philosophy, a tension has existed when it comes to the discussion of public service; namely, the ability of those governing to rule for the common good as opposed to their own self-interests. This line of thinking is present throughout the history of political philosophy and continues to some extent to the present. However, this suspicion of public service is countered by an opposing view that sees public service as a noble calling. Yet both schools of thought have been affected by the place of faith in the public service. Therefore, it is apt to explore whether or not it is politically correct to be a Christian public servant. In this respect, the expectation is that those who engage in public service will bring to their functions good judgment. Such judgment will no doubt be a reflection of their moral values and conscience. Public service in His footsteps is, in many ways, being engaged with our neighbours and society as He was: tending to the poor and disadvantaged, helping to deliver us from the limitations of that which surrounds us. He is, essentially, the ultimate public servant and the perfect role model. For Maritain, the secular conception of humanism that was devoid of the spiritual dimension rejected a fundamental aspect of the human person. To him and many philosophers throughout the history of ideas, faith is, in fact, an integral part of our being. As such, one in public service can no less leave their faith at the door than a carpenter can leave his tools at home. Indeed, the experience in Canada and many other countries shows that the foundations of faith and public service are not just philosophical, but practical.

It is a pleasure to join you this afternoon and I would like to begin by thanking the Canadian Jacques Maritain Society for inviting me to this wonderful conference. The Society continues to honour the work of one of the 20th century's great thinkers, a man who made his own mark on public service both as France's

Ambassador to the Vatican and whose ideas influenced the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In reflecting on faith and public service let us begin with the following story image:

A lone, single, individual person finds himself on a distant abandoned island. Our solitary islander mounts the highest peak of the atoll, holds up his pencil and cries out: “this is my pencil; I have a right to this property.”

What is wrong with this image? Probably many things. However, for pedagogical purposes, I wish to suggest that the cry of our incongruous character demonstrates an apparent pointlessness – here one person is making a claim of “right” when that person is in isolation. This helps to illustrate that, at a minimum, the conceptualization of “right” requires a dyad. That is, right by essential definition is a social reality. People constitute the *material cause* of human rights.

This, of course, is a very Aristotelian argument. In Book I of *Politics*, Aristotle argues that the city comes into being for the sake of living (i.e., self-sufficiency), but that “... it exists for the sake of the good life.”¹ With this claim, he is not associating society with mere comfort or convenience, but arguing that it enables human beings to fulfil their *telos* by leading lives of virtue, resulting in happiness. This is the basis for Aristotle’s famous claim that life in the city is therefore necessary for anyone who wishes to be completely human. The quality that distinguishes human beings from the beasts and the gods – the uniquely human

¹ *The Politics of Aristotle*, Translated with an Introduction, Notes and Appendices by Ernest Barker, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1946, 1252b, p. 5.

character of human beings – is profoundly rooted in participation in social relationships and citizenship.²

From the earliest works of philosophy, there has existed a tension when it comes to the discussion of public service. Plato and Aristotle had their famous misgivings about democracy. The problems they had were not with the regimes themselves, but with the nature of the people who would run them. They were afraid that if rulers ruled out of self-interest and not the common good, mass rule would be mob rule. We have struggled for thousands of years to achieve our freedoms and, in that effort, to legislate for the common good and prevent ourselves from backsliding into tyranny.

This line of thinking is present throughout the history of political philosophy and continues to some extent to the present. It is most notably present in the work of the Framers of the United States Constitution – *The Federalist Papers* – who noted that the goal of a well constructed regime was to control the effects of faction and proceeded to describe how their new regime would do just that if enacted. Their underlying concern arose from the basis that man was a fallen creature and governed himself by his passions, and would therefore govern out of local self-interest and not the common good of the nation. So worried were they about local interests becoming national, that they gave members of the Electoral College two votes to ensure an individual of national prominence would emerge as President. In an era long before the seemingly endless primary campaigns, it was the original intent of the Framers to have states actually elect electors and then trust the members of the college to choose a president. Alexander Hamilton

² Edward Clayton, *Aristotle*, The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2006, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/a/aris-pol.htm#SH7a>.

argued two votes were necessary because the electors' first choice would likely be the local demagogue; therefore a second choice was necessary to allow someone of national importance to emerge as the consensus candidate.

This suspicion of public service is countered by an opposing view that sees public service as a noble calling. Indeed, public service is a noble and a profoundly ennobling activity. In Canada and throughout the world, society has benefitted from the work of so many who have answered the call to a public service vocation. Some have found this calling within the representative public service by working on municipal councils, school boards, provincial and federal legislatures or as public officers, including members of the judiciary. Others are persons serving in the professional civil service of governments, and yet others again have responded through participation in non-governmental organizations that make up civil society.

Pope Benedict XVI, during his visit to Cyprus in 2010, referred to the public service as a "noble vocation", stating that: "When carried out faithfully, public service enables us to grow in wisdom, integrity and personal fulfilment."

It is on the issue of faith in public service where these schools of thought begin to diverge. In fact, the place of faith in the public service even creates murkiness within these schools of thought. Those in favour of secularism; a public service devoid of faith; are not necessarily those that have a dim view of public service. Secularists tend to promote a rigid view of separation of church and state, forgetting the person who gave name to the doctrine, Thomas Jefferson, who was more concerned about protecting religion from politics, than politics from religion:

“Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between man and his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legislative powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should ‘make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,’ thus building a wall of separation between church and State. Adhering to this expression of the supreme will of the nation in behalf of the rights of conscience, I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress of those sentiments which tend to restore to man all his natural rights, convinced he has no natural right in opposition to his social duties.”³

The wall of separation articulated by Jefferson was never intended to chase religion out of the public square, for which it has since been much misused. Jefferson and the Founders believed that religious belief was integral to the human person. It was the proper role of government not to interfere with the relationship between man and God.

Prior to the drafting of the Bill of Rights, with the prohibition of establishing a state church in the First Amendment, the only reference in the constitution to religion was in Article 6, which provides “...no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.”

³ Thomas Jefferson, letter to the Danbury Baptist Association, January 1, 1802; from Merrill D. Peterson, ed., *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, New York: Library of America, 1994, p. 510.

While this may seem like a lot of American history for the *Canadian Jacques Maritain Society*, Maritain spoke frequently on the issue of religion and faith in America. The American experience has greatly informed our thinking here in Canada. At the time of the framing of its constitution, the United States was rich in the number of religious denominations present in the original 13 colonies. Although it was predominantly Protestant, there were large Catholic communities in Maryland and Florida. Later, the Louisiana Purchase saw an increase in the Catholic population. The Protestant denominations themselves were numerous and diverse, as well as openly hostile to the Roman Catholic Church. The Framers' decision therefore, so as to ensure that one denomination did not come to predominate, was to remove government from the affairs of God. The state would not pick and choose a religious denomination for America, and would not interfere with the citizen's relationship with the Almighty. Canada, by contrast, has no history of a formal separation between church and state. While the state is largely uninvolved in the affairs of faith, both our French and British colonial heritage includes state endorsement of particular religious denominations.

Another major influence on the framers on how these provisions of the new constitution would be implemented was the French Revolution. By the time Thomas Jefferson had become President, the French Revolution had up-ended much of Europe, resulting in the self-appointed emperors of Napoleon Bonaparte. Jefferson, an early supporter of France's enlightenment thinkers and revolutionaries, had seen an Age of Reason descend into a Reign of Terror. Like many observers, he believed the failure of the French Revolution lay in the overreach of its leaders. Rather than replacing the King and making France a representative democracy, they engaged in a radical program of revolution that stood in contradiction to human nature. This was in stark contrast to the

comparatively conservative ideals of the American Revolution. As 19th Century historian George Paschal writes:

“The American separation of church and state rests upon respect for the church; the [European anticlerical] separation, on indifference and hatred of the church, and of religion itself.... The constitution did not create a nation, nor its religion and institutions. It found them already existing, and was framed for the purpose of protecting them under a republican form of government, in a rule of the people, by the people, and for the people.”⁴

One finds similarities to the Founder’s views in Maritain’s own philosophy of Integral Humanism. Maritain believed the secular conception of humanism that was devoid of the spiritual dimension rejected a fundamental aspect of the human person. In the opening of his famous textbook on philosophy written for French colleges and seminaries, Maritain argues the fact that Aquinas had revived the works of Aristotle, proving there was a super-natural aspect to human reason:

“If the philosophy of Aristotle, as revived and enriched by St. Thomas and his school, may rightly be called the Christian philosophy, both because the church is never weary of putting it forward as the only true philosophy and because it harmonizes perfectly with the truths of faith, nevertheless it is proposed here for the reader's acceptance not because it is Christian, but because it is demonstrably true. This agreement between a

⁴ George Paschal (1868) *The Constitution of the United States Defined and Carefully Annotated*; W.H.&O.H. Morrison Law Booksellers; Pp. 254

philosophic system founded by a pagan and the dogmas of revelation is no doubt an external sign, an extra-philosophic guarantee of its truth; but from its own rational evidence, that it derives its authority as a philosophy.”⁵

The public service, broadly defined, can be understood as a deeply ethical activity, directed to maintaining the social foundations that, among other things, make ethical activity possible, in addition to serving the more immediate objectives of public sector work.

Perhaps the first issue to be canvassed is whether or not it is politically correct to be a Christian public servant. In reflecting upon de Tocqueville’s observations on 19th century American society, John Neuhaus wrote:

“It is frequently said that you cannot legislate morality. In fact, you cannot legislate anything but morality. Any question of political moment has to do with questions such as justice, equality, fairness, and the common good. All of these are inescapably moral categories. However confused may be their understanding of the connections between morality and religion, for the overwhelming majority of Americans, morality is derived from religion. To interpret the separation of church and state as the separation of religion from public life is, quite simply, a formula for the end of politics. This is why Tocqueville could call religion “the first political institution” of American democracy. His point was that it is from religion, and within the context of religious associations,

⁵ *Elements de Philosophie* (1920)

that most Americans learn the virtues and habits that they bring to the deliberation of the question, How ought we to order our life together?”⁶

According to Neuhaus and de Tocqueville, one cannot help but bring faith into their public service. It is their faith which has developed their values to lead them to serve the public instead of themselves.

Blessed Pope John XXIII in his Encyclical *Pacem in Terris* drew our attention to what has become known as the *Magna Carta of the 20th Century*, namely the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which was proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 10, 1948.

Pope Roncalli considered the *Universal Declaration* to be: “An Act of the highest importance performed by the United Nations”.⁷ The Holy Father wrote that it was his earnest wish:

“that the day may come when every human being will find therein [the UN] an effective safeguard for the rights which derive directly from his dignity as a person and which are therefore universal, inviolable and inalienable rights. This all the more to be hoped for since all human beings, as they take an even more active part in the public life of their own political communities, are

⁶Richard Neuhaus, *A Strange New Regime: The Naked Public Square*, 8 October 1996, <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Lecture/A-Strange-New-Regime-The-Naked-Public-Square>.

⁷ Pope John XXII, Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*; April 11, 1963; para. 143 http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem_en.html

showing an increasing interest in the affairs of all peoples, and are becoming more consciously aware that they are living members of a world community.”⁸

Article 21 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* contains the right to take part in government and the right of equal access to public service. It speaks to the use of elections as an expression of the will of the people.⁹

The *Universal Declaration* also articulates the human right to religion and the right to be free from discrimination because of one’s religion in the exercise of human rights.

Christians, therefore, have the right to participate in public service without any requirement to leave their faith at home. There is no test given by any civil service commission in Canada for secular versus religious orthodoxy. The expectation is that those who engage in public service will bring to their functions good judgment. Such judgment will no doubt be a reflection of their moral values and conscience.

Judge James L. Buckley, in commenting on the American scene, writes:

“In sum, we live in a society in which the importance of religion has always been recognized. And while the First Amendment [of the Constitution of the United States] forbids laws "respecting an establishment of religion," it

⁸ Ibid.; para.146 NB: emphasis author’s

⁹ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations, New York, NY, 1948

has never required that the state be isolated from exposure to religious principles. To read the Constitution as though it did would be to rob religious liberty of meaning. The men gathered in Philadelphia who outlawed religious tests for public service surely had the practical common sense to know-if some contemporary ideologues do not-that in those roles in which public servants are expected to bring their personal judgments to bear, including judgments as to what is right or wrong, moral or immoral, the views of religious individuals will inevitably reflect their religious beliefs. It is, quite simply, fatuous to suppose that a public official can check the religious components of his convictions at the door before entering the council chambers of government.”¹⁰

In Canada, the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* was added to our Constitution in 1982. Section 3 of that Charter set out for the first time in our Constitution the basic right of Canadians to participate in public service in this fundamental way:

“Every citizen of Canada has the right to vote in an election of members of the House of Commons or of a

¹⁰ James L. Buckley; “the Catholic Public Servant” 18 -22 in *First Things*; 20:, February 1992

legislative assembly and to be qualified for membership therein.”¹¹

Although expressed as a right, I think there is an implied concomitant responsibility to exercise that right in a responsible manner and thereby render public service.

Voting exercises this right in a very important way, although it is not unfair to say that this participation in public service is only in a peripheral manner. There are many other opportunities to participate in public service both directly and indirectly. The first is through the political process.

Working for a parliamentarian springs to mind. Volunteers in the constituency work on policy development, riding organization, or voter registration and mobilization. There are a myriad of ways to participate in public service through political parties.

Employment in the civil service is another obvious way to participate directly in public service. By working for the civil service, it is possible to help shape and implement government policy.

Another form of participation in public service is through the medium of non-governmental organizations, which tend to have more focused goals. In addition to a mandate to provide direct assistance, NGOs regularly engage in

¹¹ *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, Constitution Act, 1982 NB: It is worth noting that the language of Section 3 explicitly reserves the right to vote to those who are citizens of Canada. Most of our rights in the *Charter* are guaranteed to “everyone” in Canada. There are only three which are limited only to citizens. Along with the aforementioned Section 3 right to vote, they are Section 6, the right to leave and return to Canada, and Section 23, the right to minority official language education where numbers warrant.

public education and also inform the legislative process by testifying before parliamentary committees and even by lobbying parliamentarians.

In the category of NGO service, it is important to draw attention to the work in this sector of faith groups, sometimes with the support of governments. The history of faith groups in providing direct service to those in need goes back to the first European settlements in Canada. In New France, the Church was responsible for the delivery of services such as education, health care and assistance for the crown. This was supported by both individual donors and the French Crown. After the colony was ceded to England in 1763, government support for the Church's work was terminated. The Church, however, continued its services and was the predominant provider of social services, regardless of faith, in Quebec until the 1960s when the Quiet Revolution led to the development of the province's modern social welfare state.¹²

Public service, in my view, is the call to facilitate social relationships and citizenship within the body politic and to discern the common good and the public interest. Participation in public service is ultimately working for the common good and there are many ways in which to do so. It is inherently rewarding and I thus do not hesitate to encourage everyone to exercise their right to participate to the fullest.

The unifying feature of the three ways of public service is, of course, that they are not merely directed to the interest of the individual engaged upon them, but are contributions to the public interest and the common good.

¹² M. H. Hall et al. *The Canadian Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector in Comparative Perspective*, Imagine Canada, Toronto, 2005.

The Book of Genesis provides us with certain foundations of Judaic – Christian anthropology; the inalienable dignity and constitutive social nature of human beings. We are told that man was created “to the image of God” [Gen 1:26] and is therefore a creature of inestimable dignity and worth. Moreover, “by his innermost nature man is a social being and unless he relates himself to others he can neither live nor develop his potential.”¹³

It is public service that plays a crucial role in facilitating the orderly relations of person to person in society. In Vatican II’s pastoral constitution “*De Ecclesia in mundo huius temporis*” [Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World] in Chapter II – “The Community of Mankind” – it is observed that:

“One of the salient features of the modern world is the growing interdependence of men one on the other, a development promoted chiefly by modern technical advances. Nevertheless brotherly dialogue among men does not reach its perfection on the level of technical progress, but on the deeper level of interpersonal relationships. These demand a mutual respect for the full spiritual dignity of the person.”¹⁴

Human interdependence is ever more a reality and a sign of our times; something that was vividly brought to light when I hosted the Speakers of the G-20 countries to discuss food security and food supply in 2010. What is apparent is that

¹³ Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium Et Spes*, Promulgated by His Holiness, Pope Paul VI on December 7, 1965; http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html

¹⁴ loc. cite., para. 23

we now speak of the global community, where issues such as food security are of concern to us all and require a collective response.

From a human rights analysis, it is instructive to find the common good as described by Vatican II:

“...the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual member’s relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment today takes on an increasingly universal complexion and consequently involves rights and duties with respect to the whole human race. Every social group must take account of the needs and legitimate aspirations of other groups, and even of the general welfare of the entire human family.”¹⁵

The importance of responsibility and participation is to be underscored:

“In order for individual men to discharge with greater exactness the obligations of their conscience toward themselves and the various groups to which they belong, they must be carefully educated...”¹⁶

¹⁵ loc. cite., para. 26

¹⁶ loc. cite., para. 31

It is here where the work of this distinguished university and its sister institutions play such an important role in helping to shape men and women of “refined talents”, as well as “great-souled persons” who are so needed in the world of today. For those who choose to bring to bear their talents as professional public servants, they have chosen a very honourable life’s work.

Public service in His footsteps is, in many ways, being engaged with our neighbours and society as the Man from Galilee was engaged: tending to the poor and disadvantaged, helping to deliver us from the limitations of that which surrounds us. He is the ultimate public servant and the perfect role model.

Answering a call to public service is, when viewed from various perspectives, a fulfillment of the urge to serve our neighbours. He sought to help the poor and oppressed, and to promote peace and harmony among all people. A public servant does this as well, albeit in many different ways.

While the day-to-day work of the elected representative, the civil servant or the non-profit worker may go unnoticed, any shortcomings are often made very public. It has been my privilege to have been a public servant in some way, shape or form since 1967 when I became Chair of New Brunswick’s human rights commission. In the 43 years that have followed, I have met many public servants, whether as a federal deputy-minister or Senator, and I can say with some confidence that I have yet to meet any who wake up in the morning and ask “How can I do badly today?”

Public servants are certainly not beyond reproach. There have been lapses and struggles. Gethsemane taught us about temptation. There are many

temptations for public servants. There is incredible pressure to achieve a particular result or to respond to the passions of the moment. My own office has a cautionary note in Latin carved in the wood that comes from the teachings of Cicero:

Principum munus est resistere levitati multitudinis - “It is the duty of the nobles to oppose the fickleness of the multitude.”¹⁷ This literal translation does not do the context justice, because Cicero was essentially urging that we observe the common good and resist opinions that change from day to day, no matter who might hold them.

Public servants sometimes fall short of Cicero’s maxim. While the Lord rejected Satan’s temptation and sacrificed himself for us, public servants are human and, as such, may succumb to temptation. Human beings are not perfect. With that in mind, we build systems of governance to mitigate the potential for a negative influence of the few over the many. The temptations in public life and the complex challenges faced by public servants underline the need for faith in public service.

For many, public service is a calling. It is one way to fulfil the call for us to serve our neighbours. With this in mind, an examination of what one would gain from answering the call to public service requires that we focus less on the material and more on the spiritual rewards. Those who heed the call to public service do so in the knowledge they are working to better the situation of their neighbour.

In our service to our neighbour, we must seek to aide him or her to achieve full development as a human person. For the public servant, this may mean

¹⁷ Cicero; *Pro Milone* 22

administering programs such as those that fund education and healthcare systems that, in turn, allow us to develop.

In public life, a common mistake that can have profound consequences for the outcome of one's work is that laws and programmes are conceived around a hypothetical construct of "the individual" as the basic unit of society, neglecting another basic unit: the family.

For those in public service, St. Thomas Aquinas's articulation of the "*principle of subsidiarity*" is instructive. The message of Aquinas is that the state is not to replace the family but should rather be available to assist the family when the latter no longer has the means or the capacity to meet its needs. As Pope Pius XI taught in *Christian Education*: "the function of civil authority residing in the state is twofold: to protect and to foster but by no means to absorb the family and the individual, or to substitute itself for them."¹⁸

Another caution against being too invasive in our assistance to those in need is that it risks absolving the community from its own obligation to come to the assistance of its own members, to the community's detriment. As John Paul II instructed:

"By intervening directly and depriving society of its responsibility, the Social Assistance State leads to a loss of human energies and an inordinate increase of public agencies, which are dominated more by bureaucratic

¹⁸ Pope Pius XI, Encyclical *Divini illius magistri*, December 31, 1939
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_31121929_divini-illius-magistri_en.html

ways of thinking than by concern for serving their clients, and which are accompanied by an enormous increase in spending. In fact, it would appear that needs are best understood and satisfied by people who are closest to them and who act as neighbors to those in need.”¹⁹

His Holiness was concerned that the bureaucratic nature of the secular state would have a negative impact both on the individual receiving assistance and the community as a whole.

In Canada, a robust public service awareness has developed over the 143 years since Confederation. In my opinion, this development has been achieved through Canadians playing a positive role by way of their engagement in public service, whether as an active citizen in civil society, serving as a professional public servant or as a legislative representative.

At the national level, the Public Service of Canada, which has been in existence for more than 100 years, has promoted ethical standards for public servants. An important document that sets forth in an articulate manner the values and ethics of professional Canadian public servants is entitled: “Values and Ethics Code of the Public Service.”²⁰ A number of outstanding Canadian public servants and academics, such as John Tait and Professor Kenneth Kernaghan, can be mentioned for their work in the areas of public service values and ethics. One finds

¹⁹ Pope John Paul II, Encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, May 1, 1991; para. 48
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus_en.html

²⁰ Government of Canada; *Values and Ethics Code for the Public Service*; Canadian Government Publishing, Ottawa, 2003

underscored as a mark of the good public servant qualities such as: knowledge, disciplined analysis, understanding, compassion, integrity, wisdom, prudence, perseverance, leadership and fortitude.

Before her untimely death, Monika Hellwig argued in the *Public Dimensions of a Believer's Life* that public servants needed to rediscover the cardinal theological virtues and incorporate them into the practice of their service to the public. These cardinal virtues are: faith, hope, and love or charity. Hellwig believed we have to incorporate the cardinal virtues into the decisions people make in human affairs at all levels of social organization. She thought it important to explore the values that guide these decisions and the way those values are often apparently in conflict with one another.

While Hellwig argued that public servants should find ways to include the cardinal virtues in their decision making, she cautioned against using a narrow definition that could have the effect of, on the one hand, tying oneself into a theological straightjacket or, on the other, falling short of the goals' virtues. She wrote:

“In fact, faith is concerned with a constantly expanding interpretive vision of reality, which is a gift of God to those who are open to see what is divinely unfolded before them. The theological virtue of hope is the expectation, motivation, and striving that grows out of the faith vision. And charity is not love in the popular sense of attraction or emotion, but rather a total

commitment of oneself, one's energies, loyalties, resources, and time.”²¹

Benedict XVI indicated that a Christian in public service should strive to promote moral truth. In his previously cited address to politicians and diplomats in Cyprus, His Holiness illustrated three principles that public servants should follow to promote moral truth. Firstly, promoting moral truth means acting responsibly on the basis of factual knowledge. He believes this helps public servants identify true injustices and grievances, enabling them to consider dispassionately the concerns of all those involved in a given dispute. It requires that parties rise above their own particular view of events so that they can acquire an objective and comprehensive vision. Those who are called to resolve such disputes must make just decisions and promote genuine reconciliation by grasping and acknowledging the full truth of a specific question.

A second way of promoting moral truth consists of deconstructing political ideologies that would supplant the truth. He stated, “The tragic experiences of the twentieth century have laid bare the inhumanity which follows from the suppression of truth and human dignity.” While these are not-so-veiled references to the experiences with communism and fascism, we must hold this principle to be true for our own ideologies and ideological labels also. When we look through the lens of ideology with facts, we should not reshape facts to fit through our ideological lenses.

²¹ Monika K. Hellwig; *Public Dimensions of a Believers Life: Rediscovering the Cardinal Virtues* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield) 2005, p. 139

Thirdly, promoting moral truth in public life calls for a constant effort to base positive law upon the ethical principles of natural law. An appeal to natural law was once considered self-evident, but the tide of positivism in contemporary legal theory requires a re-statement of this important axiom. Individuals, communities and states, without guidance from objectively moral truths, would become selfish and unscrupulous, and the world a more dangerous place in which to live. When the policies we support are enacted in harmony with the natural law proper to our common humanity, our actions become sounder and more conducive to an environment of understanding, justice and peace.

As Canadians, we might wish to add an additional principle for the promotion of moral truth in public service: the need for solidarity. Given that Canada is a multi-cultural society [cf. Section 27, *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*], Canada is also a multi-faith society. It is important that all Canadians are able to make use of the public square and not scrub it clean of religious references. In an interesting study, David Houston et al examined the religiosity of public servants (governmental and non-governmental) and non-public servants, as well as the secular attitudes held by members of each group. The study finds that individuals in government-related public service occupations are generally more religious and possess less secular attitudes than those in non-public service occupations.²²

It has been my experience that those who engage in all forms of public service from all faith communities have been highly successful public servants by remaining faithful to their faith.

²² David J. Houston; Patricia K. Freeman; David L. Freeman; “How Naked is the Public Square? Religion, Public Service, and Implications for Public Administration” in *Public Administration Review* (May) 2008; Pp. 428-444

As we go forward on our journey through the 21st century, it is important that men and women of faith will continue to improve our shared life by engagement in public service. The Archbishop of Westminster, Vincent Nichols, described our liberation through the Resurrection whereby we are released from the grip of helplessness and restored to goodness and hope, and I will make a slight modification of his words which seem apropos for today's discussion:

“This is the underground stream of faith which nourishes so many today who strive to improve our shared life, to lift the burden of victimhood and helplessness, and who seek in so many ways to serve the common good. The fruit of this hidden stream is seen in the work of every sincere politician or public servant who is dedicated, at any level, to public service. This is the true dignity of the public service vocation: that by working for the good of all, the genuine common good of our society, politicians and people in public life attempt to create signposts of that greater hope, the hope of the fulfilment of all our potential...”²³

To Maritain and many philosophers throughout the history of ideas, faith is an integral part of the human person. As such, one in public service can no less leave their faith at home than a carpenter can leave his tools at home. In Canada, we have a history of welcoming faith values in public service. Faith groups and their members have provided important services to those in need, regardless of the

²³ Archbishop Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster, Sunday Civic Mass, February 14, 2010
<http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStoryPrinter=15642>

faith of those they served. The experience in Canada and many other countries shows that the foundations of faith and public service are not just philosophical, but practical.