

Cardinal Nichols: UK would face problems if it left the EU

Today the Bishops' Conference released a statement on the EU referendum in which they urged Catholics to pray before voting



Cardinal Vincent Nichols today warned that it would be harder for the UK to face socio-economic problems if it left the European Union.

Speaking at a press conference in London on the day that the Leave and Remain groups began to campaign in earnest, the Cardinal said that the Catholic instinct was “to look for the whole”.

The Bishops Conference of England and Wales today put out an effectively neutral statement on the EU Referendum, calling on Catholics to pray before they voted.

That statement said that the human person, not economics, was at the heart of the debate.

While the bishops acknowledged “the profoundly religious roots of European nations” and that “Europe has a two thousand year-old Christian culture”, they also noted “the justifiable concerns that many people have in relation to the European Union”.

But speaking in a personal capacity, Cardinal Nichols said that there was a long tradition within Catholicism “of holding things together”.

“Once you start down the path of division, that almost inevitably leads to further division. Once it becomes your solution it becomes a frequent solution,” he said.

He pointed out that Pope Francis had himself spoken in support of European unity.

“If the UK was to leave Europe I think we would face more complex problems with more difficulty finding our role than we would by playing an active and vigorous part within Europe,” he concluded.

He stressed that the Catholic Church would not tell people how to vote.

Elsewhere in the press conference, which concluded the bishops’ bi-annual plenary meeting in Leeds, the Cardinal explained why he was reluctant to describe IS’ actions in the Middle East as a genocide, despite calls from Catholic charities to do so.

“The use of the word in general language I quite understand. I have a slight difficulty in as much as genocide seems to suggest a single target whereas what we’re seeing in the Middle East has multiple religious targets and that’s a complication. Secondly genocide is a legal term,” he said.

Liz Dodd- The Tablet