

## **A time to speak and a time to be silent**

### ***Thought for the Day***

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The past week seems to have been entirely dominated by pageantry, pomp, and circumstance. The front pages of newspapers, television, and news websites were a mass of flags, red carpets, and ceremonial uniforms – and that was just in Rome! Here the week began with a special May Day parade to mark the 80th anniversary of VE Day; and the actual anniversary on Thursday was observed with a memorial parade, formal services of thanksgiving, and a royal tea-party for veterans.

On the same day, another even more time-honoured ritual was being played out in the Vatican, culminating in the white smoke that signalled the election of the new Pope, Leo XIV. This was far from the first Conclave that I've observed from afar, but it was the first when I've been quite so conscious of the process. Perhaps it's because the very idea of hermetically sealed confidentiality seems alien in an age when all it takes to reveal what should remain hidden is a permanent fixture in everyone's pocket.

Perhaps we – subconsciously at least – don't believe that anything should be secret any more. Do we find ourselves sympathising with the eavesdropper because somehow we think that secrecy is wrong? Do we think that anything hidden is necessarily furtive, clandestine, nefarious? Is this another conspiratorial rabbit-hole that we're in danger of falling into?

Let me be clear – I'm sure I'm not alone in deriding the smoke-filled rooms that used to determine the leadership of our own political tribes. But has the public acrimony and often personal name-calling that has replaced them made for better, more rational governance? Perhaps there are lessons we can all learn from the dignity and seclusion of the Conclave – not everything has to be on public display, and there remains a time for private decorum.

*Ephraim Borowski*

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