



***PROPHETS OF TRUTH, SERVANTS OF UNITY***

*Pastoral Appeal in the Spirit of Our for Love of God and Country*

My dear countrymen:

We address you as we get nearer the crossroads of our journey as citizens of this land and citizens of heaven. We bring to you a message of truth that may be painful but hopefully liberating. We offer you a hand to unite and our prayers to the Lord to heal our land and people divided by politics.

This is what the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches about Church pronouncements on political issues: *It is a part of the Church's mission "to pass moral judgments even in matters related to politics, whenever the fundamental rights of man or the salvation of souls requires it. The means, the only means, she may use are those which are in accord with the Gospel and the welfare of all men according to the diversity of times and circumstances."* (CCC 2246)

*Discerning our Choices*

The nationally telecast debates as well as the publicized utterances and actuations of our candidates, particularly those who vie for the high office of President of the Republic, have given us all a glimpse of who they are, what they represent and the causes they champion – or reject.

There is a fundamental difference between right and wrong, and not everything is fair game in politics. A choice for a candidate who takes positions that are not only politically precarious but worse, morally reprehensible, cannot and should not be made by the Catholic faithful and those who take their allegiance to Christ and his Kingship seriously. One cannot proclaim Christ as King and at the same time accept the governance of one whose thoughts, speech and demeanor are diametrically opposed to the demands of submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

The desire for change is understandable. Our people have suffered from incompetence and indifference. But this cannot take the form of supporting a candidate whose speech and actions, whose plans and projects show scant regard for the rights of all, who has openly declared indifference if not dislike and disregard for the Church specially her moral teachings.

The Catholic Church has never asked any political candidate to seek its endorsement, but the Catholic Church has always demanded of Catholic voters that they cast their votes as an act not only of citizenship but also as a public declaration of faith. We ask this most earnestly of all of you, Catholic brothers and sisters, in the forthcoming election.

*A Nation at Prayer*

We commend the various initiatives of our Catholic laity and other youth associations to come together and pray for guidance in choosing the right leaders. In particular, we encourage you to pray the rosary every day and receive Holy Communion starting May 1 until May 9. In this novena of rosaries and Masses, we claim from the Lord the gift of a godly electoral process. With the permission of the bishops, the Blessed Sacrament may be exposed for public adoration to beg the Lord for the gift of peaceful elections.

*To you our dear candidates, we plead.*

In less than two weeks, the sovereign people will choose who should govern them. It is this that makes us a free people. We, your bishops of this country, therefore ask of you to allow each Filipino the free and untrammled right to an informed choice. This means, among other things, that you cannot deceive or mislead the people by proffering them falsehoods, much less defraud the nation.



The campaign period has been rancorous. This is regrettable. Many wounds have been inflicted. This is true not only of candidates but also of their supporters. Even close friends have parted ways because of differences in political persuasion and in the choice of candidates to support. As we advise our voters, so we also say to you dear candidates: Pray! Pray not only to win but pray that the Lord may show by His signs His chosen leader for this nation, this nation who calls on Him at the crossroads of its national life.

*Time to Unite*

When the elections shall have been concluded and winners proclaimed in accordance with law, we beg you all, in the name of Jesus Christ, to be instruments of peace, reconciliation and healing. Let those who prevail rise in nobility above the hurtful words that may have been uttered by opponents, and draw them rather into a government of unity, but unity that firmly rests neither on expediency nor compromise, but on truth and justice.

We ask all who shall be sworn in to remember that when they take the oath that the law requires of them, they call on God as their witness — and even if they may not expressly do so, they swear in the sight of God's People. Every public official swears to uphold and to defend the Constitution and to do justice to every man and woman. Not whim then, nor arbitrariness, not vendetta nor revenge, but the rights of God's people enshrined in the Constitution and their demand for justice, unity, progress and peace to which every law must respond!

Whoever wins honestly, whoever takes the oath of his or her office seriously, whoever strives to heal the wounds of the divisiveness of politics, whoever respects the rights of all and is earnest in his or her fear of God and is zealous for his precepts has the support of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, and we will do everything together with our priests so that all our people, to the remotest barangays to which we minister, may rally around a just and God-fearing government that visits no vengeance on foes but is characterized by mercy and compassion for all, not only for allies!

*Prayer*

I invoke the Blessed Mother to cover our nation with her maternal love and to beseech her Son to grant us all the favor of meaningful, peaceful elections and a government thereafter that unifies our people in the sight of God and in accordance with His will.

*Lord heal our land. Lord heal our land.*

From the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, May 1, 2016

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