



Elections 2006

On January 23 we will return to the polls to elect a new government which will be responsible for the future of our country. After having paused to celebrate Christmas and the New Year with family and friends, now is the time to reflect on which party or person we will vote for in the Federal election. Cynics may advise you not to vote at all, but the goal of this letter is exactly the opposite: to encourage you to do so.

As bishop and pastor, it is my duty to provide some food for thought in your ongoing reflection on the political situation so that you can make informed decisions when the time comes to vote. First, one must admit that no one political party seems to respond entirely to the social vision of our Church. Last month, Pope Benedict XVI invited the faithful to witness to their Christian values in the political arena by telling us, *“The Church does not identify with any political party or system. She always recalls that lay people involved in politics must give a clear and courageous witness of Christian values, which they must reassert and defend should they be threatened ... The dialogue initiated by Catholic lay people concerning political issues will prove effective and useful if it is based on love of the truth, a spirit of service, and solidarity in commitment to the common good.”*

This seems quite evident in our current political context. This time, we should make an effort to vote according to the values we cherish in life. Let's not support a certain party only because of tradition. Examine each candidate, listen to them, choose the ones that are most likely to support our values and convictions, to sustain the social life to which we aspire, to respect the life and dignity of persons, to defend the poor, the marginalized, the excluded, to promote family, the environment, universal health care and justice.

On December 18, the Pope once again spoke about this matter. In his view, one of the challenges facing the Church today is to help Catholics involved in politics to be mindful of their Christian identity so that they may commit with clear conscience to transmitting the values which promote communal life while respecting all dimensions of the human person.

Even though perfection is not of this world, we must seek out and vote for the candidates whose integrity and honesty are closest to the political ideal that we wish for our community. Be informed, ask questions, refine your political judgment, make up your own minds. Don't give into the political apathy that surrounds us, rather be aware of your life of faith and your religious convictions; choose to the best of your ability and vote according to your conscience. Remember that your vote can make all the difference to enhance the social and political landscape of our country.

May the Lord guide and enlighten you as you make your choices.

Sudbury, ON
January 3, 2006

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