

ELECTION 2016



A GUIDE FOR POLITICS OF CHANGE AND MEANINGFUL ELECTIONS



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To the Discerning Voter

Consistent with the mandates of the 24th NCCP General Convention under the theme “Launching Out Into the Deep for Justice and Peace,” we are called by our faith to persevere and respond prophetically to the challenges of the day. As a response to the forthcoming elections, this primer is shared to inform and guide those who seek to make their vote an act of faith.

This primer consists of four parts; (1) A Biblico-theological Reflection (2) A Guide for New Politics and Meaningful Elections (3) The Automated Electoral System and, (4) Practical Tips.

Please feel free to reproduce this primer and to circulate it widely among your friends and neighbors. You can call 929-37-45, 922-81-41, 926-97-60, or 925-17-65, visit us at 879 EDSA, Quezon City, or email us at fwsnccp@gmail.com if you want to conduct an electoral education session in your church or community and need facilitators and/or more materials. Please visit our website at <http://www.nccphilippines.org> to download this resource and to view news of the NCCP.

We hope this primer will be of help.

NCCP Voters’ Education Secretariat

ON ELECTING PEOPLE TO OFFICE: A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION¹

by

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The Electoral system, as it is practiced today, finds no equivalent in Scripture. But persons were set apart for a particular office or position of leadership in olden times. Anointing was usually the rite employed for such an election. Kings and priests were the persons most frequently anointed on taking office (Exodus 28:41; Isaiah 45:1). Another term used to describe the process of setting apart someone for an office is "appointment". It was God, through prophets and kings, who appointed persons. It was usually succeeded or preceded by a sacrifice on the altar to show the profundity and seriousness of the act of election or appointment.

In the Bible, it is very clear that it is the position that seeks the person, not the other way around. David was out in the field taking care of the sheep when Samuel, the prophet, sent for him in order to anoint him king because King Saul had already lost favor in God's sight. How unlike the practice today where candidates bare themselves to the public, in a cheap attempt to advertise themselves.

In the election of Matthias (Acts 1), it is emphasized that the one chosen to take the place of Judas must be a witness of Jesus' resurrection. It will be recalled that the resurrection was the "selling point" of the Jesus' movement. It was what distinguished it from other religious movements then. In a manner of speaking, there had to be a degree of faithfulness to the basic principles of the cause. "Party switching" was not allowed! The person who was to replace Judas was required to have the faith of the apostles. Track record was also very important. In the account, Peter explains that the one who would fill the vacancy in the apostles' group caused by the death of Judas, "must be one of the men who were in our group during the whole time that the Lord travelled about with us..." (Acts 1:21-23).

The process of election in Acts was by the drawing of lots (Acts 1:26). The casting of lots was the responsibility of the entire community.

While it is true that Peter was the recognized leader, he could not impose his authority from above without the agreement of the community. Before the drawing of lots, there was a prayerful reflection which invoked God's wisdom to be on the electorate. In that prayer was a clear understanding of what the community needed a leader for. "Show us, therefore, which of the two you have chosen to replace Judas in this apostolic ministry." (Acts 1:24) Knowing why they were choosing a leader provided a framework for the kind of person they were to elect. They, therefore, would not be blinded by the silver and gold, if any, that was to be offered to them.....the physique (show biz aura!?)...the eloquence with which the candidates expressed themselves...the sugar-coated promises. Of course, nothing is said about a campaign period where Joseph and Matthias could jockey for the position. In other words, right from the very start the community knew what they needed and therefore, they set out to elect the person who would fill the need.

The social condition today which has not changed substantially, even with new personalities at the helm of government, calls for a different brand of leaders. And the people continue to express their aspirations for the fundamentally new and better. These sentiments resonate with the hopes of Jerusalem for a king:

"Someday there will be a king who rules with integrity and national leaders who govern with justice. Each of them will be like a shelter from the wind and a place to hide from storms. They will be like streams flowing in a desert, like the shadow of a giant rock in a barren land. Their eyes and ears will be open but they will act with understanding and will say what they mean. No one will think that a fool is honorable or say that a scoundrel is honest. A fool speaks foolishly and thinks up evil things to do. What he does and what he says are an insult to the Lord, and he never feeds the hungry or gives thirsty people anything to drink. A stupid person is evil and does evil things; he plots to ruin the poor with lies and to keep them from getting their rights. But an honorable person acts honestly and stands firm for what is right. " (Isaiah 32:1-8)

Like the Hebrews of long ago, the Filipino people today hope to have leaders with integrity and who make justice the cornerstone of governance. The giant rock in a barren land (Isaiah 32:2b) calls to mind the rock from whence gushed waters to quench the people's thirst. The country needs leaders who are sensitive to the problems and concerns of the people (Isa. 32:3) and, therefore, will ensure that basic social services are within the reach of the poor. The country needs leaders who will defend and promote people's rights (Isa. 32:7b). The country needs leaders who will be transparent and honest in what they do and who they claim to be (Isa. 32:7a).

The national elections is an arena where we can help to secure the election of candidates who are committed to working for the oppressed and the exploited. The elections may not bring about the needed changes, which the people have long clamored and struggled for. Therefore, the more important task for the churches is to accompany the poor in their journey toward their Promised Land, whether in season (election time) or out of season (after election time). For when they shall have thrown off the yoke of oppression and entered their Promised Land, they will surely make the electoral process work for their good.

Meanwhile, the Church is challenged to participate in the politics of change.

THE 2016 NATIONAL ELECTIONS

“Above all let us be guided by the Holy Spirit, by Christian principles and by the vision of our Church for our people – a vision of society where justice flows like a river and righteousness as a mighty stream”².

The nation has again entered the election season as we approach the 2016 national elections. It is a time when the national media becomes obsessed with the celebrity of political figures, when grand promises are trumpeted by the different parties and their candidates, and every possible gimmick is deployed to try and convince the voting public to cast their ballot for a particular candidate.

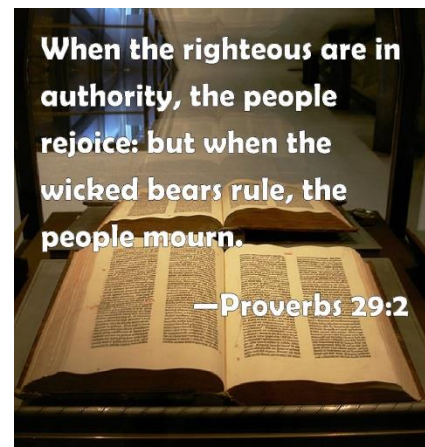
During this season every politician does all he or she can to convince us that they are pro-people, that they are a man or woman with a heart for the common folk. It is during this time that we need to gain perspective and remind ourselves that the majority of politicians are from among the powerful few. That it is almost always the case that the rich, powerful and traditional politicians and their kin emerge as the winners, and that there is a long history of coercion, deception, fraud, patronage, and vote buying that has marked the way that elections are conducted in our country: the so called “guns, goons and gold”. It is clear that the politics of patronage, family political dynasties, and corrupt practices continue to dominate the practice of elections. It is seldom that genuine representatives of the poor and marginalized are elected to positions of power and influence, but rather, it is those with the most money and those enjoying positions of power, who can finance the kinds of political machinery that wins elections, who come into office.

On May 9, 2016, we as the Filipino people will make our way to the polling places to again choose our lawmakers and local leaders. As we prepare to make our voting decisions, we are called as Christians to keep our eye on the greater good for our people, especially the most disadvantaged, and to cast our vote as an act of faith in practice, not just as an act of self-interest.. The NCCP and its member churches do not recommend candidates as some other religious organizations do, but rather we encourage our members to cast their vote as an act of a considered conscience and as an act of faith, responding to the biblical mandate to elect to positions of authority those who are acceptable in the eyes of God.

THE VICIOUS CYCLE

One of our endearing traits as Filipinos is our enduring optimism, and when it comes to elections we continue to believe that they can bring about positive changes, despite a history that would indicate the opposite. The NCCP affirms the importance of this hope, but for it to become a reality we need to become a nation of discerning voters. Elections can only be a tool for democratic change if we, the people, engage in active discernment about the choices we make and remain vigilant in guarding our choices.

The author of the Book of proverbs observes that: *“When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when the wicked rule, the people groan”* (Prov. 29:2) The old type of



electoral politics, with all the ‘groaning’ that it causes, will continue if we, the ordinary voters, do not unite, pray and work for meaningful elections. As churches and church people, we are called to be beacons for moral guidance within our communities, as we seek to participate in the politics of change and meaningful elections. As discerning voters, we should consider the history of past promises. Do the

promises that candidates made in the past remain unfulfilled? We need to look at the track record of candidates. Have the candidates used their position for their own self-interest or have they contributed to actual positive change for the majority of the people? We need to discern if the extravagant promises made during an election campaign have a real chance of becoming reality. We need to be alert to the corrupting influence of political dynasties where politicians do all they can to retain political power within a particular family or clan.

THE POLITICS OF CHANGE

The discerning voter must work and pray for the *Politics of Change* in order to break this vicious cycle. *The Politics of Change champions true service for and accountability to the people. It responds to the issues of the marginalized and the oppressed. It stands and works for national sovereignty.* This is in contrast to the politics of empty promises, deception, corruption, and patronage, which is self-serving, supports only the interests of the already powerful and is subservient to foreign interests and dictates.

THE STATE OF THE COUNTRY

Reynato J. Puno, former chief justice of the Supreme Court, has observed the economic and political state of our electoral politics and suggested that:

“Our elections are controlled by political dynasties that continue to monopolize power in almost all our electoral units. Political dynasties result in a government of the few, and for the few, a government that is the antithesis of democracy.”

“Those who govern must be accountable to the people. The transparency of the governing process must permit the citizenry to keep a watchful eye on state officials so as to detect corruption and punish those who perpetrate it. Corruption can strangle a democracy at any stage of development.”

“We will never be a full democracy unless and until we fully enthrone the people as the real sovereign in our country. ...If democracy has not fully flowered in the Philippines, it is because the people have been betrayed by some of their so-called representatives time and time again. If democracy has not been deeply rooted in our soil, it is because it has often been hijacked by a small but powerful cabal of political and economic elite. Democracy will succeed in the Philippines only if we can stop these betrayals. Only the people can stop these betrayals. Let us support all initiatives of the people, all initiatives for the people and all initiatives by the people.”³

As Chief Justice Puno has observed, it is currently the dominant economic interests within our country that determine the nature of our electoral politics, rather than our democratic will effecting how resources are allocated and shared within our nation.

The 2016 elections are set against the backdrop of increasing economic globalization, which has seen global wealth become increasingly concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer transnational corporations and wealthy individuals, and the gap between the rich and the poor, both on the global and national levels continues to widen. The Aquino administration has trumpeted the growing GDP during his term (which is now in significant decline) and the increased reputation of the Philippines with credit institutions. But the country remains debt ridden.



- Total external debt remains high at US\$77.7 billion as of December 2014 despite the Aquino government being a good payer of national government foreign debt.⁴ Servicing of foreign debt depletes resources needed for basic social services, health and education.

However the increased national wealth has accumulated disproportionately to a few wealthy businesses and individuals.

- The wealth of the 10 richest Filipinos has more than tripled from Php630 billion in 2010 to Php2.2 trillion in 2015, or a 250% increase. There are 12 Filipino billionaires among the world's billionaires listed in Forbes Magazine.⁵
- The gross revenues of the country's 260 listed firms on the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) increased by 106% between 2010 to 2014, while the real value of the average daily basic pay of millions of workers nationwide increased by less than Php9 or just 3.5% over the same period.

It has become evident that those corporations that have benefited from our increased national wealth have chosen not to increase investment of productive capital within the country, but rather by buying significant interests in businesses outside of the country.

- Examples include Ayala Land, the largest real estate company by revenue in the Philippines, buying a \$92 million share in Malaysian developer MCT. Manila Water (also Ayala controlled) significantly increasing its investment in Vietnam.⁶ The recent Monde Nissin buy out of the British manufacturer Quorn for \$833 million and the Emperador Company controlled by Andrew Tan the fourth richest man in our country, spending more than a billion dollars on buying businesses in Europe.⁷ These are just a few of the many possible examples of a multibillion dollar spending spree that Philippine corporations are currently engaged in. This directs the increased wealth they have gained towards investment outside of the country, rather than into productive investment at home.

Thus, while our national wealth has increased it has not benefited the majority of our people, there has been no significant increase in employment or improvements in the quality of jobs.

- Over recent years the Philippines has seen GDP growth, growing corporate profits and the increasing personal wealth of a few, yet over the same period employment growth has been negligible with an all time high of 11.2 million Filipinos in 2014 either unemployed or underemployed (consisting of 4.3 million unemployed and 6.9 million underemployed). 'This is the most number of unemployed and underemployed Filipinos in the country's history'⁸
- Unemployment has a particularly youthful character with almost half (48.5%) of the unemployed being under the age of 24 years old. Around one out of five (22 %) of the unemployed have a college degree.
- There has been a decline in the quality of work for those employed, with increasing numbers of people in part time work and declining numbers in full time employment. In April 2015, 15.5 million or 40% of employed Filipinos were in part-time work (most with low pay and inadequate benefits).⁹
- "The Philippines has been dubbed as among the worst countries in the world for workers in 2015 by the Belgium-based International Trade Union Confederation. The country obtained a score of 5, along with countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, Cambodia and China, which means that workers' rights are not guaranteed."¹⁰

The so-called improvement in our economy has not resulted in any alleviation of poverty, but rather the real number of people in poverty has continued to increase, as indicated by both objective measures and self rated poverty.¹¹

- There were 25.8% (or around 26.7 million) Filipinos living in poverty in 2014 according to government estimates. However if the poverty level were to be calculated on an income per person of PhP 125 per day or less, then the figure would rise to around 66 million Filipinos or 68% of the population.¹²
- The much needed PhP 2,000 increase in the SSS Pension for senior citizens which was passed by both the Congress and the Senate was vetoed by the President on the grounds that SSS funds will run out in the near future, but he approved bonuses for government officials including those in the SSS, amounting to millions of pesos.
- The consistent lack of investment by successive governments in rural development has resulted in increasing rural poverty, with the result that there is massive migration from rural areas to urban centers. This is at tremendous social cost as our urban centers do not have the infrastructure to adequately support such a rapidly increasing urban population. There is increasing mass urban poverty, with people forced to live in informal settlement areas where they are subject to insecurity and often brutally violent forced evictions without adequate resettlement being provided.
- The Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) and the CARP-Extension with Reforms (CARPER), the longest and most expensive land reform program in the world, has ended, but the majority of peasants remain landless.

Lack of adequate employment and the poor quality of jobs has continued to drive our people to subject themselves to the labor export policies of successive governments.

- On average 6,092 Filipinos left the country everyday to work abroad in 2015¹³. They are also burdened by exploitative labor practices in the destination countries and the pain of separation from families at home. In 2013 there were 10.2 million Filipinos working abroad.
- For 2014, the Philippines received \$28 billion in remittances, which constituted 9.5% of GDP. This declined in 2015 to 8% of GDP.¹⁴ The country ranks third among remittance receiving countries after India and China.¹⁵

Some are driven to prostitution.

- The sex industry in the Philippine is big business and constitutes somewhere between 2 to 10% of GDP. A conservative estimate indicates that international sex tourists contribute at least \$1.16 billion (around 0.46% of GDP) and generate around 1.1 million jobs in the tourist and service sectors (contributing to around 3% of national employment).¹⁶ The sex industry provides demand for victims of human trafficking. Government action on human trafficking has been increasing but is still woefully inadequate and big time offenders are rarely apprehended and prosecuted.

Public-Private Partnership (PPP) projects have been a corner stone of the administration's economic policy, which have been simply a continuation of privatization policies from past administrations. Among PPP projects rolled out by government have been those in the sectors of water, power, transport and health. The privatization of public utilities and services most adversely impacts the lives of those who are among the poorest. The MRT incompetence is such a clear example of failed privatization, where crony contracts for preferred businesses and lack of public investment have resulted in the suffering of commuters on a transport system that has been gradually run into the ground.

- Privatization continues to result in expensive health services, education, water, electricity and mass transport and more demolitions and displacement of communities to give way to the PPP projects. An indication of the inadequacy of the health system is the international ranking of the Philippines as among the worst places in the world to die (ranked 78 out of 80 countries), because of the severe lack of health care for those who are terminally ill.¹⁷



The main strategy for poverty alleviation has been the conditional cash transfer (CCT) which has been marred by many unqualified recipients and also by its basic character as a hand-out of money that does little to address the underlying causes of mass poverty within our country.

Over the last four years the exposè on corruption especially among our politicians in the pork barrel scams has been unprecedented. Yet, while it appears endemic to most traditional politicians,

the administration has pursued only its enemies and largely left its friends untouched. The administration itself, in violation of the Constitution and Supreme Court rulings, has continued to

create and disburse discretionary funds with impunity. We have seen the greed of our politicians diverting the people's money away from the development of the nation into their own pockets and personal political agendas.

- The so called 'daang matuwid' of the current administration and its drive against corruption, has resulted in little change. Ombudsman Conchita Carpio has said: "A "SUPER" number of corrupt government officials can still be found throughout the bureaucracy".¹⁸ In 2015 Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) ranking of the Philippines dropped 10 notches from 2014.¹⁹

We have witnessed the rotten core of our current political system. The veil has been lifted on the pretense to public service that our traditional politicians profess and has shown how they really view public office as a route to self-aggrandizement. As a path to secure wealth and power for handing out the patronage they need to perpetuate themselves and often their relatives in power. About two-thirds of the outgoing Congress are the heirs of political families and based on the current batch of registered candidates that figure could be even higher in the next Congress unless we as discerning voters practice the politics of change and reject this rotten system of corruption and patronage politics.

- A new study by the Center for People Empowerment in Governance, or CenPEG shows political clans firmly entrenched in 72, or 94 percent, of the 77 provinces included in the research. Of the 178 dominant political families named in the study, 100, or 56 percent, come from the old elites; 78, or 44 percent, are new....the study says a political family exists "if at least two members of the same family (typically up to the third degree of consanguinity) have won a congressional and/or gubernatorial seat between 1987 and 2010."²⁰

As typhoon Yolanda, a storm of unprecedented ferocity ravaged the central part of our country, we felt firsthand the reality of climate change and its effects. We saw how the poor are the most vulnerable to climate impacts. We witnessed the inability or unwillingness of government to engage in efficient, effective and appropriate rehabilitation for the affected communities in the Visayas. There is clear evidence that funds have been corrupted, resources wasted through mismanagement, and projects and money left unspent so that it can be used as political war chest for local and national candidates as they run for office in 2016. Relief and rehabilitation funds should not be allowed to become part of the patronage game of politicians and officials. Resources should not be handed out as some kind of privilege for which the people are bound by a false sense of "utang na loob". Access to relief and rehabilitation is not a privilege, but a basic human right and a constituted duty of care that government has for its citizens when they become affected by calamity.



We have seen the culture of impunity persist in our country, where those who engage in extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances, torture and other grave human rights abuses are not investigated or brought before the bar of legal justice. None of the extrajudicial killings that occurred under the Arroyo administration have been addressed under the Aquino administration, despite the promise

of President Aquino that these would be addressed. Rather we have witnessed continued incidents of gross human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, and a continued perpetuation of the culture of impunity. Increasingly indigenous people and environmental activists have become victims as they seek to defend the environment and ancestral domains from development aggression. Often the military engages in protecting foreign mining interests rather than in serving our own citizens. The military also promotes the formation of paramilitary groups within indigenous communities to harass and target their own tribal communities. To cover up their role in defending foreign mining interests the military resorts to the tired argument that indigenous people are supporters of the New People's Army.

- In the five years to July 2015 human rights group Karapatan recorded 262 victims of extrajudicial killing (EJK), 293 frustrated killings and 26 victims of enforced disappearance by suspected state agents. Most of the EJK victims were farmers (158) and indigenous people (63). There were also a large number of minors (21) and the urban poor (13). The Aquino government has not brought a single perpetrator to justice.
- Human Rights Watch reported in 2016 that "Overall ... Aquino's record on human rights has been disappointing due to the failure to address impunity for the government's rights violations. Among the reasons were lack of political will to investigate and prosecute abuses by state security forces; a corrupt and politicized criminal justice system; and a traditional "patronage politics" system that protects officials and security forces."²¹
- A 2015 report by London-based Global Witness said that in 2014 almost a third of environmental activist killed around the world, were killed in the Philippines and these killings were in relation to mining projects.²²

We have witnessed successive administrations that have not had a heart for peace, and have been unwilling to enter into principled negotiations with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). In the absence of principled negotiations there have been on and off calls for total war with devastating consequence for our people. There have been continual threats to abandon historic agreements between the government and the NDFP. We have seen successive administrations continually choose the way of the sword, with consequent hardship and suffering brought upon the people, rather than seriously seeking to address the root causes of the armed conflict. A politics of change requires a government that is willing to tread the path of principled negotiation rather than subjecting the country to more of the same failed military strategy that has prevailed over most of the last 46 years.

Lasting peace in Mindanao needs to be a high priority for any new administration and congress. This must be a peace that is based on justice that seeks to be inclusive of all those who are affected by the conflict in Mindanao, especially the most disadvantaged sectors of society, and action towards peace that is not subservient to foreign interests and undue influence. We have witnessed how an ill-conceived negotiated peace agreement with MILF which in the first place did not address the demand for self-determination of the Moro people, was imperiled by the incompetence and foreign interference displayed in the Mamapasano tragedy. In the end, it is the people; especially the poor who continue to suffer the ongoing effects of internal conflict within our country.

Our nation is in the midst of dramatic changes in our regional security situation, with the US pivot to Asia, the expansion of the visiting forces agreements and the forging of new US military agreements, not just in the Philippines, but across the region. The increasing tensions with China, brought about

by this geopolitical military repositioning of the US has become a justification for massive increased military spending in our region, increased military engagement between Southeast Asian countries, and countries like Japan moving away from defensive military positions to more aggressive military posturing. While government makes a display on the one hand of protecting our national sovereignty from Chinese incursions, it is ever more willing on the other hand to sell out our national sovereignty to the military interests of the US and its allies as evidenced by the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA). It is clear from history that when states become increasingly militarized, they also become increasingly repressive internally. Preparing for war can never be the way towards peace.

Our national sovereignty is also under threat from those who desire that our country become more enmeshed in unequal international trade agreements, and there will be increasing pressure over the next presidential term for those in power to abrogate the provisions within our Constitution that protect our national patrimony from ownership by foreign corporations and individuals, so that our country can become compliant and qualified for entry into international agreements such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). The TPP in particular threatens to elevate individual foreign firms to equal status with sovereign nations, empowering them to privately enforce new rights and privileges, provided by the pact, by dragging governments to foreign tribunals to challenge public interest policies that they claim frustrate their expectations.

These are just a snapshot of the myriad of issues that form the backdrop to the 2016 Elections. Meanwhile, we are challenged to work for the politics of change.

THE CRITERIA

For the May 2016 elections, five people are running for president of the Republic, six are contesting the vice-presidency, and several dozen are campaigning for a seat among the 12 available in the Senate²³.

Literally thousands more are running for:

- 297 seats in the House of Representatives;
- provincial governor and vice-governor of 81 provinces, and 772 seats in their provincial boards;
- mayor and vice-mayor of 145 cities and 1,489 municipalities;
- 11,924 seats on municipal councils;
- governor and vice-governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and 24 seats in the ARMM regional assembly.

The following themes of *Justice, Peace, Righteousness, National Sovereignty*, and the *Integrity of Creation* are suggested as criteria for discerning whether the candidates and party-list groups will uphold the politics of change and keep the interests of the people above all else.²⁴

1. JUSTICE

(Some Suggested Bible Verses: Psalms 82:1-4; Isaiah 56:1; Jeremiah 23:5)

Psalms 82:1-4

"(do not) judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked... Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked."

Isaiah 56:1

"... 'Keep justice, and do righteousness, for soon my salvation will come and my deliverance be revealed..."

Jeremiah 23:5

"...deal wisely...execute justice and righteousness in the land"

Micah 6:8

"...what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

Candidates or political parties are working for *SOCIAL JUSTICE* if they are upholding and pushing for:

- *Genuine land reform*, where those who toil on the land are given their due as responsible stewards. Where there is a genuine redistribution of land to the benefit of tenants and landless farmers. Opposes rampant land grabbing and the cancellation of Certificates of Land Ownership Awards (CLOA) and Certificates of Land Transfer. Opposes the conversion of agricultural lands into golf courses, foreign plantations, and other uses which withdraw agricultural land from food production in favor of private and business interests.
- *Just wages and job security* as opposed to low wages and labor contractualization. An equitable share in the fruits of their labor for workers, as well as participation in management and decision-making. The recognition of the basic right of workers to form unions as a means to effectively address their grievances.
- *Housing, education, health care and other basic social services* where people are guaranteed their right to life and enjoy provision of their basic human needs. This can be done by strengthening basic services like housing and decent relocation sites for the urban poor, free or affordable health services, and affordable prices of the basic staples of life. Where the yearly or semestral increases in matriculation fees are strictly regulated so as not to make education unaffordable for the average Filipino and the K-12 program which is geared towards the market, should be reviewed or scrapped altogether. There should be increases in the national budget for education and other basic social services as stipulated by our Constitution. A stop to the increasing trend to privatize public hospitals.
- *Equal opportunities for women* where the value of women are recognized and women are empowered both in the productive and reproductive spheres that are both contributory to

nation building. Full implementation and strict enforcement of laws, such as the Magna Carta for Women, RA 9262 or the Violence Against Women and Their Children Act, Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act 2012, Anti-Human Trafficking in Persons Act.

- *Respect for Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Trans-genders (LGBT)* and helping them to prosper in a community “where persons can freely talk about their sexual orientation and gender identity without fear of condemnation” ²⁵
- *Self-determination for indigenous communities* where our brothers and sisters who are national minorities are empowered to chart their own course as a people by being equally represented in organs of governance, respect for their rights over their ancestral domains, and the defense of their cultural integrity.

2. PEACE

(Some Suggested Bible Verses: Micah 4:1-4; Romans 10:14-15; Romans 14: 17-19; Ephesians 2:14-15)

Micah 4:1-4:

“...they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation., neither they shall learn war any more; but they shall sit every man under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken”

Romans 10:14-15

“But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

Romans 14: 17-19

“For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The one who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and has human approval. Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.”

Ephesians 2:14-15

“For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace,”

Candidate or political parties are working for *PEACE* if they are upholding and pushing for:

- *Principled peace negotiations* between the government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) and the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) based on mutually agreed upon conditions to help end the decades-old armed conflicts.
- *Respect for human rights* where there is strong adherence to the protection and promotion of human rights, encompassing both civil liberties, political rights, and the right to appropriate development. An end to the culture of impunity and the proper investigation and prosecution of those responsible for extra-judicial killings, enforced

disappearances, torture and other human rights violations. The full implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations Human Rights Council made during the Universal Periodic Review on the Philippines²⁶ especially the recommendations that relate to the prevention of human rights violations by the AFP and the PNP. The strict enforcement of laws against torture and enforced disappearances. The strict adherence to International Rights Covenants to which the Philippines is a signatory. The release of those imprisoned for their political beliefs. In addition, they should work to:

- *Scrap the counter-insurgency program, Oplan Bayanihan*, which has resulted in many extrajudicial killings, the practice of labeling advocates of the poor, workers, indigenous people and the environment as enemies of the state, and the filing of fabricated charges against those who are critical of the government and its policies.²⁷
 - *Justice for the victims of human rights violations* committed by State security forces through proper investigation and prosecution of perpetrators. The enforcement of the principle of command responsibility within the military hierarchy as the basis for criminal liability for extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and torture. The denial of immunity for government and military officers found to be perpetrators of human rights violations.
 - *Reform of the criminal justice system to address the pervading climate of impunity*. In particular, the speedy and proper investigation, arrest, prosecution, and conviction of perpetrators of human rights violations..
- *An end to rampant militarization*. The social costs of increasing military deployment especially in rural areas has resulted in large numbers of human rights violations and incidents of internal displacement. The rights of civilians must always be protected and reforms within the military must be introduced to ensure that human rights violations do not occur. Militarization breeds unpeace in the life of our communities.

3. RIGHTEOUSNESS

(Some suggested Bible Verses: Isaiah 32; Zephaniah 2:3, Galatians 6:3-10)

Isaiah 32

“Someday there will be a king who rules with integrity and national leaders who govern with justice. Each of them will be like a shelter from the wind and a place to hide from storms. They will be like streams flowing in a desert, like the shadow of a giant rock in a barren land. Their eyes and ears will be open but they will act with understanding and will say what they mean. No one will think that a fool is honorable or say that a scoundrel is honest. A fool speaks foolishly and thinks up evil things to do. What he does and what he says are an insult to the Lord, and he never feeds the hungry or gives thirsty people anything to drink. A stupid person is evil and does evil things; he plots to ruin the poor with lies and to keep them from getting their rights. But an honorable person acts honestly and stands firm for what is right. Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. And the effect

of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever. My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.

Zephaniah 2:3

"Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, who do his commands; seek righteousness, seek humility...."

Galatians 6:3-10

"For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor's work, will become a cause for pride. For all must carry their own loads. Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher...Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith"

Candidates are *RIGHTEOUS* and for *GOOD GOVERNANCE* if they treat public office as a public trust, and not as a means to enrich themselves, and if they:

- *Have a clean track record in public service.* The candidate should not have any record of corruption or of giving special favors to relatives, friends and political supporters. The candidate should not have a record of human rights abuses, the oppression of women or exploitation of the poor.
- *Do not tolerate corruption.* Are committed to stand for the prosecution of those implicated in plunder and malversation of public funds. Are committed to uphold the law to seeing those who have plundered the nation's coffers like the Marcos family, and abused their power to face the consequences of their wrongdoings.
- *Are committed to listening to the voice of the marginalized sectors of society.* Are willing to let the voices of our powerless sectors, which comprise the majority of our society – the peasantry, workers, fisher folk, urban poor and national minorities – be heard in decision making.
- *Are against political dynasties.* The perpetuation of political dynasties stifle democracy, undermine the sanctity of the electoral system, and corrupt the integrity of the people's participation in the act of public decision making. Political dynasties sustain oligarchy and elitist politics, and thus subvert genuine democracy. The enabling law to implement the Constitutional ban on dynasties should be passed.
- *Demonstrate political integrity.* They are not involved in cheating and illegitimately influencing the results of the people's choices by stealing their votes through coercion, intimidation, manipulation and other "sleights of hands".

4. NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY

(Some suggested Bible Verses: 2Chronicles 7:14; Luke 7:1-10; Galatians 5:1; Philippians 2:1-10)

2 Chronicles 7:14

"if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

Galatians 5:1

"For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."

Philippians 2:1-10

"...be of the same mind, have the same love, be in full accord and of one mind. Do not be selfish nor conceited, but in humility count others better than yourselves.

...look for the interests of others.

...be like Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross..."

Candidates or political parties are working for the *NATION'S INTEREST AND SOVEREIGNTY* if they are working for:

- *National Industrialization* where basic and vital industries are under the effective control of the national community. A primary example for this is the nationalization of our oil industry by working for the repeal of the Oil Deregulation Law in order to prevent the continuous increase in the price of oil.
- *The review and scrapping of agreements and treaties that infringe national sovereignty.* The safeguards of our national sovereignty in the Philippine Constitution should be defended and upheld. Treaties and agreements that are decidedly unfair to the Philippines and can bring unpeace like the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) and similar agreements should be reviewed and scrapped.
- *Economic sovereignty over globalization.* The impositions and dictates of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB), General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade-World Trade Organization (GATT-WTO) wreak havoc on our economy by allowing the unrestrained entry of foreign goods into our market which affects the viability of our local production. Laws that support and promote globalization like the Retail Trade Liberalization Law, Oil Price Deregulation Act, Electric Power Industry Reform Act (EPIRA), and other similar laws should be repealed or scrapped. The privatization of our water resources and public hospitals should be stopped.
- *The non-payment of onerous loans.* Onerous loans which are a bane to the people should not be paid, especially those loans used to fund environmentally destructive projects dating from the time of Marcos like the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant, the Chico River Dam Project, among others. Foreign debts are burdens to us, and will continue to be burdens for coming generations. The automatic appropriation within our national budget for debt servicing must

also be stopped. The return of the people's money plundered or lost to graft and corruption should be pursued with astute political will.

- *The defense of the nationalist provisions in the Philippine Constitution.* The Philippine Constitution is by no means perfect, it still has many loopholes and problems. There are, however, positive provisions within the constitution such as the Bill of Rights, the ban on the entry of foreign troops, bases and nuclear weapons, and restrictions on not allowing 100% foreign ownership of land and patrimony. These provisions serve as our safeguards against the onslaught of globalization and unrestrained foreign intervention. Moves for Charter Change to tailor fit our constitution to economic globalization and accommodate foreign interests must be opposed.
- *Foreign relations based on equality and mutual respect.* The foreign relations policy of our country has been to echo the pronouncements of the most powerful nation on earth, even to the detriment of our own national interests. There is a need to work for the drafting of new rules that are based on equality not on "big country-small country" power relationships and for the mutual respect for the sovereignty of each country.

5. INTEGRITY OF GOD'S CREATION

(Some suggested Bible Verses: Genesis 2:15; Isaiah 2:2-5; Psalms 95:1-7; Revelations 21:1-4)

Genesis 2:15

"The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it."

Psalms 95:1-7

"In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also.

The sea is his, for he made it; for his hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand."

Romans 8:21

"...because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God."

Revelations 21:1-4

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away."

Candidates or political parties are working for the *INTEGRITY OF GOD'S CREATION* if they are upholding and pushing for the protection and nurture of the physical environment to ensure ecological balance and inter-generational equity²⁸. This can be seen if they are calling for:

- *The repeal of environmentally destructive laws* like the Philippine Mining Act of 1995 and Mining Executive Order 79 which give foreign mining companies the license to freely disembowel our environment²⁹. There is a need to impose a moratorium on large-scale mining projects. To then enact mining policies and laws that put the industrial development and the welfare of the Filipino people first. They should work for a “Mining Bill that places serious regard to the defense of our national sovereignty and patrimony as our Constitution so declares”.³⁰
- *A ban on large-scale, commercial logging* until sufficient rainforest cover for the country has been recovered. The immediate cancelation of all commercial logging permits such as Integrated Forest Management Agreements (IFMA). The investigation of corruption within the National Greening Program. A stop to practices that lead to land grabbing and the conversion of forest areas and public lands into the private holdings of the already wealthy. Watershed areas should be rehabilitated and protected and community forestry management should be promoted.
- *The junking of the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA)* which allows the importation and dumping of toxic and hazardous wastes. The rejection of other impending free-trade agreements that promote the plunder of natural resources and allow the pollution of the environment, such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA). The dumped toxic waste from Canada must be returned.
- *The upholding of the Supreme Court decision banning the trial of bio-transgenic agricultural crops.* The imposition of a moratorium on the introduction and commercialization of genetically-modified food and agricultural crops until a robust regulatory regime is put in place to ensure that these technologies can be proven safe and healthy.
- *Concrete action on climate change.* The legislation and enforcement of policies that will genuinely address the crisis of climate change and ensure sufficient aid and reparations, effective community-based disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation programs, and guarantee the human rights and social justice for climate refugees such as the survivors of typhoons Yolanda and Lando.
- *The ban on illegal fishing and the encroachment of foreign commercial fishing vessels* on fishing grounds traditionally reserved for small fisher folk.
- *A moratorium on the construction of coal-fired power plants, mega dams, and other dirty and destructive energy sources.* The repeal of the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (EPIRA). Push for the promotion of people-controlled, community-based, renewable energy projects.
- *A sustainable solid waste management policy* that shuns incinerator plants, landfills and dumpsites, and promotes waste segregation, composting and recycling in communities.
- *A stop to the illegal wildlife trade and biopiracy.* The promotion of the conservation of our biodiversity by enforcing the ban on illegal wildlife trade and a stop to biopiracy.

- *The amendment of the Clean Air Act* by instituting mechanisms that will safeguard the livelihood of low-income workers and ban oil companies from passing on the cost burden for cleaner oil products to consumers.
- *The immediate rehabilitation of biologically dead rivers and the immediate upgrading, expansion and development of a national sewage system.*

THE PARTY LIST SYSTEM

For parties and organizations running under the party list system.

The party list system was made into a law so that the marginalized sectors of our society can join the elections in order for them to be proportionally represented in congress, particularly in the lower house. A total of 50 party list representatives can be a part of congress.

In the party list system, it is the organization or the political party and not the individual that is elected. Only one party list is voted. The name of the party list organization is the one chosen on the ballot and not the nominees. There is a minimum of one and a maximum of three representatives from the winning party list that will sit in the congress based on the number of votes or the percentage of votes garnered from the total voting population.

At present, there is a loophole in the party list system because traditional politicians and the powerful few in the country can form parties to join the party list bandwagon. Because of this, even the party list system, which is supposed to ensure the representation of the marginalized sectors, is dominated by the rich and the powerful.



For the party list system, analyze and ensure that the contenders are truly independent and are not dummy organizations that are created or funded/bankrolled by traditional political parties and politicians. Also make sure that the party-list groups are not closely identified with the current administration. Support those that are truly representing the poor and the downtrodden and not the rich and the powerful.

While in many ways the party list system may be seen as a mere token, it does offer a small window of opportunity. It provides a small portion of the "power pie" to marginalized sectors as opposed to the much larger piece that remains in the hands of the elite. The party list system can be maximized for the Politics of Change.

THE AUTOMATED ELECTORAL SYSTEM

What is the automated election system (AES)?³¹



Since the country started holding electoral exercises, the manual system of voting, counting and canvassing has been the norm. The 2004 and 2007 elections, just to cite current examples, saw the nation waiting for an agonizingly slow tabulation of election results. Moreover, there were many cases of dagdag-bawas (vote shaving). To address this, RA 9369 or the election modernization law was passed. This requires an automated election system (AES) to “encourage transparency, credibility, fairness and accuracy of elections”³²

SEC. 1 of RA 9369: It is the State policy to ensure free, orderly, honest, peaceful, credible and informed elections, plebiscites, referenda, recall and other similar electoral exercises by improving on the electoral process and adopting systems that will ensure the secrecy and sanctity of the ballot and all election, consolidation and transmission documents in order that the process shall be transparent and credible and the results fast, accurate and reflective of the genuine will of the people.

In a nutshell, AES is the use of a computer to record the ballot, count, transmit, and canvass votes. Thus, for the 2010 and 2013 Elections, the Precinct Count Optical Scan (PCOS) or Optical Mark Reader (OMR) technology system was used by the consortium Smartmatic-TIM under contract from the Commission on Elections (Comelec). Instead of writing the names of candidates on the ballots, the voters shaded small ovals opposite the names of their choices on ballots 2.5 feet long, and fed the ballots into the PCOS-OMR machines. After the voting period, the machine itself counts the votes and produces the election returns (ERs). With a modem, the PCOS will transmit through the internet the election return to the canvassing center (municipal board of canvasser, national central server) and KBP server. The Consolidation/Canvassing Server or CCS (REIS: Real-time Electoral Information System) is used to canvass the votes.

For the 2016 Elections, the Vote Counting Machines (VCM) will be used instead of the PCOS. Again, the Comelec has entered a contract with Smartmatic-TIM which promised to provide 93,000 machines for the elections. Smartmatic claims that the new machines are “seven times faster” than the PCOS.

What are the critical issues and problems in the automation of the 2016 elections?

Under RA 9369 *internal safeguards* are guaranteed in regard to the AES. However, despite calls from different groups who are seeking clean and honest elections, the Comelec has failed to put in place the necessary *safeguards* to ensure *the integrity and secrecy of the vote*, and a *transparent, accurate and credible* vote count. What is also very disturbing is the fact that the implementation of the AES is over-dependent on a foreign company - Smartmatic.

The Comelec still purchased the Vote Counting Machines from Smartmatic even though there were many issues and problems associated with the PCOS machines that the company supplied during the 2010 and 2013 elections. They have also failed to address the 32 glitches that were observed in 2013.

According to the Center for People Empowerment and Governance (CenPEG), “money...will control the 2016 elections”. CenPEG has raised the following concerns:

That “a collusion continues to reign based on money and political expediency among power players to allow a foreign company – Smartmatic-TIM – to monopolize the supply of election technology and hardware, worse, to control the country’s sovereign electoral process despite this company’s questionable credentials and without any credible system of audit and accountability as deterrent to the manipulation of poll results”

The group also stated that:

“...meaningful efforts by concerned citizens’ groups coursed through all possible legal means in the past continue to fall on deaf ears. Various state authorities – including the Comelec, Malacañang, Congress through its suffrage committees and Joint Congressional Oversight Committee (JCOC), and procurement bodies – have simply failed to discharge their constitutionally-mandated functions in ensuring that elections are transparent and secured, voting is verifiable, votes are duly authenticated and electronically-transmitted without glitch, counting is accurate, and election results are credible. They all remain hostage to the power of political expedience and opportunism not to scientific studies and compliance to laws they themselves framed and claim to abide with.”

The Filipino IT for Election (FIT4E) movement has encouraged the use of Filipino scientific ingenuity to design our own election technology. The public and media demonstration of Filipino alternative technology solutions have proven that “the Filipino can do it and that systems can be designed compliant with RA 9369 or the election automation law particularly the minimum system requirements such as transparency, among other system features.”³³

There is also the lack of a credible independent review of the software that will be used for the machines. Another issue with this year’s elections is the disenfranchisement of 2.5 million voters that were not able to follow the deadline of their “No Bio, No Boto” requirement.

Three Main Issues

Without going into the intricacies of the many failures of Comelec to follow the automated Election Law to the letter, there are three main issues with the current system that the Comelec has entrusted to Smartmatic:

1. Transparency – When the individual has inserted the ballot into the VCM, what transpires afterwards cannot be seen by the naked eye. The counting of the votes is done by the machine and there is no guarantee that it is done properly. As CenPEG puts it: “...there can never be transparency with machines that count the votes inside the box and invisible to the eyes of the public. There can never be accountability when the results simply pop out of the screen without being verified publicly.”³⁴
2. Credibility – The current system’s non-transparency makes it very vulnerable to tampering. It is possible that election results can be manipulated on behalf of the highest bidder, or the public perception that this has occurred. This diminishes public confidence in the counting of the ballot and weakens the credibility of those elected. A recent survey by Pulse Asia

indicates that already four out of 10 voters believe that cheating will happen in the coming elections.

3. Sovereignty - The most critical and fundamental issue is the fact that the Comelec has again entrusted the elections primarily to a foreign company with a technology that has so many problems. In the end, the people's right to suffrage may be compromised and we may end up with leaders that are not democratically chosen by the people.

Automation does not guarantee clean elections but it can be achieved or errors minimized with proper safeguards and security measures, and full citizens' engagement in the whole exercise.

But in the long run, whether modernized or not, no election system will bring democracy to the people and a just government elected unless the systemic problem of fraud and violence which is the entrenched modus operandi of powerful politicians and dynasties is addressed decisively and comprehensively. In any electoral exercise, an organized and vigilant citizenry is the paramount requirement.

A ROMAN CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE

The Church's role and prophetic task in the 2016 election

*Prof. Jerry Imbong
Solidarity Philippines*

"But choose from the people at large some capable and God-fearing persons, trustworthy and incorruptible, and appoint them as leaders of the people..." (Ex. 18:21).

The Church's obligation to participate in shaping the moral character of society is a requirement of our faith. In the Catholic Tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation. This obligation is rooted in our baptismal commitment to follow Jesus Christ and to bear Christian witness in all we do. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us, "It is necessary that all participate, each according to his position and role, in promoting the common good. This obligation is inherent in the dignity of the human person. . . . As far as possible citizens should take an active part in public life" (nos. 1913-1915)

The Church acknowledges that in the political field, "social sins unfortunately abound", such as graft and corruption, "dirty politics" of "guns, goons, and gold", deceit and unprincipled compromises, and "politics of greed". CBCP calls these systems where such social sins are deeply imbedded through constant practice as "structures of sin or structures of injustice."³⁵ The Second Plenary Council humbly cognizant of "an imperfect Church living amidst and ministering to a very imperfect society" (PCP II, 142) and acknowledging that Philippine politics as "possibly the biggest bane in our life as a nation" and "the most pernicious obstacle to our achieving full development" urges its faithful to discern as a community the rich heritage that can guide Filipino Catholics to consider the challenges in public life and contribute to greater justice and peace. Amidst the widespread discontent among the people in the political field, still a significant number of Catholics believe in the electoral process. Many still pin their hopes that after the election, a good leader will emerge that will really address their problems and change the lives for the better. It is in this connection that the Catholic Bishops Conference in the Philippines offer some guidelines to help form consciences (Deut. 17; 8-13), choose for their standard bearers, men and women, who are characterized as "of good reputation, who are wise and full of the Spirit" (Acts 6:3).

The moral and religious principles that guide politics are (a) human dignity and solidarity as the first principle of politics; (b) the common good as the goal of political activity; (c) authority and power as a divine trust for service; (d) autonomy and mutual collaboration between the Church and the political community. At the core of any political platform is social justice. Social justice is sometimes called the justice of the common good. It demands proportionate share in the fruits of economic cooperation and equitable distribution of the wealth of a nation among different social classes. It also imposes obligations of mutual relation on different social groups, e.g., the better to assist the poor so that they can live in a manner worthy of human beings. Social justice condemns such situations as "excessive economic and social disparity between individuals and peoples" (GS, 29), the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few, and excessive profits.³⁶

The Church recognizes that the responsibility to make choices in political life rests with each individual in light of a properly formed conscience, and that participation goes well beyond casting a vote in a particular election.³⁷ Therefore, it highlights the role of the Church in the formation of conscience, and the corresponding moral responsibility of each Catholic to hear, receive, and act upon

the Church's teaching in the lifelong task of forming his or her own conscience. With this foundation, Catholics are better able to evaluate policy positions, party platforms, and candidates' promises and actions in light of the Gospel and the moral and social teaching of the Church in order to help build a better world.³⁸

The following desirable qualifications for political candidates are outlined by the CBCP in its Pastoral Letter "Renewing the Political Order: Pastoral Guidelines on Choosing Candidates for the 1992 Elections":³⁹

1. The candidate must have pursued, with persistency and consistency, the common good. St. John XXIII, in his major Encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth), stated that "the whole reason for the existence of civil authorities is the realization of the common good" (No. 55). The purpose of the State is the protection and promotion of the common good. This is accomplished through three tasks: (1) legislation and administration of justice, (2) promotion of the socio-economic welfare and health, and (3) care for cultural and moral concerns.⁴⁰
2. The candidate must have been a vigorous defender and promoter of justice. Justice, if faithfully implemented, can remove many of the causes of social conflicts. In order to draw up programs for eliminating injustices which have become embedded within our social system.
3. The candidates must be imbued with the spirit of service. Authentic service is marked by humility after the example of the Lord Jesus who came to serve and not to be served. It cannot be genuine service when it is done in arrogance and domination.
4. The candidate must possess an enduring and preferential option for the poor. Love for the dispossessed poor, victims often of structural injustice, is akin to that of God whom Scriptures describe as the defender and liberator of the poor. Our people expect the new politicians to live without ostentation, to be close to the poor in order to derive first-hand knowledge of their problems and to support their efforts to attain economic self-reliance. Their solidarity with the poor will give them the determination to defend the human rights of our citizens.

Just recently, the PPCRV has launched a campaign called "One Good Vote" which seeks to eliminate vote-buying in the 2016 elections. Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Socrates Villegas reminded the faithful of the sacredness of their votes for its capacity to elect one good leader or a corrupt and crooked one. At the center of this campaign is the challenge to have a good vote viz-a-viz the need to have one good electoral system. Because we are people of both faith and reason, it is appropriate and necessary for us to bring this essential truth about human life and dignity to the public square. We are called to practice Christ's commandment to "love one another" (Jn 13:34). We are also called to promote the well-being of all, to share our blessings with those most in need, to defend marriage, and to protect the lives and dignity of all, especially the weak, the vulnerable, the voiceless.

Let us follow these helpful tips from the electoral watchdog KONTRA DAYA.

10 ANTI-FRAUD TIPS FOR VOTERS ON ELECTION DAY

1. Look for your assigned precinct and your name on the voter's list early.
2. Make sure the ballot is clean and free of marks before accepting it from the Board of Election Inspectors (BEI). Do not accept ballots with marks or dirt because the Voting Counting Machine (VCM) may be unable to read them. Spoiled ballots may not be replaced.
3. Make sure the VCM accepts your ballot. If the machine rejects the ballot, you have four tries to insert it again in different orientations. Voters are allowed to fix ambiguous marks or the improper shading of ovals. The BEI should also explain why the ballot was rejected. It might not be the voter's fault and the VCM might be broken. If a machine has rejected several valid ballots, it has to be replaced.
4. Do not over-vote, otherwise the VCM will not read the votes for that position. Make sure you fully shade the ovals, or the machine might reject your ballot for having "ambiguous marks." You will not be given another ballot if you make a mistake while voting. Meanwhile, the use of ballots to sabotage the VCM is strictly prohibited.
5. Under the new VCM, a voter is given the option to complete the votes for a position if the voter failed to do so upon casting the ballot. (For example, if only 10 out of 12 senators were shaded, there is an option to complete the votes before the VCM finally accepts the ballot.)
6. If precinct runs out of ballots, a voter can still cast his vote in the nearest precinct. The BEI should accompany the voter after giving the latter a certification.
7. Only the BEI can hand out ballots. Not even local officials, Comelec personnel and Smartmatic technicians can interfere. Also, no one should tinker with the VCM during voting time.
8. Voters should make sure they sign the voters' list at the start and have their fingernail marked with indelible ink at the end. This is one safeguard against "flying voters".
9. The allotted voting time is from 7 am to 5 pm. Voters who are within 30 meters from the precinct or are still in line after 5 pm can still vote. They should have their names listed down by BEI. Voting should continue until everyone within 30 meters of the precinct or in line has voted.
10. Armed police, military personnel, para-military forces, security guards, barangay officials, armed goons and supporters of politicians who are campaigning are barred from the polling precinct. The BEI should send them out.

Even if the voter takes every necessary precaution, we are still not sure if the foreign-controlled automated election system can accurately record and count our votes. The Comelec has refused demands for the printing of receipts for voter verification. There has been no full review of the software that will be used for the election. There are still issues regarding the transmission of results. All these make the AES susceptible to fraud. Voters must remain vigilant and ready to act.

*The elections may not bring about desired changes
because it is still a contest primarily of the elite.*

*What is important is that in season or out of season,
the people's journey towards SHALOM must continue.*

*Prayerfully and unafraid, let us denounce
the evils in our society and announce
God's good news of transformation!*

ENDNOTES

- ¹ While the reflection above was written almost a decade ago, we hold that the issues brought forth remain as valid today as they were then. The intention for utilizing this material today is not to convey the hopelessness of the situation. Rather, it is to point now to the great task that still remains to be accomplished – engaging in the politics of change. – National Council of Churches in the Philippines
- ² 'Statement on the 1987 Elections', Executive Committee, National Council of Churches in the Philippines, 25 April 1987
- ³ <http://www.philstar.com/opinion/2014/02/20/1292418/cj-puno-ours-not-yet-full-democracy>
- ⁴ IBON (2015) *Midyear 2015: Aquino's Final Year – Legacy of Elite Economics and Governance*, IBON, Quezon City. p.7.
- ⁵ IBON (2015) *Midyear 2015: Aquino's Final Year*, p.13
- ⁶ Ayala Land: Philippine developer enters Southeast Asia', *Nikkei Asian Review*, 16 October 2015
- ⁷ Iris Gonzales "Andrew Tan buys Madrid skyscraper" *PhilStar Global*, 4 December 2015
- ⁸ IBON (2015) *Midyear 2015: Aquino's Final Year*, p.10.
- ⁹ IBON (2015) *Midyear 2015: Aquino's Final Year*, p.10.
- ¹⁰ IBON (2015) *Midyear 2015: Aquino's Final Year*, p.14
- ¹¹ IBON 'End of the Road and a New Beginning' *Bird talk* 21 January 2016 p.16; Social Weather Stations 'Fourth Quarter 2015 Social Weather Survey: Hunger falls to 11.7% of families; Moderate Hunger 8.9%, Severe Hunger 2.8%' 13 January 2016, <http://www.sws.org.ph/pr20160113.htm> [accessed 1 Feb 2016] ref. charts 1 & 2. The Social Weather Station survey of people on the level of hunger they experience shows that the experience of hunger increased dramatically during the Arroyo presidency and largely remained high throughout the Aquino presidency at an average of 18.3% of households for the period 2010-2015 compared with 10.05% of households for the period 1998-2004.
- ¹² IBON (2015) *Midyear 2015: Aquino's Final Year* p.18; IBON (2015) *Bird Talk: Yearend 2014 – Aquino on Defensive*, IBON, Quezon City. p. 28
- ¹³ According to Migrante International, under the Aquino administration, the number of OFWs leaving the country increased due to chronic joblessness and low wages – from 2,500 daily before Aquino assumed office in 2009, 4,018 in 2010, to 6,092 daily by early 2015 (per Department of Labor and Employment data). <http://migranteinternational.org/2015/07/29/sona2015-number-of-ofws-leaving-daily-rose-from-2500-in-2009-to-6092-in-2015/>
- ¹⁴ IBON (2016) End of the Road and a New Beginning?' *Bird talk: Economic and Political Briefing*, IBON, Quezon City. p.8.
- ¹⁵ International Migration Organization <http://www.iom.int/cms/en/sites/iom/home/news-and-views/pressbriefing-notes/pbn-2013/pbn-listing/philippines-report-tracks-rise-o.html>
- ¹⁶ NCCP (2015) *Policy Paper on Human Trafficking* p.8
- ¹⁷ Charmie Joy Pagulong "Phl among worst places to die – study", *Philippine Star* 10 October 2015.
- ¹⁸ Tarra Quismundo 'Ombudsman: So many in gov't are corrupt' *Philippine Daily Inquirer* 1 February 2016.
- ¹⁹ Transparency International (2016) *Corruption Perceptions index 2015*, Transparency International, Berlin.
- ²⁰ http://www.cenpeg.org/2015/pp&e/DEC2005/Cast_of_Clans=From_Aguinaldo_to_Aquino_dynasties_rule.html
- ²¹ Human Rights Watch (2016) *World Report 2016*, Human Rights Watch, New York, p.457
- ²² Global Witness (2015) *How Many More: 2014's deadly environment*, Global Witness, London.

²³<http://bulatlat.com/main/2016/02/20/sick-sick-sick/>

²⁴ The criteria are based on National Council of Churches in the Philippines (1998) *Towards a Common Vision and Mission*, NCCP, Quezon City.

²⁵ “Create Safe Spaces for Understanding Human Sexuality”, Approved by the NCCP 24th General Convention, November 2015

²⁶ In 2008, a mechanism called the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) was initiated in the UN Human Rights Council. The UPR is a new mechanism under the UNHRC where the fulfillment of obligations to international rights treaties by member states is assessed by their peers. The Philippines underwent the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in May 2012. Around 69 countries quizzed the Philippine government on its human rights record during the UPR session. At least 22 countries expressed concerns on the continuing spate of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and torture in particular and impunity in general. Several countries also called on the Philippine government to dismantle all paramilitary groups and militias. For a copy of the full Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, please visit: <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G08/136/75/PDF/G0813675.pdf?OpenElement>

²⁷ These three calls were adapted from “A Clarion Call To End The Climate Of Impunity”, 23rd NCCP General Convention, November 25, 2011

²⁸ This portion was adapted from Green Vote 2016

²⁹ “Affirming Our Call To Repeal The Mining Act Of 1995”, 23rd NCCP General Convention, November 25, 2011.

³⁰ NCCP Statement on Executive Order 79

³¹ From Automated Election System Watch (AES Watch)

³² Republic Act 9369

³³ <http://www.cenpeg.org/2015/pp&e/SEPT2015/MONEY-AND-PCOS-WILL-CONTROL-THE-2016-ELECTIONS.html>

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ CBCP, Catechism on the Church and Politics, Manila: 1998.

³⁶ CBCP, Catechism on Church and Politics, 1998.

³⁷ Ibid, #7, page 2.

³⁸ Ibid, #5, page 2.

³⁹ CBCP, Renewing the Political Order: Pastoral Guidelines on Choosing Candidates for the 1992 Elections, Manila: Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines.

⁴⁰ CBCP, Catechism on the Church and Politics, Manila: 1998.

TIPS FOR A MEANINGFUL ELECTION:

- ✓ Let us not sell our votes. Reject those who are trying to buy their way into power.
- ✓ Let us form watch groups to safeguard against cheating and to make sure that our votes are counted properly.
- ✓ Be vigilant about the automation of the elections so that it may not lead to wholesale electronic cheating.
- ✓ If rampant cheating and violence ensues in the elections, let us guard the true will of the people by announcing and denouncing the mockery that has happened by taking to the streets and shaking the foundations of traditional politics ruled by Guns, Goons, and Gold.
- ✓ Take note of electoral promises. After the elections, critically monitor the actions of elected officials and hold them accountable to their campaign promises.