



## **YOUR RIGHT TO BE HEARD**

### **A Guide to the Ontario Election – 2011**

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#### **Introduction**

Throughout the gospel stories, Jesus identifies closely with the poor. In the judgment scene from Matthew's gospel (Matthew 25:34-43), Jesus directly connects our salvation to how we have tended to the needs of the poor, the hungry, the naked, the sick, the least among us.

We face that judgment personally and also as a society.

Catholic social teaching continually keeps before us our responsibility, as individuals and as a society, for the common good and for the poor with whom Jesus identified in a preferential way.

Elections, for people of faith, are a matter of conscience. In the period leading up to the election, Christians are called to ...

- learn about the issues,
- weigh how each candidate and each party approaches these issues
- consider the principles of Catholic social teaching
- make an informed decision on Election Day.

#### **Our responsibility as citizens**

It is we, the citizens of Ontario, who choose governments and give them power to shape community.

As we prepare to cast our votes, we ought to pause and consider how fortunate we are. There are still far too many places in the world where democracy is elusive. That fact increases our obligation to take up our democratic responsibilities seriously.

It is inconceivable that people would consciously decide not to vote on Election Day.

#### ***Catechism of the Catholic Church, Section 1915***

As far as possible citizens should take an active part in public life. The manner of this participation may vary from one country or culture to another. *"One must pay tribute to those nations whose systems permit the largest possible number of citizens to take part in public life in a climate of genuine freedom."*

*(Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World 31 #3 Documents of Vatican II)*

#### **Principles to guide you as you prepare to vote**

The Catholic Bishops of Ontario offer the following five main principles upon which to analyze the issues, evaluate public policies and the positions advocated by candidates and their respective parties.

- Governments must support life. The human dignity of every person, from conception to natural death, must be respected.

- Governments must balance the rights, obligations and opportunities of various segments of society by supporting:
  - Publicly-funded education, including Catholic education
  - The right of workers to organize
  - The right to own property, but at the same time recognizing that such a right is not absolute
- Governments must demonstrate a commitment to the creation of a more just society by adopting tangible measures that address and include, among other initiatives:
  - A poverty reduction strategy, inclusive of child poverty
  - Homelessness
  - Unemployment and under-employment
  - Ensuring a basic income that is sufficient for food and housing
  - A health system that supports and accompanies all individuals and especially those with disabilities, the elderly, and the sick
- Governments must demonstrate stewardship toward the environment through policies which:
  - Develop natural resources with consideration of the impact on communities and on the natural environment
  - Promote efficient production of renewable energy
  - Control urban pollution
- Governments must encourage and facilitate the involvement of its citizens (especially those directly affected), other governments and non-governmental bodies, in the process of political decision-making.

## In Conclusion

Voting means using your judgment.

We urge Catholics and all people of good will to make enlightened, well-thought-out judgments on Election Day. Weigh your choices carefully.

Your bishops encourage you to engage in the ongoing dialogue on major social issues as you are guided by the Catholic moral and social principles listed above.

As Pope Benedict XVI reminded us in his 2009 Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*:

“... the primary capital to be safeguarded and valued is man, the human person in his or her integrity. The human person is the source, the focus, and the aim of all economic and social life.” *Caritas in Veritate* (25)

**Our goal as the Catholic Bishops of Ontario is to encourage you to cast your vote for those who provide the best hope of shaping our society as God would have it be.**



The Social Affairs Commission  
 Assembly of Catholic Bishops  
 of Ontario  
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Additional Resources from the Ontario Catholic Bishops  
*Choosing a Government* (1998) and  
*Taking Stock: An Examination of Conscience* (2007) are  
 available on the Ontario Catholic Bishops' website at  
<http://www.acbo.on.ca/englishweb/publications.htm>