
FEDERAL ELECTIONS 2000



Just as I have done at election time these past seven years, I take this opportunity as first pastor of the Church of Edmundston to consider with you the action we are called to carry out on November 27, this year, and to reflect on the critical situations challenging us today. In doing this I rely on the Church's words of wisdom which are given to us in its social teaching.

A GOSPEL AT WORK

God's will is that the Gospel transform not only our private and personal lives but also the whole of public and social life, that is, the mentalities, customs, laws and structures of our milieu. He asks everyone of us to join together in bringing about a kinder and more human world where injustice and violence would no longer threaten men, women, and children, and where the resources of creation would be employed to meet the needs of everyone. Pope Paul VI pointed out that Christian communities must objectively analyse the situation as it exists in their own countries in the light of the unalterable words of the Gospel, and to draw principles, norms, and directives from Church teaching. By applying the Gospel in this way to our times we can better identify and judge our society and contribute to its development.

NUMEROUS REQUESTS

Throughout my thirty-five of ministry, both as director of social ministry and as bishop, I addressed myself with respect and determination – and continue to do so, along with my brother priests and bishops, lay people and religious – to those in charge of our civil society, and asked pointed questions concerning respect for all human life, the human cost of intolerable unemployment, the ethical challenges of the economic crisis, the situation of the dispossessed: children and women, native people and immigrants, respect for human resources, social housing, the accumulation of monetary reserves on the back of the unemployed poor, environmental questions, the quality of democracy, changes to Employment Insurance, openness to scrutiny in the granting of loans and projects, respect for constitutional guidelines, etc. As the Canadian bishops stressed in their message on a society to rebuild, despite the fact that our times are marked by grave social problems, many Christians find reason to hope. The problems we are faced with did not arise overnight, it is only that today people are becoming more aware of the splintering of society. Each day the media spread a menu before us of every controversy arising over what is happening, but they also report on demands for change. The variety of these demands indicate that we are faced with conflicting values and contrasting views of humankind and the world.

A TIME OF DIALOGUE

Campaign time could at first seem like an ideal time for in-depth dialogue on these conflicting world-visions, but because of its short duration and its immediate objective of imminent victory of one or the other candidate, this objective is easily telescoped and often placed on the 'back burner', so to speak. And this is regrettable, because questions left unanswered or inadequately answered will be raised again in a not-too-distant future. Inspired by the words of Vatican Council II I readily say to the leaders of our time and our country: "Take heart, you leaders of the Canadian people: if through having Christian wisdom you truly know what is a human being,

you can bring today to our nation a great many things needed for the common good: food, instruction, order, and the dignity of free and united citizens. By working together in justice and love, you can create peace, the sovereign good craved by all and the maintenance of which owes so much to the Church. You can make of humankind one global city. May God be with you.”

AT THE HEART OF DAILY ACTIVITY

At a time when we are witnesses to the globalization of human life, it is difficult to point out to one's own members of parliament which are the most immediate needs of our fellow-citizens, so intimately are these needs interwoven with the entire international fabric. But only the MP who is close to his or her electors will contribute to the growth of his or her milieu. The MP's degree of local implication is somewhat a guarantee of commitment to the common good of society. It is a big challenge to an MP to be truly a neighbour to his or her constituents, distances are great and interests countless. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the member of parliament who is concerned with respect for and protection of the essential rights of his fellow-citizens - food, work, housing, transportation, culture, and participation - is a source of hope for the population.

A HUMBLE PRAYER

As I ask all Christian communities to pray for all those involved in the present electoral campaign and for the entire country, I assure my fellow-citizens of my daily prayer for them all. I firmly believe that the women and men involved in the field of politics can engage in a true ministry for the benefit of their sisters and brothers, a ministry of justice, charity, and hope. I pray to Saint Thomas More, patron of politicians, who gave up his life rather than give up his personal convictions, to continue interceding for us. “Lord, make me good, humble and modest, calm and peaceful, charitable and kind, loving and compassionate. May my every action, word and thought be filled with and blessed with the Holy Spirit. Good Lord, grant me a lively faith, boundless hope, and heartfelt charity, a love for you which far surpasses love of myself. Help me to love nothing you do not approve, but to love everything which is directed to you.”

I wish you a good electoral campaign!

+ François Thibodeau

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Bishop of Edmundston

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