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**PURSUING THE COMMON GOOD**  
**Statement of the Philippine Province Jesuits on the May 2022 Elections**

The May 2022 Elections place all Filipinos at a crucial juncture in our nation's history. At this time when much of that contemporary history is being misrepresented, citizens, and especially Christians, are called to strive vigorously to ensure that our choice of leaders serves the common good, particularly the best interests of the most vulnerable in society. The Philippine Province of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) takes up this task knowing that the soundness of that choice is under serious threat from systematic attempts to misinform our people.


Part of the spiritual legacy of St. Ignatius of Loyola, Founder of the Jesuits, is the discipline of discernment, as against straightforward decision-making. He invites people to a deep self-awareness of one's motivations for considering various choices. Ignatian discernment is never between good and evil, where the choice is obvious, but between "good" and "better." This exercise requires critical thinking and an inner freedom to rise above one's feelings. Against the cynicism of many, we must ask, who are the good candidates, and who might be better?

To pursue the common good by promoting wise choices, and to counter efforts that deceive and coerce, we offer the attached "Discernment Guide for Choosing Candidates" prepared by the Society of Jesus Social Apostolate Commission. We humbly recommend it for adaptation in various contexts.

Motivated by their own discernment, individuals and institutions in the Jesuit Philippine Province may express their preferences for candidates for national office, and share their reasons for doing so. Some have already done this. We commend them for their sense of civic duty and desire to live Gospel values in the realm of politics. We trust that such efforts will always be carried out with a commitment to truth, justice, integrity, and respect for those who may disagree, knowing that many young people in our care look to us for guidance and inspiration.

In the face of many grave threats to our democratic and Christian values, particularly the potential return to power of a dictator's son, we must resist the temptation to resign ourselves to what surveys and opinion polls say, or to sit back and wait for the elections to pass. We live in challenging times, but are called to be ministers of hope and joy. Pope Francis has said that Jesuits must "never be robbed of that joy...through discouragement when faced with the great measure of evil in the world and misunderstandings among those who intend to do good."

Discern. Choose. Act. As persons for and with others, let our collective voices for truth and justice be heard.

  
**PRIMITIVO E. VIRAY, JR., S.J.**  
**Provincial**  
25 February 2022

## **Discernment Guide for Choosing Candidates**

Society of Jesus Social Apostolate Commission, 20 January 2022

### **Our Present Situation:**

Recent years have been marked by serious threats to genuine democracy. Strong currents of opinion tolerate repressive approaches that suppress dissent in the name of keeping peace and social stability. Rights and liberties get sacrificed to promote change and economic prosperity, and this is seen as justifiable, even necessary.

Indeed, new challenges collectively confront us when valuing democracy, freedom, and human rights no longer seems self-evident and accepted by all. Threats are not just from tyrants; elected demagogues capitalize on populism and prejudice to systematically constrict liberties, dismantle democratic institutions, silence press freedom, and disregard the rule of law. Misinformation and disinformation run rampant and can systematically undermine elections and democratic institutions.

### **The May 2022 Elections:**

As May 2022 draws nearer, a flood of spectacle from political campaigns and candidates curries voter support. Main issues confronting the nation—pandemic recovery, corruption, persistent poverty, extrajudicial killings, unemployment, territorial integrity, hunger—get drowned out by election gimmicks, slogans, offline and online hype. Voters long used to being passive spectators during elections merely listen to candidates' campaign promises.

But elections are more for and about the people than the political candidates and their campaigns. An election is a hiring process through which those qualified for public office are chosen. Voters do the 'hiring' through ballots they cast. So voters must frame questions for candidates to answer, just like when employers interview job applicants. Important too is that voters learn more about candidates, to evaluate and vote in those suitable for the job and supportive of key issues.

In casting ballots, voters pick leaders and choose a direction for the nation. The governance they get reflects how they vote and how involved they are as citizens after the elections. The electoral process is one thing; but the country's problems will not go away just because public officials worthy of trust get elected. There is ongoing need for citizens actively to engage in the country's political life and to avoid being merely onlookers expecting elected officials to solve all problems.

## **CRITERIA FOR CHOOSING CANDIDATES**

Consider the following criteria when choosing candidates (*Limang Pangangalaga at Isang Pagkiling*): (1) *Pangangalaga ng Buhay*, (2) *Pangangalaga ng Bayan*, (3) *Pangangalaga ng Sangnilikha*, (4) *Pangangalaga ng Katotohanan at Katapatan*, (5) *Pangangalaga sa Demokrasya*, at (6) *Simpleng Pamumuhay at Pagkiling sa Maralita*.

### **1. *Pangangalaga ng Buhay***

A candidate should fight for the sanctity of life and respect the dignity of the person. The candidate should possess a record of respecting, protecting, and promoting the rights of all.

A candidate should know how the pandemic threatens human life in relation to labor, food, health, and security; and how it is sapping people's livelihood, often in very unequal ways.

A candidate has to have a sound economic plan to alleviate poverty and to promote job and food security.<sup>1</sup> His/her actions should offer clarity and leadership that balances controlling virus transmission and restoring economic activities.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. ***Pangangalaga ng Bayan***

A candidate's governance platform should be grounded on social justice and the common good. Needed are knowledge, skills, and expertise in the office being sought. A candidate's capacity should come from personal experiences and aptitudes, not relatives or other patrons.

Only a candidate with integrity can boldly begin systemic changes and see them through to eradicate corruption and to reform public service.<sup>3</sup>

A candidate should protect Philippine territory and conserve natural resources to benefit people now and for generations to come. A candidate should value and embrace all that is good in Filipino culture and identity.

## 3. ***Pangangalaga ng Sangnilikha***

A candidate should protect the integrity of creation and the environment. This means championing radical environment programs that focus on education, conservation, simplicity, and the empowerment of farmers, fisherfolk, and indigenous peoples.<sup>4</sup>

He/she must ensure that the benefits of natural resources are shared equally.<sup>5</sup>

## 4. ***Pangangalaga ng Katotohanan at Katapatan***

A candidate must fight for truth against disinformation and historical revisionism; he/she should value honesty, and not use deceit in campaigning or deliberately sow disinformation.<sup>6</sup>

A candidate has to be honest in both words and actions, a person marked by integrity and open to accountability. He/she must not have been involved in or condoned human rights violations or graft and corruption. Campaign funds should come from clean and legitimate sources.<sup>7</sup>

A candidate's work ethic should embody the dignity of work. It should respect the dignity of the office being sought, promoting pride and a sense of mission in public service. Citizens' trust should be repaid by responsible fulfillment of duties.

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<sup>1</sup> PCP 2 #293.

<sup>2</sup> *Fratelli Tutti* #167.

<sup>3</sup> PCP 2 #304

<sup>4</sup> *Laudato Si'* #48

<sup>5</sup> PCP 2 #297

<sup>6</sup> Such systems are described in *Fratelli Tutti* #45.

<sup>7</sup> Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church #134

## 5. *Pangangalaga sa Demokrasya*

He/she will defend democratic institutions, strengthen checks and balances and promote the rule of law.

A candidate should value human rights and civil liberties, enhancing participatory decision-making by expanding citizen involvement in governance. He/she will be open to working with others for solutions that foster a free and just Philippines.<sup>8</sup>

## 6. *Simpleng Pamumuhay at Pagkiling sa Maralita*

A candidate must recognize that political power emanates from the people and avoid trappings of power by living simply and in solidarity with the status of most Filipinos.

There should be genuine concern for the poor, a concern consistently practiced by both the candidate and his/her family.

### **DISCERNMENT GUIDE**

To aid an informed decision for voting in the May 2022 elections:

#### **STEP 1: *Reflect on and pray about the current situation.***

Consider the current situation of the country and relate it to one's personal situation and feelings. Ask the following guide questions to begin the discernment:

- Are you happy with the current situation? Why or why not?
- What things make you happy or unhappy about the situation of your family, community, and the country?
- How will your choices in the 2022 elections affect you, your community, and nation?

#### **STEP 2: *Name issues that matter (to you, your community, the country) and qualities a candidate needs to address them.***

To chart directions for the nation, voters must examine issues that matter to them and seek leadership qualities that suit a particular public office and are found in the experience a candidate brings to that office.

What changes are needed and what policies should be kept? What programs do candidates advocate? Listen to all sides and perhaps take down notes to keep track of important positions taken by each candidate.

#### **STEP 3: *Know what the candidates claim (their profiles and plans).***

Learn more about the candidates, setting aside political slogans and name recall, as these won't indicate who is most suited for the role. More information about the candidates themselves can

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<sup>8</sup> *Centesimus Annus* #46

come from their campaign websites, social media platforms, political ads, pamphlets, and flyers. Also useful are news reports, press releases they issue, speeches given, their participation in public discussions and debates. Ask all the candidates questions during fora, debates, and other events.

But most of all, realize that candidates try to woo voters' support by their statements. Note how what some candidates say is not consistent with positions they have taken in the past.

#### **STEP 4: *Verify and analyze the candidates' profiles and plans.***

Pay particular attention to candidates' statements, arguments, and responses. Check if their track record is consistent with what they say. Performance is crucial for evaluating how reliable a candidate's stand is on issues.

Watch if a candidate's specific remark, picture, or action are just emotional appeals and recognize manipulative techniques both online and offline. These include name-calling, spreading rumors, evading real issues, making popular yet unrealistic promises. Always look for facts; don't be swayed by catchy statements.

Voters deserve transparent and truthful campaigns and candidates. Ask candidates to release Statement of Assets, Liabilities, and Net Worth (SALN). Look at candidates' campaign finances too. They should make periodic disclosure of contributions and expenses during the campaign period. Where do candidates get the resources used for their campaign? Do they use their own money or rely on the resources of a few people? Or does support come from many people giving small amounts? Campaign finance disclosure is essential for the integrity and credibility of elections. Where candidates get their money during campaign undeniably affects the kind of government managed by those elected.

#### ***Learn how other people view the candidates.***

Speak with people who can offer a credible assessment of candidates. They can help clarify one's view of issues relevant to the campaign. Look for trustworthy people who keep track of political campaigns and candidates. Ask why they support particular candidates and what reliable sources of information they use. Engage in constructive dialogues that identify and correct misinformation and disinformation. Always fact-check information from social media.

Do not base your support of a candidate on what election surveys say. Instead, anchor your decision on issues that matter to you and the country, on qualities in a public servant that best suit a particular office, on the experience they would bring. Election surveys tell who is leading at a particular point during the campaign, but that is useful more for the candidates than for voters. Political campaigns use surveys to get more support and contributions from fence-sitters and those ready to follow the bandwagon.

#### **STEP 5: *Evaluate and select your candidates before God.***

Evaluate the information gathered. Go back to the issues that matter to you. Who among the candidates has views and policies you agree with the most? Who shows more knowledge of the issues as well as ways of moving forward? Who has the leadership qualities and the experience needed for the elective position? Is the candidate's campaign open, honest, and fair? Bring

your evaluation to prayer, narrow down options and make an informed choice that best reflects God's own heart for the nation.

Conclude personal reflection with a prayer, e.g., the CBCP's Prayer for the 2022 National and Local Elections:

*Leader: Let us pray that the forthcoming national and local elections may truly reflect the will of the Lord who guides the destinies of nations.*

*For every petition, let us pray together:*

*Response: Deliver us, Lord.*

*From coercion, intimidation, violence and terrorism ...  
From dishonesty, lies and all distortion of truth...  
From bribery, graft and all conspiracy for fraud...  
From gullibility to the deceptive and blindness of perspective...  
From threats, intimidation and perverse language...*

*Leader: Let us pray together:*

*Response: Hear us, Lord*

*That conscience may always be our ultimate norm ...  
That the common good may always be our highest goal ...  
That human dignity may be respected all the time ...  
That the poor and the weak may always have the priority ...  
That care for creation may never be ignored ...  
That solidarity may guide the path of peace and development ...  
That genuine fear of God and love of neighbor may guide those who seek public office ...*

*Leader: Let us pray.*

*Altogether: Shepherd of souls and Savior of the nations, politics is your gift to us, a call to serve others and grow in holiness. Guide our politics as you guide our lives. May our political engagement for voters and candidates bring glory to your loving name and help us grow in holiness, forever and ever. Amen.*

## **STEP 6: Support your candidate and Vote.**

Take action. There are many ways for you to support your candidates. Talk to peers, friends, family, and others about why you support candidates, and how your opinion was shaped. Share credible information through social media accounts. Take a stand against unfair campaign practices, misinformation, and disinformation. Support your candidates by volunteering and/or donating. You may also do election monitoring and volunteer work through the various election watchdogs helping to ensure a safe, clean, and fair May 2022 elections. On Election Day, vote for the candidates of your choice.