

**Message on Human Rights Day
Of the Catholic Church in Thailand**

Christians and Election



Sunday, 18 November 2007

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To All Christians of Good Will

We all know that in December 2007 Thailand will observe a significant celebration, which is the highest honor for all Thai people, on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the birthday of His Majesty King Bhumiphol Adulayadej of Thailand. On the 23rd day of this same month, Thailand will also hold another general election in the political history of Thai democracy, which is celebrating its 75th anniversary. The Catholic Church in Thailand sees that it is opportune to send a message inviting all Christians to fulfill their duty of political participation, especially in exercising their right as citizens of the country conscious of righteousness, to mutually recover political and social unity once again.

With our political lessons in the past, we have learned that politics in democratic system has been distorted resulted from the blindness of ethics under which there was misuse of power for vested interest. Given this situation, we turn to the Church's teaching and find that *The Church promotes political life of Christians. It is because politics is a significant way to foster knowledge, understanding and practice of political ethics and virtues, and respect of human dignity so that people in society might do justice to one another (DE 28). The Church and Christians must fulfill their duty in bridging politics and faith, and bringing politics to meet the Living God aiming at common good of society.*

The Church sees democracy as the only political system in the present day society with good values. It provides opportunity for the people to take part in politics, be able to exercise their right in electing their representatives into government, as well as monitoring and controlling the administration, taking mutual responsibility and changing the government in peaceful ways when the time is appropriate. However, the intrinsic democracy would only emerge in a state with laws and administration based on the respect of human life, virtues and the ultimate truth (CA 46). The forthcoming election is a

major political activity that Thai Christians have to take part like other Thai citizens, and it is a duty that cannot be failed, in the quest for mutual recovery and common development of a democratic system.

In the Christian tradition, we hold that *the responsibility as a citizen is a virtue of participation in political process. It is a moral commitment. The exercise of voting right to elect members of parliament is a fundamental and essential right of Christians in society.* This exercise of voting right is a sacred duty, because it requires rational judgement, conscience and responsibility to elect good, moral, capable, sacrificing people for the good of all.

Life in democratic system will not be fruitful without linkage with or active participation of all parties. Therefore, the Church calls on all Thai Christians to take up this meaningful opportunity to fulfill their duty as faithful citizens expressing their political responsibility by exercising their voting right to elect members of parliament on 23 December 2007.

Finally, we invite all Christians to pray together to God for His abundant blessing upon this general election to be held successfully without any violence, but with honesty and justice for democratic society of Thailand, so that we may take part in the plan of salvation of the Kingdom of God forever.

Faithfully in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink, starting with a cross symbol and followed by the name 'Banchong Chaiyara' in a cursive script. The signature is written on a light-colored background.

(Bishop Philip Banchong Chaiyara)

Chairperson

Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace

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