



## A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON THE CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY TO VOTE

***“And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”*** (Micah 6: 8). These words, from the prophet Micah, can be applied to all of us who are South African citizens, especially our leaders.

For democracy and progress to work, it is important that all of us prepare ourselves to vote, and for all of us who follow Jesus Christ this vote should be obligatory. Our voting should express our love and concern for our country, especially for the poor, the marginalized, the unemployed and those rejected by our society. Every vote is important and will affect the lives of everyone in our country. Our Christian vote is for Christian values to be upheld and implemented in our society e.g. compassion, justice, love, walking humbly, choosing life; *“I am the way, the truth and the life.”*

To vote responsibly means that we prepare well and get to know what each political party stands for and what is in their manifesto. Do their values and common vision for our country resonate with the values and vision of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Are their policies and practices for the common good of all the people of our country?

Political tolerance needs once again to be stressed, especially here in our province of KwaZulu-Natal. The happenings at Nongoma should alert us to the fact that tolerance is not high on the agenda of some people in our country. Our politicians are called upon to discourage intimidation, violence, disruption of rallies, and they must avoid hate speech and punish their members who indulge in hate speech. Those of us who witnessed the “civil war” here in KwaZulu-Natal in the 80’s and early 90’s know and remember the devastation, suffering and trauma caused by politicians who did not discipline their followers. Violence towards those who differ from us or our party is undemocratic and unChristian.

You are free to vote for the party of your choice and no-one can tell you which party you are to vote for. Voting for a party just because your mother or grandfather voted for it does not give direction to our young democracy. Vote for the party that will include the poorest people of the country on their agenda. Do not vote for a party that serves only your own interests or those of your socio-economic group. *“Act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God”*. Be an informed voter by attending rallies, meetings, listen to the radio, watch informative programs on television and invite the various politicians, across the board, to address your Church

and have lively debates with them. This is one way that we can inform politicians of our Christian values and our vision for the country.

Choosing to be ignorant and voting with prejudice is not an expression of concern for justice. We need to take our Christian responsibility seriously and choose the party that will best serve the needs of all the people in our country especially those who have been neglected and uncared for in our new democracy. Fourteen years into our new democracy and many people have no homes, no electricity, no water, no access to grants, many are illiterate, out of work and the suffering is heartbreaking.

The time for talk is over, we need a democracy that is 'poor people friendly', compassionate towards those living with HIV/AIDS, that will deliver services to rural areas and townships, that will comfort the widow and the orphan and show the loving face of our God to all our people. Our democracy is still young, a teenager, and we all need to work together to produce a mature democracy based on Christian values that will make South Africa a home for all God's children, where we become people of hope, people of peace, people who live in freedom.

Now we need to prepare ourselves for a free, peaceful election. I believe that it was through the power of prayer that we had a relatively peaceful transition in 1994 and avoided a bloodbath. I would ask all God's people to pray every day for a peace-filled time prior to the election day. The prayer for peace of St Francis could be a way for some. Praying this prayer as individuals and as a community can be a powerful way to lead our people to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God.

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Prepared by Bishop Barry Wood, OMI  
Chairperson of Diakonia Council of Churches  
9 February 2009