

## Recommendations:

To organize and encourage all Christians/ Catholics in the country to take part with enthusiasm in the following activities at all levels.

- (1) At Family level - to recite the Holy Rosary daily and to offer constant prayers for an honest leader for the country.
- (2) At Community level - to promote prayer sessions and intercessory prayer groups to seek Divine intervention for the nation.
- (3) At Parish level - to share this message with all the Parishioners under the guidance of all Parish Priests across the country.
- (4) At Deanery level - to organize discussions with the support of unbiased and fitting resource personnel.
- (5) At Diocesan level - to organize awareness programmes to educate the community leaders and associations.
- (6) At Sunday Holy Mass - to include this intention into the Intercessory Prayers in the Sunday Liturgy.



## **Catholic National Commission for Justice Peace and Human Development**

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## **Caritas Sri Lanka- SEDEC** *Social and Economic Development Centre*



Position Paper of the Justice, Peace and Human Development Commission of the CBCSL providing guidelines for the election of the most appropriate candidate for Presidency.

### **Introduction:**

The Chairman of the National Election Commission of Sri Lanka has announced that the Presidential Election will be held on 16<sup>th</sup> November, 2019. Out of the total population of 22 million, 16 million are eligible to cast their vote to elect the 08<sup>th</sup> President of Sri Lanka.

Reading the signs of the times in the light of Christian Social Teachings and recognizing the current political confusion and chaos in governance, the Catholic National Commission for Justice, Peace and Human Development has particularly in view of the impending Presidential Election, considered the contextual situation prevailing at this crucial time. Our recent reflections have focused on various dimensions of the prevalent political culture as well as on a range of social and economic issues faced by the people of this country.

### **National Issues & Commitment:**

We believe that the following issues require urgent attention;

- (1) Introduce an Action Plan to attend to issues related to ethnic and religious conflicts as well as concerns on Missing Persons, Illegal Occupation of Private Lands and Enforced Disappearances.
- (2) Drafting a New Constitution in consultation with all stakeholders in order to ensure devolution of power and to fulfill the aspirations of all communities.
- (3) Commitment to impartially execute Legal Action through immediate judicial processes against all Politicians, State and Private Institutions involved in Bribery and Corruption.
- (4) Establish Special Task Forces with required authority to eradicate Narcotics/ Dangerous Drugs as well as to deal with Underworld Armed Violence and unhealthy Media Culture.
- (5) Development and implementation of viable National Economic Policy in consultation with independent professionals to ensure growth with equity without incurring excessive debt.
- (6) Introduction of Good Governance in all State and Private Institutions with proper monitoring mechanisms and establish Law and Order in the country.
- (7) Establish Independent Judiciary supported by a culture of justice and transparency.
- (8) Implement National Policies to ensure the Rights and Aspirations of the Farming and Fisheries Communities and provide solutions to their burning issues such as lack of marketing facilities, right price for products, protection from natural disasters, excessive debt incurred through micro finance institutions, poverty, climate change and environmental issues and unemployment.
- (9) Uphold the dignity of the communities in the Estate Sector and address their low living standards including access to basic facilities and right to decent wages and employment.
- (10) Mechanism to eliminate fraudulent practices in the migration sector such as Human Trafficking and employment of Children by closely monitoring the activities of agencies involved in such practices.

## **Christian Perspective for Reflection:**

1. "Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can under any circumstance claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being." (CCC2258)

Society ensures social justice when it provides the conditions that allow associations or individuals to obtain what is their due, according to their nature and their vocation. Social justice is linked to the common good and the exercise of authority. (CCC1928)

2. "Authority is exercised legitimately only when it seeks the common good of the group concerned and if it employs morally licit means to attain it. If rulers were to enact unjust laws or take measures contrary to the moral order, such arrangements would not be binding in conscience. In such a case, "authority breaks down completely and results in shameful abuse." (CCC1903)

3. "Using drugs is a sin because it is an act of self-destruction and thus an offense against the life that God has given us out of love. Every form of a person's dependence on legal substances (alcohol, medication, tobacco) and even more so on illegal drugs is an exchange of freedom for slavery; he loses some of his human dignity and freedom and therefore sins against God" YouCat 389

4. Political authorities are obliged to respect the fundamental rights of the human person. They will dispense justice humanely by respecting the rights of everyone, especially of families and the disadvantaged (CCC 2237)

5. St. John Chrysostom vigorously recalls this: "Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs."

6. "The trade in human persons constitutes a shocking offense against human dignity and a grave violation of fundamental human rights... Such situations are an affront to fundamental values which are shared by all cultures and peoples, values rooted in the very nature of the human person. The alarming increase in the trade in human beings is one of the pressing political, social, and economic problems associated with the process of globalization; it presents a serious threat to the security of individual nations and a question of international justice which cannot be deferred." Pope John Paul II, May 15, 2002 in a letter on the Occasion of the "Twenty-First Century Slavery - The Human Rights Dimension to Trafficking in Human Beings

7. 'The right to the exercise of freedom, especially in moral and religious matters, is an inalienable requirement of the dignity of the human person' (CCC 1738 pg. 332)

8. The establishment of justice depends upon the will of the poorer nations to develop. Without this will they will become the victims of international economic forces. They must, therefore, take their future into their own hands, and they have a right to participate in their own economic, political and social progress. There are some towards whom action for justice must be especially directed, migrants, for example, farm workers, refugees, those denied religious liberty and other civil rights. (Justice in the World – Para. 13-28)

9. It is impossible to conceive true progress without recognizing the necessity – within the political system chosen- of a development composed both of economic growth and participation. Participation constitutes a right which is to be applied both in the economic and the social and political field. (Justice in the World – Para. 18)

10. Our action is to be directed above all at those men and nations which because of various forms of oppression and because of our present character of our society are silent, indeed voiceless, victims of injustice. (Justice in the World – Para. 20)

## **Conclusion:**

This Position Paper prepared by Caritas Sri Lanka – SEDEC, the social arm of the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka is to enlighten mainly the general public and especially the Christian/ Catholic faithful, based on the Church teachings on the vital importance and obligation as the citizens of the country to use the universal franchise and to guide them on their selection of the candidate to vote.

We believe that the ongoing political turmoil has led to a very grave situation from which our motherland needs to be extricated forthwith

1. that the people of this country must be empowered to demand an immediate change from this seemingly endless chain of crisis upon crisis
2. that a strong, sustainable people's movement is needed which will bring together citizens from all walks of life regardless of ethnic and religious identity or political affiliation
3. that faith-based communities have a special role to play in such an enterprise
4. that the Church can give valuable and fearless leadership to this endeavor by:
  - a) creating a renewed awareness among the people, especially the youth, about the power of the ballot as a means to bring about peaceful, democratic and meaningful change
  - b) educating voters on the present electoral laws and voting systems
  - c) conscientizing voters to ensure that they elect exemplary men and women of unblemished character as their future leaders, and particularly highlighting the attributes to be expected of a Presidential candidate – namely, political maturity, thirst for justice and peace, commitment to good governance, respect for human rights and equality, concern for the poor and the downtrodden, determination to foster the people's wellbeing over and above protecting party interests
  - d) enabling voters to maintain constant vigilance and prevail on the elected leaders to implement the actions spelt out in their election manifestos
  - e) striving to put in place suitable mechanisms to monitor compliance, accountability and transparency on the part of those in power

It is expected that Christian/ Catholic hierarchy will lead and guide the Christians/ Catholics in the entire country to abide by these guidelines and disseminate this message to all the faithful in order to vote for the appropriate Candidate who will usher an era of peace and harmony amongst all citizens of Sri Lanka who are followers of the four major religions practiced in the world.

All Presidential Candidates are encouraged to respond to this call by the Christian/ Catholic brethren endorsed by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka. In preparing this guide Caritas Sri Lanka – SEDEC is guided by the words of His Holiness Pope Francis, "the caress of the Church to its people, the caress of the Mother Church to her children, her tenderness and closeness".

The Church expects to know clearly the stand of all the Presidential Candidates on the burning national issues, how they would be addressed, the timeline and proposed financing of each issue. Based on the precise commitments by the Candidates, the Church will invite all Christians/ Catholics and guide them on selecting and voting the appropriate Presidential Candidate.