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Whakapuaki Pōti 2023

Nā ngā Pīhopa Katorika o Aotearoa New Zealand

2023 Election Statement

Catholic Bishops of Aotearoa New Zealand

The election gives us all a voice and a responsibility

He hōnore he kōroria ki te Atua, he maungarongo ki te whenua, he whakaaro pai ki ngā tāngata kātoa. Tihei mauri ora! Honour and glory to God, peace upon the land, and goodwill to all people.

Ki a tātou, ngā mokopuna o te Atua, ngā ākonga o te Ariki, to all the children of God, followers of Christ. Tēnā ano tātou kātoa kei Aotearoa. He mihi tautoko tēnei. Greetings to all the people of this land.

The 2023 general election is a time to reflect on our nation and our hopes for its people. In this pre-election statement, we are writing our reflections, for those who are standing for political office, and to all voters who are invited to reflect and make their voices heard as we go as a nation to the polls.

As bishops we have reflected together in the light of the Gospels and Catholic Social Teaching on the issues affecting our country. We have discussed the rising levels of poverty and mental health, the lack of housing in our various dioceses, and the storm events

that have beset our islands as global climate change impacts on us and so many in our world. We lamented the growing indifference to the sanctity of life. We affirmed our commitment for Te Tiriti o Waitangi as offering us a pathway of unity for our nation. And we talked about the rapidly growing toxicity in our communities that is dividing us and that generates anger, hate and even violence. These are but some of the many issues we face.

At the same time, we are concerned with the growing trivialisation of politics, with the focus of politicians and media being on mistakes, misdemeanours or scandals of individual parliamentarians instead of being on the scandals of poverty, mental health, and the diminishment of the sanctity and dignity of life. We are concerned that so many of the issues affecting all of us are treated as political footballs. Successive election-season promises and the changing of policies in line with the agenda of each new government are not working. More and more people in our land are



becoming disillusioned and feel disenfranchised. Our hope is that the politicians who will form the Government that voters elect on 14 October will focus on the issues that beset us as a nation and work together across party lines to make real progress in finding genuine, lasting solutions.

As we approach the election, we, with many of you, are asking, "Who will I vote for?"

As Christians we believe in the right relationship, the whanaungatanga, that is found in Jesus' commands to *love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and your neighbour as yourself* (cf. Matthew 22:37-39). These commands unfold throughout the Gospels and Catholic Social Teaching and point us to a care and concern for our neighbours, especially the poor and vulnerable. We are reminded to have a love of the creation to which we belong and which is God's great taonga entrusted to us for the well-being of all people. We remember that as life in all its stages is sacred and every life is sacred, so too we must love our foes and pray for those who persecute us, a teaching that reminds us that charity must be extended to those whose views are different from our own. So many of our nation's issues are a fruit of not being in that right relationship.

With the ballot papers, we are being asked to have our say in the future leadership of our country. We recognise it can be difficult to find a party or candidates which subscribe to all we do as the followers of Christ. In considering who you will vote for, we ask you to be informed and to look seriously at the policies of each party and the position of each individual candidate in your electorate in light of the various issues that are important to us all. At times we cannot find parties or candidates who subscribe to all we believe. When this happens, we make choices, informed by our conscience guided by the Gospel and Catholic Social Teaching, for the party or candidate which will bring forth the most common good,



especially for the poor and vulnerable, and at the same time whose policies will bring forth the least moral harm.

This election campaign reminds us as a nation that we all have a voice and a responsibility. May that voice and responsibility be guided by Christ who calls all people to unity, justice and peace, and the fullness of life.

We end as we began: He hōnore he kōroria ki te Atua, he maungarongo ki te whenua, he whakaaro pai ki ngā tāngata kātoa. Honour and glory to God, peace upon the land, and goodwill to all people.

- ✘ Stephen Lowe, Bishop of Auckland, Apostolic Administrator of Hamilton and NZCBC President
- ✘ Paul Martin SM, Archbishop of Wellington and NZCBC General Secretary.
- ✘ Michael Dooley, Bishop of Dunedin and NZCBC Vice-President
- ✘ Michael Gielen, Bishop of Christchurch
- ✘ John Adams, Bishop of Palmerston North (from 30 September)

**Promoted by Bishop Stephen Lowe
President, NZ Catholic Bishops Conference
30 New St, St Mary's Bay, Auckland 1011.**

Bishops' Prayer for Election 2023

God of Nations
bless our nation as we approach our election
in these uncertain times.

As we discern our choices,
guide us with your Spirit.
Grant us humble Parliamentarians of integrity
who seek to serve for the common good.

E Ihowa Atua
Unite our nation in the desire to protect
the sanctity and dignity of every human life in
all its stages.

Help us recognise our families as a treasure
and enable us to support those families that struggle
Make us mindful of those in need in our communities
and ready to work together for a just community.
May we always delight in the beauty of your creation
and ensure this beauty is enshrined for our children's
children.

We make our prayer through Christ our Lord.
Amen.