



# DNC *Times*

MAR-APR-MAY | 2024 | Vol III

Sacred  
Voices,  
Transforming  
Choices:



**A CALL FOR  
POLITICAL INTERVENTION  
IN THE LIGHT OF FAITH**



### **Disclaimer**

The views and opinions expressed here are those of the writers/authors and do not reflect the thoughts of the editorial board.

# Editor's Desk

The General election is fast approaching, and our nation is set to choose a new government. As the election vibe sets in, as always, development will be in every politician's talk. Every contesting candidate will be shamelessly bragging about their achievements and promises. Certainly, the incumbent government will proclaim all the developments it claims to have brought about. Promises, often empty ones, will be proclaimed from the rooftop to woo voters. No political parties are in exception to this.

But in the coming election, more than ever, before casting their vote, every voter must understand the kind of development our nation needs. Today, the rich are growing richer, and the poor are becoming poorer. People are left homeless due to the "bulldozer" policy. Tribal land is forcefully acquired and exploited in the name of development. Farmers are being forced to sit in protest for their rights. These are discriminatory economic developments designed only for the interests of the dominant section of society. We have also seen other developments taking place that are indicative of a backsliding democracy in our country. In many instances, some elements denigrate human dignity, curtail human freedom, and deprive human rights. Dissenting voices are being harassed and silenced, women are being paraded naked, and wearing religious dress in public is seen as "unsecular". Despite the popular slogan of the ruling government 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas' which claims to ensure the development of all, we have seen unprecedented incidences of violence against minority religious groups. So, are we really developing? These are not the signs of development, rather infringements on the development of society.

Therefore, voters need to be aware of all these and carefully consider the situation before making their choice, lest they fall prey to this sort of development.

Development is not merely economic growth but that which concerns the integral growth of human society. The Church Encyclical, *Popolorum Progressio* No. 14, speaks of an authentic development. It states, "The development we speak of cannot be restricted to economic growth alone. To be authentic, it must be well rounded; it must foster the development of each human being and of the whole human being." This development is inclusive, and it concerns the integral growth of every person in society. It is all about creating space for expression for every individual, valuing diversity, recognizing the uniqueness of each person and culture, providing equal opportunities for everyone, and respecting one's beliefs and gender. This authentic development stems from respecting every person's human dignity and the principle of common good.

The Constitution of India, in its Preamble, assures every citizen Justice, Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. In other words, it guarantees its citizens an authentic development. Therefore, all citizens have a right to such development and this is the kind of development our nation needs. But today, this seems to be a far-fetched idea. Our constitutional rights and democratic values are being gradually eroded through majoritarianism politics. Nevertheless, as the saying goes, "Better late than never," we urgently need, in every way we can, to do away with all the unsecular and undemocratic elements that are operating in our country. As responsible citizens, it is our duty to resist these elements



*“Whatever choice you make makes you.  
Choose wisely.”*

*- Roy Bennet*

and to safeguard our constitutional rights and democratic values because only as long as we have these rights and values with us, we have the power to make the authentic development a reality in our society.

The Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici* (42) teaches, “The lay faithful are never to relinquish their participation in ‘public life’, that is, in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas, which are intended to promote organically and institutionally the common good.” Thus, our Christian lay faithful have an additional duty to ensure the common good of every individual in society. This is possible through a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good, that is, to the good of all and of each individual because we are all really responsible for everyone else (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*). The faithful are responsible for safeguarding the rights and values that ensure the common good of everyone. This

can be achieved through active participation in the decision-making process. Therefore, the Church urges her faithful to take active part in this process by exercising their rights. Election is about making choices that concerns the well-being of all. What we choose will determine the kind of society, we will have to live in. Thus, we must make an informed decision and choose what guarantees the common good which ensures authentic development. We have the responsibility to conscientize people to bring about a just, developed and inclusive society. It is also our duty to mobilize individuals to prudently exercise their rights to vote. Therefore, as we make our choice, let authentic development be the deciding principle. As Roy Bennet says, “Whatever choice you make makes you. Choose wisely,” we need to choose wisely because the choice we make is crucial to the kind of nation we want India to be. The choice is ours.



SCH. DANIELSON C. SYIEMLIEH SJ  
EDITOR, DNC TIMES



# CONTENTS

Political Intervention in the Light of Faith - <i>Dr. Frazer Mascarenhas SJ</i>	6
Power of Sacred Voices in Politics for Socio-Political and Economic Change and Justice in India - <i>Fr. Rajeev Ranjan SJ</i>	9
Divine Call - <i>Sch. Abhishek Toppo SJ</i>	11
Voting for a Change: A Call for Every Responsible Indian - <i>Mr. Paul Fernandez Nongrum</i>	12
Who Would Jesus Vote For? - <i>Sch. Brennan Baptista SJ</i>	15
Search for Truth in a Post-Truth Era: The Challenge of General Elections - <i>Bro. Fernandes Senbern Fenvito OFM CAP</i>	17
Voting for a Lesser Evil Ideology - <i>Sch. Elson Lobo SJ</i>	19
The Impact of Each Vote: A Catalyst for Change - <i>Sch. Anthony Pavingaolou SJ</i>	21
Casting a Vision: Faith in Politics - <i>Sch. Kuldeep Topno SJ</i>	23
Faith Traditions Amidst Political Storm - <i>Br. Agassi Tariang MCBS</i>	24
General Elections – A Kairos Moment - <i>Sch. Ivin Tomy SJ</i>	26
Christian Faith: A Challenge Within Our Indian Politics - <i>Sr. Monica Thangbiakmawii, MSMHC</i>	28
Harmony Unveiled: The Unifying Power of Collective Voices - <i>Sch. Shreyash SJ</i>	30
“Political Intervention in the Light of Faith” - Can We do this? - <i>Sch. Chris Patric Pio SJ</i>	32

## EDITORIAL BOARD

*Daniel SJ, Vysakh SJ, Stephen SJ,  
Princen SJ, Marconi SJ, Pawan L SJ,  
Anoop K SJ, Sawan R SJ, Steven J. SJ,  
Alex G SJ, Agil R. SJ & Gabriel MCBS*

**Fr. Francis Pudhicherry, S.J.,**  
*The Rector*  
**Fr. Dolichan Kollareth, S.J.,**  
*The Animator*



# Political Intervention in the Light of Faith

“We should not expect everything from those who govern us, for that would be childish” – strong words from Pope Francis in Fratelli Tutti. “*We have the space we need for co-responsibility in creating ... new processes and changes*”.

This co-responsibility is the urgent need in India, as the current period can easily be seen as an “**emergency**”. The democratic institutions that guarantee a fair environment for political forces and for civil society, appear compromised. The Media is an obvious example, with the major media houses being bought up by big business houses that support the government and independent journalists being targeted with legal charges that keep them in jail for extended periods. Civil society activists, lawyers, students and professors face terror charges which have very difficult bail provisions and hundreds are presently languishing in jails. The Election Commission appears compromised, with a dissenting Election Commissioner allegedly being forced to resign due to threats against his family. While Parliament seems to hardly function, with there being little debate and mere voice votes for important bills, the Judiciary too seems to be under attack, with former Judges of the Supreme Court and leading lawyers making adverse observations regarding its present functioning.

In such a situation, it is the disadvantaged communities that bear the brunt of questionable government decisions. The Christian, Muslim, Dalit and Tribal communities are clearly in an ever-increasingly disadvantaged position. An example of questionable legislation is the Anti-Conversion laws passed in many States. While the Criminal Justice Code already makes conversion by force and/



or fraud a crime, the new legislation can be easily misused by people who want to target a community. The victims of communal violence are being arrested on charges that ultimately are not proved, while the perpetrators of the violence go scot-free. Non-State actors are able to ensure that the law enforcement authorities turn a blind eye or are actually complicit.

Christian institutions that have for decades proved their bona fides in humanitarian work among the disadvantaged tribal or rural population are being attacked not only by mobs of a particular persuasion but even by national authorities like the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights, as in M.P. and U.P. The lack of basic law enforcement in the country is something that should disturb all communities as it is already degenerating into the law

of the jungle in which everyone becomes a victim. Is this an exaggeration? Consider Manipur, where the Arambai Tenggol were able to arm themselves in May 2023 from Police Armouries for the murder of Kuki tribals in the Imphal Valley. In January 2024 all the Meitei Legislators were called for a meeting and given instructions and the few who objected were assaulted, with one of them needing hospitalization. And last week, they abducted and assaulted a senior Police Officer who had to be rescued and then hospitalized. Pure jungle-raj under a “double-engine” sarkar!

The National Education Policy 2020 is another matter of grave concern, not only to the Christian community which runs hundreds of the best schools and colleges but also to the general population that relies on public education. The NEP2020 has provisions for taking control of all Minority Institutions that are funded by the government although this goes directly against settled constitutional law. And the Judiciary is reluctant to intervene, as in the case of Gujarat, where a law was passed more than 2 years ago regarding government appointments of Principals and Faculty of Minority Schools and the Gujarat High Court has not heard the case for more than 2 years.

The new political narrative that is needed to restore our ‘lost’ constitutional rights, requires only the restoration of the independence of democratic institutions like the Media, the Election Commission, the Judiciary and the Investigative Agencies. And the economic policy of the Government should favour the provision of basic amenities to the majority of the population, especially the most disadvantaged, rather than being obsessed with the GDP and the Trillion Economy goals. In fact, the recent engineered resignation of Prof. James as Director of the International

Institute of Population Sciences, allegedly for bringing out in the NFHS, statistics which are unpalatable to the government regarding the health of the population - especially the levels of child stunting - is a recent example of the government wanting to suppress the harsh facts of today.

As elections approach, political parties must be confronted with these facts about the suspension of democracy and the harsh economic realities of our people and they must pledge to work with civil society to re-construct an equitable society in India. The coming together of disadvantaged groups in common solidarity against present policies, by working in the forthcoming national elections in favour of a government committed to democracy, secularism and economic inclusion, is the most urgent need. The use of social media to disseminate authentic information is another effective means of bringing in a government that cares for all. Using the electoral process effectively, by conscientizing people of the real situation in the country and mobilizing them to full electoral participation by enrolling in the votersqw’ lists and actually casting their vote according to their conscience, should be the priority in the next 2 months. Will Christians consider this political intervention as inspired by God’s Spirit?



**DR. FRAZER MASCARENHAS SJ**  
**FORMER ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATOR**  
**AND PARISH PRIEST**





SCH. ASHISH LAKRA SJ





# Power of Sacred Voices in Politics for Socio-Political and Economic Change and Justice in India

## Introduction

The Indian democratic political system has witnessed different phases of turmoil within its socio-economic and political set-up. After seventy-five years of independence, India remains a land of deep contradictions. Rigid hierarchical social structures and political and cultural hegemony cause instability in Indian society. Social instability enables the ruling class to subjugate the oppressed. The oppressed sections of our nation have been suffering from socio-economic, political, cultural and religious discrimination and atrocities for decades.

Though there have been some interventions for socio-economic and political transformations, these interventions lack the faith and moral compass needed for the transformation of choices. Most of these interventions are for selfish benefits. Therefore, in this context, we need to explore the power of sacred voices and their impact on transformative political choices.

## Power of Sacred Voice

The call to listen to the sacred voices is an invitation to uphold the spiritual and moral values that enhance life. The sacred voices embrace the intrinsic human values and the interconnectedness of all life forms. They emanate the values of social justice, compassion, freedom, equality and fraternity. These values are not endowed to one particular religious tradition but extend to a broader societal and political domain. They inherit a universal acceptance.

Thus, the sacred voices guide human beings in their attempt to bring social and political transformation to human history. All

religious traditions uphold the importance of moral and ethical principles and advocate the preservation of life. However, I would like to illuminate only a few biblical voices that help us in our transforming political choices.

God speaks through Moses in the book of Deuteronomy 30: 19, "I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live." This sacred voice calls us to make a moral decision and choose life so that we may live. It is a moral obligation to preserve life. The right to life is fundamental to individuals. Thus, it enables us to assert ourselves to live freely and object to the violation of this right.

"The Ten Commandments" (Ex. 20: 1-26) which are love for God and love for neighbour, is nothing but a sacred voice given to human beings to build a just and humane society. The purpose of the ten precepts is fundamentally to encourage people to inculcate moral principles in their lives and thus preserve life.

The mission manifesto of Jesus in Luke 4:18-19 says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour," is a guiding light for political intervention for social change and justice.

## Role of Sacred Voices in Political Interventions

Constitutionally, our nation is a secular nation. It is secular in the sense that it does not favour one particular religion.



It means, there is no separation of religion from political life because, in a place like India, which houses diverse cultures, religions and languages, politics cannot realise its aim without religion. In Mahatma Gandhi's opinion, "political education is nothing worth if it is not backed by a sound grounding in religion. A Man without religion is a man without roots. Therefore, religion is the basis on which all life structures have to be erected if life is to be real."

It is the very nature of sacred voices to transform the nature of human beings. This transformation brings a state of happiness and prosperity in all walks of life to all members of society. Every religion exercises a purifying and redemptive effect on human society. J. W. Von Goethe (a German poet) once said that religion alone is favourable to human progress. History bears testimony to the fact that nations have progressed as they held fast to religious and ethical principles or fallen as they abandoned religious and ethical principles. Therefore, the role of sacred voices in political interventions is decisive.

### **Challenges to Sacred Voices**

Despite their crucial role in political intervention, sacred voices can be dogmatized. Blind adherence to the sacred voices may give birth to religious fundamentalism and fanaticism. These can hinder the socio-economic and political development of individuals as well as the nation, leading it back to square one. In the realm of fundamentalism and fanaticism, "people are without the art of living together in peaceful cooperation, which is the political art." They waste their energies in quarrels and nourish hostility towards one another. They become enemies of one another.

Therefore, it demands leaders who listen to the divine voices and interpret them for the common good. An unjust society needs leaders who draw moral and ethical

principles from divine voices to uplift the oppressed and empower the last person in society. They need to gather courage from sacred voices to challenge unjust social structures and socio-economic and political discrimination.

### **Conclusion**

The call for political intervention in the light of faith is an invitation to endorse the sacred values of peace, love, justice, equality, fraternity and freedom. These values are fundamental to enhancing life. Sacred voices play a crucial role in guiding political interventions for socio-economic and political transformation. They offer moral guidance and ethical principles that light the path of not only political choices but also of the individuals who participate in socio-economic and political transformation. They challenge the existing injustice and immoral practices, which are against the common good.

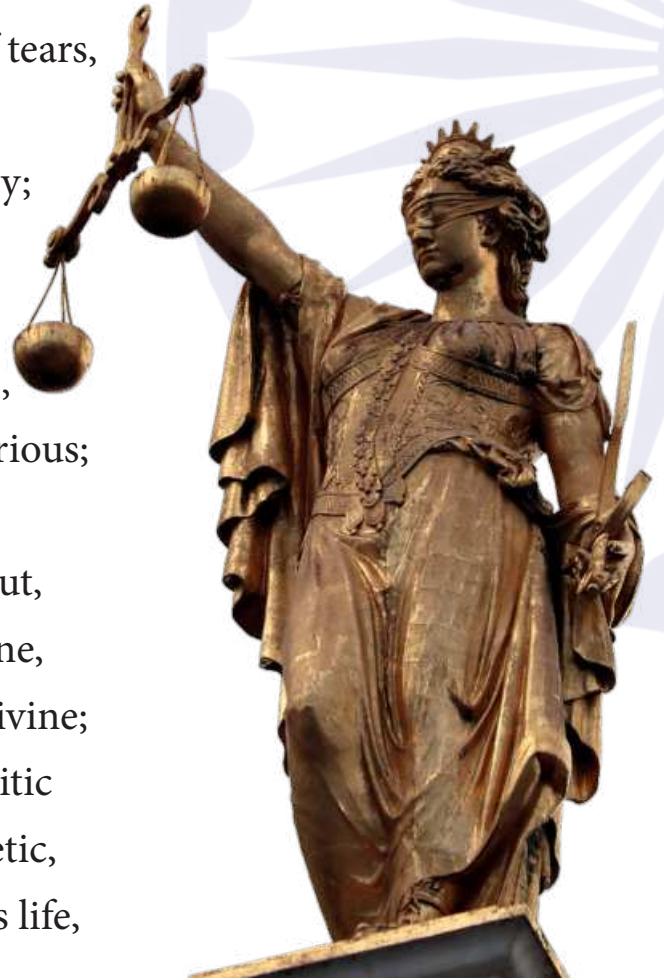
Therefore, as socio-political beings and people of faith, we are called to listen to the sacred voices, make a choice that gives life, act in solidarity with the oppressed and become agents of socio-economic and political change and justice in the political sphere of our nation.



**FR. RAJEEV RANJAN SJ**

# Divine Call

In the midst of darkness of the ages,  
I stand and doubt in many cases;  
Eyes despaired, gazing the hustles though,  
Sessions will pass by, trouncing sorrow;  
I see justice is dead in bloody massacres,  
Wandering without the reason and full of tears,  
Souls haunt in pain and agony,  
But all wish their own gain and victory;  
Will, mind and intuition be crown,  
To save the problems around,  
Stranded in the abyss of sacred ideas,  
Let them shine and always remain mysterious;  
Be the fire that no one can put out,  
Abound with voices that all may call out,  
Ablaze with intellect that musters serene,  
Let this spiring furnish in the heads of Divine;  
The thoughts you relish are mere sybaritic  
Hence, seek the heart that's perfect ascetic,  
Warmth of the soul, eyes sparkle towards life,  
It's My call: you must strive;



The world is full of nasty, though,  
But called to flourish tomorrow,  
O! long for the depths of serenity,  
And be worshiped as among many deities.



SCH. ABHISHEK TOPPO SJ

# Voting for a Change: A Call for Every Responsible Indian

India is the largest democratic nation in the world. Its democratic values and aspects are admired and respected by other nations around the world. It is also a country with rich resources, in particular its human resources, which have contributed a lot to its economic growth as well as growth in many different fields. India's contribution to the world in many fields is unquestionable and acknowledged by other countries.

The Preamble of the Constitution of India has declared India to be a sovereign, socialist, secular and democratic republic. Its objective is to make India a nation where justice, liberty and equality is enjoyed by all its citizens. Its purpose is also to promote fraternity and to maintain the unity and integrity of the nation.

The Catholic Church and its faithful, in following the teaching of Jesus Christ, "I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these brothers of mine, you did it to me!" (Matthew 25:40) has been doing so in serving the people of the world and India, irrespective of their faith, race and community. In short, it served

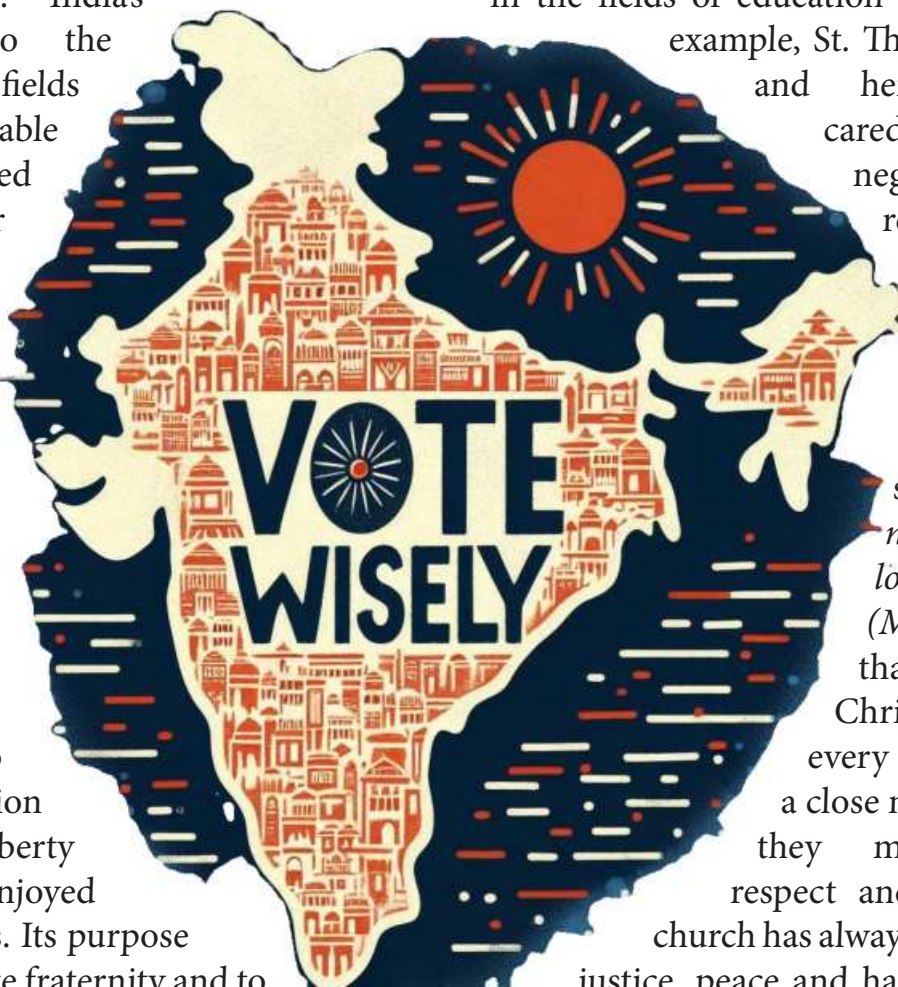
everyone who needed help, as they believed that they served their Lord Jesus Christ when they served the needy. Similarly, Swami Vivekananda said, "Service to man is service to God." In India, the Church and its faithful have contributed a lot to nation-building through many fields, especially in the fields of education and charity. For

example, St. Theresa of Kolkata and her missionaries cared for the poor, the neglected and the rejected. If one is to summarize the teaching of Christ in one word is 'Love'.

Jesus Christ said, "Love your neighbour as you love yourself" (Mark 12:31), and that is how every

Christian looks at every human being as a close neighbour whom they must love, respect and care for. The

church has always stood for social justice, peace and harmony, or it has always upheld and exercised what is written in the Preamble of the Constitution. What is more important is that it has and will always stand for human rights, dignity, equality, and the upliftment of the downtrodden. It is very unfortunate and disheartening that the church and its members, who have always served the nation, are being victimized by many groups and political parties for their political gain.



*“Voters must realize that their voting right and voting decision is sacred, and it is their privilege, which they must hold dearly.”*

Every group, community and minority want a government that looks into their welfare, but it should not be at the cost of others' welfare. Everyone wants a government that preserves peace and harmony and upholds the constitutional values. The architects of our Constitution have diligently incorporated ideals that make India a nation where peace reigns, secularism is observed, and above all, freedom is held to and respected.

Many politicians and political parties have divided the people based on creed, caste, and community for their political gain. The use of threats, fancy but false promises, and money power to lure voters is a great threat to the core and foundation of democracy. Therefore, the upcoming general election should be an eye-opener for every Indian voter. They have to be wise and conscious of the fact that they need to rise above all differences to choose or elect their representatives who can really build up India. The voters are going to decide the fate and glory not only of the country but of humanity. It calls for and demands an examination of one's own conscience. The voters need to introspect and retrospect on what the past and present government have done, not only in terms of development but, most importantly, in terms of uplifting human rights, dignity and equality. It is unwise to blame the representatives for the corruption and disruption of peace and harmony if the voters themselves continue to elect the same representatives who did nothing for the common good.

Voters must realize that their voting right and voting decision is sacred, and it is

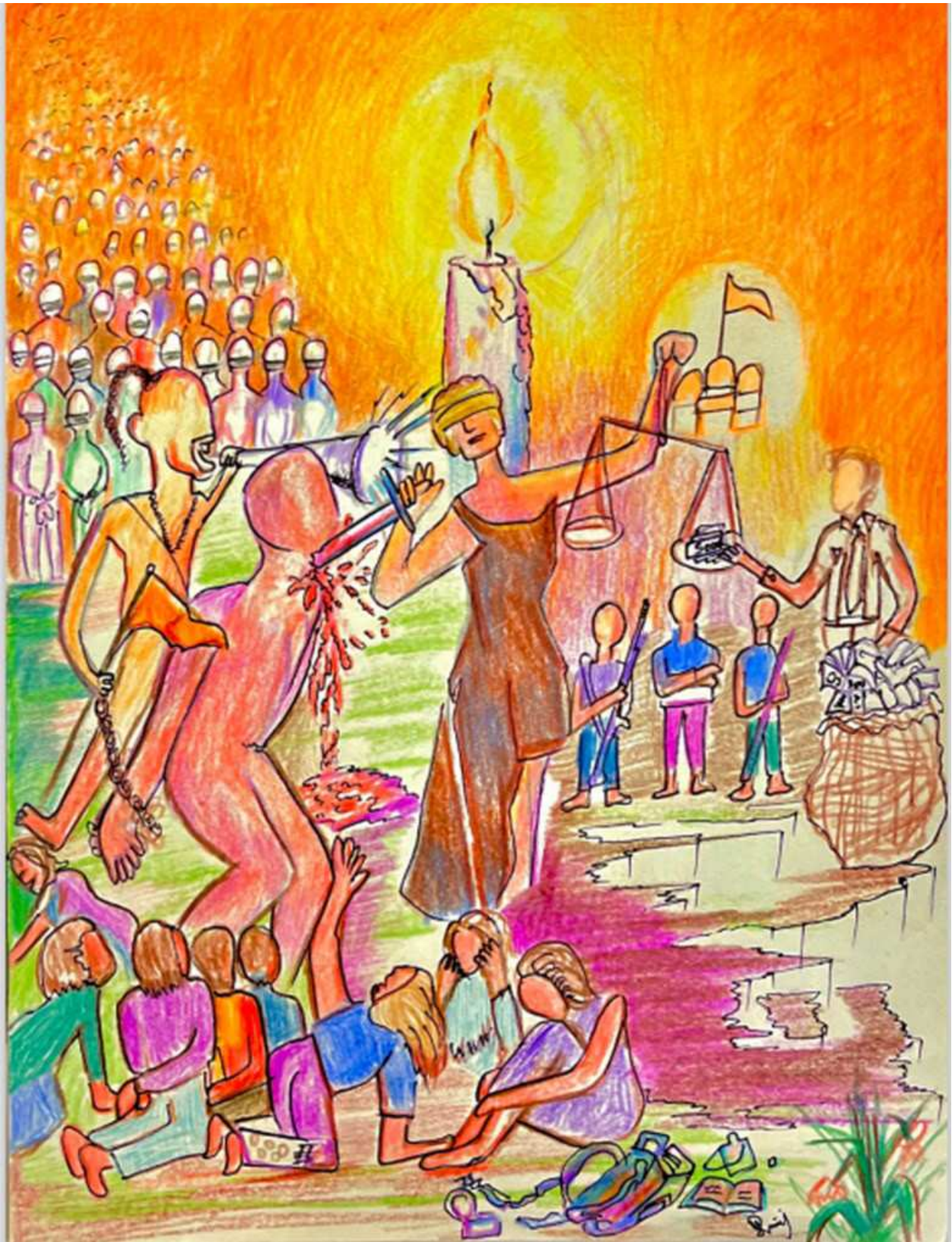
their privilege, which they must hold dearly. They must realise that their rights in return call for their duties towards their fellow countrymen. As every good and bad deed has its own reward, similarly, a conscious and responsible citizen will carefully consider what is good for his or her own neighbour because that is what they will get in return.

Therefore, this upcoming general election should be an election which will change India into a better India. Voters should not only cast their vote for the representatives or political parties but should do so for a change where corruption, division and disruption of peace and development end. Then only India will be a nation, as prayed and dreamt by Rabindranath Tagore in his poem, *Where the Mind is Without Fear: 'Into that heaven of Freedom my Father, let my country awake'*. May God bless our country and its citizens. Jai Hind.



**MR. PAUL FERNANDEZ NONGRUM**  
ASSISTANT TEACHER,  
ST. THOMAS HR. SEC. SCHOOL,  
MEGHALAYA





SCH. NITESH ROHIT MINJ SJ



# Who Would Jesus Vote For?

A couple of years ago, I saw a T-shirt on the internet, with the letters WWJD on it. It stands for “What would Jesus do?” I learnt that you can get bracelets, wrist bands, and stationary with this logo, particularly in the US. The idea of this kind of logo is that when you are angry or confused or wondering what to do, one needs to just stop for a moment and think: “What would Jesus do?” It’s a nice idea. So, in the current scenario, with national elections coming up in a few months; I pause and think WWJD. Therefore, I altered the question according to this present scenario, and I asked, “Who would Jesus vote for?”

Well, firstly, hidden in that question is a presupposition, an assumption that Jesus would vote. So first, let’s discuss if Jesus would Vote or not in today’s context. From the Gospels, we know that Jesus was a revolutionary. He surprised and shocked many people. He turned many traditions upside-down. So, would Jesus make a bold political statement by abstaining from voting, saying that all the candidates and parties are corrupt? There are some who do this. And there are many more who abstain from voting simply because they don’t care. But what this leads to is more corruption. About an hour before closing the voting booth, fake voters pose as those who haven’t voted and vote for the candidate and party that has paid them. Therefore, this can be rather counterproductive. Further, in the Gospels, we see that Jesus fulfilled his civic duties. He didn’t oppose paying taxes by saying, “Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God.” (Mk 12:17.) Besides, voting is an important civic duty; hence, I conclude that Jesus would most certainly vote.

Now we come to the big question: *Who*

*would Jesus vote for?* This is a really tough one, but let’s face it: there are no saints in the political arena. The last time I checked, the Virgin Mary wasn’t standing for elections! Thus, voting today is sadly reduced to what moral theologians would call ‘selecting the lesser evil.’ So how would Jesus go about doing that? Naturally, Jesus, being the Son of God, would always promote ‘Truth and Justice’ which brings me to the next critical question: *Is it better to vote for the Candidate or the Party?* That is, in case there is a better candidate from a worse party versus a worse candidate from a better party, who would you vote for? And more importantly, who would Jesus vote for?

Let’s see what we can find in the Scriptures. In Acts 1:6-7, we hear the disciples asking Jesus after the resurrection, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” Jesus replied to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.” After witnessing all that Jesus did and taught, the disciples were still thinking about a petty thing like gaining political control over the land of Israel from the Romans. But Jesus knew better. Jesus had in mind the larger picture. Jesus saw the whole of human history, in all its entirety. In the same way, when we vote looking only at the candidate, we fall in the same trap that the disciples fell. We look shortsightedly at the petty immediate goals and forget the larger picture. The fact is that even the best candidate can only do little like helping his own constituency. But, in the larger picture, it is the party that makes all the difference. Because ideology, policies and agenda are all decided by the party high command and not the little MPs. So, it is crystal clear to me that Jesus would vote based on the party and

not the candidate.





However, the question still remains: *Which party would Jesus vote for?* What options do we have? On one hand, we have a party that has ruled our country for some 60 odd years. It seems riddled in corruption with no great vision, and nothing really attractive about it. And on the other, we have a party with seemingly strong leadership, a somewhat clear vision and agenda, the will and muscle to do whatever it takes to achieve their goal. But their agenda seems to be one-sided: one nation, one religion, non-inclusive. They form a nexus with two top industrialists. The industrialists rise to the 2nd and 3rd richest in the world. While the global hunger index rank of the country plummets lower. The rich get richer and the poor get poorer. And dissent is not tolerated. As I said earlier, Jesus would always look at the larger picture. History has shown us that a regime with a clear focus but destructive ideology actually does more harm than one that is lax and corrupt. This was seen in the II world war with the atrocities of Hitler. Thus, at the end of the day, we can conclude that Jesus would vote for the lesser evil, the lazy party that at least doesn't rule with its autocratic specious non-inclusive ideology.

But I wonder, would it just end there? Or wouldn't Jesus take up the cross of peaceful protest and public awareness drives? He would challenge the establishment peacefully but powerfully with the weapon of truth, only to be arrested and crucified once again. But as he did 2000 years ago, Jesus will rise again.



SCH. BRENNAN BAPTISTA SJ





# Search for Truth in a Post-Truth Era: The Challenge of General Elections

General elections are at hand, and our social media feeds are already being flooded with information. The information we have received or are going to receive will have a huge impact on our response to the General Election. How much of the information we consume is authentic? How much can be verified? Thus begins our journey in search of truth! But wait a minute, in our present world, “Truth” is becoming an increasingly ambiguous term. It is becoming very difficult, day by day, to arrive at the truth. Truth is endangered in today’s political arena. The notion of truth has now been thrown into question.

The concept of truth could vary from person to person. Truth is usually held in contrast to falsity. For centuries, there has been a conflict between what is right and what is wrong. Many conservatives still believe that truth is absolute reality and that there is no falsity involved. However, others tend to disagree, especially those who believe that truth is relative – it is an individual’s perception of beliefs and decisions. In 2016, the Oxford dictionary named post-truth ‘the word of the year.’ It defines post-truth as ‘relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotions and personal beliefs. In simple words, it is a political culture in which debate is based on emotions rather than facts. Nowhere is this phenomenon more evident than in the context of general elections, where competing narratives and agendas vie for public attention and support.

The pursuit of truth in the midst of a post-truth era poses a terrifying challenge, particularly within the realm of electoral

politics. We are going to get more and more information, but the question is its reliability. Candidates and parties are going to craft information, messages and will manipulate information. Facts will be diluted or even changed, or perhaps even new facts may be “created” which are far from reality just to attract a vote bank. The ordinary citizen will have to distinguish facts from fiction, which will become a daunting task for citizens seeking to make informed decisions.

At the heart of the issue lies the question of epistemology: how do we know what is true? Today, information is spreading rapidly with just a click of a mouse. With the emergence of social media and the internet, information can reach millions within a fraction of a second. The traditional gatekeepers of truth, such as reputable news organisations and academic institutions, face increasing scrutiny and skepticism. As a result, individuals are left to navigate a sea of competing narratives, often relying on personal intuition and confirmation bias to discern truth from falsehood.

Moreover, the rise of populism and demagoguery in contemporary politics has further complicated the search for truth. Political leaders are appealing to emotion and identity rather than reasoned argumentation, often gaining traction by exploiting societal fears and prejudices. In such a climate, the appeal to truth becomes not merely a matter of objective fact but a moral imperative essential to preserving the integrity of democratic discourse.

In the context of general elections, the challenge of searching for truth is aggravated by the inherent biases and limitations of the electoral process itself. Political



# SEARCH FOR TRUTH



campaigns, with their focus on persuasion and mobilisation, are inherently designed to shape public opinion rather than facilitate genuine dialogue and understanding. Moreover, the growth of fake news and disinformation campaigns has intensified public distrust in institutions and increased social divisions. In response to these challenges, it is crucial that individuals cultivate a critical mindset and a willingness to engage with diverse perspectives. Rather than passively consuming information, citizens must actively seek out reliable sources, verify claims, and interrogate their own assumptions and biases. Additionally, fostering a culture of transparency and accountability within the political sphere is essential to restoring public trust and integrity in the electoral process.

Some ways to fight the post-truth era are: Checking the authenticity of the claim, see who is giving the piece of information, whether trustworthy or not. We need to self-interrogate. Are we convinced by scientific logic, religious biases, cultural prejudices, ideological perspectives, or political motivations? A comparison of the received information with different sources is important before arriving at any conclusion. Learning to analyse news is

crucial to know what fake news is and how to combat it. Quality journalism should be encouraged to counter fake news and biased information. Establishing a correct policy is a necessary mechanism to ensure that social networks cannot allow fake news and untruths to spread on their networks. They are to know that they have the responsibility to tell people the truth.

Ultimately, the search for truth in a post-truth era requires a collective commitment to upholding the principles of reason, evidence, and ethical conduct. While the task may seem difficult, particularly in the context of general elections, it is only by embracing the challenge that we can hope to safeguard the foundations of democracy and ensure a more just and equitable society for future generations.



BRO. FERNANDES SENBERN FENVITO OFM CAP



# Voting for a Lesser Evil Ideology

Let us envision a scenario where a diabetic patient, armed with a sweet tooth, stands in front of a table of desserts. On one hand, there's a luscious chocolate cake, tempting and decadent. On the other, a seemingly innocent apple pie, laden with the natural sweetness of apples. What he or she should choose depends on which treatment does less harm to one's health. Nevertheless, the diabetic patient in the above scenario still has a better choice, as he can step away from the situation and opt for something healthy, albeit painfully. However, the situation for voters is not as simple, as they have fewer options. One cannot even vote for an amazingly impeccable ideological party if it divides the votes and is bound to ensure victory for the worst ideological party. In the year 2024, a whopping 40 countries, including the US, UK, Russia, and Ukraine, will undergo the electoral process. Election time is an interesting phase to observe the gimmicks of political parties. Some have crystal clear ideologies in their manifestos, while others operate covertly. However, each party has its own ideological background on which it is established. When I allude to ideology, I must clarify that it is not confined to extreme ideas like Nazism, Hindutva, etc., but a particular set of ideas and beliefs, especially those on which a political system, party, or organization is founded or towards which one is manoeuvring.

Our task as political participants or responsible citizens is to support or challenge any winning party and critique ideologies that go against the very fabric of our Constitution. Somehow, voting seems to mean supporting or rooting for the party. One can't say that their job is over after simply voting for their party, but one necessarily has to back the party. But how can one



be sure of the fidelity of the party to its ideology lasting forever? Politicians keep changing their ideologies like chameleons. It is true that our voting, supporting and political participation are always at stake, making it a risky choice. There is no escape from it. But then no party has absolutely perfect ideologies. Each ideology has its roots in selfishness and egoism. Therefore, it becomes an essential task to prudently and wisely choose a lesser evil ideology. We know the lesser of two evils principle naturally, though we haven't academically read or integrated it into our choices. In Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle writes: "For the lesser evil can be seen in comparison with the greater evil as good, since this lesser evil is preferable to the greater





one, and whatever is preferable is good.” Any ideology, however pristine or sacred it may appear, has agendas that are quite murky. When there are no choices, what can one do? Should one be neutral, allowing the worst ideologies to play their course and destroy the country, especially the disempowered and impoverished ones? If I am voting for a particular party, it doesn’t mean the same party will provide employment tomorrow, but my hope is that, being a lesser evil ideology, it will not cause two more individuals to lose job opportunities tomorrow. If I don’t choose something of lesser evil, I am responsible for something more heinous and graver. My task is not over when I cast a vote for the lesser evil one, but it advances as I have to keep supporting and backing the lesser evil ideology. At times the same party may exhibit its evil face on the poor and downtrodden, and I must keep favouring it directly or indirectly because voting is close to supporting. If I ignore that fidelity, sooner or later, the worst face of evil will befall the weak and the cornered ones. Thus, choosing a lesser evil ideology is a necessary evil; otherwise, why would a responsible citizen or voter vote for something evil?

It is true that my ideas here are inundated with the bias that ideologies are either less evil or more evil because they are intertwined with politics. It is politics that characterizes them as evil; otherwise, the evil could

have been considered good. Voting might seem simple, but it brings up tricky ethical questions, especially when you have to decide on the “lesser evil.” This adds a deep ethical layer to the decision-making process, making people think about whether it’s palatable to compromise on their ideals. As we, the citizens, take on the responsibility of influencing our political scene, it’s crucial to grasp the ethical aspects of our voting choices. Voting isn’t just about politics. It’s a moral decision that affects the destiny of our whole society.



**SCH. ELSON LOBO SJ  
REGENT, KARNATAKA**



# The Impact of Each Vote: A Catalyst for Change

Imagine the poignant scenario where your own brother, whom you deeply support, is contesting an election, and the result is negative, as he lost the election by just one vote - your vote. Now you realize how your negligence in participating in the electoral process could have monumental consequences, not just for your brother's political aspirations but also for the community he aims to serve.

Voting transcends a mere civic duty; it symbolizes the very essence of democracy, placing power solely in the hands of the people. It is important to note that in the grand tapestry of democracy, every vote serves as a crucial thread, intricately weaving the fabric of our collective future. The notion that "every vote counts" is not merely a platitude but a stark truth that reverberates across the globe. In elections, even at the smallest levels, we have seen the outcomes swayed by a vote of margins. For instance, in the 2018 Rajasthan assembly elections, Congress candidate Raghu Sharma won the Okhla constituency by a margin of just one vote. This emphasizes the profound implications of voter participation and the far-reaching electoral outcome.

Abraham Lincoln said, "The ballot is stronger than the bullet." This captures the transformative potential of democratic processes. Through engaging actively in the election, we build a favour for dialogue and mutual respect for one another. It also offers a peaceful avenue for us to resolve conflicts, reject violence, and resist coercion.

However, with great power comes great responsibility in life. It is mandatory for every citizen to approach the voting process with careful consideration, discernment, and a strong sense of civic duty. Looking

at the scenario in our country, we need to choose leaders who will invest in building bridges, not walls. Provide education, not weapons of destruction. Convergence, not division based on caste, tribe, religion, etc. It's important that the whims and fancies of the talks and propaganda do not take us away and that we are not swayed by empty promises or political rhetoric. But to make informed decisions based on the values and principles that align with a better future for all.

It's crucial to remain vigilant against any attempts to undermine the integrity of the electoral process. Safeguarding the value of each vote is important, as our vote represents a voice, a whisper of hope, and a declaration of our faith in the principles that strengthen our communities.

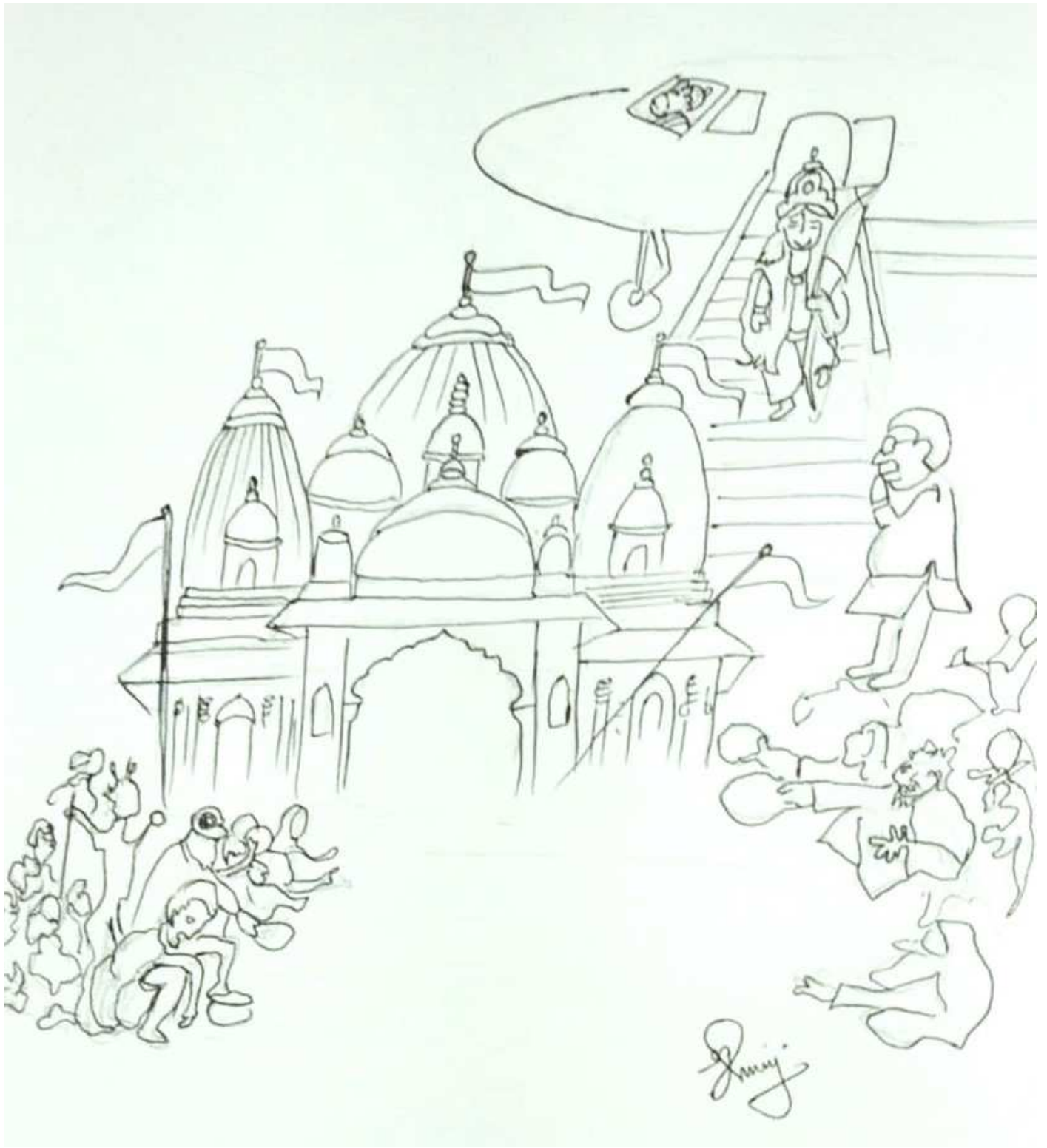
We cannot overstate the importance of every vote. It is not merely a mark on a ballot but a beacon of hope, a catalyst for change, and a testament to the enduring spirit of democracy. As we navigate the crossroads of the modern world, let us remember the words of Mahatma Gandhi: "If you want to change the world, start with yourself." By exercising our right to vote, I truly believe and want to convey the message that we become the agents of progress, the architects of a brighter, better tomorrow.

Remember: Your vote is your voice, and it is through the collective chorus of voices that we shape the destiny of nations and pave the way for a just and inclusive society.



SCH. ANTHONY PAVINGAOLOU SJ





SCH. ALFRED SJ



# Casting a Vision: Faith in Politics

A single vote is crucial, representing the dreams of many people. When we vote, we expect our leaders to fulfil certain responsibilities. Voting is like sharing our vision by making critical choices in politics that can change the world in terms of development, job opportunities for youth, and promoting equality, justice, and fraternity – representing the dreams of many.



In today's world, where politics can be divisive and unfair, injustice and inequality are seen in society, belief systems provide hope to leaders and citizens. It acknowledges the powerful role of faith in shaping individuals' beliefs and political discourse. The voice, echoing from different religions, advocates for kindness, justice, and collaboration. This provides space where we can make choices to challenge those in power.

Considering today's political issues, such as disagreements between groups, unfair systems, and moral problems, the idea of integrating faith into politics becomes more important. It suggests the need for a comprehensive approach to governance, going beyond self-interest and political parties. Leaders should follow the moral principles of their faiths to uplift the poorest of the poor and ensure equality and justice for every citizen. This also emphasizes the need to involve religious groups and leaders to bring about positive changes

for the common good. In a time where people may not trust politics much, religious communities can serve as great sources of moral values and social unity. If leaders work with these communities, they can leverage their shared values to promote justice, fairness, and respect for all.

However, this way of thinking has its own setbacks. Mixing faith and politics can be complicated, with challenges like defining religious freedom and maintaining the separation of religion from government. Leaders must be careful to respect different beliefs while still adhering to basic human rights and democratic values. In sharing this idea, leaders must also listen to the concerns of non-religious groups or people of different faiths. Political decisions influenced by faith should include everyone and respect differences. This means leaders need to engage in conversations, understand others, and remain committed to the positive values derived from their faith.

When we consider politics through a religious lens, it should evoke positive thoughts and guide leaders in making choices for the common good. Leaders, by aligning their actions with religious and constitutional principles, can bring hope and unity, and create a fair and kind society for every citizen.



SCH. KULDEEP TOPNO SJ



# Faith Traditions Amidst Political Storm

The German Lutheran pastor Martin Niemöller in his famous post war confessional poem “First they came,” wrote;

*“First, they came for the communists  
And I did not speak out,  
Because I am not a communist.  
Then they came for the trade unionists  
And I did not speak out,  
Because I am not a trade unionist.  
Then they came for the Jews  
And I did not speak out,  
Because I am not a Jew.  
Then they came for me  
And there was no one left,  
To speak out for me.”*

I refer to Niemöller’s poem because, in this ever-developing world, we humans are slowly turning towards the habit of being indifferent to the events around us, which in the long run would do us much harm. We remain secluded within our ingroup boundaries, considering the other as the enemy, when in fact the enemy lies elsewhere, and both the ingroup and outgroup are victims. Therefore, we need to examine ourselves more critically and regain our lost voices in speaking out the truth. We need to regain the vision of what it means to be a human, irrespective of one’s faith traditions.

It takes great courage to make a choice to be a prophet in present times to contribute towards a good cause. We find in the Bible, in the Old Testament, how the prophets deliver God’s message for the people, even if it means risking themselves. But today, we have immersed ourselves in our comfort zone, and have become inward looking. We are deaf and dumb to the needs of the people, especially those unlike us, for fear of being intimidated by those in power. So, we become what Niemöller wrote in his poem – silent or indifferent witnesses

to countless atrocities.

Today, we live in a society where the wealthy and influential hold sway while the impoverished struggle to survive. Peace appears to be a distant dream in many regions of our country. People are being divided based on their identities and faith for the selfish interests of cooperates and those in political power. In this context, irrespective of whichever faith we practise, we need to be the voice for people. This voice needs to become a ‘Transforming Choice’; this is to say that political decisions and actions have the potential to bring about positive change, both at the individual and societal levels. It implies a commitment to pursuing policies and initiatives that align with the moral imperatives and ethical principles espoused by various faith traditions. Therefore, there is a need for political intervention in society in the light of faith traditions.

The call for political intervention in the light of faith is not merely a suggestion; it is a summons to embody the transformative power of our beliefs and to infuse the public sphere with the values of justice, compassion, and solidarity that lie at the heart of our religious traditions. Central to this theological reflection is the recognition of the inherent worth and dignity of every individual, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, or social status. Grounded in the belief that all human beings are created in the image of the divine, we are called to challenge systems of oppression and to work tirelessly for the liberation of the oppressed. In this 21st century of multi-faith and multi-cultural society, whenever we have a conflict, we need a political intervention in the light of faith. This is to emphasize the active involvement of religious individuals

and communities in the political process. It acknowledges that faith is





not separate from the realm of politics but rather has a legitimate role to play in shaping public discourse, policy formulation, and governance. It is also important that the intervention be grounded in the teachings, values, and moral precepts of faith and tradition. It suggests that religious principles can serve as a moral compass, guiding individuals and communities towards decisions and actions that reflect a commitment to justice, compassion, and human dignity.

In the complex tapestry of contemporary society, the imperative for political intervention in the light of faith takes on added significance. In a world marked by profound inequities and systemic injustices, our faith traditions serve as beacons of hope and sources of inspiration for transformative social change. It is a call to confront the structural injustices that perpetuate poverty, inequality, and marginalization. It demands that we speak truth to power and challenge the entrenched systems of oppression that deny people their inherent rights and freedoms.

At its core, political intervention in the light of faith is a deeply moral undertaking - one that requires courage, conviction, and a steadfast commitment to the principles of justice and righteousness. It calls upon us to advocate for policies and practices that uplift the marginalized, empower the disenfranchised, and promote the common good. Moreover, it is an expression of our prophetic witness - a testament to our unwavering belief in the possibility of a more just and compassionate world. It is a declaration of our solidarity with those who suffer injustice and a pledge to stand with them in their struggle for liberation.

This call recognizes the potential of religious faith to inspire and mobilize individuals and communities towards collective action for the greater good. It also

acknowledges the importance of upholding principles of pluralism, tolerance, and respect for the rights and beliefs of others in the pursuit of a more just and equitable society. One thing we must always remember is that the world is always won by Love, not hatred. Jesus Christ did not stop from speaking out against the evil practices and injustices of his time. His voice has always called for the transformation of society based on love and respect for one another. Therefore, His voice is a sacred voice. As Christians, we are invited to emulate Him to become a sacred voice for all.

In the end, we can say that if we keep on dividing ourselves in the name of religion or caste, or if we fail to speak or are indifferent to the hate agenda of the evil elements, there will come a time when no one will be left to speak for us, as Niemöller mentions in his poem. We need 'such voices.' This is a rallying cry for all people with a conscience to heed the voice that beckons us to act for justice and righteousness. It is an invitation to harness the transformative power of our faith traditions and become agents of positive change in the world. May we answer this call with courage, compassion, and a steadfast commitment to building a more just and equitable society for all.

This call seeks to bridge the spiritual and the temporal, urging believers to bring their sacred voices into the public sphere to shape choices that contribute to a more just and compassionate society.



**BR. AGASSI TARIANG MCBS**



# General Elections – A Kairos Moment



stellar role to play in regaining the soul of the nation. In fact, it is incumbent upon each and every Catholic in India to strive towards the re-establishment of an egalitarian, just, and secular national polity. This obligation stems primarily from our rights and duties as citizens of India and from the teachings of the Church.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) states that it is “morally obligatory” for Catholics in democratized societies ‘to exercise the right to vote.’ (cf 2240) This obligation flows from the Catholic Church’s strong emphasis on the value and duty of wide and active participation in governing society. This obligation is reaffirmed forcefully in the Compendium of Catholic Social Teaching, which states: ‘Participation is a duty to be fulfilled consciously by all, with responsibility and with a view to the common good.’ (cf 189). Again, the CCC states: ‘It is the duty of citizens to contribute along with the civil authorities to the good of society in a spirit of truth, justice, solidarity, and freedom. The love and service of one’s country follow from the duty of gratitude and belong to the order of charity.’ (cf 2239) *Pacem in Terris*, the first encyclical addressed to all people of goodwill, states: ‘[.....] man’s [woman’s] personal dignity involves his right to take active part in public life and to make his own contribution to the common welfare of his fellow citizens’ (cf 26).

As we Indian Catholics seek to promote the common good, we have a role to play in society which no one else may fill. While we know that to do this, we must form our consciences in harmony with faith and reason, the complexities of our political landscape make political decision-making far from a simple task. Our faith impels us to adopt a political posture of humility – one that affirms and empowers others, especially the

**W**e are at the threshold of yet another general election. We live in India at a time when an aggressive majoritarian government, which abhors dissent and voices of opposition, is trying hard to exploit the existing fault lines within the nation for their electoral advantage. While there are attempts to undermine the nation’s cherished democratic values, there are also encouraging signs in the form of farmers, activists, authors and media persons trying to build in order to stem the backsliding. Given this milieu, the Indian Church finds itself in a quagmire. While there have been attempts to lure the church leaders towards the ruling party, brazen attacks on Christian communities in various parts of the country hardly lend credence to such ‘vote gathering’ exercises. However, as patriotic citizens of this great nation, Indian Catholics have a



## Let us 'get out and vote'

most marginalised sections of society. This recognition does not stem from any notion of superiority but from the firm conviction that each human person is a bearer of the image of God. At the same time, we must also show justice to our call to be prophets at this time of unprecedented crisis. As Indian citizens, the most powerful tool that we possess is our constitutionally guaranteed right to vote. Our vote is not just a tick on the ballot paper, but a potent weapon for change. It signifies the collective will of the people of India – shaping policies, determining the course of the nation, and impacting the millions of lives of this nation. Each vote is a thread woven into the fabric of our nation, and it is the duty of every Indian citizen, especially Indian Catholics, to participate actively in the electoral process for the good of the human community at large and our country in particular. In our deliberations about political engagement, superficial responses shaped by fear must give way to a framework for political engagement based on reality and relationships. In other words, our electoral preferences must go beyond loyalties based on caste, language and ethnicity. As we make our electoral choices, we must reject false narratives and diversionary tactics and listen intentionally to the voices of those who have been marginalized or exploited.

Our country has achieved tremendous success with electoral democracy ever since our independence from the colonial rule. All citizens of India have equal value, regardless of their economic status, cultural and linguistic background, or political affiliation. This is the meaning of justice, equality, fraternity and justice – the values enshrined in our Constitution. The upcoming general election is the *Kairos* moment for the people of India to reaffirm these hard-earned constitutional values and to reject authoritarianism. The only antidote to a failing democracy is none other than



more effective democracy. Let us, therefore, 'get out and vote'.



SCH. IVIN TOMY SJ  
II B.TH., VIDYAJYOTI, DELHI



# Christian Faith: A Challenge Within Our Indian Politics



**T**he socio-political scenario of our country today is really distressing. India, the world's largest democracy and the most diverse country in the world in terms of ethnicity, language, and religion, is right now going through a very critical period. The political situation in India is fast-changing. Ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversities tend to be losing ground while tyranny seems to be on wheels. Mobocracy seemingly has the upper hand over democracy. We are aware of our limitations. But that should not hinder us from discharging our responsibilities and playing our role in society.

## **Christian Outlook**

Indian Christian politics has stood boldly for the rights of the poor and backward classes. It seeks to protect their culture and land, especially of the tribals from the government policies that prioritize the corporates over the underprivileged. It stands for justice for the downtrodden and the marginalized. The Church has shown the world the path to harmony which eventually results in the development of human society.

## **Politics of Love**

Though the Church that follows her

master has the transcendent as its goal, she plays an effective role in promoting political love through her teachings and timely interventions. We, Christians, have the duty of promoting a politics of love in India. It should necessarily enhance the democratic, secularist, pro-poor, pastoral, prophetic, practical and pro-life fabric of Indian politics for the common good. And we have a recent hero and martyr as a model for such politics - Fr. Stan Swamy SJ! May this great soul inspire the whole Indian Christians community to come out of lethargy, fear, selfishness, and opportunism and contribute positively with service-mindedness accompanied by sincerity, fairness, charity and fortitude.

## **Influence Politics**

Throughout history, God has called faithful men and women to serve in the public arena. These individuals are accountable to God to exact justice, speak wise counsel to secular rulers (Daniel 4:27), and apply God's principles to government. In doing so, they pave the way for generations of blessings. Proverbs 29:2 says: "When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule, the people groan." The Bible has examples of men and women engaging in political life. From Esther to King David, God used men and women in positions of political power to fulfil His will. Similarly, the Apostle Paul spoke of the importance of Christian engagement in government. In Romans 13:1, he says that our political leaders have been "instituted by God."

Another key way to influence politics is through voting, yet far too many citizens refrain from making their voices heard at the ballot box. By exercising your right to vote, you can participate in electing those who aren't ashamed to boldly defend divine





values. You can also hold accountable those elected to protect our religious freedoms and human dignity.

### **Good citizens**

As Christians, we are called to respect and honour government leaders (Romans 13:7), to obey the laws enacted by the government (Romans 13:1-5), pay taxes (Matthew 22:17-21), and most importantly, to pray for our leaders. 1 Peter 2:13 says, “Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human authority,” and 1 Timothy 2:1 tells us to pray for “kings and all those in authority.” Remember to pray for our country and our elected officials. Ask God to give them wisdom, humility, and guidance as they structure policies and enact laws. Pray that they will fight what is evil and promote what is good.

Politics undeniably shapes culture, forms society, and defines our national identity. As Christians, our ultimate hope rests not in governments or rulers, but on a coming King and His coming kingdom. Isaiah 33:22 says, “For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our King; He

will save us.” We understand that God is the One who raises up governments and leaders and brings them down. We have confidence in God’s sovereignty over our country.

Yet, when Christians abandon the political arena, we risk allowing those who are not driven by righteousness or a desire for God’s best to determine our future. Therefore, believers have an obligation to keep their civic responsibilities and make a positive difference whenever possible. In doing so, we become the voice for the vulnerable and fight injustice. We help reconcile a broken world back to God.

In conclusion, as Christians, we have a responsibility to engage in politics with love, integrity, and a desire for justice. We are called to be empowering leaders, influence politics for God’s kingdom, and be good citizens by respecting and praying for our leaders. Our ultimate hope rests in God, but we must also do our part to promote righteousness and God’s values in the political arena. As members of the world’s biggest democracy, declaring ourselves democratic would call us for greater courage to stand and witness the source of all power and sovereignty. Realizing the innate powers resting upon us, we need to foster the culture that will strengthen democratic processes, a culture in which discussion and participation (voting) are central and indispensable. Teaching, instructing and empowering the ignorant and the poor about their rights and democratic values rest heavily upon the learned.



**SR. MONICA THANGBIAKMAWII, MSMHC  
BA, SALESIAN COLLEGE, SILIGURI**



# “Harmony Unveiled: The Unifying Power of Collective Voices”

Once upon a time, in the heart of a bustling Indian town named Surya Nagar, lived a community deeply rooted in diverse faiths and traditions. In this vibrant tapestry of beliefs, the collective voices of different faiths held a profound influence over the lives of the people. However, as the town faced burgeoning challenges, the need for transformation became evident, prompting a call for political intervention in the light of faith.

At the heart of Surya Nagar stood the ancient Shantivan Temple, where the revered Guruji, a spiritual leader known for his wisdom and compassion, resided. One day, as the sun dipped below the horizon, casting a warm glow on the temple, Guruji gathered the faithful for a discourse on the role

of faith in shaping societal choices. “Guruji,” began a concerned villager named Ananya, “Our town is facing challenges that seem insurmountable. The fabric of harmony is fraying, and poverty casts a long shadow. How can our faith guide us towards transformative choices?” Guruji smiled warmly, acknowledging the genuine concerns of the community. “In the sacred texts,” he began, “we find the essence of compassion, equality, and stewardship of the Earth. It is time for us to weave these principles into the very fabric of our lives and choices.”

The words of Guruji’s message spread across Surya Nagar, reaching the ears of the town’s political leaders. Realizing the potential for positive change, they sought an audience with Guruji to discuss collaborative efforts to address the town’s challenges. In a meeting at Shantivan Temple, political leaders and religious figures engaged in a dialogue that transcended traditional boundaries. Together, they envisioned policies inspired by the religious principles, aiming to promote communal harmony, environmental sustainability, gender equality, and poverty alleviation.

They initiated a Harmony Festival, celebrating the diversity of faiths within Surya Nagar. People from different backgrounds came together, sharing stories and traditions and fostering mutual understanding. The festival became an annual event, nurturing a sense of unity that transcended religious divides. Inspired by the sacred voice, the leaders also launched environmental conservation programs. Tree-planting drives, waste reduction campaigns, and sustainable practices became integral to the town’s ethos.

The sacred groves surrounding the temple were protected, serving as a sanctuary





for native flora and fauna. The women of Surya Nagar, guided by a reinterpretation of sacred texts emphasizing on equality, found themselves empowered. Education and skill development programmes were initiated, ensuring that women played a pivotal role in shaping the town's future. Poverty, too, became a shared concern. Faith-based organizations collaborated with the government to establish community kitchens, schools, and vocational training centres. The town witnessed a transformative shift as the marginalized found opportunities for growth and development.

As Surya Nagar prospered through these collective efforts, the collective religious voice continued to guide its people towards choices that honoured the principles of compassion, justice, and unity. The tale of Surya Nagar serves as a beacon for communities across India, highlighting the transformative

power that lies in the sacred voice within them. By embracing the wisdom embedded in faith and inviting political intervention, a harmonious future can be woven where choices reflect the shared values of a diverse and united nation.



SCH. SHREYASH SJ

# “Political Intervention in the Light of Faith” - Can We do this?

The Government today is propelling the people through majoritarianism and communalism to safeguard the interests of the corporates and sustain capitalism. Capitalism kills the equal opportunity that is provided to all profit making and non-profit making organisations. This, in turn, has resulted in the massive unemployment of youth. Capitalism is at the root of maintaining this increasing socio-economic imbalance by not allowing people to raise their status and then leaving them in a worse social-economic condition. This privatisation has turned into intimidation for civilians.

As religious, safeguarding social justice becomes one of the inevitable charisms in our lives. Hence, it is time we call for a political intervention, considering faith, to safeguard the constitutional values which politics fail to promote social justice. To our surprise, no religious congregation has selected it as their charism to educate people in politics. When I say ‘educate people in politics’, I mean, to help them understand and analyse the political nuances.

If a religious congregation chooses this aspect as one of their charisms, then there will be a group of men and women who will be actively analysing the politics of the present. Eventually, they can participate in the common forum as activists engage themselves in political discourse. Thus, we will make people politically educated. Jesus himself was a man who was politically active and was never afraid to question the political structure of his time.

The current Government has failed in many ways to stand for social justice. Instead, it has become a potential threat to our sacred Indian constitution. The right-wing



propaganda has become an explosive force against secularism and democracy, which are the fundamental essence of our Indian Constitution.

India is a Hindu majority country. The enmity between Muslims and Hindus is being imposed through extremist religious ideologies, and through religion-based campaigns, which has led to many communal riots in India. This way of politicising people wreaks havoc on the very roots of secularism. The saffronization has become a threat to the pluralistic fabric of our country. It is obvious that Ayodhya will become the popular agenda in the campaign for the forthcoming election, which leans







towards only the Hindu population. In consequence, secularism is no longer going to have its value.

Why do we still not understand that we must make people politically informed to stand for justice? As Catholics and religious, we have had a secularistic approach to stand for people from all walks of life, be it in the educational, social, or medical fields. This, in turns, has become our faithful act of standing for social justice. But when it comes to politics, we are at the backstage, and sometimes nowhere near it. When will we realize that the Government has the decisive power to actualize the secularistic approach to equality? For this, it is indispensable that a Government has the values of peace, respect, and harmony at its core.

The dignity and rights of our civilians are being violated day by day by a political force driven by fascism. Therefore, it is due for the Jesuits to venture into political intervention for the promotion of the common good, as our third Universal Apostolic Preference (UAP) of the Society of Jesus calls us to

walk with the excluded, the poor, the outcasts of the world, and those whose dignity has been violated, in reconciliation and justice.

There is also an urgent need for other religious congregations to enter into political dialogue, as our country faces a strong force which is against the constitutional values. As we defend our faith and the church, it is also time for us, as citizens, to defend the constitutional values which are being devalued by a fascist politics in India. Therefore, this becomes a sacred call for us, and our radical response to this is a choice that would be transformative.



SCH. CHRIS PATRIC PIO SJ

# DNC News

## South Zone Celebrations: *Pongal* and *Sankrathi*

We celebrated *Pongal* and *Sankrathi* on 19th of January. The purpose of this Pongal celebration is to mark the end of the winter harvest season and to express gratitude to the sun god, *Surya*, for a bountiful harvest. Furthermore, it's a time for thanksgiving, family gathering, and rejoicing in the abundance of nature's blessings. *Sankrathi* is the most famous festival celebrated in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. It is a unique festival for it marks the sun transition from zodiac sign of Capricorn (*Makara*). Moreover, this becomes a profound experience for the people celebrating it as a harvest festival as well as inviting new year by burning all the old things in the *Bhogi* fire. The celebration began with a solemn mass, wherein Fr. Selvarathinam SJ (KAR) was the main celebrant and Frs. Philip Kumar SJ (CEN), Clement SJ (MDU), Lawrence SJ (MDU), and Peter Ignatius SJ (PAT) were the concelebrants. The cultural meal was served in a way to honour tradition and celebrate the vibrant and unique cultural heritage. It brought us together, fostered a sense of community, and allowed us to enjoy the delectable dishes imbued with symbolic significance. Everyone in the community joyfully joined the celebration. This significantly enhanced the joy of celebrating these cultural festivals and transformed the celebration into a profound expression of shared cultural heritage and community.

## Diaconate Ordination

As the entrance hymn resounded, 'you have called us by our names', seven of our Jesuit companions, along with five Capuchins, reaffirmed their call by receiving the diaconate conferred by Rev. John Rodrigues, the Bishop of Pune, on the 10th of February 2024, in the Chapel of De

Nobili College. The theme "Burning hearts and moving feet" was quite apt for 12 of our brothers, who like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, have had a similar experience that stirred their hearts, fostering a profound love for Jesus and a resolute commitment to emulate His path.

The solemn ceremony began with the presentation of the candidates to the ordaining prelate by Fr. Francis Pudhicherry SJ, the Rector of DNC and Fr. Vilas Pegado OFM, Rector of Laverna. Bishop John, in his homily, exhorted that the burning hearts are not those filled with anger and hatred, but rather by the transforming power and the flame of boundless love and compassion through the encounter with Jesus. Drawing parallels from biblical narratives wherein God summoned and anointed prophets like Moses and Jeremiah, Bishop John highlighted the duty entrusted upon these newly ordained deacons – to accompany humanity on their spiritual pilgrimage towards God.

Fr. Richard Lopes SJ meticulously planned and executed the ceremony with the help of Scholastics. It was indeed a moving ceremony, and it was a great joy to see the family members being part of this great event. The angelic singing of the Scholastics added to the prayerful ambience of the solemn celebration. After the solemn celebration, the newly ordained deacons were felicitated. Dn. Vysakh SJ expressed, on behalf of his companions, his gratitude to the Rector and the staff members for their accompaniment in the formation. He also thanked the scholastics for the companionship and for making the ceremony memorable. As we congratulate the deacons, we pray that the burning flame within their hearts may illuminate their path ahead, guiding them with unwavering faith and dedication.

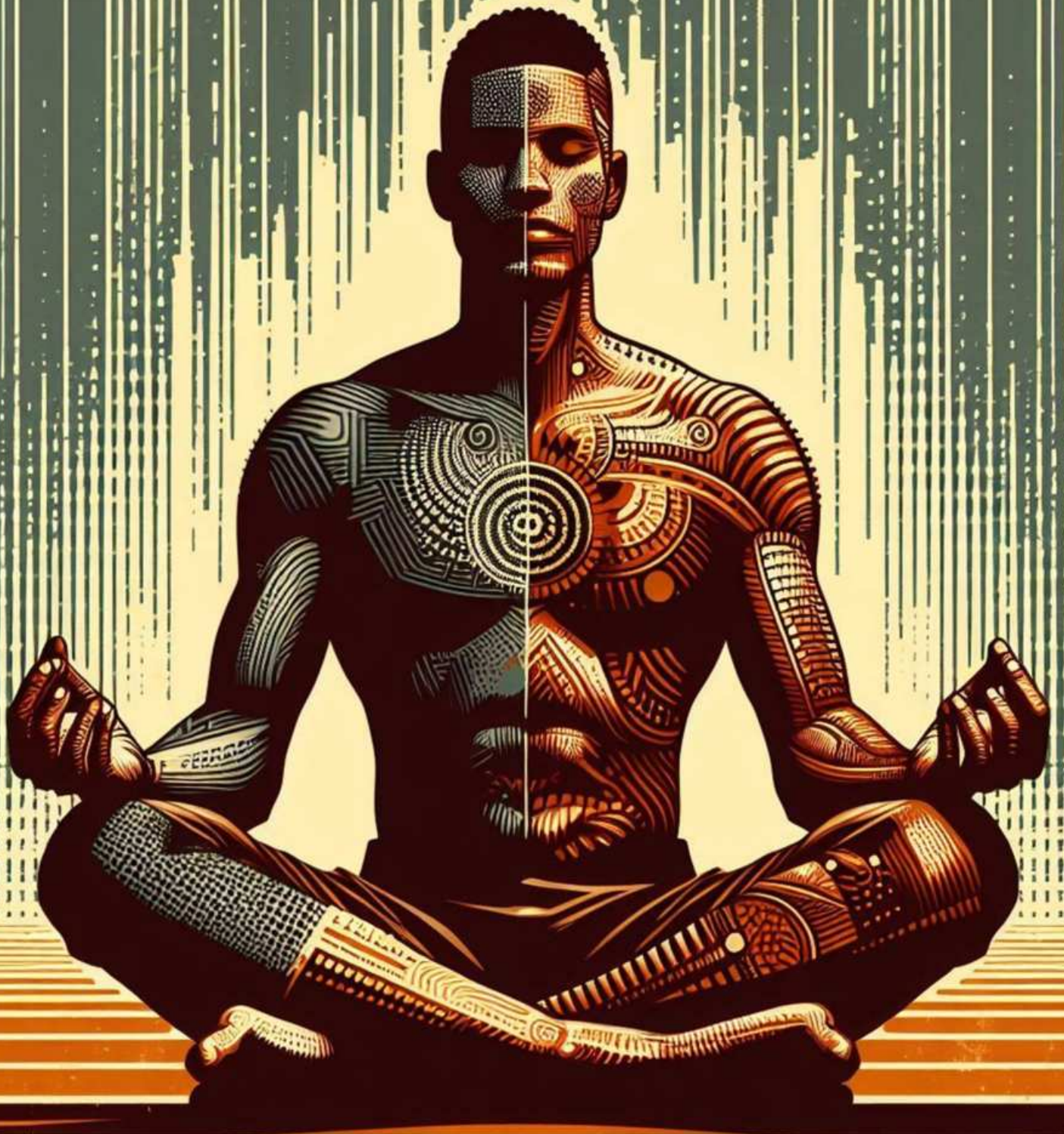


*Congratulations*

**Dear Deacons !**



Next Issue



Digital Spirituality