



December 8, 2021

Feast of the Immaculate Conception

DISCERNING OUR FUTURE: THE 2022 ELECTIONS

We, the De La Salle Brothers of the Philippines, believe that the coming elections in 2022 will perhaps be the most crucial ones in recent history. As we reel from the social and economic devastation wrought by the pandemic and the continuing blight of corrupt and ineffective governance that has grown even more pronounced in the past six years, the issue at stake is not just one of national recovery but of our very survival as a God-loving, sovereign, and democratic nation. The election of 2022 is not just about the choice of a new leader – it is about choosing the kind of future we want for ourselves, our children, and our children’s children. If there is anything this pandemic has driven home to all of us, it is that our survival depends on cooperation and solidarity, on new forms of “*people power*” rather than reliance on autocratic forms of governance which are insensitive to the rights of ordinary citizens, prone to abuse and corruption, and that rob individual citizens and civic groups of the responsibility to co-create a just, humane, and prosperous society. That is why whoever seeks to lead must be able to:

- 1. propose a vision that can unite the people in the pursuit of the common good**
- 2. possess the moral integrity needed to command trust from citizens and civil society**
- 3. have a proven track record of empowering the disempowered and underserved sectors of Philippine society.**

For this reason, as Catholic educators in the Lasallian tradition, we are compelled to speak out to offer our Lasallian family, educators, and all people of good will, moral guidance in the form of ethical principles for discerning the kind of leadership our country needs and deserves. The principles we propose are not new. They belong to the heritage of Catholic Social Teaching which is intended to guide all forms of public and political engagement. Thus, we propose that voters ask themselves where each candidate stands on the following:

- 1. The promotion and defense of human dignity and rights for which society exists.** *(Does this candidate have a track record of support for human rights?)*



2. **The promotion and defense of the common good which enables all to live with dignity.** *(Does this candidate work for social conditions that benefit all Filipinos or does he/she serve the interests of those close to him/her, the powerful few?)*
3. **The promotion of solidarity, particularly for the poor and the vulnerable.** *(Does this candidate have a track record of aiding and empowering the poor and disadvantaged to build better lives rather than reinforcing dependency through dole-outs?)*
4. **The promotion of subsidiarity which favors grassroots empowerment for social development over autocracy and authoritarianism.** *(Does this candidate engage government, civil society, and business in pursuit of the common good rather than relying on authoritarian measures?)*
5. **The universal destination of goods – which obligates leaders not to hoard wealth (much less steal) but to ensure that no one goes hungry, naked, homeless, or uneducated.** *(Does this candidate present viable ways of ensuring a more equitable distribution of goods across the social spectrum? Is he or she responsible and transparent in the use of government funds?)*
6. **Respect for truth and freedom of information.** *(Does the candidate take pains to ensure that citizens have access to truthful and reliable information on issues affecting the common good? Does he or she engage with media institutions to promote journalistic integrity and accountability rather than resort to coercion, censorship, threats, and fake news?)*
7. **Stewardship of creation.** *(Does the candidate promote sustainable development for future generations of Filipinos?)*
8. **Personal integrity.** *(Does this person's track record in public service reflect his or her words? Is the candidate's ability to lead and unite the country compromised by ethical misconduct in the past? Anyone can propose a better future – the question is whether he or she is working for that future even now.)*

Finally, we must ask whether the candidate is committed to serving and implementing the principles enshrined in the 1987 Philippine Constitution by reforming and strengthening the institutions that ensure justice, progress and integral development for the generations that come after. Cognizant of the fact that they themselves are mere tenants and caretakers in the halls of power, true leaders look forward to leaving the country healthier morally, socially, and economically than when they entered office.

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Voting is not just an ethical responsibility – in these difficult times, it is a prophetic task requiring us to challenge old ways of thinking that have led to the stagnation and squandered opportunities that are killing our very own people. If we are true disciples of Christ, discipleship must be exercised not just in how we pray but also how we vote, not just in how we vote, but how we strive to work together for a society that reflects the values of God’s reign. We are voting – not just for a leader – but for a future worthy of ourselves and our children. May these principles guide everyone in their discernment.

We call on every Filipino voter to see and evaluate how each of our local and national candidates measure up to these non-negotiable ethical criteria. Let us not also fall victim to the factories of disinformation and misinformation campaigns.

Let this Christmas season be a time of peace, joy, and hope in seeking God’s most holy will.

Signed
De La Salle Brothers
(Philippines)

