

Archbishop Smith: Suitable for Office

A federal election will soon take place in Canada. Over the next weeks, the electoral platforms of the political parties and their leaders will be the focus of attention for the citizens of this land.

The Church, too, is focused upon an election, not for a short period of mere weeks but always. This one is not the result of a writ having recently been dropped. It arises from a determination made by God from all eternity. I am referring here to God's election of a people, the divine determination to fashion and then re-fashion all of his people into a communion, one with him and with one another in the bond of covenant love.

In the current federal election, parties will lay out their plans. We shall have a variety of candidates who will seek to convince us of their suitability for office. In God's plan for the world, there is only one person suitable for the fulfilment of the divine saving purpose; there is only one Saviour. This One is not selected by majority vote of the people, but designated by the Father in heaven. On Sunday, we heard St. Paul, in his first letter to St. Timothy, put it this way: "For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself a ransom for all." (1Tim 2:5-6) By divine election, Jesus Christ is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end of all history (cf. Revelation 22:13). This means that while political mandates are but for a span of time, Christ now rules for eternity. It means that while elected officials may govern a limited territory, our Lord presides over the universe. It means that even though temporal powers develop and enact policies, the force that guides all world events is the Holy Spirit, possessed in fullness by Jesus of Nazareth and released through his death and resurrection.

Jesus, himself, exercises his reign by election. He freely chooses men and women to follow him by adopting the pattern of his life as their own. That choice reaches and transforms us at our Baptism. God's choice makes us suitable for the office of disciple, something we could never merit on our own, or by anyone else's "election." Furthermore, from the moment of Baptism, we live as disciples of the Lord by ensuring that the myriad choices we make are in conformity with God's prior choice of us in Christ.

Among those choices will be the one we exercise in a few weeks at the ballot box. What guides our discernment of those most suitable for public office is the Christian "office" to which we have been elected by God. We vote as followers of Christ, allowing our Christian identity to inform our conscience as we make our determination. The Bishops of Canada have recently [published a guide](#) to assist our discernment. I hope you find it helpful.

Speaking of the Bishops, we are gathered this week in Cornwall for our annual

plenary meeting. I would be grateful if you kept us in your prayers, asking that God, by his grace, will enable all of our deliberations to unfold in keeping with the election He has made of us.