

# Examining the Role of Politics in the Ministerial Duties of Catholic Priests

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**Abstract.** The priests' pastoral dedication towards their flock's spiritual well-being motivates them to participate in all facets of their congregation's life struggles, including the political sphere. This involvement in politics serves as both an affirmation and an embodiment of their inherent rights. However, it is essential to remember that a priest is primarily a shepherd, symbolizing unity rather than a politician. This paper employs a literature-based approach to investigate how much a priest can exercise his political rights. The study delineates several fundamental principles: firstly, the participation should be driven by the desire to advocate for justice and to foster public welfare. It is not a means to attain power. Secondly, a priest must remain steadfast in upholding moral principles and the tenets of the Catholic faith. Thirdly, the involvement should transcend practical politics and instead focus on ethical political conduct. Fourthly, a priest must staunchly defend human rights and consistently offer moral judgments on various aspects of political governance, especially concerning human rights or the salvation of souls. In conclusion, this study posits that politics is highly susceptible to conflict and hostility. Therefore, priests must embody their role as shepherds and symbols of unity to uphold justice, empower the disadvantaged, balance rights and obligations, and uphold human dignity.

**Keywords:** Priest; politics; justice; catholic church

## 1 Introduction

In the Catholic Church, the priest serves as the shepherd of the congregation, as outlined in canons 515-516, 519, and 529 [1]. Embodying the spirit of the Great Shepherd, priests guide their flock towards contrition, encouraging them to confront their sins through the Sacrament of Penance. This process fosters a continuous spiritual journey towards God. Priests also instruct their congregation to participate in the sacred liturgy enthusiastically and sincerely, fostering a deeper spirit of prayer tailored to individual graces and needs. Furthermore, they encourage their flock to fulfil their responsibilities by their life status, to live by the Gospel's teachings, and to glorify God through their lives and work (PO 5-6) [2]. Pope Francis underscores the role of priests as true shepherds who lead, accompany, and follow their people. They lead by guiding their flock towards the future, walking among them to empathize and connect, and following to assist those who have strayed, helping them find their way. Emulating the risen and wounded Christ, the Good Shepherd reaches out to the most impoverished communities. A true shepherd is deeply involved in the highs and lows of his people's lives, particularly in their fight for justice and human dignity [3].

The pastoral commitment of priests often propels them to engage in the multifaceted struggles of their congregation's lives, including politics. This involvement is intrinsically tied

to their pursuit of social justice and the realization of the common good for society. Levesque and Siproth [4] observe that the political leanings of priests align with their ideological understanding of the Church. For instance, support for Gore among Catholic priests was driven by concerns about hunger and poverty, while support for Bush was primarily motivated by opposition to abortion. The political participation of imams is similarly influenced by a deep-seated interest in social justice and the alignment of individual imams' socio-economic views with those of their congregations [5].

The political choices of priests significantly influence the political decisions of their congregations [6] [7] [8]. A study conducted by Bjarnason and Welch [9] in the United States found that parishioners' attitudes towards the death penalty were heavily influenced by their parish priest. The ideology of the parish priest serves as a critical indicator of the ideology of their congregation [8]. In Ireland, Catholic priests play a pivotal role in sustaining nationalism [10]. During the French Revolution, hundreds of thousands of Catholic priests were involved in reconciling the ideology of liberty with the Church's traditional teachings [11]. Imams, as leaders of the majority community in Ireland and the United States, navigate issues of denominational plurality. When religious issues intersect with political prominent problems, imams may inadvertently become informal political leaders [12].

This article aims to illuminate the political involvement of priests as a manifestation of their service to their congregation and the Church. Utilizing a literature-based approach, this article will explore the following questions: What forms does priestly involvement in politics take as a service to their congregation and the Church? To what extent can priests engage in practical politics? How can they exercise political influence without entangling themselves in non-practical politics?

## **2 Method**

It is an extensive literary reflection on the study of priests, politics, justice, and the Catholic church. This research uses literature from offline databases such as limited libraries and online databases, namely Google Scholar, which has a wide reach.

This exploration explores the challenges associated with these themes and then presents them from the perspective of the Catholic faith. This comprehensive conclusion includes the findings, which lead to a discussion of political participation in priestly ministry and how Imams the priests in practical politics.

## **3 Results and Discussion**

This research involves content analysis to find tendencies or similarities in views and descriptions in the literature. Based on the content analysis results, this systematic literature review presents an important theme, namely, the Catholic Church and politics. The study's results also discuss Priests and their rights in politics, including political participation in Priestly Ministry and priests in practical politics.

### **3.1 Catholic Church and Politics**

The Catholic Church traditionally presents itself as a non-political entity. Its fundamental stance posits that the political community and the Church are mutually autonomous and self-governing. Just as the political community is obliged to ensure the Church and other religions the necessary space to fulfil their respective missions, the Church likewise respects the

legitimate autonomy of the democratic order. This principle aligns with Jesus' words: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21).

However, the delineation between religion and politics does not preclude all forms of collaboration. The Church and the State serve humanity, and this shared objective necessitates pooling resources to foster a more equitable and prosperous society. The separation of Church and state does not imply that believers should be excluded from public action. The Church's role and presence invariably bear political implications. Politics is a realm that the Church often addresses. According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the separation of church and state does not necessitate a division between faith and public action or between moral principles and political choices. Still, it safeguards the rights of believers and religious groups to practice their faith and act on their values in public life [13].

In the political sphere, the Church not only discusses the involvement of its members in politics but also acknowledges its connection with Christian values. Faith and politics are not mutually exclusive; they do not devalue each other. If politics supplants faith, politics becomes the solution to all human problems, leaving no room for faith. Conversely, if faith supersedes politics, faith becomes politicized, reduced to a political level and remains solely horizontal. As a result, the Church will not establish a political system that embodies an eschatological utopia in history, namely the kingdom of God. A single political party cannot represent the Church; no political party can claim to be the party of the Catholic Church [14].

The 1983 Code of Canon Law advocates for the Church to disseminate the Gospel and its moral principles in structuring society and upholding human rights. Canon 747, 2 asserts that "the Church has the authority always and everywhere to promulgate moral principles, even those concerning social order, and to pass judgment on any human affairs, as far as the salvation of souls or human rights necessitates" [1]. This canon's mandate actively encourages the Church's involvement in public policy or political events. Leo Boff contends that the Church is inherently political by its ministry. Confronted with poverty and injustice among its people, the Church is compelled to engage in politics. If the Church abstains from politics, its presence becomes insignificant, allowing poverty and injustice to be perpetuated by those in power. Conversely, if the Church is political, it aligns itself with the poor in pursuing a fairer and more prosperous society [15].

Romero [16] bases the Church's political involvement on three key considerations. Firstly, a newfound awareness of the pervasive sin within social, political, and economic structures. The Church is called to prophetically address the root causes of injustice and the suffering of the poor and weak entrenched in unjust socio-economic and political structures. Secondly, the Church's missionary nature to perpetuate God's salvation through Jesus necessitates involvement in all aspects, including socio-economic and political structures. The Church is tasked with actualizing the work of salvation by boldly challenging manipulative, exploitative, and corrupt socio-economic and political structures that oppress others, particularly the weak and poor, and undermine the integrity of creation. Lastly, the Church's faith in God's promise of abundant life for all people becomes tangible when the Church shares in humanity's joys and sorrows, especially those who are suffering and marginalized. Faith in the living God urges the Church to advocate for the poor, weak, suffering, and marginalized. Consequently, the Church is obliged, whether willingly or not, to influence political policies towards the liberation of the suffering and impoverished.

Pope Francis has underscored that Catholics must engage in politics despite its potential for corruption, frustration, and failure. Christians are responsible for working for the common good in the political sphere, but this does not necessitate forming a Catholic political party. Catholics should participate in politics as it is one of the "highest forms of charity," promoting the common

good. This endeavour is not without challenges, particularly in the face of rampant corruption. It is a form of “martyrdom,” where one daily bears the cross of the ideals of the common good, persevering without succumbing to despair amidst the failures of political struggle. When individuals are excluded, they are deprived not only of material well-being but also of the dignity to act, to shape their destiny and history, and to express their values and culture. Pope Francis asserts that the Church cannot separate promoting social justice from recognising societal culture and values, including spiritual values that underpin their noble dignity. He acknowledges that many individuals involved in politics have spent years working with popular movements, a task often deemed “uncomfortable” due to accusations of being “too political” or “attempting to impose religion” [3].

Historically, the Catholic Church, the world's oldest institution with a population exceeding one billion, undeniably wields significant influence on global political dynamics. The encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (New Things) of 1891 by Pope Leo XIII expanded the Church’s interest in social, economic, political, and cultural issues. It called for drastic changes in 19th-century Western society in response to the influence of capitalism. Following the release of this document, the labour movement, which had been floundering, began to grow in Europe and North America. Catholics, both laity and clergy, expressed a desire for active social and political involvement to address acute social problems according to Catholic Christian principles, as opposed to a purely secular approach.

In the 20th century, the political movement of the Catholic Church gained considerable strength in Spain, Italy, Germany, Austria, Ireland, France, and Latin America. These movements shared common goals: defending the rights of the Catholic Church against anti-clerical politicians and protecting the Christian faith and moral values threatened by increasing secularization. The political influence of the Church became increasingly evident in the roles of Pope John Paul II [17] and Pope Francis in the 21st century [18] [19] [20]. In several countries, the Church’s political dominance in formulating various public policies has been noted, such as in the issue of fetal law in Poland [21].

The politics discussed here refers not to power politics but the moral domain. When the Church makes a political statement, it operates within the moral sphere. This does not imply an intervention in personal freedom and autonomy. All political statements from the Church originate from a consciousness of safeguarding human moral values. It is important to understand that the Church's duties in the political field lie within the realms of morality and faith. Both these domains possess political dimensions and content. As *Gaudium Et Spes* No. 73 stated, all power must be utilized for the public interest, not personal or party interests. Furthermore, St. John Paul II, through the encyclical *Octogesima Adversiens* No. 46, emphasized that the task of politics is to address human relations issues. The Gospel encourages Christians to participate and make choices [1].

Therefore, every Christian should recognize the nobility and sublimity of politics. Its nobility lies in the aspect of vocation. That is, God Himself calls everyone involved in it. God commissions them to participate in His work of salvation. Politics is a vocation that must be undertaken with full responsibility. The vocation in question is a call to serve others. Thus, aligning with the poor and weak becomes the Church's fundamental political responsibility and option. The Church exists to provide access for the poor and weak to obtain convenience and security, and thereby create prosperity. The Church's involvement is inseparable from its responsibility to govern and establish just laws. Pope Francis stated that law and government should serve freedom so that the law does not restrain but enables everyone to grow. As far as possible, state law is based on divine law, which God has implanted in the hearts of every human being. This law liberates humans from self-love and serves only certain groups. The goal of a

state is to realize general welfare. The Church also pursues this goal. The general welfare here encompasses the totality of social life conditions that enable individuals, families, and associations to achieve their perfection more fully and efficiently [3].

Engaging in politics for the Church signifies expressing political responsibility aligning with Christian values. The Church perceives its assigned tasks as expressions of faith guided by the law of love taught by Jesus. This responsibility lies with the rulers in any given country, as they are the source of all political policies. If a politician genuinely embodies their faith, then all political responsibilities will invariably be oriented towards the public interest. Hence, politicians are expected to possess personal integrity, a strong commitment, and high moral standards and to utilize power earnestly for public interest and welfare. Politicians should also profoundly understand social and political life, ensuring their involvement is meaningful and beneficial to humanity. The Church's mission of liberation for the poor by combating its causes (unjust socio-economic and political structures) is rooted in God's mission of liberation for His people. However, this mission commitment was only systematically formulated as a social doctrine in 1891 through Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. This document represents a prophetic response to the social and economic issues caused by the industrial revolution of that era. During the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church became increasingly conscious of its concern and solidarity with all of humanity, particularly the poor, who are oppressed and further impoverished by various structures of economic and political injustice [3].

It is important to note that Christ did not assign His Church a mission that directly implements political, economic, or social order, but rather a spiritual mission. The Church must be a positive force in organizing and consolidating the structure of community life according to divine law. The primary principle is, of course, politics to glorify God. Everything is from Him, by Him, and for Him. To Him be glory forever and ever. God is sovereign and powerful in Heaven and Earth. Therefore, all life is dedicated to God, loving God and others. Such politics will bring prosperity to all people.

### **3.2 Priests and the Right in Politics**

Aristotle's characterization of humans as *zoon politicon* (political beings) underscores humans' inherent social and interactive nature in fulfilling communal needs. In cohabitation, everyone possesses political and human rights, including the right to active participation in governance, the right to vote and be elected in general elections, the right to join and establish political parties, the right to engage in governmental activities, the right to express opinions; the right to be appointed to governmental positions; and the right to assemble and associate. These political rights, part of human rights, represent the personal freedom to exercise them freely, as stipulated in Article 23 of Law Number 39 of 1999 concerning Human Rights.

As humans, priests are also political beings; they are religious beings who are political and political beings who are religious. Politics is inherent in a priest as a natural right, not granted by authorities and irrevocable by anyone else. These political rights are so fundamental that they cannot be annulled by positive law. At the legal level, natural rights are incorporated into natural law (*ius naturalis*). The presence of positive law aims to clarify and make fairer, more accurate, and more reasonable natural law.

As responsible citizens, priests are obligated to engage in politics through accountable and conscious efforts to advocate for the *bonum commune*, which is the political goal (cf. Canon 747, 2). The 1971 Synod of Bishops obligated priests to strive to defend fundamental human rights to achieve peace and justice. Priests are tasked with assisting the faithful in forming a correct conscience (*Enchiridion Vaticanum*, IV, 1194). On the one hand, priests and the entire Church serve justice and peace, but on the other hand, the social and political role of a person

of faith differs from that of other believers (lay people). The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) Number 2442 emphasises that "It is not the role of the pastors of the Church to intervene directly in the political structure and organization of social life. This task forms part of the vocation of the lay faithful, acting on their initiative, individually or in associations."

The Synod of Bishops recognizes that a priest can exercise his political rights personally and vote according to his conscience. As stated in the *Enchiridion Vaticanum*, IV, 1195, in circumstances where there are legitimate differences regarding political, social, and economic choices, priests, like all other citizens, have the right to make their own choices. However, the Synod also reminds us that political choices are inherently contingent and never fully adequate to serve as a lasting way of interpreting the Gospel. Priests, witnesses of things to come, must maintain a certain distance from political office or any political involvement. A priest's expression of personal choice is limited by the various demands of his priestly ministry. Amid socio-political realities, a priest should be a strong sign of unity to preach the Gospel convincingly. He must avoid division and respect the maturity of his people in making political choices (*Enchiridion Vaticanum*, IV, 1194). He must not do what might create enemies by taking political positions that cause distrust of the people or cause the faithful he pastors to distance themselves from him.

The 1983 formulation of the norms of Canon Law encourages priests to actively foster harmony and peace. However, it also cautions against their involvement in practical politics due to the potential for causing divisions among the congregation. Canon 287, 1 states, "Clergy should always foster peace and harmony as strongly as possible based on the justice that must be maintained between human beings." Yet, several canons regulate the manner and intensity of priest involvement in politics. Canon 285.3 asserts, "clerics are prohibited from holding public office which requires participation in the exercise of civil power."

Furthermore, "clerics are not to take an active part in political parties and the management of trade unions, except when, in the judgment of the competent ecclesiastical authority, this is necessary to protect the rights of the Church or to promote the general welfare" (Canon 287.2) [1]. This last canon allows for political involvement if deemed necessary by competent authorities. Priests may engage in politics if permitted by competent authority because it is considered valuable and necessary to protect the rights of the Church or promote the general welfare

### **3.2.1 Political Participation in Priestly Ministry**

The primary mission of a priest is religious, not political, economic, or social. However, within this religious mission, the priest performs the function of light, salt, and energy, illuminating and animating the people's lives to align with divine law (GS 42). The Second Vatican Council stated that the joys and hopes, sorrows and anxieties of today's people, especially the poor and neglected, are the joys and hopes, sorrows and anxieties of Christ's disciples. Priests should bear witness to their faith by entering all the lives of believers, including the political realm. They should provide enlightenment that every political action aims to establish the Kingdom of God, characterized by love, justice, equality, and mutual prosperity [2].

Political participation among priests is usually imbued with concern for social justice, general welfare, and harmony of social and economic views between the priest and his congregation. Priests must fight for evangelical values, such as inclusiveness, options for the poor, human rights, solidarity, and subsidiarity, and the common good (Canon 747, 1) [1]. All these evangelical values are the soul of a priest's political struggle and in building a political order that is just, civilized, and directed towards the public interest, especially the poor, weak,

and marginalized. Therefore, a priest's political actions are not directed at gaining power or occupying public office.

According to Pope John Paul II, it is impossible to separate the Gospel testimony today one hundred per cent from politics. God himself entered human history and, as a human, became a historical subject who had great political influence. Consequently, it is impossible for a priest to completely free himself from politics in his duties. The priest is not of this world and cannot choose this world to be his dream (John 17, 14-16; PO 3). On the other hand, the Pope also emphasized that priests are called to work for justice and peace, but they must not be involved in political campaigns or political struggles for power.

A priest's political involvement is a manifestation of his service to God and His people. A priest's political actions are closely related to his mission to seek the safety and welfare of his people. His political actions truly served the people. The basic commitment of his political struggle is establishing the kingdom of God. If the government does politics with an iron fist, then a priest does it with love. The commitment to love must have socio-religious overtones. His involvement in politics is not to gain power but to build the values of God's kingdom: love, peace, truth, and justice. His involvement opens up moral insight and faith in every political dynamic [22].

Priests are responsible for imparting Catholic doctrine, even when it intersects with politics. However, it is crucial not to diminish doctrine to mere politics. For instance, the issue of abortion must be addressed from the pulpit. Still, it should be clarified that abortion is not merely a political issue—it is a significant moral issue of our time. The truth must be communicated firmly and generously, and if it offends someone's political sensibilities, so be it. Doctrine cannot be concealed, nor can it be reduced to the level of citizenship. Priests are educators of the Catholic faith and moral law. They are obligated to teach about life and human dignity, the dignity of marriage and the family, war and peace, the needs of the poor, and justice demands.

In many instances, the Catholic priest wields considerable influence due to his position, holy character, advanced education, and aligning his interests with his congregation's. Many people believe priests' political struggles are generally conducted in the people's interests. In exercising appropriate influence over the electorate, the priest can advise, recommend, plead, delineate the true line of moral duty, explain why one candidate should be preferred over another, and, if deemed necessary, leverage the full weight of his character.

Until the Second Vatican Council, the Church was not always positive about accepting the modern model of democracy and its expansion into the social and economic realms due to its wariness of anticlerical socialistic tendencies. When Catholic social activists were deemed too extreme in social conflicts, the Church hierarchy attempted to curb their excesses. These events include the Priest-Worker movement in France in the 1940s and 1950s and liberation theology in Latin America in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Some Catholic priests and lay activists have sometimes tended to support far-right leaders such as Francisco Franco and António de Oliveira Salazar, as well as military regimes in Latin America. As a result, many workers involved in the labour movement joined social democratic and communist parties, which were sometimes secular and called for revolution against old values, including religious and Church teachings.

### **3.2.2 Priests in Practical Politics**

Historically, before the canonical ban imposed by Pope John Paul II in 1980, priests—including Benedictine monks, bishops, and future cardinals—were permitted to hold public office. So far, a minimum of twenty-three Catholic priests have served as ambassadors, chancellors, representatives, prime ministers, and presidents in 11 countries since the 18th century. European countries that elect or appoint Catholic priests include France, Germany,

Poland, Austria, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic. Priests serve in public office in Latin America, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Paraguay, the Dominican Republic, Canada, and the United States. Several studies found the significant influences of priests in the political decisions of their congregations [6] [7] [8]. For example, the parish priest mostly influenced parishioners' attitudes towards the death penalty [9] or the ideology of their congregation [8], including the spirit of nationalism in Ireland [10] and reconciling the ideology of liberty with the Church's traditional teachings during French revolution [11]. Many priests become informal political leaders when religious issues intersect with prominent political issues [12]. Even after a canonical prohibition, priests still became members of the legislature or executive leaders even though they had to choose laicization or leave the priesthood.

Pope John Paul II prohibited priests Robert Drinan, Cardinal Fernando, and Jean Bertrand Aristide from engaging in politics as their involvement was perceived to cause scandal among the people. Their political struggle had the potential to reduce Christian values to certain political ideologies and even rationalize or profane transcendent Christian teachings. Since then, the Pope has emphasized that practical politics is a layman's duty. Priests are not social workers, political leaders, or political party officials. Practical politics can cause societal divisions, whereas a priest is a unifier.

The prohibition on priests from being involved in practical politics has existed since the early Church, as evidenced by the Church leadership's efforts to establish various rules that control priests' involvement in politics. Priests are prohibited from getting involved in practical politics because politics is not commensurate with the priest's vocation, which demands total commitment as a spiritual servant. Practising politics can endanger the integrity of the priesthood's dignity and the clergy's status. With practical politics, the freedom and discipline of priests disappear because they have to submit to worldly leaders. When priests engage in politics, it has the potential to damage the good name of the Church and cause divisions among its people.

Practical politics means participating directly in the struggle for world power and public office. This can be done for oneself or a particular party or to help other people gain political power by applicable regulations. Therefore, priests are prohibited from openly campaigning about themselves, other people, or certain parties. Priests can engage in politics through various non-political institutions to channel the aspirations of their people. Here, the priest is involved not in obtaining public office but primarily in changing and improving public policy to favour society and produce justice and prosperity for citizens. They appear as moral figures who fight for social justice and general welfare. They can do this through demonstrations or peaceful rallies, expressing their struggle through writings, lectures, and speeches, which are packaged proportionally and fairly. They can also make people aware of their rights and obligations as citizens and find solutions to social problems. In all their political struggles, priests manifested concern for social justice and general welfare [22].

When priests engage in politics, they must not side with one political party. Priests belong to all people regardless of political party. The priest must embrace all people from any party. They do not direct their people to choose one party and be hostile to other parties. They are tasked with motivating to form a Christian conscience in building a political order where the values of the kingdom of God find their embodiment. Through his teachings, the priest tries to inspire political morals and ethics (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 44). The priest encouraged his people to apply the imperatives of the Gospel in political life.

On the contrary, a priest's neutral stance should not eliminate his prophetic critical function towards politicians who justify any means, including negative and destructive ones such as money politics, character assassinations, and hoaxes. The reality shows a moral decline in all



areas of social life, especially politics, which can endanger or destroy our nation's unity, future, and safety. Many unabashedly exploit their positions, roles, and opportunities to enrich themselves, their families, relatives, close friends, or their groups. The less privileged easily become victims of various forms of intimidation, manipulation, and eviction, which often destroy the foundation of personal life, family, and society. Time and again, society's sense of justice has been seriously violated.

It is worth noting that the world is no longer a paradise but has become a hell where human rights are trampled on. The rulers acted arbitrarily by justifying persecution, torture, and murder. In such situations, the priest cannot remain silent, neutral, or wash his hands. Silence, neutrality, or washing one's hands in situations of injustice will justify and perpetuate oppressive actions. They will feel comfortable with their actions without fear of any party. However, when the Church speaks out, through sermons, the oppressors are disturbed and change their attitude. The Second Vatican Council calls on priests to act together with the Church to be firm when defending fundamental human rights, fighting for the dignity of the human person, and realizing justice and peace. Priests, according to their position, can contribute to a more just world order, especially where grave injustice and oppression put human life at risk. A priest's political stance is not solely based on the options of a particular political party or the ideology of a particular party but primarily on Christian concerns for the poor, weak, and neglected.

In politics, priests do not appear to condemn anyone, not to spread hatred or incite revenge against anyone. As followers of Christ, the King of Love and Truth, priests should be present as witnesses of love and truth, especially among the weak people. Priests are present to uphold justice, empower the weak, balance rights and obligations, and realize the nobility of human dignity

#### **4 Conclusion**

As human beings, priests possess fundamental political rights, including actively participating in governance. However, these political rights are adapted to their role as shepherds of the people, carrying out God's mission of salvation for their congregation. In executing this mission, priests cannot be detached from politics, particularly because the people they serve are often victims of economic, social, and political injustice. The involvement of priests in politics is not for the acquisition of power but primarily for the liberation of their people from suffering and injustice. In politics, priests certainly adhere to the principles of Christian faith and morals.

In line with this, priests should not engage in political parties or other practical political games but should participate in indirect political activities. Canonical legal norms encourage priests to advocate for and promote peace built on the foundations of justice. Priests must defend human rights with all their might and always provide a moral assessment of matters that intersect with the political order if they are related to human rights or the salvation of souls (canon 1752). As public figures, priests are symbols of unity who are relied upon to reconcile and harmonize others without discrimination, injustice, violence, or conflict. Politics is the domain most susceptible to conflict and hostility. Priests are, of course, involved in politics to protect the rights of all people and ensure justice and mutual prosperity.

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