

## EDITORIAL

# THE NEED TO VOTE

Probably never before in the history of the country has the accent been placed more emphatically on the individual Catholic and his civic duty to register for voting than at this hour.

Why the urgency? There is of course the consideration that to vote is a matter of Christian responsibility. To vote in fact, has the highest priority among our civic duties. It is a duty—not merely a citizen's right—founded on the assumption that we must keep our country strong and defend the freedom with which we have been blessed.

In recent years our Popes have been most emphatic in underscoring the moral obligation that every Christian has, as a citizen of the State, to get out and vote.

Pius XII, speaking to the women of Rome in 1945, said: "In your social and political activity much depends on the legislation of the State and the administration of local bodies. Accordingly, the electoral ballot in the hands of Catholic woman is an important means towards fulfillment of her strict duty in conscience, especially at the present times."

The very next year—this time to the pastors and Lenten preachers—he reiterated the same fundamental Christian duty: "The exercise of the right to vote is a grave responsibility, at least when there is involved a question of electing those whose office it will be to formulate the constitution and laws of the country... particularly those laws which affect, for example, the sanctification of holy days, marriage, family and school, and those which give direction, according to justice and equity, to the various phases of social life."

These words of the Holy Father, pronounced in another place and time, when viewed against the backdrop of present national conditions acquire a more strident force and meaningful urgency. We are in the Philippines, as in other countries, living through

an era of revolution and are witnessing many strange voices and hearing many deceptive slogans. We are faced as a nation in making decisions, decisions that quite rightly demand an heroic degree of courage and wisdom, and more personal sacrifices. A thousand questions which are not merely political but, above and beyond all else, moral are clamoring, pressing for an immediate attention and solution: war on poverty, peace and order, direction of education of our youth, an ebbing sense of integrity, fairness and decency, and not the least of all, the search for identity and recognition in the society of nations.

To refuse to vote, to stand idly by and "let George do it!" is a grave and fatal sin of omission. For in these times and conditions, the selection of responsible candidates is one of the most pressing imperatives of our national life, not to say survival. It is not hard to understand this. If a democracy is to survive and remain strong, its citizens must show interest in choosing good men; otherwise, this form of government will soon fall into decadence.

Voting is an exercise of the virtue of patriotism. One can make it a good habit by using it well or can destroy its real meaning by not using it or by using it badly.

The choice is up to each individual citizen. That choice must be done come November this year.