

SACBC STATEMENT ON PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS IN POLITICS (25/1/94)

While we firmly believe that the Church has an important function in the political life of a society, we do not accept that priests and members of religious institutes accepting public office and exercising political power best fulfil this function.

The canon law of the Catholic Church expressly prohibits this (Canon 285, 672).

In fulfilment of its spiritual mission, the Church is committed to the protection and promotion of human rights, the common good of all people and the democratic values without which there can be no peace and justice. The Church has a high moral and educational role.

It fulfils this role best by remaining independent of political structures, serving the common good of all and avoiding the divisive tendencies that result all too easily from involvement in practical politics.

We are aware that for grave reasons bishops may authorise priests and members of religious institutes to seek public office but do not see the need for this at the present time.

There are more than enough competent lay people to hold public office. We encourage them in their task, promise to pray for them and look forward to supporting them by helping to cultivate the social attitudes and values that favour sound politics.