

A Statement on the election of
FERNANDO LUGO
as President of Paraguay

(Note: This statement is to be quoted in its entirety or not at all. Quoting only portions of it will misrepresent the opinion contained in the statement)

(1) We wish to express our solidarity with the people of Paraguay and share their joy at the election of Fernando Lugo as their new president. We also wish to extend our congratulations to president-elect Fernando Lugo and assure him of our prayers so that he may lead the nation with wisdom and courage, justice and compassion.

(2) At the same time, we wish to reiterate that in principle we are not in favor of priests or religious entering politics. Our vocation and mission do have a political dimension. Yet, we believe that this dimension is expressed by carrying out our prophetic and pastoral role in society, and not in involvement in partisan politics, the attainment of political power, or the assumption of a government position.

(3) However, as a concerned citizen of Paraguay, Fernando Lugo felt that he had to respond to the call of the people. His option for the poor was seen as a source of genuine hope for the majority of the people of Paraguay. We respect his personal discernment and the clear choice of the people in the election. Our own hope is that his experience as a religious missionary priest and bishop will help him to bring about the change desired by the people. Meaningful change will be achieved if he succeeds in changing the hearts and minds of the people – those he serves and those who serve with him.

(4) Fernando Lugo is a member of the Society of the Divine Word, but as of his appointment as bishop on the 5th of March 1994 he ceased to be under the jurisdiction of the superiors of the Congregation and became subject directly to the Pope (can. 705). As a consequence of his decision to enter into politics in Paraguay, his ministerial faculties as a priest and as a bishop have been suspended by the Vatican. It is expected that the Vatican authorities will in due time clarify his status in the Church.

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Superior General
Society of the Divine Word
Rome: 22 April 2008