

The news this week in our fair province has been dominated by coverage of the election and its surprising outcome. It's no shock that this momentous development would receive such attention. While the dramatic turn of events at the Alberta Legislature is certainly newsworthy, I am hard pressed to recall any election that does not get equally as much coverage, analysis and reaction. Understandably, we are fascinated by politics- elections especially- because they are so influential upon our day to day living.

What is always so ironic about democratic elections is that they are *never* received with unanimous joy. There will invariably be individuals, possibly even as many as one-less-than-half of voters, whose wishes were not realized. A vote cast is not a guarantee of success and a party elected is not a guarantee of satisfaction. Elections are held up as the apex of demonstrated freedom, and yet, it is rare for freedom to be more distressing than when it doesn't go your way.

It has been observed by various political theorists that in a democracy, people receive the government they deserve. If that is true, time will tell what Albertans have coming to them. I believe the point behind this statement is that if you have chosen your leaders, in theory, they should be a representation of the majority. It is difficult, therefore, to comprehend why the *vast* majority of democratic citizens only ever *complain* about all of their politicians, though in fairness, perhaps the issue lies in the unfortunate scenario where the person

elected turns out to be different than the voters had been led to believe he or she would be. It is frustrating when the ones you have chosen disappoint.

Now, this has been a lot of political banter to get me to the spiritual application of my homily. However, a careful treatment of our common and fresh experience of democratic elections will help us understand something about both our Lord and ourselves, especially given today's gospel. This passage is rich with images and sayings which evoke lots of emotion. So much so, in fact, that it was difficult to narrow down what to preach about, but in light of the election, I decided upon verse 16 of this 15th chapter of St. John, "You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last..."

No mention of an election or any campaigning but there is something in common: our Lord *chose* His first Apostles and He continues, to this very day, to choose each of His disciples. This consideration gives cause to wonder, does our Lord ever feel about His disciples the same way we feel about our politicians? Look at it from the perspective of the expectations we have of our elected leaders. I stumbled upon a website which attempted to compile a list of the top five proven qualities of successful and appreciated political leaders. They were as follows: honesty, compassion, integrity, confidence & flexibility. These seem like reasonably expected characteristics of those in public office, but shouldn't they apply to everyone, and not merely elected officials?

It seems highly probable that Jesus equally desires His disciples to have honesty, compassion, integrity, confidence and flexibility as we desire from our politicians. After all, the reason we expect these things is precisely because we have chosen these individuals. We wouldn't have chosen them if we thought they would disappoint. Unfortunately, the consistent complaints these days about our public servants is that they are dishonest just to win votes; they feel entitled to exemptions and special privileges; and they mismanage the resources which are entrusted to their care and administration. If we are honest, however, are these admittedly troubling situations the exclusive temptations of politicians? Couldn't anyone who has been chosen or elected for anything face the same? It would seem so, and therefore, by extension, having been *chosen* by our Lord, *do we* ever disappoint Him?

Have we ever made resolutions with God about virtue or spiritual discipline that we have failed to keep? Is that any different than lying to win the vote? Isn't it true that sometimes we complain to our Lord that since we are "so good, and trying to follow Him" that we should be spared certain hardships? Sounds a lot like an attitude of entitlement. And speaking of the mismanagement of resources, have any one of us here been perfectly faithful stewards of all the graces God offers? Have we ever been indifferent towards the sacraments of our faith; ever

decided we had better things to do than go to Sunday Mass? It's hard to think of a greater resource entrusted to our care than the Holy Eucharist.

Now, it is not my intention to turn this homily into a major guilt trip about us being poor disciples. That being said, the results of our recent election have been declared by many to be a "wake up call" to Albertans. So let the words of today's gospel be a wake up call to each of us. Not unlike our politicians, whom we so easily and flippantly judge, we have also been chosen. And like the failure of so many of our leaders on so many counts, it is naive to suppose we ourselves aren't equally as guilty in the practice of our faith.

Let's imagine ideal politicians who strove their best to live up to the high ideals to which they were held. Suppose it was the honour of knowing they had been chosen which was the motivation to serve their electors with the highest caliber. We would be very grateful for such public servants and we would be well served by them. Why not hold ourselves, then, to a similar standard in relation to our blessed Lord? He has chosen us and called us disciples and friends. In gratitude, we must give Him the best that we have to offer; for doing so is not merely the job of politicians.