

# Cardinal urges Catholics to follow Christianity in election

LYON, France - A French cardinal has urged Catholics to follow Christian principles in the April 22 presidential election.

"I'd like Christians to be Christians and speak out more," said Cardinal Philippe Barbarin of Lyon. He said that meant "defending what, in the view of Christians, is right for everyone."

Twelve candidates are vying to succeed French President Jacques Chirac.

In an April 9 TV interview, Cardinal Barbarin said he saw the emergence of a "new, exceptionally dynamic generation" of French Catholics whose faith had developed outside "previous frameworks and structures."

"The terms right and left don't fit Christians, whose actions should be guided by the love Christ shows for people and for life," Cardinal Barbarin said.

"We should remember democracy is only a means of action. It's the best we have, but it isn't God and it can sometimes lose its head," he added.

In a statement in his diocese's *Eglise de Lyon* magazine, Cardinal Barbarin said Christian politicians were "called to show a coherence between their faith and engagement, the Gospel spirit and service to the current society," adding that Catholics should oppose "a capitalism which becomes purely financial."

Although a record 44.5 million French citizens registered to vote, 42 percent said in an April 8 poll that they were still undecided.

In a March 27 speech at Lourdes, the president of the bishops' conference, Cardinal Jean-Pierre Ricard, said the church could not "give orders" to voters, but added that Catholic social teaching offered "useful criteria for reflection."

The cardinal said key priorities for assessing candidates should include their support for "families founded on marriage between man and woman and open to

procreation,” as well as their opposition to same-sex unions, euthanasia, the increasing economic gap and expulsion of immigrants.

“More than ever, our country needs strong convictions and a vision of mankind which is clear about defending rights and recalling duties,” said Cardinal Ricard.

Catholics traditionally make up two-thirds of France’s more than 62 million inhabitants, although fewer than one in 10 attend Sunday Mass.

In an early April questionnaire by the Catholic La Vie weekly, four leading candidates described themselves as Catholics; six other presidential hopefuls said they were atheists.