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## **Foreword..**

A Pastoral letter is an open letter addressed by a bishop/s to specific recipients who could be the clergy, religious, laity, government or the public in general, containing either general admonition, instruction or consolation, or directions for behaviour in particular circumstances. Such letters are normally sent out regularly at particular ecclesiastical seasons but also as need arises in response or in anticipation of particular events and situations. Priests are required to read out pastoral letters of their bishop/s to their congregations.

It is with joy therefore that we welcome the publication of this compendium of the pastoral letters of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference since its inception in 1969. Apart from being grounded in the Social Teaching of the Church, the pastoral letters are in a way a record of important historical events and situations in our country. By simply looking at the year of publication and the theme/s being addressed we gain some insight into what was affecting the nation and the Church most on the pastoral level. The pastoral letters will serve as an important resource for both academic and pastoral purposes.


We thank the Bishops for the profound teaching and guidance contained in these pastoral letters. We also thank all those who helped ZCBC in compiling these pastoral letters and publishing them. This compendium of ZCBC pastoral letters will be cherished for many years to come.

**Fr. Fradereck Chiromba**

# **OUR MISSION TO TEACH**

Pastoral Statement on Education  
issued by  
the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops'  
Conference

Lent 1987



Patrick Chakaipa, Archbishop of Harare  
Henry Karlen, OMM, Bishop of Bulawayo  
Francis Mugadzi, Administrator of the Diocese of Gweru  
Alexio Muchabaiwa, Bishop of Mutare  
Ignatius Prieto, SMI, Bishop of Hwange  
Helmut Reckter, SJ, Bishop of Chinhoyi  
Patrick Mutume, Auxiliary Bishop of Mutare

## **CHRIST THE TEACHER SENDS US.**

**These are the principles that guide us in OUR MISSION TO TEACH:**

### **CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND DUTIES**

*(From the Vatican II Declaration on Christian Education)*

1) "Since every man of whatever race, condition, and age is endowed with the dignity of a person, he has an inalienable right to an education corresponding to his proper destiny and suited to his native talents, his sex, his cultural background, and his ancestral heritage." (no. 1)

2) "Since every Christian has become a new creature by rebirth from water and the Holy Spirit, so that he may be called what he truly is, a child of God, he is entitled to a Christian education." (no.2)

3) "Since parents have conferred life on their children, they have a most solemn obligation to educate their offspring. Hence, parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children." (no. 3)

4) "While belonging primarily to the family, the task of imparting education requires the help of society as a whole." (no. 3)

5) "The office of educating belongs by a unique title to the Church. "... As a mother, the church is bound to give these children of hers the kind of education through which their entire lives can be penetrated with the spirit of Christ, while at the same time she offers her services to all peoples by way of promoting the full development of the human person, for the welfare of earthly society and the building of a world fashioned more humanly." (no. 3)

6) "Among all the agencies of education the school has a special importance .... While it cultivates the intellect with unremitting attention, the school ripens the capacity for right judgement, provides an introduction into the cultural heritage won by past generations, promotes a sense of values and readies for professional life.

The school sets up a kind of centre whose operation and progress deserve to engage the joint participation of families, teachers, various kinds of cultural, civic, and religious groups, civil society, and the entire human community." (no. 5)

7) "Beautiful ... is the vocation of all those who assist parents in fulfilling their task ... by undertaking the role of school teacher." (no. 5)

"Let them perform their services as partners of the parents." (no. 8)

8) "The Church is keenly aware of her very grave obligation to give zealous attention to the moral and religious education of all her children. To those large numbers of them who are being trained in schools which are not Catholic, she needs to be present with her special affection and helpfulness." (no. 7)

"The Church's involvement in the field of education is demonstrated especially by the Catholic school."

The Council "proclaims ... the Church's right freely to establish and run schools of every kind at every level ... The exercise of this right makes a supreme contribution to freedom of conscience, the protection of parental rights, and the progress of culture itself." (no. 8)

"The Church feels a most cordial esteem for those Catholic schools, found especially where the Church is newly established, which contain large numbers of non-Catholic students." (no. 9)

## **1. Introduction**

At a time when much thought is being given to education in Zimbabwe, to its structures and its future direction, it is appropriate for us and all the faithful to consider our Christian vision of and commitment to education in our country. Tremendous strides have been made by the Government and the people in the expansion and improvement of our educational

system, particularly in providing opportunities of education to all Zimbabweans and in designing curricula which are more in keeping with the goals and the needs of our new nation. The Church has supported these progressive measures by expanding its educational facilities, adapting the programmes at its schools and recruiting teachers to assist in the rural areas. We hope to continue making our contribution in the future.

## **2. The Rights of the Individual and the Needs of Society in Education**

Pope Pius XII declared that all persons "of whatever race, condition or age, in virtue of their dignity as human persons, have an inalienable right to education" (quoted in G.E. 1). This is in full accord with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of Man (United Nations).

But it is also our belief that no individual should be encouraged to think that he is entitled to develop his own particular talents without reference to the needs of the society in which he lives. It is the role of Government to provide education so as to develop the capabilities of each person in so far as this is compatible with the needs of the community as a whole. Government has a responsibility to plan education with a view to the projected needs of the entire nation.

At the same time it is important to recognise that the individual cannot find fulfilment, let alone work successfully, without some freedom of choice in his education which will affect his whole future. This requires a balance between the rights of the individual and the needs of society at large.

### **3. Education Guided by Ultimate Values**

Where there is no clear orientation towards ultimate values, educators are like the blind leading the blind. African tradition has never considered the human person as limited to a material and earthly life; it recognises in each person the presence and power of the spiritual. Even though this recognition can be expressed in different ways, the presence of God permeates African life, as the presence of a higher being, personal and mysterious (Pope Paul VI, Message to Africa, 8).

Christ came to proclaim and initiate the salvation and liberation of the human person. All people are called to share in the divine life of their Creator, and by so doing to grow in awareness of the world around them. No other creature on earth, not even the most sophisticated machine, is endowed in this way. Only the human person can respond to this invitation. Christian education confronts the student with this vision.

### **4. Education for Liberation**

We have only to read or hear the daily news reports to realise that man is still enslaved by sin. To the Christian, education is a liberating experience. It enables people to develop their potential in order to achieve their full dignity as sons and daughters of God, able to share in God's creative work, to demand justice for themselves and for others, and to work selflessly for others.

This education teaches the liberation from enslavement to our selfish passions, and stresses the unity of all people as children of God, as brothers and sisters to be respected and loved (G & S: 17, 19 & 31).

But it is unrealistic to believe that we can achieve our total liberation by our own efforts alone: Christ is our liberator. Nor can we determine the point in time when total liberation will be achieved or even assume that it has been achieved already: we cannot rest yet, we must keep striving tirelessly for complete freedom from the slavery of sin.



Faith in Christ on the one hand and our own human effort on the other are no contradiction: as members of His Body we are united with Christ in one single effort striving for our total liberation.

Christian education, as regards the role of the teacher as well as that of the students, is part of this one great effort.

## **5. The Spiritual in Human Development**

Education should develop the person, intellectually emotionally, physically and in the use of practical skills. But for the whole person to grow, education should also develop the spiritual side of a person.

It is only then that he can combat the problems that threaten our nation from within: materialism, selfishness and corruption. With a sound spiritual development our people will be able fearlessly to speak the truth, courageously to work for justice, unselfishly to overcome the divisions that still linger on in our country, and so create a nation of peace and unity.

Man's greatest achievements emerge from a highly developed spiritual life; most obviously in terms of heroism and sacrifice even to the extent of giving his life for others and thereby finding true life forever in the presence of God (John 12, 23-25). Heroism is possible in our young people. Many gave their young lives so that their brothers and sisters could grow up and develop in a peaceful and just Zimbabwe.

## **6. Educating the Conscience**

Christian teaching has always stressed the importance of the use of free will; people have the freedom to choose whether they do good or evil (G & S: 13 & 17). Therefore an essential element of education is sound moral teaching and development of the ability and courage to think and judge for oneself.

Too often people blindly and unthinkingly follow the mob. In order to protect them against exploitation by the selfish adult world, the young must be trained to see the world around them, to understand what they see, and then to judge in all wisdom what contribution they are called to make to this world (G.E. 5).

This is the only protection we have against exploitation either by individuals or organisations. Such education will also foster the emergence of people who can lead our nation along the path of progress to a prosperous future with justice for all our citizens.

Education should equip young people to take what is good from the modern world, in areas such as science, technology, modern political systems and administration. However, our pressing material needs in Zimbabwe tempt schools to offer instruction rather than education. Technological change alone leaves many problems in the world unsolved. Our schools will only serve Zimbabwe truly if their teachings ally science with conscience.

Therefore pupils should also be made aware of the evils brought to Africa from the modern world and learn how to combat rather than passively and unthinkingly adopt these imported practices.

Among the evils threatening Africa today are the high rate of divorce; destruction of family life and rejection of the aged; individualism and the encouragement of a sense of class superiority; the immorality of many modern business practices which result in the exploitation of the poor (cf. *Populorum Progressio*, 41).

## **7. Church and Government in Education**

"The Church is keenly aware of her very grave obligation to give zealous attention to the moral and religious education of all her children". (G.E. 7). This concern of the Church "is demonstrated especially by the Catholic school". (G.E. 8).

The Church does not dispute the overall responsibility of the State for education; likewise the State should respect and welcome the contribution made by the Church to the education of the country's young citizens (cf. G.E. 6). The religious liberty which we enjoy in the pluralistic society of Zimbabwe does indeed assure the right of Church schools to exist, thus contributing "to freedom of conscience, the protection of parental rights and the progress of culture itself" (G.E. 8). The Prime Minister stated in 1982: "If we compare Government and Church policy on education, there is a lot of common ground and identity of viewpoint which should make for a firm partnership between the two institutions on the subject". (31. 7. 82).

## **8. The Church's Concern for the Poor and Disabled**

In 1978 the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference made the following declaration: "We believe that the Church has a care for everyone in society especially the poor, for the building of families and Christian Communities, and that its primary role in all fields of education is religious formation" (Role of the Church in Education).

Too frequently in the past and still in various parts of the world today, education has been the privilege of the rich minority who can afford to pay high fees for school. Speaking before the United Nations General Assembly Pope Paul VI proclaimed, "We make our own the voice of the poor, the disinherited, the suffering, of those who hunger and thirst for justice, for the dignity of life, for freedom for well-being and progress".

In the same spirit, various religious congregations in the Universal Church have started educational institutions for the poor and deprived. Indeed many religious congregations of sisters and brothers have been founded specifically for this purpose. The effect of this has been as important for the rural poor of Africa, Asia and Latin America today as it was for the deprived and poor of the cities of the industrial revolution. Of the 123 Catholic schools in Zimbabwe 84 are in the rural areas, mostly in the communal lands.

Those with special disabilities enjoy the same rights to education. They have gifts and talents bestowed on them by God by which they can contribute to their own fulfilment and to the enrichment of society. Often it is the able-bodied who are too blind to see these potentialities which are calling out to be developed (cf. John 9:39-41).

Following the example of Christ, the Church has a special care for the oppressed. So long as people are illiterate, unskilled and uneducated, they can be exploited by those who misuse their own education to pursue self-centred ends. This is true at every level from the exploitation of the under-developed nations by the more developed and therefore more powerful nations, down to the village level where the illiterate peasant can be dominated and denied his rights by those with a little more education. In the light of this tendency the Catholic Bishops in Zimbabwe stated: "We believe that the Church, considering the needs of the poor and disadvantaged, should stress non-formal education programmes in literacy, vocational training, agriculture, health etc. and should assist in raising the social and economic standards of the poor" (Role of the Church in Education).

## **9. The Role and Rights of Parents**

"Since parents have conferred life on their children, they have a solemn obligation to educate their off-spring. Hence, parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children" (G.E. 3).

The family home is the principal school in which children will discover and develop their own identity, character and gifts and will be trained in the social virtues.

Parents are assisted by society as a whole in their right and duty both as parents and educators. This is a role and right which cannot be taken from them. It is therefore up to all those entrusted with the education of children to respect the wishes of the parents.

Parents should have as much freedom of choice of schools as is compatible with the common good. This is especially important with

regard to the parents' right to educate their children in conformity with their moral and religious convictions (G.E. 6, Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, 26 & 18, Constitution of Zimbabwe, 19, Charter of Rights of the Family, 5).

Not all parents who send their children to our schools are Christians, but they do so wishing that their sons and daughters will leave school not only with good examination results, but also as people of moral integrity and sound character (G.E. 20).

The parents of Zimbabwe are to be praised for their whole-hearted commitment to the education of their children. The sacrifices they make to build schools in their locality and to find necessary secondary school fees are truly admirable.

But their involvement should not be limited merely to financial matters. Both parents and teachers should form a team of mutual co-operation and respect working together for the sound development of the children.

Parents must ensure that they remain well informed about their children's progress, encourage and exhort them and know about their activities outside the school. Frequently, once the child is at school, parents relinquish all responsibility to the teacher. Parents' associations and Parent-teacher associations are important. They have the right to be vigilant about the moral and religious education and values of the school.

Sometimes in Zimbabwe, especially in rural areas, parents are unaware of their rights, do not have the necessary freedom to insist on their rights or fear to exercise these rights when it means confrontation with teachers more highly educated than themselves. Conscientisation programmes for the parents themselves are very valuable in correcting the situation.

## **10. The Role and Responsibility of the Teacher**

Teaching is not merely another job, or a way of earning money; it is a vocation (G.E. 5). Christ himself was called "teacher" and his example of the love, patience and respect he gave to his disciples is the guide to all Christian teachers. The teacher is called to bring knowledge of the wonders of God's creation to his pupils. He is called to continue the work of Christ in bringing his pupils out of the darkness of ignorance into the light of the truth. He is sent to extend the salvation and liberation which Christ brought, so that all students under his care can grow to the full capacities their Creator has planned for them.

Heads of schools and educational administrators need to be aware that authentic authority presupposes a spirit of service and a strong sense of responsibility. It means giving their whole attention and dedicating all their working hours to the school. Only in this way can we be certain that teachers will be at their best, and students will be guaranteed a sound education. Teachers have been given a great responsibility as partners of parents in the education of children. While children are in their care, teachers take the place of parents. They are given a trust that must never be betrayed. The teacher's vocation is not merely to impart knowledge in the classroom, but to inspire by example, to lead by maturity and wisdom, to encourage by understanding and patience, and thus to share a Christian vision of the world (cf. G.E. 8, Lay Catholics in Schools). "The soundness and efficiency of a school are a matter not so much of good rules as of good teachers.... For their pupils they must have a pure and divine love ... and on that account have sincerely at heart the real good of families and of their country" (Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri*).

There are Catholic teachers in schools not administered by the Church as well as in her own institutions. The effectiveness of the Church's contribution in all these schools depends on the faith, integrity and commitment of these teachers who participate in the mission of Christ, the Teacher.

## **11. Needs of the Present Zimbabwe**

Realism is required by pupils, parents, teachers and Government in setting the goals of education for Zimbabwe. We would ensure that our education system is able to discover where the God-given talents of every student lie and then be equipped to develop them for the service of others and the fulfilment of the individual.

The educational system we have inherited leads many people to believe that there is only one road to follow: travelling from grade 7 to Z.J.C., to O levels, to A levels, to University; the only variable factor being how far along that road the student can reach.

Such an approach leads to frustration among those students whose talents will better be developed by following a more practical course, and to an ever-increasing flow of unemployed youths to the cities. We would like to congratulate the government in its efforts to train more teachers of practical subjects, equip more schools to teach these subjects, and devise a more appropriate examination system for Zimbabwe.

The Church is happy to offer its support in these endeavours because, "We believe that the Church's involvement in education should be a positive commitment to the development of the country and the needs and progress of the people. The Church should examine the traditional educational system and be prepared to give a lead in experimentation of new areas of educational practice and policy". (ZCBC, Role of the Church in Education).

## **12. Education towards Creativity for Development**

Our young people need to learn the skills required for the development of the nation. Development is a God-given opportunity for man to become a collaborator in the completion of God's creation. We human beings should share in God's plan by being creative and inventive. Therefore

education has to do more than make pupils learn facts by rote or develop skills. Only a creative person can see new possibilities in a given situation and can initiate change.

### **13. Culture and Christian Education**

We fully support Zimbabwe's search for its own genuine culture. It is culture that gives the country its identity. Diverse culture elements we have inherited must be integrated into one common culture to give us unity. Man in his entirety is a material and spiritual being; in his culture he 'materialises' his spiritual values in painting, sculpture, songs, stories and proverbs. These express his spiritual longing for freedom and love, and his desire for all he wants to be. It is through culture that man lives a truly human life (John Paul II, to UNESCO, 2. 6. 80).

Every culture is unique and has its own particular character; and yet it is also open to universal values, to humankind as a whole and indeed to God as the Lord of the Universe. That is why Christ could reveal God through one particular culture and yet communicate His Word universally to all cultures.

The Second Vatican Council pointed out that our era needs wisdom more than bygone ages and that the future of the world stands in peril unless wiser people are forthcoming. But at the same time many nations, poor in economic goods, are rich in wisdom (G & S: 15). African culture respects the primacy of the person before material goods, stresses discipline and generosity, love of the extended family with an appreciation of the community life found there, respect for their parents and for their ancestors.

Pupils should learn the rich wisdom of their culture. At the same time they have to learn to think creatively and intelligently and, in the light of new challenges, to evaluate traditional practices such as polygamy, lobola and the limited rights of woman (Paul VI: Message to Africa, 37).



## **14. Conclusion**

The Church promotes education in various ways. She regards the parents in the home as the prime educators, assisted by teachers in various types of schools. Parents receive special support from Catholic schools and non-formal groups in parishes and missions. In

her educational institutions the Church, in partnership with Government, strives to offer an education adapted to the changing conditions and the emerging needs and hopes of society, always steeped in a Christian vision of the world and man.

### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. How do we balance the demands of the individual student and the needs of society in education?

Think of your own children. Think of some individuals among your own students, their gifts and talents-how would you like to further their education to make the best possible use of their talents for the good of the country?

2. In what way can you give moral guidance to children

- a) as a parent,
- b) as a teacher?

3. What has our Christian faith to do with Development?

4. How can you further the religious development of your children

- a) as a parent,
- b) as a teacher?

5. What would you like to be the relationship between Government and the Church in education?

## **DOCUMENTATION**

### ***Church Documents***

***Gravissimum Educationis (G.E.):*** Declaration on Christian Education, Second Vatican Council, 28. 10. 65

***Gaudium et Spes (G & S):*** Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Second Vatican Council, 7. 12. 65.

***Divini Illius Magistri:*** Encyclical letter of Pope Pius XI on the Christian Education of Youth, 31. 12. 29.

***Populorum Progressio:*** Encyclical letter of Pope Paul VI on the Development of Peoples, 26. 3. 67.

***Address to the United Nations Assembly:*** Pope Paul VI, 4. 10. 65.

***Message to Africa:*** Pope Paul VI, 31. 10. 67.

***Address to U.N.E.S.C.O.:*** Pope John Paul II, 2. 6. 80.

***Address to the Federation of the Institutes of Educational Activities:*** Pope John Paul II, 28. 12. 85.

***Evangelisation of the Modern World:*** Third Synod of Bishops, 1974.

***Lay Catholics in Schools; Witnesses to Faith:*** Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, Rome, 1982.

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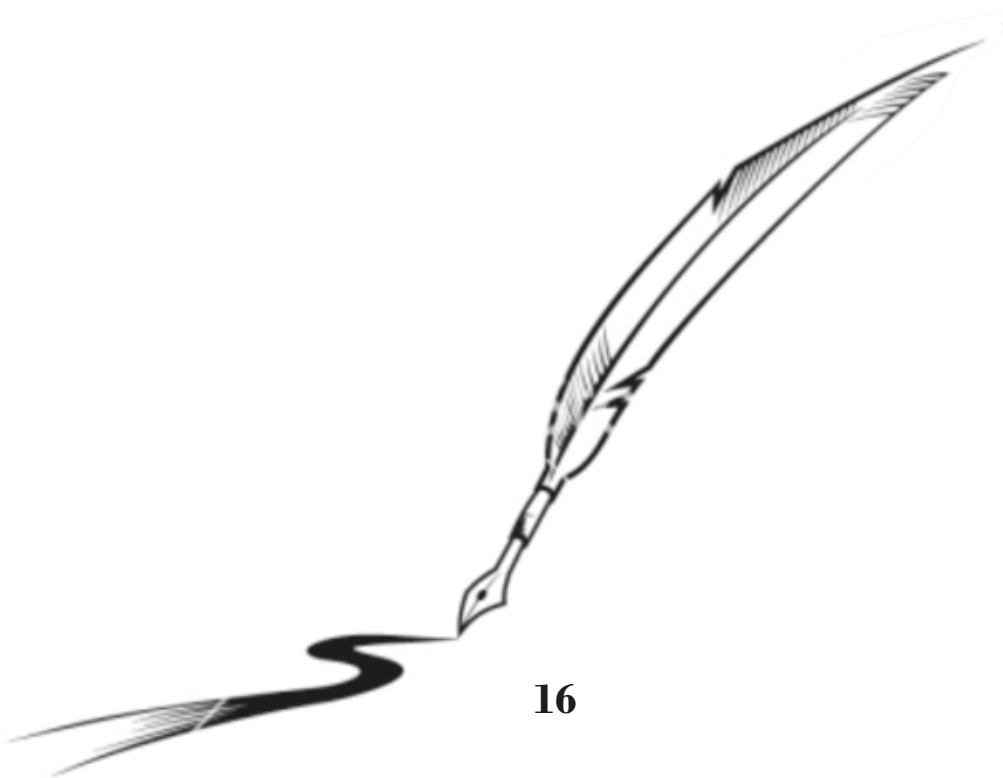
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Press statement of Prime Minister R.G. Mugabe 31. 7. 82.

# **AIDS AND OUR MORAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Pastoral Statement issued by  
Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops'  
Conference

October 1987



AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is spreading in our society and we would be lacking in our pastoral duty if we did not lend our voice to those helping to counteract the spread of this disease.

First of all we state that our primary concern is for AIDS' sufferers, their families and friends who also suffer much distress. We consider that this severe disease is a consequence of the law of nature. Misuse of alcohol or drugs creates serious health problems. The misuse of sex is the major cause of the spread of AIDS in our society and this, too, brings most serious health problems. AIDS may be seen, too, as God's answer to man disregard for His moral law (cf. Matthew 5, 27-52), but God is the God of compassion who bids us to be compassionate too (cf. Colossians 3, 12-15).

## **Modes of infection**

AIDS can be contracted by the use of an infected surgical needle or razor blade. This calls for special care by medical staff (which they are now taking) and the abandonment of the use of an inadequately sterilised razor blade for surgery by traditional healers.

But the main mode of transmission of this disease in Africa is by heterosexual contact and it is precisely here that all persons can help to stop its spread. Promiscuity is at the root of the problem. The disease is contracted during sexual intercourse with an infected person, male or female. Some medical authorities advocate the use of a condom during sexual intercourse to prevent infection. ' However, condoms are not completely reliable and their users can still contract AIDS and transmit it to others. Married persons who are sexually promiscuous can infect their wives or husbands. The only safe course is not to have sexual relations with an infected person.

## **Christian Morality**

In order to face this serious health and moral challenge we have to return to the source of morality and consider our attitude to human relationships and to sexuality within this context. Chastity before marriage, and fidelity to one's partner after marriage, should not be seen as impossible ideals in spite of prevalent sexual laxity. It may be that on account of fear of AIDS people will reform their moral standards. However, rather than on fear, we should seek to rest our moral standards the knowledge of God's love for us and to respond to His love by keeping His Law which forbids sexual promiscuity.

## **Traditional Values**

African traditional values reinforce the Christian Law in this regard. Virginity of both bride and bridegroom were highly praised and expected, with damages to pay if there was an infringement of virginity. So when the Church condemns both pre-marital and extra-marital sex it is keeping to our local traditions and not asking the/impossible.

## **Message for Youth**

We have a special message for our youth, both young men and young women, to resist the fashion of the day in matters of sexuality. They should try to see their companions as persons of immense worth and beauty and not sexual objects. They should look forward to joining a marriage partner of honesty and chastity and one whom they can be sure has not contracted the AIDS' virus.

We believe that both partners to a marriage should feel free to ask for an assurance that their future partner is free of infect even if this may mean taking blood tests to reassure themselves.

We would also urge government, for the health of the nation, to make

incipient AIDS (H.I.V. positive) a reportable disease in order to assess the size of the problem. Such H.I.V. positive persons should receive support and counselling.

## **Our response to the afflicted**

We wish our people to obtain accurate information from medical sources about the contraction and spread of this disease.

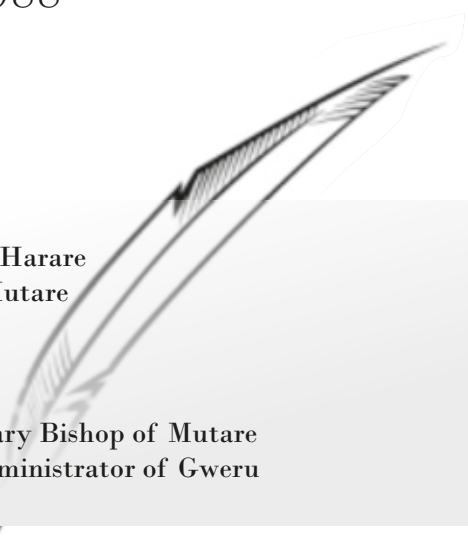
We say 'accurate' as we do not want people to panic but to assess the situation realistically, especially when called upon to deal with a person suffering from AIDS. This person should not be ostracised but, on the contrary, should receive love and the best care and attention. Compassion must be offered without any moral judgement about the person who is afflicted and suffering. He or she must be treated as Christ Our Lord treated the sick with love and, above all, respect for their God-given dignity.

This great scourge calls for a truly Christian response from our people. We shall find more and more AIDS' sufferers in our society and we should not abdicate all responsibility to the medical services which may become overtaxed. It is our duty, as well as our vocation, to offer any personal assistance we can, especially to terminal cases. Let us also support the measures of government and others to contain this disease, always keeping in mind our own moral standards and responsibilities.

# **AN EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE**

Letter by the Catholic Bishops of  
Zimbabwe  
on the Visit of Pope John Paul II to  
Zimbabwe

October 1988



Archbishop Patrick E. Chakaipa of Harare  
Bishop Alexio C. Muchabaiwa of Mutare  
Bishop Henry Karlen of Bulawayo  
Bishop Ignatius Prieto of Hwange  
Bishop Helmut Reckter of Chinoyi  
Bishop Patrick M. Mutume, Auxiliary Bishop of Mutare  
Mgr Francis Mugadzi, Diocesan Administrator of Gweru

**W**e, the Bishops of Zimbabwe, write to you today to give thanks for those wonderful days when our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II was with us here in Zimbabwe.

First and foremost we wish to thank the Lord for the strength he has given the Holy Father to undertake this arduous journey. We wish to thank the Lord for all the spiritual gifts lavished upon his people on this great occasion.

We wish to thank the Holy Father himself and all his Roman co-workers for coming to Zimbabwe to bless this young country and give it his message of peace and hope.

We are particularly pleased to be able through this letter to express our gratitude to you, our brothers and sisters in Zimbabwe, for all the many sacrifices you have made in preparing for the visit of the Holy Father and in actually coming to meet him.

We appreciate the warm welcome given to the Pope by all our fellow citizens.

We were very touched by the assistance and help we received also from fellow Christians of other churches. We wish to thank them most sincerely. Let us remember the Pope's words to the ecumenical assembly in St. John's Cathedral in Bulawayo, "You, like Christians throughout the world, are now walking together along the path that will lead to fullness of communion in Christ."

We wish to thank the leaders of our country, government ministries as well as private companies for doing so much to make the visit of the Pope a success. We are most grateful to all those many government representatives, policemen, health workers, transport workers and various technicians for the service they rendered us cheerfully and efficiently. We would like to thank, too, all journalists and media workers for their hard work.



To you all the Pope addressed his personal words of thanks when he bade us farewell on the Airport on September 13th:

“With gratitude to God, I express to all of you present here and to all the wonderful people of Zimbabwe my joy at having been able to spend these days in your country. My stay was short, but it was intense, filled with prayer, celebration and friendship. I thank you for the warm welcome and fine hospitality with which you received me from the first moment.”

The Holy Father has left, but his inspiration and his words remain with us. Our theme was COMING TOGETHER IN CHRIST. And, indeed, we have experienced a great oneness, through many ways of co-operating across diocesan boundaries even during those long months of preparation, but then especially during those short days of the Holy Father's presence among us.

We are certain that the Church in Zimbabwe has grown and gained strength through OUR COMING TOGETHER IN CHRIST before and during the papal visit. We have succeeded, with Lord's help, in completing a task we thought beyond our strength.

Never again will we be able to say, “We can't do this. It is too much for us”, because we will remember that we did a bigger job before, when the Pope came, and so we can do it again.

We must now use this newly won unity and strength to build the Church, fill our families with the love of Christ and our country with the spirit of reconciliation.

Shortly the words of the Holy Father will be available in printed form. We invite you to study and reflect upon the messages of the Holy Father in your families, parish groups and religious communities. Let them guide you in your meditation and prayer. May the Spirit of Our Lord, alive in the Church, enable you to put them into practice.

When addressing the laity, the Holy Father said, “A fitting result of our meeting would be a resolve on your part to study carefully the social and moral doctrine of the Church and to promote its implementation.” The Pope has spoken out on a number of important social and moral issues in recent years, to mention but a few: MARY IN THE PILGRIM LIFE OF THE CHURCH, encyclical letter; MARY AND THE CONSECRATED LIFE, letter to religious; SOCIAL CONCERN, encyclical letter on social development; THE DIGNITY OF WOMAN, apostolic letter. Those statements and letters, too, we recommend to you for study and prayer.

During this month of October which is specially devoted to Our Lady we would like you to make your own the words of the Pope with which he entrusted our country to Mary the Mother of Christ: “Look upon these sons and daughters of yours, whom I confidently entrust to you today. They have known the horrors of hatred and violence. They hunger for justice and peace. They desire reconciliation and harmony among the tribes and races of Zimbabwe, among all the peoples of the earth.”

# **SOLIDARITY AND SERVICE**

## Pastoral Statement of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference

26th November 1989

Patrick F. Chakaipa, Archbishop of Harare,  
Henry Karlen CMM, Bishop of Bulawayo,  
Francis N.M. Mugadzi, Bishop of Gweru,  
Alexio C. Muchabaiwa, Bishop of Mutare, (President ZCBC)  
Ignatius Prieto SMI, Bishop of Hwange,  
Helmut Reckter SJ, Bishop of Chinhoyi,  
Patrick M. Mutume, Auxiliary Bishop of Mutare,  
Secretary General ZCBC

## 1) Our Common Responsibility

“You have been blessed with this beautiful country, fertile and full of resources which, in the mind of the Creator, are meant to be used for the common good,” said **Pope John Paul II** on 11th September 1988 in Harare (*Pope John Paul in Zimbabwe, Mambo Press, p.36*).

As the first decade of our independence is about to end we, the Bishops of Zimbabwe, together with you, our brothers and sisters, wish to thank God for the precious gift of our country.

The coming year, 1990, will be a year of important political decisions. Just as we did in 1985, in our Pastoral Statement PEACE AND UNITY AND FREEDOM so we remind you this year too of what the Church teaches about our communal and individual responsibilities as citizens.

We in this country are in great need of the social virtue of solidarity. By this we mean “a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all” (**Pope John Paul II, Social Concern, 38**).

It is not enough that the individual looks after his/her own interest, hoping that the common good will take care of itself. It is not enough that these unconnected individual interests compete against each other, in the expectation that the result will be prosperity for all.

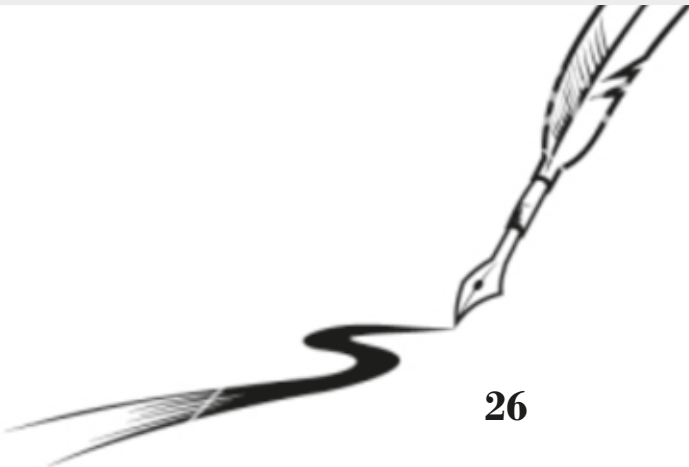
We need solidarity. We need a common purpose. We need unity. We need a basic consensus which finds its political and legal expression in a universally accepted Constitution. There cannot be any dissent at this level if our country is to go forward and prosper.

We are very happy that the bloodshed in some parts of the country has come to an end because of the Unity Accord. We hope that in the same way our leaders will succeed in their commendable effort to bring the

# **SAVE OUR FAMILIES**

Pastoral Letter on Marriage, Family,  
Sexuality and the AIDS Epidemic  
by the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops'  
Conference (March 1991)

Patrick F. Chakaipa, Archbishop of Harare  
Henry Karlen CMM, Bishop of Bulawayo  
Francis Mugadzi, Bishop of Gweru, (Vice President ZCBC)  
Alexio C. Muchabaiwa, Bishop of Mutare  
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Patrick M. Mutume, Auxiliary Bishop of Mutare.



***“African traditional culture is centred on the family. Africa cannot flourish unless its families survive present social upheavals. The African family must find new strength, reaffirm the positive values contained in tradition and assimilate a more personal dimension of understanding, commitment and love,” said Pope John Paul II on 11th September 1988 in his address to the Catholic Laity of Zimbabwe in Harare Cathedral.***

## **Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,**

We, the Catholic Bishops of Zimbabwe, want to give you this message of hope: Christ restores the often perverted relationship between man and woman to its original goodness; families can flourish once more; Christ's healing hands reach out to all in need of help.

### **1. “African traditional culture is centred on the family”**

**Our ancestors** were aware that the love between man and woman is something precious given by the Creator. They guarded and protected marital love and family life through a variety of different customs and rituals. They knew how much the well being of the community depends on mutual respect between men and women and taught their children proper behaviour and self-restraint from an early age.

Today families that are united in Christ's love and in prayer are the fulfilment of our ancestors' hopes.

### **2. The Spirit of Christ's love in our homes**

Our ancestors had some insight into God's plan and purpose when he created man and woman.

There is beauty and goodness in this plan (cf.Gen. 1:31). Man and woman are created for each other, and both are created for God. In God's eyes

they are of equal dignity. Both must discover their personhood: each is unique, because God's creative love never repeats itself, and is infinitely precious. Love goes together with respect for the person of the beloved, for his or her dignity in the eyes of the Creator.

A person is both body and soul, distinct and yet inseparable. Love, therefore, is more than the physical union of two bodies. It is the union of two persons (cf. Gen.2:24).

The love between man and woman as persons calls for fidelity. As the covenant between God and his people cannot be broken, so the bond between a husband and wife cannot be cut. As God will never abandon his people, so a husband must not 'break faith with the wife of his youth' (Mal.2:14; see also Is. 54, Jer. 3:6-13, Hos.2:21). Faithfulness is not slavery, but the certain knowledge that there is always someone at your side in whom you can trust completely. It is a beautiful gift the faithful God gives to us.

“God is love” ( 1 John 4: 8). The extent of this love was demonstrated to us in the Son of God, Jesus Christ, “who loved his own to the end” (John 13:1) when he died for us and rose from the dead. “No one can have greater love than to lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

Man and woman are called to make this love of Christ visible and effective in their love for each other “to the end”. This is the meaning of the **Sacrament of Matrimony**: the love of husband and wife is a visible sign of the love of Christ for his bride, the Church. “Husbands should love their wives, just as Christ loved the Church and sacrificed himself for her” (Eph.5:25; cf.5:21-33).

By their intimate love and tenderness husband and wife reveal to each other the intimate and personal love God has for each of them. St Paul calls it a “mystery” (Eph. 5:32), and it takes a lifetime to fully explore it.

True love is never closed in upon itself. True love wants to be fruitful. Husband and wife, in their mutual self-giving, awaken powers of love in each other for the children they receive as the Creator's gift. Children need their parents' mutual love as much as the air they breathe.

### **3. The Creator's design perverted and corrupted**

We, as your bishops and pastors, are grieved to see that so many people in our country are disregarding, not only the laws of nature and the biblical precepts, but also their own culture. They have torn sexuality out of the context of marriage. What was meant to be an expression of personal love, has become something impersonal, even inhuman. What was meant to foster lifelong fidelity has become a means of monetary intoxication and excitement. What meant to instil tenderness and gentleness in couples, and bring them comfort and joy, has been turned into a brutalising and dehumanising experience of violence and pain for victims of rape and incest.

Sexual intercourse has become a form of entertainment for mere children, often seduced by their irresponsible elders. Innumerable young girls are scarred for life through the experience of premature pregnancies and abortions. Countless children aborted or dumped after birth are only many human beings thrown on scrap heap. We deplore the cowardice of men forcing women to have abortions when they decline responsibility for children that are theirs. We deplore the complicity of parents in procuring abortions for their daughters. We grieve for the children killed.

Blackmailers exploit the scarcity of jobs on the labour market by demanding sexual favours before giving employment to women.

Sex has become a commodity traded on the open market. Women selling their bodies to men are selling themselves into a form of slavery, their male customers being the slave traders. Was Zimbabwe not proud of its 'new order'? And yet Zimbabwean society tolerates, and practices to a large extent, this 'exploitation of man by man'.



Promiscuity and habitual infidelity violates the marital bond and finally causes marital breakdown and divorce, with all the resulting harm to the children.

#### **4. The threat of AIDS**

The dreadful scourge of AIDS is now casting a dark shadow over our land. That this disease infects through sexual intercourse is a bitter irony: “The life-giving functions of human sexuality, and the blood which epitomises health and life itself, have become a roadway to death” (Pope John Paul II, in a speech to diplomats on his recent visit to Tanzania).

In their loving intimacy husband and wife were meant to enhance each other's lives and bring forth new life. It is part of the terror of AIDS that it makes man and woman inflict a deadly disease on one another.

If nothing else before, at least now this dreadful affliction should show us clearly: men and women were created according to a definite order. If this natural order is wilfully and continuously being upset, even destroyed, man himself is destroyed.

While we know that some AIDS sufferers have been infected by means other than sexual intercourse (e.g. by transfusion of contaminated blood, by infection of babies in the womb or at birth), there is no doubt that the vast majority of cases of HIV-infection and acute AIDS (by now around half a million) is the direct or indirect result of sexual immorality just described.

#### **5. New hope against defeatism**

People despair of moral improvement, but hope that science and technology, e.g. drugs, will solve their human and moral problems. But such things will never make them better and more responsible persons. Feeling helpless, they ask, “Why should we struggle?” Clearly, such defeatism is unacceptable.

“Who will rescue me from this body doomed to death?” asks St Paul, and gives the answer, “God (will) – thanks be to him – through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom.7:24).

We remind you that we are meant to attain “the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Rom. 8:21). We assure you that the Spirit of Christ, who overcame sin and death when he rose from the dead, can free us, too, from our slavery to corruption and restore our perverted humanity.

This Spirit was given to us in Baptism and Confirmation. It is renewed every time we listen with faith to the Word of God and receive the Body and Blood of Christ. It is this Spirit of love that lives in the hearts of married people in virtue of the Sacrament of Matrimony which binds them together.

It is this same Holy Spirit that makes our bodies his temple and gives them unique dignity (cf. 1 Cor. 6:12-20).

Let no one tell you that you simply have no choice but to give way to your 'natural impulses', that trying to control them would even be harmful to you.

Even though films and TV series represent the relationship between man and woman as a brutal game of mutual exploitation, we want to stress that genuine love, unselfish, gentle and considerate, capable of self-control and sacrifice, is possible. Some commercial music sing the praises of self-indulgence which in fact, as AIDS shows, leads to death. But you are not trapped. You have a choice. Choose life!

Let no one lose heart because of failure. Maturity comes through growth and patience. There will be weakness which will need forgiveness. To integrate sexuality into their personal, intimate loving relationships is a lifelong task for married couples.

Our faith gives us courage. Not by our own power, but by the holy Spirit at work in us, we will be able to restore the dignity and true humanity to our mutual relationships as men and women (cf. Gal.5:16-24).

## **6. Tasks we are facing**

### **6.1. A new kind of marriage**

Whereas in the past traditional customs gave married people clear guidance on who had to do what at a given time, this is no longer so. No longer does a master merely give orders to a servant. But husband and wives, as friends and lovers, must work out solutions to their problems together **which requires continuous and open dialogue.**

### **6.2. Responsible Parenthood**

It is the joint **responsibility of parents** to decide on how many children they may give life to and when. The wife must not be left to cope on her own. **Responsible parenthood**, as understood by the Church, involves both spouses.

**No other agency**, no national or international organisation, neither the State or a political party, **may take this responsibility from the parents.** No methods unacceptable to the **informed conscience** of the individual must be forced upon parents by media pressure or propaganda.

Whereas chemical contraceptives interfere with the fertility of the woman and put the burden of family planning on her alone, couples using natural methods share the joy and responsibility of regulating their fertility equally.

### **6.3. Fertility awareness**

Nature as created by God allows the woman to be ready for contraception only for a short period every month. A wife who knows the fertile days through self-observation based on scientific research shares this knowledge with her husband and makes him her ally, instead of protecting herself against untimely contraception without any consideration from him.

We are beginning to see that we must respect the laws inherent in nature, and work with nature and not against it. As far as the natural environment at large is concerned, we begin to see the truth. We still need to see that **our sexuality, too, is much a 'natural environment' whose inherent laws we have to respect.**

Our sexuality is part of our humanity and personhood. As such it is not outside our moral responsibility. No artificial device can make up for a lack of moral insight and effort. If we want to be truly human then we do not need more such devices to protect us from consequences of uncontrolled behaviour, but more consideration and respect for one another as persons.

While we are most grateful for the great efforts of small groups of dedicated couples, nurses and doctors who promote Natural Family Planning, we must admit that the vast majority of Catholic married people do not know about it yet. We urge our lay organisations to get involved in promoting vigorously 'fertility awareness' as part of Christian married life. We would like to see a grassroots movement in which this knowledge will be passed on in a personal and confidential manner from couple to couple.

#### **6.4. AIDS – a moral issue**

Similarly, **the scourge of AIDS**, caused by sexual immorality, can only be overcome by a restoration of morality. But the blind trust in technological solutions to human problems, combined with moral defeatism, persuades many that contraceptive devices like condoms will save the lives of the promiscuous.

We do not deny that, speaking on the level of sheer mechanics, if used correctly and regularly, reduce the risk of HIV infection to some extent (but by no means completely). But we do deny that the widespread use of such or similar devices is the answer to the deep moral crisis which has caused the rapid spread of AIDS in our country. In fact, propagating

condoms is tantamount to admitting moral defeat, and, worse than that, it positively encourages promiscuity, especially when they are made available to the young.

## **6.5. Christian education for family life**

The whole Church must educate the young for Christian marriage and family life. It begins in the smallest cell of the Church, the family. “Parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of the young” (from the Vatican II Declaration of Christian Education, quoted in *Our Mission to Teach*, Pastoral Statement ZCBC, 1987). Even when sending their children to Catholic schools they must not abdicate their responsibility.

But the school as well the parish and Christian community do have an important complementary role to play. In the past young men and women were introduced into their roles as husbands and wives, fathers and mothers by certain mature relatives (sekuru/tete). This wise provision of traditional culture no longer exists where extended family life has been disrupted. Parents may for reasons of traditional culture ask trusted friends or relatives to assist them in this delicate task. Schools, if they are to assist, must respect the right of parents to determine exactly what kind of education their children are to receive.

The Catholic Church firmly rejects any kind of 'education for living' which does not make any moral demands on young people, but merely informs them about how to evade the consequences of irresponsible behaviour through the use of contraceptives. Teachers, if they are clearly still immature or even known for openly immoral way of life themselves, cannot be trusted with this grave responsibility.

Children must be taught from the beginning that “the Church insists on the inviolability and dignity of the human person from the moment of conception until natural death” (Pope John Paul II, addressing the laity in Harare Cathedral on 11th September 1988).

Boys and girls must be taught reverence and respect for all of God's creation, starting with their bodies. They must know their own bodies and come to understand how they grow and develop, how they function and relate to the other sex.

The aim is to enable future parents, not to manipulate their bodies, but to recognise, and react to, the in-built signals of their bodies.

## **6.6. The need for chastity**

Young people must be taught by word and by the good example of their elders the value of chastity.

Elders must have the courage to tell boys that they have no right to become intimate with girls before they are men ready to accept responsibility for a family. Girls must have enough self-respect to be able to say No.

The inability to exercise self-control destroys our families and provides a breeding ground for AIDS.

## **6.7. Support for engaged and married couples**

We call upon all pastoral workers to give much help to engaged couples to prepare for married life. Workshops and seminars run jointly by priests, married couples and medical and legal advisers will be of great help. Once properly prepared, engaged couples must take the next step and get married in church before they start living together, and be fully committed to each other from the start.

Young married couples should get together and support each other, learning how to engage in dialogue and communication which is so vital in marriage. Mature married couples benefit greatly from the Marriage Encounter method and marriage seminars.

Every Christian home is a 'small church' in which the Spirit of love must be fostered through common prayer led by the father and mother.

## **6.8. Home and togetherness**

In this day and age husband and wife must cherish and nurture their marriage in daily companionship for it to survive. While all married couples must know how to cope with inevitable times of separation preserving their fidelity to one another, such times must be the exception, not the rule.

Workers who live their wives at the rural home and live alone in town are tempted to be unfaithful. Such a life pattern, brought about by the migrant labour system, was unknown in traditional culture and is incompatible with Christian marriage. Today it is an outright threat to the physical survival of our families because of AIDS.

Political liberation has come. It is time that families free themselves from this remnant of past slavery.

It is one of the most distressing features of the AIDS epidemic that unfaithful husbands give the killer virus to their faithful wives and eventually to their innocent children.

Is running the family farm back home worth the risk of becoming alienated from wife and children? What is the point of having two homes, one urban, one rural, if it tears the family apart?

We ask married people seriously to reflect on their life style and to change them before it is too late.

We appeal to employers, especially Government, not to separate working wives from their husbands, but to deploy them in such a manner that they can stay together.

On behalf of all workers who have no choice but to live alone far from their families, we urge central and local government as well as employers to build family homes. "Home ownership contributes to the stability and welfare of the family which the State has a duty to foster and protect" (Solidarity and Service, ZCBC, 1989, n.7).

## **7. "Be compassionate just as your Father is compassionate" (Lk. 6, 36)**

7.1. "Go, and from this moment sin no more" (John 8, 11)

The moral law that demands chastity of young people not yet ready to be father or mother is very clear. But when it is broken, only compassion can undo the damage.

Therefore we appeal to parents not to reject their daughters who have fallen out of wedlock. Your daughter has failed and bitterly disappointed you. But your anger must not drive her into killing her unborn or new born child, or even into suicide.

We are most grateful for the help and support provided by caring people and institutions for abandoned young mothers. We hope that they will find the greatest possible support from all Christians and the public at large.

We accept that a new law (Infanticide Act) makes a difference between murder and infanticide, provided this does not signal a disregard for the value of human life in the moral consciousness of the nation. We welcome the leniency shown to distraught and desperate women, but insist that every child, whatever the circumstances of its birth, must be made welcome.



## **7.2. “He himself bore our sickness away and carried our disease” (MT. 8, 17)**

Thousands of acute AIDS sufferers are already with us. Maybe as many as half a million people are carriers of the HIV virus, though many may not know it yet. To all of them, no matter how they got infected, we would like to say:

You are all of you sons and daughters of God. Our God “is God, not of the dead, but of the living; for to him everyone is alive” (Lk.20, 38). You have not been written off. God is with you even now. Make the best possible use of the time given you. This is a most precious time. It is not the end, but a new beginning. So do not lose heart.

Now is the time to really discover what your faith in Jesus Christ means to you, the hope it gives you and the love it enables you to share with others.

Christ, who came to share the love of God with us by first sharing our death, is with you and will remain with you. Hold on to him, your light, even in times of darkness.

Be reconciled to God your neighbour through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Receive strength from the Church who is your mother, especially through the Holy Eucharist and the Anointing of the Sick in which Christ himself reaches out for you and gives you strength.

In Christ you have a new life which nothing can take from you. Not even AIDS (cf. Romans 8:38-39).

Even now many small children die of AIDS, having been infected by their HIV-positive mothers still in the womb or at birth. If we cannot save them, at least we must try and spare them pain and distress as much as possible. We must give them as much love as we can. They are capable of receiving love and recognising those who love them. This gives meaning to their short lives and makes living, if only for a few years, worthwhile for them.

There have been some voices advocating abortion for children expected by HIV-positive mothers. This is unacceptable. Even children with a life expectancy of no more than a few years have a right to life.

Not every child born of an HIV-positive mother will be infected with AIDS. More than half of such children have a chance of being born healthy and without any infection.

We will, however, have to be prepared for a large number of children orphaned by the AIDS epidemic. Families ready to adopt AIDS orphans will act in the best spirit of traditional family life while at the same time heeding the call of Christ.

We also wish to address those of you who live with, and look after, close relatives sick with AIDS in their homes. It is perfectly safe to have an AIDS patient in the house, use the same sanitary facilities and eat with him, provided certain precautions are taken. Heed the advice of health experts. Do not try and get rid of your sick relative by sending him to hospital, when his condition is stable and you can cope with looking after him. Remember our Lord who allowed the sick with all kinds of diseases to come close to him, who laid his hands on him and restored them to health of body and soul. Pray for his Holy Spirit so that through you Christ may be able to give comfort to your suffering brother and sister, using your hands.

You face an extremely difficult situation if the sick person is your spouse. By continuing to have marital intercourse you may risk being infected as well. Even when using a condom, the risk is merely reduced, not eliminated. Or else you abstain from marital intercourse altogether which may put your mutual fidelity at risk. You will have to have a completely open dialogue with your spouse about this mortal danger to yourselves and your family, possibly with the help of an experienced AIDS counsellor. The two of you will have to make a very difficult joint decision. You remember that you promised to be faithful to each other "in sickness and in health". The God of the covenant is faithful and gives you the strength to be faithful.

For the sake of your children it is imperative that at least one you lives long enough to give them the parental care and love they need.

An HIV infected woman is weakened further by a pregnancy and as a result may succumb to AIDS sooner. She and her husband need sound advice to make the right decision in conscience.

### **7.3. Population policy and AIDS**

Many forecasts about the likely growth of our population have been made well before AIDS was known to be a danger to the people of Zimbabwe. Drastically curbing population growth became a declared aim.

We reject any kind of population policy that is imposed from above without respect for the conscience of the individual and the moral foundation of family life.

Recent forecasts about the likely number of deaths caused by AIDS call assumptions about population growth into question. All concerned will have to think again.

## **8. A word of thanks**

We say to all Christian married couples: your faithfulness will save our nation. Your love and care for one another and for your children will restore life to our nation which is under the shadow of death. Your families are a sign of hope.

We say to all our priests and religious men and women who in their celibate state represent God's universal love to his people: The gift of your calling must set you free to act as mothers and fathers of the orphaned victims of war, violence and the AIDS epidemic.

Your faithfulness to your vocation will give strength to the married, and their faithful love will give courage to you.

We say to all who are single, widowed, divorced and may at times feel the pain of loneliness: while you do not experience the intimacy of marital love, you show that with the grace of God you lead fulfilled lives rendering loving service to your family and community.

We wish to commend especially those childless couples who give their love to abandoned or orphaned children. Many childless couples long for children and try by all sorts of means, even ethically dubious ones, to have offspring. And yet so many children are killed still in their mothers' wombs. If only more couples could make such children welcome in their homes (cf. Mark 9:37).

“African traditional culture is centred on the family”. We are convinced that this family culture of ours will only have a future if families find their moral and spiritual strength in Christ.

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2Cor. 13, 13).

## **APPENDIX**

### **1. QUESTIONS FOR GROUP WORK**

Our pastoral letter is based on a great deal of consultation and dialogue with priests, married couples and medical workers. We would like to invite you to continue this dialogue among yourselves, using our letter as basis.

*The following questions and suggestions are meant to assist you in this.*

- 1.1. “African traditional culture is centred on the family” – do you agree with this? Can you illustrate this with examples from your own experience, from what you have been told by your elders?
- 1.2. “Our ancestors had some insight into God's plan.” – What are the

similarities and differences between traditional and Christian marriage?

1.3. How do you explain Christian marriage to a young engaged couple in terms of the 'covenant'?

1.4. What would you say if you were to give a speech at the wedding of one of your children, nieces, nephews, based on Ephesians 5, 21-33? What would you say to the bride? what to the bridegroom? In what words would you commend the young couple of Christ?

1.5. What do you suggest can be done to free women from the slavery of prostitution? What do the men have to suggest? What do the women have to suggest?"

1.6. Do you know how the HIV virus which eventually causes AIDS is passed on? Do you know the basic facts about AIDS?

1.7. What are our reasons as Christians for hope?

1.8. What do you remember about Family Planning advertisements in the press or on the radio? What was your reaction? How do you feel about the reasons given? How do you feel about the various methods advertised?

1.9. Would you be able to explain to a young married couple the basic principles of Natural Family Planning and 'fertility awareness'? For women: how would you explain to another woman how to be aware of her fertile and infertile days? – Did your grandmother or great-grandmother have an awareness of her fertility? For men: what is your role as husbands and fathers in Natural Family Planning?

1.10. Why are condoms not the answer to the problem of AIDS?

1.11. Who should educate your son/daughter for family life? What can the school, the Christian Community and local parish, the Catholic youth organisation do to assist?

1.12. Are you happy about the way in which you communicate with your wife/husband? Do you make decisions together? For wives: do you just decide for yourself, hoping the husband will not mind? For husbands: do you just tell your wife what to do, without having asked her opinion in the first place?

1.13. Discuss the questions posed in 6.8 "Home and Togetherness", first men, women and young people in three separate groups, then all of them together, reporting on the conclusions reached in their various groups.

- 1.14. If your unmarried daughter falls pregnant what will you do? If your son is found to be responsible for the pregnancy of his girlfriend, what is your reaction, as mother, as father?
- 1.15. Your best friend has learned he/she is HIV positive and is deeply depressed? What do you tell him/her/
- 1.16. Do you have some nurses or doctors in your parish? What do they tell you about how to look after an AIDS patient at home?
- 1.17. Stage a little drama in which a husband and a wife discuss AIDS and the danger of infecting each other!
- 1.18. In China the government has decreed that couples must not have more than one child. Does any government have a right to make such a law? Or force people to use certain methods of family planning? Who decides about the number of children a family may have?
- 1.19. As Christians, we have different tasks to fulfil, but are all members of the same body. Most of us are married, some are celibate 'for the sake of the kingdom of heaven'. In what way can we help and assist each other?

## **2. FURTHER READING MATERIAL**

- 2.1. AIDS- The Christian Response, by Fr Edward W. Roger SJ, on behalf of the Heads of Denominations, Zimbabwe, 1991;
- 2.2. Christian Marriage and Family Life, Pastoral Letter by the Catholic Bishops of Zimbabwe (in English, Shona and Ndebele), Mambo Press, Gweru, 1984;
- 2.3. Our Mission to Teach, Pastoral Statement on Education issued by the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference, Lent, 1987;
- 2.4. Kuwanana KwavaKristo, (A Shona Guide to Christian Marriage and Family Life, to be recommended to couples about to be married), Mambo Press, Gweru, 1987;
- 2.5. Zvifundiso Zvavachati, Mambo Press, Gweru;
- 2.6. Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, Familiaris Consortio, Vatican, 1981;
- 2.7. Patricia Walsh OP, Fertility Awareness, small booklet explaining the Billing Ovulation Method.
- 2.8. L.P. McSweeney, Love and Life, Mambo Press

### **3. BIBLICAL TEACHING ON MARRIAGE AND FAMILY**

3.1. The Biblical and Christian marriage is found in the creation account which we read in the first pages of our Bible:

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply,” (Gen. 1:27-28).

“Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh,” (Gen. 2:24).

3.2. But the ideal of monogamous and permanent marriage took time to become a reality:

Abraham took a concubine because Sarah could not provide him with a son (Gen. 16:1-2). The patriarchs practised polygamy: Isaac married both Leah and Rachel (Gen. 29:15-30). Like other Eastern kings, David had many wives and concubines (1 Sam. 25:43).

Under Mosaic legislation, a man was allowed two wives (Dt. 21:15). Israel's law of holiness nevertheless set high ideals for family life and relationships between spouses (Lev. 18:20; Dt. 22).

3.3. The prophets compared the covenant relationship of God to his people to that of husband and wife and thus recalled Israel to the ideal of faithful monogamous marriage (Hos. 2:3). The reality of idolatry and the adoption of the superstitious rites of neighbouring peoples suggested that all was not well with the institution of marriage in Israel. On the other hand, attempts to treat the Song of Songs, the only book of love lyrics in the Bible, as merely an allegory of the relationship of God to his people (or of Christ to his Church), are not convincing. Here we have a poet convinced of the value of human love, culminating in marriage.

3.4. In Jesus' preaching of the kingdom, there is little direct reference to the institution of marriage.

He referred to himself as the 'bridegroom' (Mk. 2:19). His ministry is the time of intimacy between God and his people.

In John's gospel, Jesus began his ministry by turning water into wine at a marriage feast of Cana. His presence at this event has been understood as a symbol of divine blessing on the institution of marriage. The abundance of the wine produced by the miracle is a figure of the blessing of the messianic age (Jn. 2:1-12).

By putting before his followers the concept of a new family to which all believers faithful to the will of God, belonged, he presented an ideal that transcends purely human relationships (Mk. 3:35).

In his rare teaching about marriage as an institution, Jesus appealed to ideals and first principles.

Accordingly, he rejected the Mosaic compromise about divorce (Mk. 10:2-9), appealing to the text of Genesis 2:24 about a man and woman becoming 'one flesh' in an indissoluble relationship. The teaching of the Sermon on the Mount too insists on the dignity of woman as a person rather than an object of lust (Mt.5:27).

But even in the gospels, some compromise begins to appear. In the Matthew divorce texts, an 'exceptive' clause ('except on the ground of unchastity') is introduced (Mt.5:32; 19:9), which is not mentioned in the Marcan source of Matthew (Mk.10:2-9).

3.5. Paul gives little formal instruction on marriage, since 'the form of this world is passing away' (Cor.7:31).

To those who considered the institution unworthy of an enlightened Christian, he upheld it (1 Cor.7:2).

He taught that marriage in which a believer was married to a non-believer, was a means of holiness, both for the unbeliever and for the children (1 Cor.7:14).



He urged people to remain in the states in which they were, because he expected the end to come quickly (1 Cor.7:26).

We should remember that, though he thought that the unmarried person could better look after the affairs of the Lord (Cor.7:32), he had many married friends devoted to the apostolate (Rom.16:3).

In the letter to the Galatians, reflecting on the result of the work of Christ, who 'loved me and gave himself for me' (Gal.2:20), he insisted on the equality of all as a result of baptism: 'There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither slave nor freeman, there can be neither male nor female—for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (3:28).

3.6. In Collosians and Ephesians, which probably come from the 'school of Paul' rather than Paul himself, we find lists of the duties of the members of the household, including those of husbands and wives. In some respects, these do not represent much advance on the social demands of the time but at least, they are to be performed 'in the Lord' (Col.3:19). As to marriage itself, it points to something greater, not as in the prophets a symbol of the relationship of Christ with his Church. The true meaning of Genesis 2:24 is to be found in the love of Christ for his Church, which is a model of the love that a husband is to show his wife (Eph. 5:21-33).

3.7. The final statement of the Bible concerning marriage again refers us to Christ and the Church. The book of Revelation concludes with marriage of the Lamb, a symbol of the final union of the exalted Christ with those faithful who endure to the end (Rev. 19:9). The bridegroom (Mk. 2:19) is now definitely united with his people (Rev. 19:9).

The final chapters of Revelation contain many reminiscences of the story of Paradise and the Fall (Gen. 1-2). The work of Christ has repaired this disaster, and gives hope that all human relationships, including the broken relationships of man and woman will be restored in him.

3.8. We believe that God speaks to us in the Scripture. The teaching we find there about marriage and family reflects the history of the dealings of God with humanity, God places his ideals before us, and offers the strength of his grace to help us to live up to them. In this path lies the way to human happiness and satisfaction.

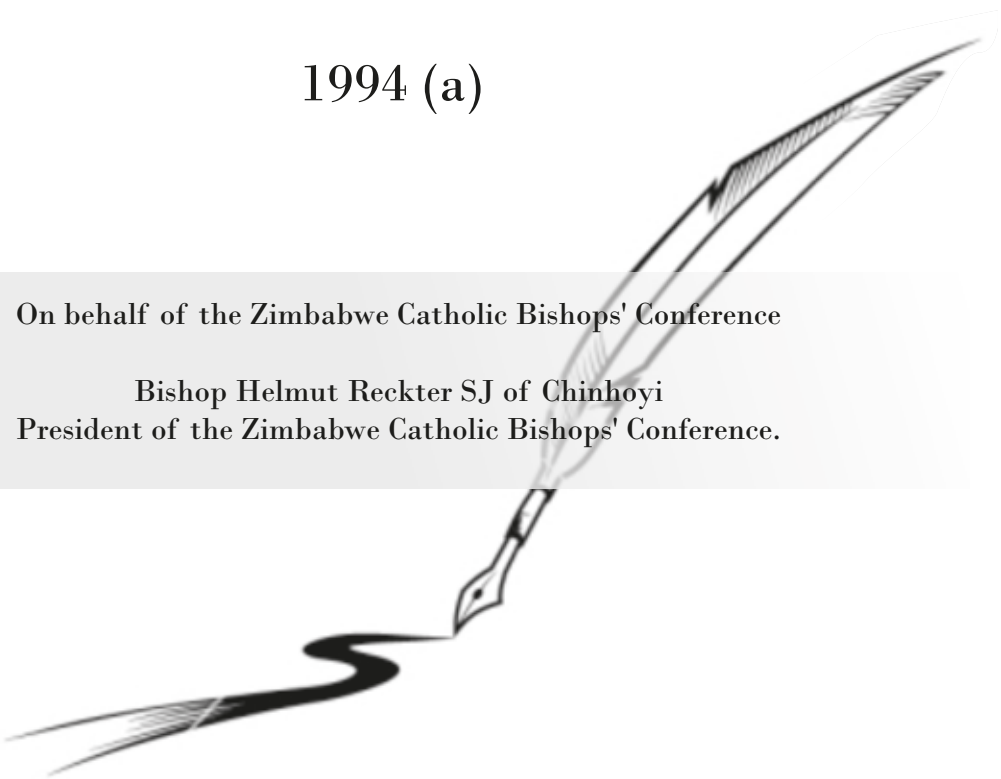
# HUMAN LIFE IS SACRED

Catholic Bishops Strongly  
Oppose Abortion

1994 (a)

On behalf of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference

Bishop Helmut Reckter SJ of Chinhoyi  
President of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference.



**A**s the public debate about abortion intensifies, the Catholic Bishops of Zimbabwe wish to make the following statement about the moral issues involved:

Human life from the moment of conception until natural death is sacred. No one must deliberately and directly kill an innocent human being. The right to life is the most fundamental of all human rights. Even the child in its mother's womb must be given the respect due to a person. Its life is sacred and must be protected by its parents and family as well as by society at large, especially since the child is the weakest member of the community and has no way to defend itself. The love of children in African culture supports this Christian conviction, based on God's commandment.

There is only one way to defend unborn life, and that is to instil respect for the dignity of the human person, born or unborn, in all members of our society, especially the young. Respect for life includes respect for the source of life, sexuality.

" Sexual intercourse has become a form of entertainment for mere children, often seduced by their irresponsible elders. Innumerable young girls are scarred for life through the experience of premature pregnancies and abortions. Countless children aborted or dumped after birth are so many human beings thrown on a scrap heap. We deplore the cowardice of men forcing women to have abortions when they decline responsibility for children that are theirs. We deplore the complicity of parents in procuring abortions for their daughters. We grieve for the children killed." (SAVE OUR FAMILIES, Pastoral Letter on Marriage, Family, Sexuality and the AIDS Epidemic, by the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference, 1991).

Experience in many countries has shown that making abortion legal does not reduce the number of illegal "back-street abortions", carried out under unhygienic, dangerous conditions. In fact, it increases the overall number of abortions likely to be carried out in a country. It lowers the respect people have for unborn life.

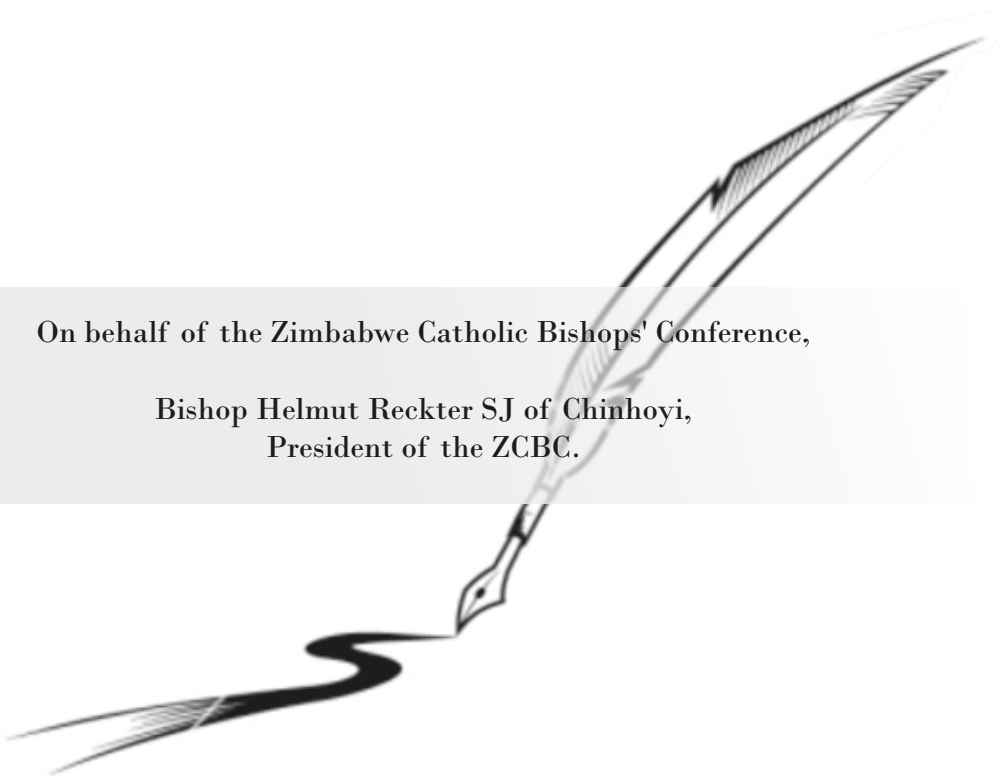
The State has a duty to defend the integrity and inviolability of human life, including the unborn one. Legalising abortion does not make it morally acceptable. Even a legal abortion is a crime against humanity. Not legalising abortion, but eradicating it altogether is in accordance with God's will and must be the aim of the people and government of Zimbabwe.

# DEATH PENALTY

Published 1994 (b)

On behalf of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference,

Bishop Helmut Reckter SJ of Chinhoyi,  
President of the ZCBC.



In recent months there has been a public argument about the death penalty, involving Government, the Supreme Court, church representatives and the public in general. What does the Catholic Church teach about the morality of capital punishment? We, the Catholic Bishops of Zimbabwe, wish to give a clear answer to this question with the following statement:

The wanton destruction of human life in so many bloody conflicts between individuals, social groups and nations is an outrage. "God did not make death, he takes no pleasure in destroying the living. To exist - for this he created all things." (Wisdom 2:13 -14). The Church, therefore, has the duty to uphold the sanctity of human life. We recall the words of Pope John Paul II during his visit to Zimbabwe in 1988, "The Church insists on the inviolability and dignity of the human person from the moment of conception until natural death" (Harare, 11 September 1988). Is the death penalty compatible with this duty to defend human life?

The law by threatening to inflict heavy punishment on those who injure or kill human beings upholds the value of human life. Capital punishment, used to uphold the sanctity of life and defend citizens against ruthless aggressors, is justified in principle.

The Church does "not exclude, in cases of extreme gravity, the death penalty," just as "those in authority have the right to use arms to repel the aggressors of the civil community entrusted to their responsibility" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2266). Wherever governments, however, see fit to abolish the death penalty the Church welcomes this. Where the reasons for and against the death penalty are being debated, the Church points out that "if unbloody means are sufficient to defend human lives from the aggressor and to protect public order and the security of persons, authority will limit itself to these means since they respond better to the concrete conditions of the common good and are more in keeping with the dignity of the human person" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2267). It follows from this that if anything less than the death penalty is sufficient to protect people from harm and

uphold the value of human life, authority should refrain from applying this ultimate punishment. Such a solution (i.e. long-term imprisonment of the offender instead of putting him to death) protects against the misuse of capital punishment and the tragic effects of plain human error. It is a better expression of our profound respect for human life and "more in keeping with the dignity of the human person".

The sanctity of life is to be upheld not just through the law. Education must give the young proper respect for human life. Health care must be provided for all. The economy must be organised in such a way that all can provide a living for their families.

The Church's health care institutions and development projects translate this stance for life into positive action which unites us with many other people in Zimbabwe engaged in similar efforts.

It is against this background that the Church abhors deliberate abortion in all its forms, since it destroys the life of defenceless and innocent human beings.

Finally, as pastors we would like to turn to those who have lost friends and relatives through murder and violence: We feel deep sympathy with you in your sorrow and mourning for your loved ones. May the Lord give them, and you, "a peace which the world cannot give" (John 14:27). You, as the injured party, will find peace if you leave the final judgement of God.

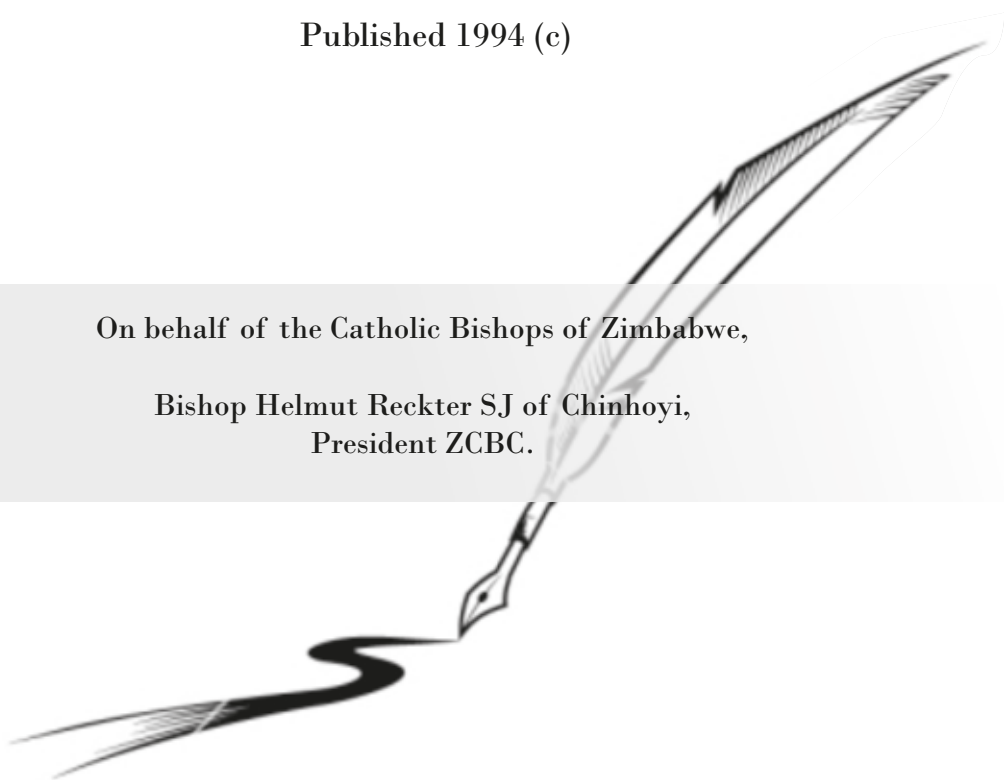


# **EVEN CHILDREN OF HIV-POSITIVE MOTHERS HAVE A RIGHT TO LIFE**

Published 1994 (c)

On behalf of the Catholic Bishops of Zimbabwe,

Bishop Helmut Reckter SJ of Chinhoyi,  
President ZCBC.



In response to the statement of the ministers of Health and Child Welfare, Dr Timothy Stamps, in Parliament (as reported in **The Herald**, 17 February 1992), the Catholic Bishops of Zimbabwe would like to make it quite clear that even children of HIV-positive mothers have a right to life. Even if declared legal by government abortion is always immoral.

The Bishops stated in their Pastoral Letter “Save Our Families” of 1991:

*“Many small children die of AIDS, having been infected by their HIV-positive mothers. If we cannot save them, at least we must try and spare them the pain and distress as much as possible. We must give them as much love as we can. They are capable of receiving love and recognising those who love them. This gives meaning to their short lives and makes living, if only for a few years, worthwhile for them.*

*“There have been voices advocating abortion for children expected by HIV-positive mothers. This is unacceptable. Even children with a life expectancy of no more than a few years have a right to life.*

*“Not every child born of an HIV-positive mother will be infected with AIDS. More than half such children have a chance of being born healthy and without any infection.*

*We will, however, have to be prepared for a large number of children orphaned by the AIDS epidemic. Families ready to adopt AIDS orphans will act in the best spirit of traditional family life while at the same time heeding the call of Christ.”*

Both HIV-positive mothers and their children need our care and support. This is a great challenge to society in general and the Church in particular. AIDS is killing many people already. We have no right to add to their number by deliberate killing. It is our duty, even under these tragic circumstances, to preserve and cherish the gift of life.

# **"THE FAMILY IS THE BASIC UNIT OF SOCIETY"**

Pastoral Statement on the Cairo World  
Conference on Population and Development  
1994 (d)

Archbishop Patrick E. Chakaipa of Harare,  
Archbishop Henry Karlen CMM of Bulawayo,  
Bishop Alexio C. Muchabaiwa of Mutare,  
Bishop Francis Mugadzi of Gweru, (Vice-President ZCBC)  
Bishop Ignatius Prieto SMI of Hwange,  
Bishop Helmut Reckter SJ of Chinhoyi, (President of ZCBC)  
Bishop Michael Bhasera of Gokwe,  
Auxiliary Bishop Patrick Mutume, Mutare.

The United Nations observes 1994 as the YEAR OF THE FAMILY. The Catholic Church has accepted this and marked the occasion with Pope John Paul's "Letter to Families".

1994 is also the year of the **Cairo World Conference on Population and Development**. We regret to inform you that the agenda of this global event which is to take place in September on the African continent is indifferent, if not actually hostile, to the family.

## **Love, Marriage and Family**

We, the Catholic Bishops of Zimbabwe, defend the *family as the basic unit of society* (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations 1948) against all attacks and corrosive influences. We appeal to all Catholic and Christian parents, and indeed to all men and women of goodwill in this country, to strengthen the family which is the very *centre of our African culture* and guard against all influences and ideologies which belittle, ridicule and degrade what is most dear to us. '

We are confronted with a stark choice: to opt for the "family as the heart of a civilisation of love" *or* to live lonely, isolated lives without lasting family bonds. To let our sexual nature be the force that ties us to the one beloved person of our lives *or* to use it merely for selfish pleasure in fleeting physical encounters without any commitment to the other *or* responsibility for resulting new life.

For *love* to last it needs to dwell in a 'house', i.e. *a social framework*, a set of supporting laws and customs. This 'house' in which love can dwell is marriage as a lasting, lifelong commitment, recognised and supported by the community.

*Marriage* is the foundation on which the *family* is built. Marriage is more than a temporary arrangement for sexual self-fulfilment. Marriage is meant to grow into a family. The love of the spouses for each other is meant to 'spill over' into the love of their children. This is the order

established by the Creator. Children born into this world have a right to be born into a house filled with the lasting love of their parents. They have a right to be born into a stable, loving family.

The word "love" does not occur in the documents of the Cairo Conference. The family is only mentioned as "a basic unit of society", not as "**the** basic unit". The documents speak about the "family in all its forms" which might include free unions, "same sex" couples etc. Family is no longer the *norm*; it is merely a free *option*.

The key concept of Cairo is "reproductive rights" (or "reproductive health" or "sexual health"). What this jargon means is this:

Every *individual*, regardless of sex, age, marital status, is said to have the right to be "sexually active" in whatever way he/she chooses, without any obligation to accept the consequences and responsibilities involved. In this view sexuality is self-centred; there is no reaching out beyond the self to the other person. Promiscuous sexual relations are accepted if they are safe (= not resulting in pregnancy, STD or AIDS). The *moral demand* that sexuality be integrated into the loving and lasting personal relationship which we call marriage is ignored. Only the rules of sexual hygiene have to be observed by the consumer of this freely available good called sex.

This ideology reflects the moral decay and decadence of Western society from where it comes. It is a *frontal assault against our African family culture*.

In the name of the Church which is the Family of the Sons and Daughters of God we appeal to all married couples and parents, but also to all young people who long for genuine love to reject this moral poison which has the deadly power to destroy our families and to fatally weaken our society.

## Sexuality and the Responsibility for Life

The more sexually promiscuous people are, the more abortions there will be. Contraception is supposed to make abortion unnecessary. In fact, reliance on contraception leads to more casual sexual relations. Since contraception of whatever kind is never 100 % effective, the number of "unwanted pregnancies" rises. "Every child born must be a wanted child," the Cairo documents say. Which implies that every child not *wanted*, e.g. a child conceived in a casual affair, should be *aborted*.

At the 1984 Mexico City Population Conference it was agreed that "in no case should abortion be promoted as a method of family planning". Cairo tries to erode this consensus. Pressure is put by Population Planners on sovereign nations to abolish laws that protect unborn life. Societies afraid of children try to instil their fears in societies which love children.

If every *individual* has the right to be sexually active, then there is no mutual responsibility, no social obligation to *mother and child*. The "sexually active" woman is left entirely on her own. She should claim the right to "safe" abortions, the Cairo agenda suggests. This is the price she is expected to pay for her own "sexual freedom" (and for the freedom of the male to use her at will). However, there is no such thing as a "safe" abortion: it is always lethal for the child and mutilates the woman deeply in body and soul.

The *rights* of the "sexually active" are to be observed, the Cairo ideologues admonish us. There is no mention of *the right to life of the unborn*. There is no mention either of duties and responsibilities. The aborted child is a victim of the brutal egotism of the "sexually active" individual who has cut himself off from all obligations towards family, community and, finally, the Creator.

## Love gives life. Selfishness kills

Sexuality is not a drug for selfish pleasure. It is meant to be an expression of interpersonal love. It is the *source of human life*.

If we lose respect for the source of life, we will lose respect for human life itself. There is a grim connection between sins against the sixth commandment ("You must not commit adultery") and sins against the fifth ("You must not kill").

There is only one fully effective weapon against the great social evil of abortion, and that is *chastity*: sexual abstinence before marriage and faithfulness within marriage.

We must also warn against the ambiguity of the term "contraception". Many so-called contraceptives do not prevent conception, as the term suggests, but are in fact abortive: they prevent the development of the already fertilised egg (= early embryo = human life in its earliest stage), they kill a human being. Among these drugs are the anti-pregnancy vaccines, "morning-after" pills, or the abortion pill RU 486. Also the IUD (intra-uterine device) has an abortifacient effect (Cf. Pontifical Council for the Family: *Ethical and Pastoral Dimensions of Population Trends, Instrumentum Laboris*, pp. 25/26).

## Responsible Parenthood versus Population Control

The preparatory documents for the Cairo World Conference on Population and Development suggest that population growth equals poverty, implying that the fewer people are added to the existing population the less poverty there will be, in other words *the fewer children are born the more prosperity there will be*.

This is a very simplistic propaganda slogan. The full demographic truth, of course, about the relationship between population growth and economic development is much more complex. A reduced growth rate, as

a merely negative factor, produces nothing. Only positive development efforts locally and economic justice internationally improve people's standard of living. But the documents say very little about development and the duty of the rich nations to support it.

A slowing down of population growth may improve the chances for development under certain conditions, but does not bring about development by itself. As matter of fact, the growth rate has already decreased globally after its peak 1965-70.

The rich nations of the North, some of which have death rates higher than birth rates (being below "replacement level"), see the population growth of the South as a threat to themselves. Sponsoring population control programmes is a defensive measure, cheaper than the required new international economic order. We sincerely hope that our leaders recognise this.

Also in the field of "population policy", we are determined to defend the family. We do not hesitate to call the love of the African family for children a great value which we wish to preserve. We will not allow this great value to be destroyed by propaganda which appeals to selfishness and greed. This was the consent of the African bishops recently assembled for the Africa Synod in Rome. "Should we Africans allow foreigners to tell us what to do or what not to do at the level of our families (which is ) our domestic church and first school?" one of the bishops asked. An African Catholic woman, Mrs. Kathryn Hauwa Hoomkwap from Nigeria, addressing the bishops, said, "Bad leadership and mismanagement of public funds are the problems of African countries and not over-population".

The Church, herself called a mother, honours all mothers. So does Africa. The population planners, by contrast, see "women of childbearing age" as a threat. Their "reproductive capacity", they claim, has to be curtailed, even at the cost of harm to women's physical and mental integrity. But we say: a society which shows contempt for welcoming the child and human life, holds the woman in contempt. Women must not be put



under pressure by "population planners" , but must be given support so that they can reconcile their roles as wives and mothers with their professional and social roles in the community. We wish to defend the family against the pressures from national and international organisations. Not international bureaucrats, nor agents of aid organisations, nor politicians or governments decide on family size, but the parents.

It is neither the sole right of the woman to decide on whether or not to have children, nor is the man to dictate to her, but it is their joint responsibility as parents.

*Responsible Parenthood* means that parents take into account the actual situation of their family: the state of health, physical and psychological, especially of the mother, as well as the economic and social situation. They ask themselves: What are our duties towards children already born? Towards society? What are our duties towards God who has created our human nature and guides us by his moral law?

Husband and wife are to have dialogue about the future of their family on a very personal and intimate level. This needs a stable marriage where husband and wife regard each other as equal partners. *Natural Family Planning* (NFP) will not just be another birth control method for them, but will be part of a new type of marriage based on mutual consideration and respect.

People with little respect for marriage do not appreciate NFP. They want a technical "quick fix" method to make casual sex "safe". The self-centred "right to be sexually active" is irreconcilable with marital love. Which explains why the Cairo documents have little interest in marriage and ignore NFP.

The more educated a woman is the more likely she will be to plan her family. If a government is genuinely concerned about family size it should invest more in female education. The millions spent on anti-birth advertising had better be spent on education for girls.

Poor people rely on their children as a form of social security for their old age. The rich have no right to deprive them of children. On the contrary, the duty of the rich is to create an economically secure climate and future for the disadvantaged.

## **Conclusions**

1) The Family is the most basic cell of society. We ask our Government to defend the African family at the Cairo Conference against corrosive foreign influences and ideologies.

2) The Family is the most basic unit also of the Church. We thank all parents who have built strong and stable families despite all the threats to family life. We ask you to share your positive experience with other parents who are struggling. We ask you especially to guide the young.

We thank all catechists who give marriage instructions to those about to celebrate their weddings. We thank all engaged in Marriage Encounter, all involved in marriage counselling and in trying to reconcile estranged couples and save families for their good work.

3) We ask all priests to help couples not yet married in church to have their unions blessed, to train marriage instructors and to teach the young about love and marriage. We hope you will show your concern for families by visiting them in their homes, as much as you can. In this way you will live the "spiritual fatherhood" the African Bishops at the Synod spoke about.

4) We ask all religious and all vowed to a celibate life 'for the sake of the Kingdom' to live your vocation faithfully and joyfully. Your celibate chastity is a precious gift to the whole Church and an encouragement for all others in their struggles. We wish to thank all religious and their lay co-workers who give shelter to abandoned young mothers and their love to children deprived of parental care.

5) We wish to say to all widows, all who are divorced, all who are single, all who are deprived of family, as well as single parents trying to bring up their children on their own: you are part of the Church; she is your family. We wish to thank you for giving your love to your children. We wish to thank you for creating a family spirit even outside natural families. We ask the entire Christian community to always welcome and support you.

6) We ask all health workers, doctors and nurses, to respect unborn life. We are saddened by all health workers, modern or traditional, who betray their calling by allowing themselves to be used as agents of death.

We ask all Catholics to fight the social evil of abortion in public as well as in their private lives.

7) We call on our young people: there is no such thing as a "right to sexual activity". We deplore the incredible foolishness and cowardice of those who do not dare to give you moral guidance when chastity is the only remedy to save you from the killer disease AIDS.

We condemn those who mislead you: there is no "safety" in condoms.

Be wise: do not rely on such risky devices for your life.

Wait for the day when you will be ready to love as a married person and to experience love that is both life-long and life-giving. Wait for this great gift the Creator has in store for you.

8) We thank all who work quietly to familiarise married couples with Natural Family Planning. But a great deal more still has to be done.

We ask Catholic nurses, doctors and pastoral workers, lay leaders and parents to make an all-out effort to set up a network in all dioceses, parishes and Small Christian Communities through which any couple who so wishes may be enabled to benefit from NFP.

Finally, we appeal to you all for prayers to the Holy Spirit that he may inspire and guide the participants of the Cairo Conference.

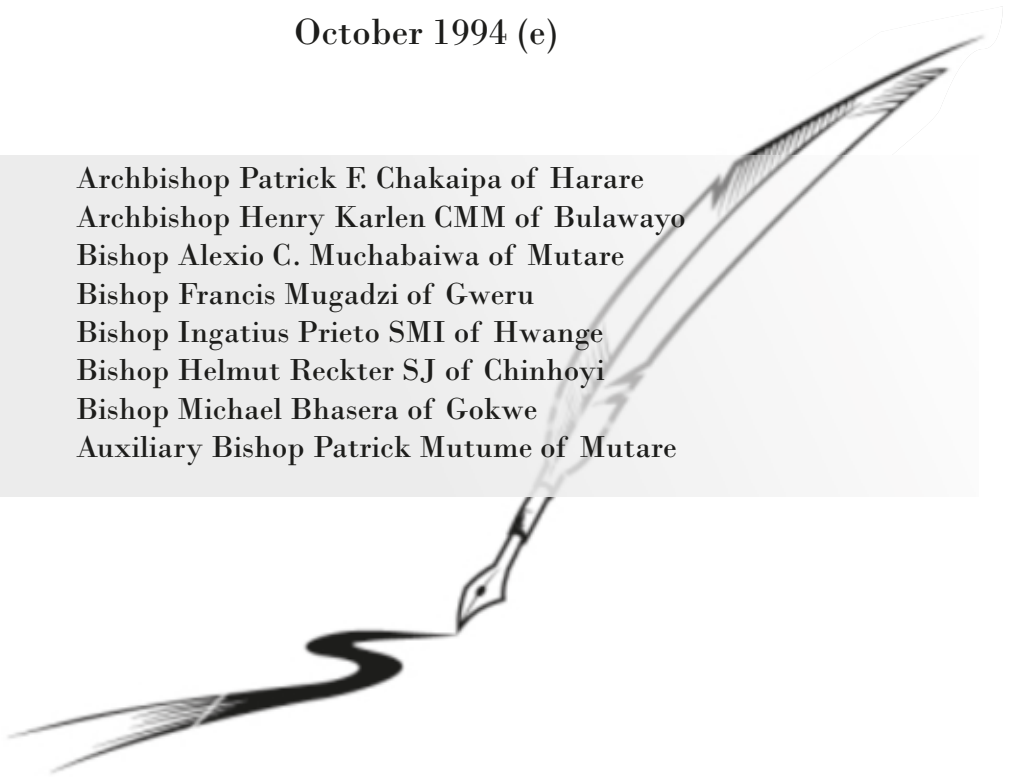
We ask you to pray for good and holy families. We ask you to pray in the family and make it the "domestic church".

# **GOD'S LOVE IN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY**

Joint Pastoral Statement by the  
Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops'  
Conference  
Based on Pope John Paul's "Letter to  
Families"

October 1994 (e)

Archbishop Patrick F. Chakaipa of Harare  
Archbishop Henry Karlen CMM of Bulawayo  
Bishop Alexio C. Muchabaiwa of Mutare  
Bishop Francis Mugadzi of Gweru  
Bishop Ingatius Prieto SMI of Hwange  
Bishop Helmut Reckter SJ of Chinhoyi  
Bishop Michael Bhasera of Gokwe  
Auxiliary Bishop Patrick Mutume of Mutare



**W**e wrote to you recently on matters relating to marriage and family, human procreation and population (**"The Family is the Basic Unit of Society"**, a Pastoral Statement on the Cairo World Conference on Population and Development, 1994). We defended the family as "the heart of a civilisation of love", in contrast to the loveless ideology of population planners.

Now we wish to go one step further and show how love has its source and origin in God's love. "God is love", and he created us for love. The God of love, Father, Son and Spirit, is reflected in the love and life of the human family. It is this dimension we wish to explore with you. We wish to do this guided by the Holy Father's "Letter to Families", written specially for the Year of the Family, 1994.

*(You find passages from the "Letter to Families" in bold print at the end of every section).*

## **Let us look at our situation**

*Tendai has been married to Chipso for three years. His mother is worried: there is no child yet. Soon Tendai is persuaded to send Chipso away. "She is a useless woman," he says, "she refused to give me a child".*

*Mr Mapuranga a successful businessman, acquired two more bottle stores. Shortly afterwards he married two new wives whom he appointed manageresses of his stores.*

*Muchaneta was married to Clopas for three years, they had one child. Then she suddenly left him. Clopas who recently lost his job was left with the child whom he took to his mother to look after. Muchaneta left a note before she disappeared, saying, "You are a poor man. I cannot stay with you. There are men around who can give me a better life. Bye."*

*Fungai listened to her boyfriend, "If you really love me, you will sleep with me." Now she is pregnant, but her boyfriend has vanished. Her parents are angry. Fungai is thinking of aborting the child.*

What do all these people have in common? They lack true love. Instead they use each other as tools for a purpose. Once they have no more use for their partners or spouses they discard them, throw them away like rubbish.

They treat each other like things, they do not respect each other like persons. Some see their wives merely as means towards the end of getting offspring. Some wives see their husbands as means towards the end of having a good life. Others treat wives as cheap labour. Men use women casually and discard them when they have 'enjoyed' them. Resulting children are not recognised as human beings, but are cut out of the woman's body like a cancerous growth.

**"The person can never be considered a means to an end; above all never as a means of 'pleasure'. The person is and must be nothing other than the end of every act. Only then does the action correspond with the dignity of the person."** [Pope John Paul II, Letter to Families (=LF), no. 12]

**"A love which is ... reduced to the satisfaction of concupiscence (cf. 1 John 2:13), or to a man's and woman's mutual 'use' of each other, makes persons slaves to their weaknesses."** (LF no. 13).

***Utilitarianism* is a civilisation of production and of use, a civilisation of 'things' and not of 'persons', a civilisation in which persons are used in the same way as things are used. In the context of a civilisation of use, woman can become an object for man, children a hindrance to parents, the family an institution obstructing the freedom of its members ...one need only to look at certain sexual education programmes ... or *pro-abortion tendencies* which vainly try to hide behind the so-called 'right to choose'..."** (LF, no. 13).

**"When the human body, considered apart from spirit and thought, comes to be used as *raw material* in the same way that the bodies of animals are used – and this actually occurs for example in experimentation on embryos and foetuses – we will inevitably arrive at a dreadful ethical defeat."** (LF, no.19).

**“Man 'is the only creature on earth whom God willed for its own sake'” (LF, no.9, quoting *Gaudium et Spes*, Vatican II, 24).**

## **God's Creation**

“God is love” and he created us for love. That is why he “*created us male and female*’ (cf. Gen. 1:27). We were created as social beings to reach out to the other. We were created for living in family, we were made for community.

Man was not created so he could *use* woman *selfishly* for his own ends and thus end up in *isolation*, but to *give* himself to her in *love* and create a *community* of persons.

Man may use the animals. He named them all, “*but not helper suitable for man was found for him*”. But he may not use bones and flesh of my flesh!” (Gen. 2:21,23). Man must relate to woman, and woman must relate to man, as persons. He must respect her as equal to himself, a human being like himself. And she can respect him, too, once she feels she is respected by him.

As long as one merely uses the other as a 'thing' there is no community of persons. There is only the loneliness of the isolated “I”. But we are meant to recognise and respect, accept and love each other and say “We”. This we learn most commonly and basically in the family. There we learn what it is to be human. If we neglect the family we lose our humanity.

“You know what Family means to us in Africa. It is the place where the deep African value of life and where each one feels himself or herself truly at home,” the Bishops of Eastern and Southern Africa said in their message from the Africa Synod (Our Journey Together, Catholic Church News, No. 14, p.4).

**“‘Male and female he created them’ (Gen. 1,27). Here too we find the first statement of the equal dignity of man and woman: both, in equal**



measure, are persons... both man and woman make their specific contribution. Hence one can discover, at the very origins of human society, the qualities of communion and complementarity." (LF, no. 6).

"The family has always been considered as the first and basic expression of man's *social nature*" (LF, no.7).

*"The primordial model of the family is to be sought in God himself, in the Trinitarian mystery of his life."* (LF, no.6).

## **Marriage – An image of God's Love**

Man was created for woman, and woman was created for man, and both were created for God, that is to say for love. In loving each other they learn to be open to God's love. In giving themselves to each other, they learn to give themselves to God. In giving themselves to each other once and for all, without any reservations to each other, they learn to give themselves to God once and for all, without reservations or conditions.

A man may be happy that "woman was created for man" and use her as his servant, ignoring that he, too, was created for her, to give himself to her in love. If a 'man cannot love his wife whom he can see how is he to love God whom he cannot see'? (cf. 1 John 4:20).

Love means giving oneself into the hands of the loved one. It means asking, not: How can I use her? But: What can I do for the beloved? Loved in this way, the woman too will ask what she can do for him.

In their mutual love man and woman have to discover for themselves this basic rule which Christ has laid down for us, "Anyone who finds life will lose it; *anyone who loses life for my sake will find it*" (Matthew 10:39). The spouses find themselves in giving themselves to each other. In forgetting about himself and caring about the wife the husband becomes the man the Creator meant to be: strong, dependable, courageous. In responding with unselfish love the woman fulfils her womanhood.

**“After affirming that man is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, the Council immediately goes on to say that he cannot *“fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself”* (*Gaudium et Spes*, 24). This might appear to be a contradiction, but in fact it is not. Instead it is the magnificent paradox of human existence: an existence called to *serve the truth of love*. Love causes man to find fulfilment through the sincere gift of self. To love means to give and receive something which can be neither bought nor sold, but given freely and mutually” (LF, no.11).**

## **Bride and bridegroom are to love each other as Christ loves his Church (Eph. 5)**

Yahweh did not hesitate to compare his tender love for Israel to the love of a bridegroom for his bride. We have no better image for God's love than this. “As the bridegroom rejoices in his bride, so will your God rejoice in you” (Isaiah 62, 5). And Yahweh, the lover, says to Israel his bride, “I shall betroth you to myself forever, I shall betroth you in uprightness and justice, and faithful love and tenderness” (Hosea 2:20-21).

Even when the woman proves unfaithful Yahweh promises her, “I shall remember my covenant with you when you were a girl and shall conclude a covenant with you that will last forever” (Ezekiel 16:6), thus going far beyond anything a human lover and husband would do.

For the new people of God Christ is the “bridegroom” (Matthew 9:15). He concludes the new covenant with the new people of God that will last forever when he gives his life, his body, his blood, his very self to the Church, his bride, in his dying on the cross. Christ, the “bridegroom” who is still with us (cf. Mt. 9:15), loves his bride “to the end” (John 13:1). Nothing can ever sever this bridegroom from his bride, not even her sinfulness. Nothing “will be able to come between us and the love of God, known to us in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom.8:39).

Christian marriage is a Sacrament. The love of the spouses is to be the

image of Christ's love for his Bride, the Church, and is to be modelled on Christ's union with the Church. "Husbands should love their wives, just as Christ loved the Church and sacrificed himself for her" (Eph. 5:25).

A husband who follows Christ cannot say, "I love you for the children you bear me, for the service you render me, for the pleasure you give me". He says, "I love you for your own sake, I love you for what you are, I love you regardless, I love you once and for all; I am in your hands just as you are in mine; what is yours is mine and what is mine is yours; whatever befalls us, we bear it together, whatever joy we receive, we share it together."

He says so because that is what Christ has been saying to his Bride, the Church, and says so still. And just as the Church gives herself wholeheartedly to her Bridegroom, so does the wife to her husband.

"This mystery is great" (Eph. 5:32), and many do not grasp it. Many lack the courage to give themselves unreservedly. They do not want to give before they have received.

They want to strike a deal, make a bargain. But "to love means to give and receive something which can be neither bought nor sold, but only given freely and mutually," the Holy Father said (LF, no.11).

Many are afraid of this unconditional commitment: the wife is accepted only on condition that she produces offspring. So the exchange of marriage vows is delayed, the faith is weakened and the love of God grows cold.

Unconditional love means this: the husband says, "Even if we are not blessed with children, I am still yours." (And they will remember that there are plenty of orphaned children longing for parental love...). The wife says, "Even if you fall sick or go to prison, I will not leave you, I am yours forever."

Others are prevented from giving themselves to each other once and for

all before God and his Church because the families cannot settle traditional demands; some degrade both tradition and Christian marriage by turning the union of their children into a commercial transaction.

The Christian faith has not yet taken root in African culture which is a culture of the family as long as Christians in practice deny this “great mystery” (Eph. 5:32).

The African Bishops declared at the Synod that our African concept of church is the Church-as-Family. At the same time they deplored the sad fact that the unions of so many Christian couples are not yet images of the love of Christ for his Church, do not yet reflect sacramentally the “great mystery” of God’s love revealed in Christ. But the Church in Africa cannot be the Church-as-Family if our families are not truly “domestic churches”.

**“The family itself is the great mystery of God. As the 'domestic church', it is the bride of Christ... Could we even imagine human love without the Bridegroom (Christ) and the love with which he first loved to the end? Only if husbands and wives share in that love and in that 'great mystery' can they love 'to the end'...**

**Love contains the acknowledgement of the personal dignity of the other, and of his or her absolute uniqueness...” (LF, no.19).**

**“The Church cannot ... be understood ... as the sign of man's Covenant with God in Christ... unless we keep in mind the “great mystery” involved in the creation of man as male and female and the vocation of both to conjugal love, to fatherhood and motherhood” (LF, no.19).**

## **Love Must be Fruitful**

Parents who give themselves to each other in love are ready to receive children as gifts from each other as fruits of their love.

**“Their unity ..., rather than closing them up in themselves, opens**

**towards a new life, towards a new person” (LF, no. 8).**

If someone has not given himself to the other in love, but is only using him or her for pleasure, he or she will not be open towards the gift of a new life. It will be rejected. In casual sexual encounters and temporary unions people are not ready for children.

The love of the spouses for each other and their love of children go together. The “contraceptive mentality” wishes to sever the link between the two: from now on, it is claimed, the love of a man and woman for each other is one thing, their love of children quite another. More and more the love of the spouses becomes self-sufficient and closed upon itself, excluding new life as the fruit of their love. Without love of children even the love of the spouses for each other may grow cold.

The love of children and the readiness to receive them as God's gift is not to be confused with the desire to have children at any cost, even at the cost of rejecting the wife for failing to provide them.

**“Certainly the mutual gift of husband and wife does not have the begetting of children as its only end, but is in itself a mutual communion of love and of life...The person can never be considered a means to an end...” (LF, no.12).** The woman must not be considered merely the child-bearer, the provider of offspring, but must be loved as a person for her own sake. It is such selfless, disinterested love that the Creator wants to bless with children who are to be received gratefully as gifts, not to be claimed as possessions by rights.

Children remain God's gifts, given as a loan for a time; they can never become the parents', not even the father's, “private property”. Eventually parents have to release them and allow them to follow their chosen path or their vocation, i.e. the path God has chosen for them. *“That is why a man leaves his father and mother and becomes attached to his wife...”* (Gen. 2:24). Some have to leave everything, even “father and mother”, in order to become Christ's disciples (cf. Lk. 14:25-27; 28-29; Mt. 10:37-39).

Parents experience real pain when the time comes to let go of their children. It is the final act of parental love. Children cannot forever go on being minors in the hands of their elders but will have to stand on their own feet and accept responsibility for their own lives though bonds of affection, love and respect remain. Everything must be done to support the families of the children. No parental interests, not even traditional claims of lavish 'bride-wealth' payments, must endanger the marriages of their children.

**“Every act of begetting finds its primordial model in the fatherhood of God. ...Begetting is the continuation of Creation. (LF, no.9).**

**“Both are responsible for their ... fatherhood and motherhood. The husband cannot fail to acknowledge and accept the result of a decision which has also been his own. He cannot hide behind expressions such as: 'I don't know'. 'I don't want it' or 'You're the one who wanted it' ...How can the man fail to assume responsibility? The man and the woman must assume together, before themselves and before others, the responsibility for the new life which they brought into existence.” (LF, no.12).**

**“The judge says: 'Come, O blessed my Father... for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me' (Mt.25:34-36).**

This list could be lengthened – 'I was an unborn child, and you welcomed me by letting me be born'; 'I was an abandoned child, and you became my family'; 'I was an orphan, and you adopted me and raised me as one of your own children'. Or again: 'You helped large families and families in difficulty to look after and educate the children God gave them'.

The Final Judgement will also contain another list, 'Depart from me...I was hungry and you gave me no food.' (Mt. 25:41-43) [Here] Jesus is present in each case as the one who has been rejected. In this way he would identify with the abandoned wife or husband, or with the child

conceived then rejected: 'You did not welcome me!'" (LF, no. 22).

"The family is a community of particularly intense interpersonal relationships: between spouses, between parents and children, between generations. It is a community which must be safeguarded in a special way ... "Honour your father and mother, that your days may be long in the land the Lord your God gives to you" (Ex. 20:12). [This commandment] indirectly tells parents: Honour your sons and daughters. The family as a 'domestic church', a 'little church' [means this] ... 'to be together' as a family, to be for one another, to make room in a community for affirming each person as such, for affirming 'this' individual person.

Yes, the civilisation of love is possible; it is not a utopia. It is possible by a reference to the 'Father from whom all fatherhood (and motherhood) on earth is named' (cf. Eph.3:14-15), from whom every human family comes" (LF, no.15).

## **The Church-as-Family**

The family is the "domestic church". This little church must pray and worship just as the Church at large does which the Africa Synod called Church-as-Family.

In prayer, love and service the domestic church should recognise itself as rooted in the Divine Family of Father, Son and Spirit.

It is our prayer that the eyes of all of us be opened to this vision of the family. Let us pray for the family. Let us pray in the family. Let us fill our homes with the love of the Bridegroom who loves his Bride *"to the very end"*.

# "MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM"

*(Gen. 1:27)*

## Human Rights Based on God's Law 1996 (a)

Archbishop Patrick F. Chakaipa of Harare  
Archbishop Henry Karlen CMM of Bulawayo (Vice President ZCBC)  
Bishop Francis Mugadzi of Gweru (President ZCBC)  
Bishop Alexio C. Muchabaiwa of Mutare  
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Bishop Helmut Reckter SJ of Chinhoyi  
Bishop Michael Bhasera of Gokwe  
Auxiliary Bishop Patrick Mutume of Mutare.



**D**uring the last year a heated public debate took place in our country about *homosexuality*. Men and women with a tendency to be attracted to persons of their own sex demanded the freedom to live according to their "sexual orientation" and "lifestyle" as a human right, even in contradiction of the inherited culture, morality and laws of the State.

Another equally important development has come to our notice, though it caused little public debate: family planning agents are more and more urging people to use the ultimate and irreversible means of birth control, *sterilisation*.

This raises some fundamental questions: do we enjoy total freedom as to how we may use our sexuality? Are there no limits imposed by human nature as created by God? Does modern biotechnology allow us to manipulate our bodies any way we want? Can we claim such wanton transgression of all limits as a human right? Which then begs the question: what are human rights? What are they based on?

These questions touch on something very close to our hearts, the family. Our culture is based on the family. And yet the family is under threat.

In 1994 we had occasion twice to write to you letters on this vital issue of the family: "The Family is the Basic Unity of Society" (August 1994), and "God's Love in Marriage and Family" (October 1994).

Since then the Bishops of Southern Africa met for their Fourth Plenary Session in Namibia in April last year and made pastoral plans to foster Christian marriage and family life in our region.

More recently Pope John Paul II promulgated the final results of the Africa Synod on his recent Journey through Cameroon, South Africa and Kenya, **defining the Church in Africa as the Family of God and the actual family as 'domestic church'**. (See final document on the Africa Synod, THE CHURCH IN AFRICA, no. 63).

This encourages us to write to you once more on questions relating to marriage and family and to clarify those issues just mentioned.

Our culture alone has no answer to these threats. We have to ask the Creator himself what he created man and woman for.

Who would have thought that something as basic as complementarity of man and woman in marriage could be questioned? And yet now we are being told that anyone has the right to choose a person even of his/her own sex as life partner, instead of someone of the opposite sex.

Being fertile and giving life was regarded as a positive value. Now we are being told it is a threat to human survival and must be suppressed in any way possible. But is everything possible also permissible?

This poses the further question: do we have right to limitless freedom? Can we claim just about everything as a *human right*?

## **Human rights based on the created order**

*(For this paragraph see the encyclical letter of Pope John Paul II “Splendour of the Truth”, no. 50).*

The Church fully supports the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights. But when people claim as a “human right” what is clearly immoral and harmful to society and its basic unit, the family, we need to remind ourselves that we do not make “human rights” ourselves. They are given to us by God. Every person, man or woman, is infinitely precious in the eyes of the Creator who made them. The life of every human being, from the moment of conception until natural death, must be respected as something sacred that belongs to God. And God wills that we live our lives according to the nature he has given us: our nature, i.e. the way we were made as men and women, imposes certain laws on us which we have to respect.

What is not in accordance with God's will as expressed in our nature cannot be claimed as a "human right".

Let us apply this principle to two moral issues on which we wish to give you clear guidance:

## **1) Homosexuality and the "right to choose"**

Man was created for woman, and woman was created for man, and both were created for God. Man and woman are to complement each other. They are of equal dignity and value in the eyes of God, and yet different. Their mutual love in marriage is to be fruitful. Marriage is to be fulfilled in children and a family.

This is the order given to humankind by God the Creator. There is no "option" or "choice". There is not "human right" to a "homosexual lifestyle".

Homosexuality is a disorder. "Homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered. They are contrary to the natural law" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2357). Christians must not practise a "homosexual lifestyle". African culture abhors homosexuality and considers it abnormal.

While we want to eliminate a disease, where it exists, we do not eliminate those who suffer from it. "Men and women with deep-seated homosexual tendencies do not choose their homosexual condition; for most of them it is a trial.

They must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2358).

Some homosexual persons may have been born like that: they have to learn how to live with their condition, helped by the Christian community.

Others have suffered a deep wound in their psyche when young, and healing may be possible. Others again act under pressure of a given social environment and need to be freed from such pressure.

It is therefore not right for anyone, including Government, to harass, persecute or torture people simply because they are known to have this inclination. At the same time homosexual persons have no right to propagate what some of them call their “lifestyle”. Laws protecting the young from sexual abuse, whether by homosexual or heterosexual persons, are legitimate.

At the same time, society must not create breeding grounds for homosexuality through overcrowding in prisons, forced separation of married men from their families, and forming an underclass of homeless people who have no hope ever to marry and have a family.

## **2) The integrity of the human person**

Fertility is a beautiful gift to be used if and when the parents responsibly can do so, but since sex is often used irresponsibly, it is now seen as a threat that has to be destroyed by *sterilisation*.

This threatens the integrity and wholeness of the human person. So often in our day the sexual encounter between man and woman is no longer an expression of commitment, but has been reduced to a consumer good for monetary pleasure. Love is no longer seen as open to faithfulness. The bodily union no longer signifies mutual personal responsibility for one another and for possible offspring. A basic truth of the created order is denied.

Many a man no longer says, “I love you so much that I will love as father even the child that may be the fruit of our love”. Instead he wants to be lover without the responsibility of a father. The woman can no longer rely on the respect and consideration of her spouse, but feels she has to protect herself against an aggressor.

As sterilisation is more and more advertised as a means of family planning, it is our duty to state unequivocally: *sterilisation is morally unacceptable* as a means of family planning. It contradicts human dignity. It disfigures God's creation. The spouses no longer express unconditional mutual self-giving to one another. Their sexual union, like a promise that is not kept, becomes a lie.

Parents together have the responsibility to decide on the size of their family. They cannot bypass their personal responsibility by some physical intervention. Fertility is an integral part of the human person, and is to be regulated through responsible action, not through mutilation of the body.

Forced sterilisation, e.g. by tying the tubes of a woman during surgery when she is not aware of what is done to her, is a violation of her human dignity and a denial of her right to personal integrity. There cannot be any moral justification for causing such grievous bodily harm.

The integrity and wholeness of the human person is at stake. The dignity of marriage as a union and communion of persons is at stake.

## **Conclusion**

What we have said was in defence of God's grand design for the loving and faithful union between man and woman called marriage which, with God's blessing, is to be fruitful and become family. These are the points we would like to stress:

Social fragmentation, the destruction of family life and the isolation of the individual may well be contributing factors to the spread of homosexuality in western countries. In so far as similar trends appear in Africa, the Church must become the extended family and supportive community that people need. The image of the "Church as God's Family"... "Emphasises care for others, solidarity, warmth in human relationships, acceptance, dialogue and trust" (Church in Africa, 65).

We need to teach fertility awareness to our young men and women even long before they are married. Where are the mature relatives (vatete, sekuru in Shona, obabakazi, okhulu, in Ndebele) to do this teaching? We need to intensify marriage preparation.

*“Natural Family Planning which stresses co-operation and responsibility between partners should be promoted.*

*Men should be challenged to assume their responsibility in the home and not abandon it. The dignity of fatherhood and motherhood should be taught and recognised,”* said the Bishops of Southern Africa at their assembly in Namibia (IMBISA) Final Report 1995).

The wholeness and integrity of the person as explained in this passage can only be preserved within the context of Christian monogamous marriage. The Bishops found that polygamy is still a great obstacle. In their discussions which involved also competent lay representatives *“the need was expressed for suppression of the polygamous mentality of many men and a growing realisation of the position of women as persons in their own right. This should lead to a different concept of love, relationship and equality in marriage”* (Final Report – group discussions).

May the Lord bless your parish communities and families. May he give you the Spirit and enable you to build the Church in Africa as God's Family.

# **“YOU ARE MY WITNESSES TO MAKE CHRIST KNOWN”**

A letter from the Catholic Bishops of  
Zimbabwe, to the laity, Religious  
and Clergy

On the implementation of the  
African Synod  
In preparation for the celebration of  
Jubilee Year 2000

1996 (b)

Archbishop Patrick F. Chakaipa of Harare  
Archbishop Henry Karlen CMM of Bulawayo, (Vice President ZCBC)  
Bishop Francis Mugadzi of Gweru, (ZCBC President)  
Bishop Alexio C. Muchabaiwa of Mutare  
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Bishop Michael Bhasera of Gokwe  
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**I**n April 1994, the Bishops of Africa met in Rome with Pope John Paul II in the meeting known as the Africa Synod. The purpose of that meeting was to examine the life of the Church in Africa and to make plans for its growth and development. Following this meeting, Pope John Paul II came to Africa in September 1995, and presented us with the decisions of that meeting. We, your Bishops went to South Africa to meet the Pope, and there he entrusted us with the fruits of the Synod and urged us to implement them in our various dioceses here in Zimbabwe.

The Synod in Rome is now over, but the implementation of what was discussed and decided upon, has now to begin in our dioceses, Parishes and Christian communities. Together as a family we need to discuss and implement all the important issues from the Synod, so that we may be witnesses to make Christ known, in our homes, at our workplaces, in our Christian communities, and in our Parishes and Dioceses. The document that the Pope entrusted to us has been made available in simplified form, and it is this book, "The Africa Synod Comes Home" that we wish to use as the basis for our programme.

#### Jubilee year 2000

In the year 2000 we will celebrate two thousand years since the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ. This is an occasion for great rejoicing and for expressing our gratitude to God for the Gracious gift of His Son. The Pope has requested that the Church throughout the whole world join in a three-year programme of preparation for the Great Jubilee Year 2000. Here in Zimbabwe, we your Bishops, have agreed that our three-year programme of preparation for Jubilee Year 2000 will be based on the Africa Synod, as well as incorporating the themes of the Jubilee year programme. With this letter, we are asking everyone to follow this programme for the next three years in your different places and situations, so that through our witness, Christ may be made known to all. The National Pastoral Team will animate and co-ordinate our efforts in implementing this programme, and will keep us supplied with material in order to assist us in this work of building up the family of God in Zimbabwe.



## **The Family of God**

During the Synod in Rome, the Bishops lived and worked together as one family, the family of God. From their experience they saw that this image of the family expresses best what they want the Church to be – a family living and working together in peace and harmony. In our own families we experience love, sharing, co-operation and dialogue. Our family is where we feel at home and no one is a stranger or unwelcome. It should be the same with the Church. All the values that we enjoy in our families – care for others, good human relationships, acceptance, dialogue, trust, solidarity – should also be clearly seen in the Church. This is what we have to work for. This is the programme that we hope to implement – to make the Church one family – the family of God in Africa. We must work together so that all Church members – Bishops, Priests, Religious and Laity, learn to love and trust one another, learn to dialogue and work together to build up the one family of God in Africa.

A) As we said in our recent Pastoral letter, the family is the basic unity of society and the first school of Christian life and human growth. We must strengthen our efforts to support and strengthen it.

B) The small Christian communities are the place where the Church as family is best experienced. We must intensify our efforts to deepen the faith in our families and in our communities.

C) Very often in the past, people have joined the family of God in baptism, without understanding and living out its reality in their lives. There is a great need for a renewed catechesis, so that people become truly Christian in word and in deed, and not just in name.

D) One of the groups that received specific attention at the Synod was women. As we all know, they have a fundamental role in any family. Here in Zimbabwe we must strengthen our efforts to affirm their dignity and rights, and we hereby commit ourselves to following programmes which will support them in finding their proper role in the family, in our workplaces, in the church and in society.

E) AIDS, which threatens our families and nation, received attention during the Synod, and we are challenged to chastity, faithfulness within

marriage, and to bring to our suffering sisters and brothers “all possible material, moral and spiritual comfort.” As the document from the Synod tells us, “the battle against AIDS ought to be everyone's battle”.

## **Inculturation**

In the world-wide programme of preparation for Jubilee year 2000, pope John Paul has asked us to dedicate the year 1997 to Jesus the Son of God. Jesus is the model of inculturation. Incarnation is a good model for our own important work of inculturation. Just as “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn. 1:14), so the Good News, the Word of Jesus Christ, must take root in our own life situations.

A) Throughout 1997, as we think and pray about Jesus, the Son of God becoming man, we will work towards ways of expressing our Christian life and our Christian faith in a more African manner. We need to discuss and work out ways to understand better the message of Jesus and to make it a genuine part of our daily life. The Church, the family of God, must become more relevant to all people, so that more and more people will be attracted to follow Jesus together with us.

B) We must also challenge our culture where it is wrong and unjust, so that it is transformed by Gospel values in the light of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

## **Dialogue**

The African Synod spoke a lot about the urgent need for dialogue. Indeed they told us it is a must! We all know what happens when people do not sit and discuss together. It can lead to misunderstanding and resentment, and even to the terrible tribal conflicts that we have seen in Rwanda and other parts of Africa.

A) As one family of God, this dialogue must begin in our homes – between husband and wife, and between parents and children.

B) It must take place in our Christian communities and parishes, between

Priests, Sisters, Catechists, and all Parish leaders and groups. All must be involved!

C) Dialogue must continue in the Diocese, between the Bishop and his priests, between the various Religious groups in the diocese, and between all those involved in administration and decision making in the Church.

D) Such dialogue demands a readiness to listen, to hear what others think and say. It means being open to other ways and ideas and not insisting only on one's own way.

E) Dialogue also means being open to the holy Spirit at work in other Churches and entering into dialogue with those of other religions.

The challenge of dialogue is vital to every level of our Church family, and one that will be underlying the entire programme of the African Synod. We want every member of our Church Family to be involved in this programme – to see everyone sitting around the same table, sharing and listening to each other in a spirit of true dialogue.

## **Justice and Peace**

The Gospel values of Justice and Peace must be the very basis of community, if the Church as family of God is to be alive and active. Justice and peace are very necessary elements if our Church is going to be one of dialogue and sharing.

A) How can we live in peace with each other, if we treat some as more equal than others, if we discriminate, if we fail to give others what is their due. We have a lot of work to do in this area of justice and peace, if we are truly going to live as one family.

B) We must learn in our families, in our Christian communities, and in our parishes and dioceses, to be genuinely concerned about the well being of every member. Our Commission for Justice and Peace will be co-operating with the National Pastoral Team in helping us to understand better the ways in which we can promote the Christian virtues of Justice and peace.

C) We ask each Parish, each Christian community, to seek to understand and to actively promote justice and peace as part of their pastoral

programme, so that our concern for the poor is translated into concrete actions. There are many other issues of the Synod which are not mentioned here in this Letter, but which will form part of our programme for the next three years. We invite each Diocese and Parish to incorporate the themes of the National Programme, into their own plans and priorities so that we may all be witnesses to make Christ known. The three-year National programme will come to you from the National pastoral Centre, and we urge all people – Priests, Sisters and laity, to take it seriously so that we travel together as the one family of God towards the Great Jubilee of the birth of Our Saviour in the year 2000.

As we begin our programme of preparation to celebrate the Great Jubilee and to implement the African Synod, it is important to remember that we must be patient. It is not something that we can implement in one day or even in one year. It will take years, perhaps even longer, to implement all the fruits of the Synod. When the Bishops met in Rome, they took as their theme: “The Church in Africa and its evangelising mission towards the year 2000”. So the Jubilee year 2000 is a target date for us. At the end of this Exhortation on the Synod, the Pope told us that for Africa, the best way to prepare for jubilee Year 2000 was to implement the fruits of the Synod. As we begin our programme of implementation, we hope and pray that all our Catholics will make every effort to live as the family of God in Zimbabwe, a family characterised by dialogue, sharing, and the gospel values of justice and peace. Let us witnesses to make Christ known, in the family, in the Church and in society so that we be truly prepared to celebrate the jubilee Year 2000.

We request that during Advent 1996, this letter be read and made known to the faithful in all parishes and outstations, in all religious houses, and in all educational institutes and schools. It serves as the opening letter of encouragement to the three-year programme of implementing the Synod that we wish to adopt so as to assist our Catholic community throughout Zimbabwe to be properly prepared for the celebration of the Great Jubilee in the year 2000.

# **RESPONSIBILITY - HONESTY - SOLIDARITY**

Joint pastoral statement of the Zimbabwe  
Catholic Bishops' Conference

April 1997 (a)



Archbishop Patrick F. Chakaipa of Harare  
Archbishop Henry Karlen CMM of Bulawayo (Vice President ZCBC)  
Bishop Francis Mugadzi of Gweru (President ZCBC)  
Bishop Alexio C. Muchabaiwa of Mutare  
Bishop Ignatius Prieto SMI of Hwange  
Bishops Helmut Reckter SJ of Chinhoyi  
Bishop Michael Bhasera of Gokwe  
Auxiliary Bishop Patrick Mutume of Mutare

## **Introduction**

*For many ordinary working class families in urban Zimbabwe life is hard at present: the father lost his job as a mechanic because of "restructuring" in industry. The mother sells vegetables. Her eldest daughter was divorced by her husband after their baby died. This ex-son-in-law has died also. His ex-wife is very seriously ill. The grandparents are taking care of the mother and the one surviving child.*

*The eldest son has just written his O-level exams. His parents have no money to allow him to repeat the subjects he has not passed yet. He has no chance of finding a place in college or a workplace. His sister in Form Two may have to leave school so that the family can at least get the two youngest children through Primary School. The father cannot find work and blames it on his not knowing anyone "in high places".*

*An ordinary rural family may face a situation like this: after years of drought and great hardship, the recent rains have enabled the people to grow good crops. The mother carried the main burden since her husband was working in town. She ran the smallholding on her own, with the help of her children. Recently her husband has come home because he is very sick. Without the cash from her husband's urban job she finds it hard to pay the school fees for her two eldest children in secondary school. Most of her agricultural income, i.e. the GMB cheque (which came so late that she had to borrow money for the school fees), was spent on her children. Next year another child will want to go to secondary school and two more to primary school. Without her husband's income she does not know how she will manage. She asks herself fearfully: is he going to live that long? And will she get ill herself as well?*

## **The Struggle Against Poverty**

We have won the war for political independence. We have not yet won the war against poverty. There are many reasons for this. We inherited a

divided country where resources were very unevenly distributed. The majority had been disadvantaged in education and vocational training, in health care and access to land. We invested much in education, health care and rural development. But you must produce before you can spend. We did not produce enough. We also spent much on the military. The region was destabilised. There was a war in neighbouring Mozambique. International trade puts us at a disadvantage, especially since we are primarily producers of raw materials whose prices we do not control. We are getting more and more indebted to donor nations and international agencies.

Some of these causes of our poverty are beyond our control. Change can only come through decisions to be taken at the highest international level.

For other causes of our poverty we are responsible ourselves. We aspired to an egalitarian society and an equitable distribution of land, resources and wealth. We have failed to achieve any of these goals. The gap between the rich and the poor is not being closed, but seems to be widening.

People try by hook or by crook to secure for themselves a share in the wealth of the nation, often without producing and contributing anything. Those with strong elbows grab a big slice, trampling the weaker ones underfoot. Almost every day the media tell us about embezzlement, corruption and large-scale theft.

There is much *irresponsibility* in the use of public assets.

There is much *dishonesty*: even people who consider themselves respectable citizens engage in stealing at the workplace, bank fraud, and white-collar crime, while pick-pocketing, burglaries and violent robberies are on the increase. Leaders have been hiding immoral behaviour behind facades of respectability.

There is *lack of solidarity*: everyone is trying to enrich himself without concern for the community. Even traditional solidarity within the family is breaking down.

## **The Human Person Must Be in the Centre**

A new ideology seems to support this trend towards selfishness: self-interest is to be the new engine of our economy in place of a centralised economy run by government. Self-interest is to achieve the common good. Rampant individualism is to build the nation. This is impossible: self-interest can never build a just, fair and compassionate society. Self-interest will bring wealth and prosperity to some, but not a victory over poverty for all.

In the midst of this confusion we must once more establish one fundamental principle: THE HUMAN PERSON IS THE SOURCE, THE CENTRE AND THE PURPOSE OF ALL SOCIO-ECONOMIC LIFE (Vatican II, **The Church in the Modern World**, no. 25).

This means that the economy must serve the people, not the people the economy. "The social order and its development must constantly yield to the good of the person, since the order of things must be subordinate to the order of persons and not the other way round, as the Lord suggested when he said that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27)" (ibid. n. 26).

What does this mean? What grows on our land is produced by people and for people. If people are hungry it is not right to produce cash crops merely for profit. If people have no work one should not replace them with machines.

But if machines make work easier and more productive for the workforce without making them redundant, then one should use them.

The important thing is constantly to ask: What is good for the people? What satisfies their needs? What makes use of their talents and energies? What makes them grow as persons and develops their humanity?



People are more important than things. People are more important than what they produce. They are worth more than the actual wage they receive. People are more than a figure on a balance sheet. People cannot be equated with their economic usefulness.

People are the entire purpose of all our economic activity. If they are not served by the economy, then the entire economy does not serve any purpose.

## **Population and Poverty**

Strong pressure groups from overseas, through their local representatives, tell us that the first thing Zimbabweans must do is to have fewer children. We keep hearing a very simple message: Have plenty of children and remain poor, cut down on children and be prosperous. In other words: Let us eliminate poverty by eliminating the poor.

Women of child-bearing age are considered dangerous to society. Children are no longer welcomed, but considered superfluous. People are one-sidedly seen merely as eaters and consumers, as if they were vermin. But first and foremost people are an asset and a resource, potential producers and creators of new wealth.

They say, for instance, that the annual population growth rate is around 3 % and the annual economic growth rate around 2 %; therefore, the population growth rate must be brought down to 2 %. In other words: the people must be adjusted to the economy. We ask : why not adjust the economy to the people? Why not bring up the economic growth to the population increase?

We do not say "The more people, the better". The world population has grown within the last 150 years more than ever before in human history. In the last hundred years the population of Zimbabwe has increased at least tenfold.

We may be lagging behind in building enough schools, hospitals, social services, workplaces, houses, means of transport etc. for all of them. But if people are our main concern, we will not say "Have fewer people". Fewer people will not build more houses, hospitals, schools.

People are not so much a threat and a danger to the earth's resources. They are a resource themselves. "Indeed, besides the earth, man's principle resource is man himself . His intelligence enables him to discover the earth's productive potential and the many different ways in which human needs can be satisfied" (Pope John Paul II, Centesimus Annus, 1991, p. 62).

So we will ask: How can we make the best use of our human potential? What effort is needed, nationally and internationally, to feed, educate, treat medically and house everyone?

We are told that our land cannot support our population by people who consume much greater amounts of energy, water, and most other resources than we do. From a global perspective, the developed nations have as much reason to question their excessive consumption as the developing nations have to ask how they can feed their people. But they do not. Refusing to change their lifestyle, they hold us alone responsible for the imbalance between rich and poor nations.

The question is not one of production (Do we produce enough for all?) but of distribution (Who has access to what is being produced?). "Between 1950 and 1980 total world food production doubled and, at the present time, 'globally there is enough food for all'. The fact that people continue to starve despite this shows that 'inequitable access is the main problem'" (**World Hunger**, Vatican, p.30).

We are told by our own leaders that we need a "population policy", apparently accepting the one-sided message coming from the developed countries unquestioningly.

*We would like to ask:* Have the people in our country ever been asked whether they want a “population policy”? How do people feel about it in the light of their culture and spiritual outlook? “Embarking upon costly social and economic policies, without taking into account the perception of reality by the most humble members of society, can eventually lead to extremely costly dead-ends for the whole world” (**World Hunger**, Vatican, 1996, p.38).

Do we need a “population policy” by which we understand a campaign to sharply reduce the number of births, considering that the fertility rate is already falling, the mortality rate is going up due to AIDS and there is a possibility that the population may stop growing anyway?

## **Rebuild the Family and beat Poverty**

We propose, instead of a population policy, a **family policy**, i.e. a campaign to restore family life, considering that the family is the heart of our culture, “the basic unit of society” and the “domestic church”.

These are the basic elements of our **family policy**:

1) “Not international bureaucrats, nor agents of aid organisations, nor politicians or governments decide on family size, but *parents*,” we said in 1994 (“The Family is the Basic Unit of Society”).

We need responsible parenthood *within* the family, not population control imposed from *outside*.

Responsible parenthood goes together with natural family planning (NFP). We ask Government and non-governmental organisations to make NFP available to the general public. It is free of side-effects and woman-friendly.

2) “Human life must be respected from the moment of conception until the moment of natural death” (Pope John Paul II).

Young people must be taught respect for human life in the family and in school.

The “unspeakable crime” of abortion (**The Gospel of Life**, John Paul II) must never be considered as a means of family or population planning.

3) We need to create a new culture of mutual respect between men and women.

We need to create a new culture of self-discipline which abhors sexual abuse and honours abstinence before marriage and faithfulness within marriage. The purpose of the Creator's gift of sexuality is to be an expression of faithful and committed love and to procreate new life.

4) While we commend women who bring up their fatherless children alone, and do not want them to be discriminated against either in the Church or in society, we must stress that children should have both a mother and a father. The single-parent family should remain the exception and not become the norm.

Young women should not allow themselves to be tricked into sexual relationships (with the inevitable result of single motherhood) by men making, but never keeping, promises of marriage. Children should be born into homes and families that can take proper care of them.

Young men should prove that they are mature enough to take on the responsibility for a wife and family by exercising sexual self-control.

Young people should encourage one another to avoid casual, immature sexual relationships.

They should not be misled into thinking that they have a right to instant sexual satisfaction "as long as they use contraceptives (e.g. condoms)".

We urge pastors, teachers, youth promoters and health care workers to teach the young, once they are mature enough, fertility awareness (See: **Save Our Families**, 1991).

We need long-term preparation for marriage starting with adolescents. We as Bishops agree entirely with Catholic men and women who reject a "further reduction of the age of consent (as)...unthinkable and irresponsible" (*Statement by the Catholic Commission of the Laity*, 22 February).

5) The Church's vision of marriage clearly excludes polygamy, let alone concubinage with a mistress. Christian married love is the complete self-giving of oneself to one spouse, and one spouse only.

6) Government can do much to support marriage and family life by giving a clear moral message in its schools when preparing syllabi for human biology, AIDS awareness, family life education and religious and

moral education. Children must be left in absolutely no doubt that sexual intimacy is not for them.

7) Marital faithfulness, so vital for the survival of our nation in the midst of the present AIDS pandemic, must be supported by a family-friendly housing policy.

Husbands and wives should not be transferred to different parts of the country, but allowed to live together. Married couples themselves should avoid living apart for long periods of time.

8) The income tax allowance for children, abolished in 1996, should be re-instituted, also for children orphaned by the AIDS pandemic. Parents should be encouraged to accept responsibility for such children not their own.

We commend all, mostly women, who give home nursing care to their sick fathers and husbands, brothers and sisters, and sons and daughters sick with AIDS.

9) Widows need special protection against exploitation. Married couples should make sure that they have a proper marriage document and a Will and Testament to avoid legal arguments after the death of one of the spouses.

Widows should be given all the human and spiritual support they need by the Christian community.

### *Conclusion:*

Strong families can overcome poverty and sound marriages protect against the lethal danger of AIDS better than broken and single-parent families.

In line with our basic principle we wish to stress once more: mere *economic* interests should not override human needs. Therefore economic policy must be at the service of *the family* which is the “basic unit of society”.

## Responsibility

“It should be noted that in today's world, among other rights, the **right of economic initiative** is often suppressed. Yet it is a right which is important not only for the individual but also for the common good,” wrote Pope John Paul II in 1987.

Our government has been stressing correctly since 1990 the need for economic initiative coming from the individual citizen or group of citizens. Every human being is meant to be a centre of activity and to accept responsibility for their own life and determine their own course of action.

Nothing is sadder than to see people paralysed by their belief that they are total victims of circumstances completely beyond their control. And nothing is more uplifting and more encouraging than to see people who, despite enormous handicaps, take their lives into their own hands and create, through imagination and determination, a workplace and livelihood for themselves and their families. Those gifted with initiative and enterprise should not be frustrated by bureaucracy and “red tape”, by jealousy and envy. However, we have this “right to economic initiative” not just for ourselves. It is a right “important not just for the individual but for the common good”.

The Creator, by giving us gifts and talents, obliges us to make best possible use of them, both for our own benefit and for the benefit of society at large, and never waste them. In terms of Catholic social teaching, there is no such thing as a completely private property. Nor is there a completely private economic initiative and activity. Skills, technical know-how, land, capital, or any other resources which the individual may have are always to be used, not just for the enrichment of one individual, but for the prosperity of all.

“More than ever, work is work with other and work for others: it is a matter of doing something for someone else. Work becomes ever more fruitful and productive to the extent that people become more knowledgeable of the productive potentialities of the earth and more profoundly cognisant of the needs of those for whom their work is done”

(Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 1991, n.31).

What people at the grassroots level can do for themselves, they must not expect government or some other agency to do for them. What developing countries can do for themselves, they must not expect developed countries or international bodies to do for them (according to the *Principle of Subsidiarity*). Developed nations “should not forget that progress is based, not only on foreign aid, but on the full exploitation of native resources and on the development of their own talents and traditions” (Vatican II, **Church in the Modern World**, 1986a).

## Honesty

No *structural* adjustment programme will succeed unless accompanied by a moral adjustment programme. Many people in this country have escaped the prison of colonial society only to make themselves slaves of greed and avarice, prostrated before the idol of wealth and riches. Biblically speaking, they have not moved to the promised land to enjoy its freedom as citizens, but they have returned to “Egypt” as slaves (Ex. 16-17). Many have bitten off more than they can chew. They have lived beyond their means. They got themselves deeply into debt. In order to cover their debts they had to take money entrusted to them, ending up as embezzlers and thieves. Many co-operatives have failed because the treasurers misused the common fund. Once people can no longer trust each other they can no longer work together. This breakdown of mutual trust has frustrated many development efforts. Many schools are still broken down and dilapidated because the parents' money was stolen. Many children were hampered in their education because school fees were embezzled.

Christians have a duty to pay taxes to the State. Tax fraud, either by companies or by individuals, is theft. It is stealing from society which is morally reprehensible as stealing from an individual. The State in turn must answer for the way it spends the money of its citizens and give an account of it to the public. If the State is seen to waste the people's taxes on unnecessary luxuries and prestige projects it weakens the morale of

the tax-paying public.

We commend those former college and university students now gainfully employed who have paid back their government grants so that other students can be supported with the same money. And we hope that those who have not yet done so will do so soon, aware of their duty to society.

We, the Bishops of Zimbabwe, deplore that the health budget has decreased in real terms over the last ten years. We ask government to cut drastically any expenditure on unnecessary travel, mere prestige projects and the army and armaments so as to boost the inadequate health budget. "Vast amounts of money earmarked for death, in the northern hemisphere as in the southern hemisphere, should henceforth be earmarked for life" (**World Hunger**, Vatican, p.41). It is especially reprehensible for public servants to betray the trust the public has in them by stealing public funds. They are stealing from all of us. They are stealing especially from the poor who are most in need of public support.

The Church and church institutions must be absolutely above reproach in the way church funds are handled. We are ashamed that even church members and church employees have 'helped themselves to the common fund' (cf. John 12:6). We commend all who, entrusted with church funds, administer them well and reliably. Parish treasurers, for instance, who spend long hours counting the people's offerings, entering them into the books and banking them, do much to build up the local church.

Honesty creates trust, and trust builds up the community. Dishonesty erodes trust and destroys the community. And only a united community, able and willing to work together, can overcome poverty. "As soon as groups of men and women begin working together in order to take due account of the need to serve the whole community, and each individual member of it, remarkable developments can be achieved" (**World Hunger**, Vatican, p.37).

*Corruption and bribery* is a great evil in our society. It is unworthy of a nation so proud of its freedom bought at such a high price. People of power, either in the public or private sector, who demand bribes are exploiters and oppressors. They abuse their positions of power and influence to enrich themselves by exploiting their fellow citizens,



especially the poor, who are desperate for certain “favours” which are in fact their rights.

## **No Christian must either solicit bribes or pay them.**

It is especially contemptible to exploit the plight of the jobless and squeeze money out of them for the “favour” of giving them work.

It is the worst possible exploitation to ask sexual favours of a woman who is seeking work.

“It is often corruption that hampers the reforms needed to pursue the common good and ensure justice, which go hand in hand. Corruption... is always a serious abuse of the trust placed by society, in those appointed to represent that society, and who exploit the social authority for personal gain. Corruption is one of the constituent elements of many 'structures of sin', and the cost to the planet is far superior to the sum total of all the funds embezzled” (**World Hunger**, p.47).

## **Solidarity**

In future we will either live and prosper all of us together by sharing the gifts of the Creator in solidarity, or we will not have a future. We completely reject the notion that socio-economic life must be seen as a struggle for the “survival of the fittest”, that my prosperity is your misery, that my freedom is your slavery, that my survival is your death.

If the rich man can only live in a mansion because his workers live in dirty hovels then there is no future in that wealth. If the more advanced nations can live only in comfort because the poor nations pay for it then we are heading for conflict and another world war.

We will develop our country all of us together, or we will not develop it. We will advance all of us together, or we will not advance.

Hunger and malnutrition, poverty and misery are first and foremost a result of human sin and selfishness, of injustice and lack of solidarity.

Solidarity means that we are responsible for one another. On the very first pages of the Bible we learn this lesson. “Yahweh asked Cain, *'Where is your brother Abel?'* *'I do not know,' he replied. 'Am I my brother's*

*guardian?' 'What have you done?' Yahweh asked. 'Listen! Your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground' (Genesis 4:9). Cain was condemned because the answer to this question is, "Yes, you are your brother's guardian!" We must know what is happening to our brothers and sisters and must care about them. Their pain is our pain. As Christians, i.e. as members of the Body of Christ, we know, "If one part hurts, all the parts share its pain. And if one part is honoured, all the parts share its joy" (Cor. 12:26). As children of one and the same Father in heaven, we cannot walk past a brother or a sister in distress. Even the stranger becomes my neighbour if he is in need. Jesus commends the Samaritan, i.e. the foreigner, for going out of his way and coming to the aid of the robber's victim on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho (see Luke 10; 29-37).*

*"Carry each other's burdens; that is how to keep the law of Christ," St Paul orders us (Gal. 6: 2). The 'law of Christ' which makes us responsible for one another even across ethnic and international boundaries is the exact opposite of the law of the market place which declares *self-interest* to be the moving force of this world.*

In our time solidarity must embrace the entire globe. "Globalisation" cannot mean every country fighting every other country for a maximum share of the world's resources. It must mean every country sharing in the responsibility of making this globe inhabitable for all. The self-interest of the stronger ones must not dictate to the weaker ones.

So we are entitled to ask the question: when the strong nations put pressure on us to reduce population growth, are they acting in solidarity with us or are they motivated by self-interest, to defend their standard of living?

The Catholic Church has a global vision. "The international economic scene needs an *ethic of solidarity*, if participation, economic growth, and a just distribution of goods are to characterise the future of humanity," said Pope John Paul II when he was addressing the United Nations in New York, 4 October 1995. Announcing the Jubilee 2000, the Pope says, "Thus in the spirit of the Book of Leviticus (25:8-12), Christians will have to raise their voice on behalf of the poor of the world, proposing the Jubilee as an

appropriate time to give thought, among other things, to reducing substantially, if not cancelling outright, the international debt which seriously threatens the future of many nations” (**The Advent of the Third Millennium**, 1994, n.51). The Africa Synod asked for the same (**Africa Synod Message**, n.41). However, if the *people* are to benefit from debt cancellation *governments* have to put their house in order first. *Wastage of public funds and corruption* must stop.

We can only claim international solidarity if we foster solidarity nationally first, among ourselves. “The exercise of solidarity within each society is valid when its members recognise one another as persons. Those who are more influential, because they have a greater share of goods and common services, should feel responsible for the weaker and be ready to share with them all they possess. Those who are weaker, for their part, in the same spirit of solidarity, should not adopt a purely passive attitude or one that is destructive of the social fabric, but, while claiming their legitimate rights, should do what they can for the good of all” (Pope John Paul II, **Social Concerns**, p.75). This spirit of solidarity and mutual responsibility, demanded by Catholic Social Doctrine, is nothing new to people rooted in African culture. The traditional extended family practised this solidarity as a matter of course. It is, therefore, distressing to see that in our society as a whole there seems to be little solidarity. Having emerged from poverty only very recently themselves, many people have little compassion or concern for those whom they have overtaken in the race for wealth, power and prestige.

Even the traditional solidarity within the family seems to be breaking down. Our aim as Christians can never be to promote selfish individualism. Quite to the contrary, we wish to use traditional family solidarity as a foundation on which to build a new and wider solidarity which goes beyond the clan and ethnic group. We wish to build a society where we recognise in anyone hungry, thirsty, naked, or sick our Lord himself (Matthew 25: 31-46).

Nowadays narrow group interests seem to supersede the common good. Like year's strikes by nurses and doctors, made worse by the government's

inability to solve the crisis through dialogue, have done untold harm. All the parties concerned fought for their narrow interests, few were concerned about the sick left unattended. This was a shocking demonstration of a complete absence of solidarity.

In the current arguments over access to land, we must not allow the strongest to win, but must solve the problem in a spirit of solidarity, taking into account the needs of the weaker members of society. "The goods of the world are originally meant for all." Private property, though valid and necessary, "has an intrinsically social function" (Pope John Paul II, in: **Social Concerns**, n.42). Scripture tells us that the owners of land are "really only stewards, ministers charged with working in the name of God, who remains the sole owner in the full sense, since it is God's will that created goods should serve everyone in a just way" (**The Advent of the Third Millennium**, n.13; cf. Leviticus 25: 1-18).

"If land is used or rather misused in a way incompatible with the common good, the State may put it to better use by redistribution," we said it already in 1989 (**Solidarity and Service**, n.7. Obviously, in the light of this principle, it does not make sense to take misused land away from one owner only to let it be misused by another, while ignoring those who are in real need of land and have the capacity to use it properly. Solidarity in this instance means that government impartially takes the needs of all its citizens, especially of the economically weaker ones, into account and does not allow strong group interests to prevail.

We need solidarity in our country between the rich and the poor, between those living in mansions and others living in huts, between those living in good homes and the homeless. We all live on the same earth, we all need shelter and protection from the same hot sun and the same rain, we all must have a chance to build a home for our families.

We need solidarity between employers and employees. However much they may argue and fight, in the end it is their joint effort that creates wealth and gives each one his livelihood. Jesus gave us the Golden Rule, "So always treat others as you would like them to treat you" (Matthew

7:12). This rule applies everywhere, on the farms and in the factory, in offices and boardrooms, schools and hospitals.

Those who have economic power must feel with the jobless youth who feel rejected by society. Solidarity for them means to be pained by the frustration of the job-seeker. They must question an economic system that sacrifices the livelihood of countless workers in order to function.

We need solidarity between different ethnic groups and regions, between people of different cultures and speaking different languages. No one group must prevail and dictate to the others. Every group has something to contribute. No one can do it all alone. While one group tries to improve its lot, it must take the legitimate expectations of everyone else into account. We need solidarity between those who govern and the governed. If leaders use their office only for their private interest and personal power, there are failures. They must be able to feel with the weakest of their fellow citizens and represent their legitimate interests. True solidarity must overcome the split between social classes which threaten to break up society.

We need solidarity between men and women. Neither men nor women alone can build up this country, or the Church or any other community. The family, as the “basic unit of society”, is built on the love of man and woman. Men and women complement each other, and must tackle their common task together. The advancement of women, properly understood, is not a threat to men, but is good for the whole of society. Men will not fail to get the respect of women when they fully accept their responsibility, especially as fathers in the family.

We need solidarity between parents and children, the old and the young. The generations seem to live in different cultures and speak different languages. Solidarity between the generations requires them to spend time together in the family and be ready for patient dialogue.

We need solidarity between Christians of different churches. “The approaching end of the second millennium demands of everyone an examination of conscience and the promotion of fitting ecumenical initiatives, so that we can celebrate the Great Jubilee, if not completely

united, at least much closer to overcoming the divisions of the second millennium,” said Pope John Paul in his Jubilee message (n. 34). Christians in Zimbabwe will be able to witness to their Christian solidarity when they are host to the 8th World Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1998.

## **Jesus Christ – God in Solidarity with His People**

In our three-year preparation for the Jubilee 2000, we celebrate the Trinity, the triune God of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. 1997 is the year of Jesus Christ. Through *“being in the form God...he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming as human beings are”* (Philippians 2: 6-7). No greater solidarity has anyone ever shown. The Son of God identified himself with us humans. He *“became flesh, and lived among us”* (John 1: 14). *“He became as humans are in all things but sin”*.

The human person is the “source, the centre and the purpose of all socio-economic life” because Christ, God made man, is the “source, the centre and the purpose” of all history. Because of Christ we now have a unique dignity and greatness. Because of Christ, every human person can claim our solidarity.

If God so much cares about us that he identifies himself with us completely, must we not care about, and accept responsibility for, one another, in solidarity with even “these least of our brothers and sisters” (cf. Mt. 25:31-46)?

It is in this spirit, in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, that the Church wishes to contribute towards the “moral adjustment” which requires a spiritual renewal of our country Zimbabwe.

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#### **Pope John Paul II**

The Church in Africa, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Paulines Publications, Nairobi, 1995;

Social Concerns, Encyclical, 1987;

Centesimus Annus, Encyclical, 1991;

The Advent of the Third Millennium, Apostolic Letter, 1994;

Address of the Pope to the United Nations, 5 October, 1995;  
The Gospel of Life, Encyclical, 1995;

### **Pontiffical Council “*Cor Unum*”**

World hunger: A Challenge for al: Development in Solidarity, Vatican, 1996;

### **Pontiffical Council for the Family**

Ethical and Pastoral Dimensions of Population Trends, Vatican, 1994;

### **Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference**

Solidarity and Service, Pastoral Statement, 1989;  
Save Our Families, Pastoral letter on Marriage, Family, Sexuality and the AIDS Epidemic, 1991;  
“The Family is the Basic Unit of Society”, Pastoral Statement, August 1995;  
God's Love in Marriage and Family, Pastoral Statement, October 1994;  
“Male and Female He Created Them”, Pastoral Statement, January 1996;

### **Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales**

The Common Good and Catholic Social Teaching, 1996;

### **Hugh, James T.**

Catholic Teaching on Population Issues, Washington DC, USA, 1991;

### **Coote, Nicholas**

The Church, Population and the Environment, Priests and People, Augu-Sept. 1993, London, UK;

### **Mwale, Luka**

Less Children or More Justice? New People, Nov-Dec. 1994;

### **Kasum, Jaqueline**

The War against Population, The Economics and Ideology of Population Control, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1988;

International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 1994.

### **Questions for Group Discussion**

- 1) Do we need a “population policy” in the sense of a sharp reduction of our birth rate?
- 2) Who decides over family size? (Government, the Zimbabwe National Family Council, the ruling party, the Church, the husband, the wife, the parents together?)
- 3) What must we do to make the next generation an “AIDS-free generation”?
- 4) Who is going to look after those many children whom AIDS is depriving of parental care?
- 5) What do we ask government to do to protect marriage and family?
- 6) Why is honesty so important if we want to beat poverty and develop our country?
- 7) In what way is corruption preventing development?
- 8) What is to be the engine and driving force of our economy?
- 9) What do we mean by the “social obligation” that goes with private property, especially land?
- 10) We are familiar with solidarity within our extended families. Discuss solidarity that goes beyond the family.



# ZCBC STATEMENT ON LAND REFORM

8th December 1997 (b)



Archbishop Patrick F. Chakaipa of Harare  
Archbishop Henry Karlen CMM of Bulawayo (Vice President ZCBC)  
Bishop Francis Mugadzi of Gweru (President ZCBC)  
Bishop Alexio C. Muchabaiwa of Mutare  
Bishop Ignatius Prieto SMI of Hwange  
Bishops Helmut Reckter SJ of Chinhoyi  
Bishop Michael Bhasera of Gokwe  
Auxiliary Bishop Patrick Mutume of Mutare

**A**s the Government of Zimbabwe has stated its intention to solve the problem of equitable land distribution once and for all and actually started the process, we, the Catholic Bishops of Zimbabwe, wish to bring to the attention of all concerned the moral principles that ought to guide the Government and the people of Zimbabwe in this enterprise. We have stated these principles before in 1989 (**Solidarity and Service**, no.7), in 1993 in a statement by the then president of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference, and in April this year (**Responsibility, Honesty and Solidarity**, April 1997, p.6).

These principles apply to actual as well as would-be owners of land, to owners of large tracts of land as well as to smallholders. They make no racial distinction. Here is the relevant passage from the 1989 statement:

*"A war was fought and blood was spilt over the ownership of land. Lasting peace and prosperity can only be achieved if the land is shared equitably. 'The goods of creation are meant for all,' Pope John Paul II never tires of saying (**Social Concern**, n.76).*

*Land is a limited resource. It cannot be produced or multiplied. It must be shared in such a way that all citizens of the country benefit sufficiently. A general land policy is necessary. The problem cannot be left to the acquisitiveness of the individual to be resolved.*

*Whoever owns the land must know that he has an obligation to the nation as a whole to use the land properly.*

*There is no such thing as an absolute, untouchable, almost sacred right to land. If land is used or rather misused in a way incompatible with the common good, the State may put it to better use by redistribution (cf. Vatican Council II, **The Church in the Modern World**, n.24).*

*It is desirable that every family should be able to acquire a home or its own, because home ownership contributes to the stability and welfare of the family which the State has a duty to foster and protect. Productive agricultural land, on the other hand, is a most precious asset which should be put to the best possible use for the benefit of one's family, the nation and even the neighbouring countries, irrespective of whether a person owns the land or has part of the communal land allocated to him/her.*

*'The hierarchy of values and the profound meaning of work itself require*

*that capital should be at the service of labour and not labour at the service of capital'. This basic principle of Christian Social teaching, as formulated by Pope John Paul in **Work and Man**, applies also to the question of land. Land must serve the needs of the people. Its ownership must be organised in such a way that people can make the best possible use of it.*

*No landowner, whether he owns a large estate or only a small-holding, must be allowed to neglect the basic rules of land conservation and destroy land through neglect. Every land owner holds the land in trust for future generations. The State has a right to make him observe the rules of land conservation" (Chapter 7 – 'Land', from ZCBC Pastoral Statement **Solidarity and Service**, 1989).*

### ***It follows from this that:***

For grave reasons, and only for such reasons, the State has a right to acquire land and distribute it equitably.

- In order to carry out this long and complex process of redistribution and resettlement, a suitable mechanism must be established to ensure that justice, equity and fairness are preserved at all levels.

- Compensation must reflect the effort which the former owner put into the land and enable him to continue being productive for the benefit of the nation.

- No Citizen of Zimbabwe can legally be prevented to appeal to the courts as neutral arbiters, whatever the issue may be.

The State has a duty to ensure that farm workers who lose their employment as a result of land redistribution find alternative employment or land on which to settle.

- Economic wealth produced on the land must benefit those who have created it. Farm workers have a right to adequate housing, education for their children and health care. The final responsibility to provide these services, however, remains with the State.

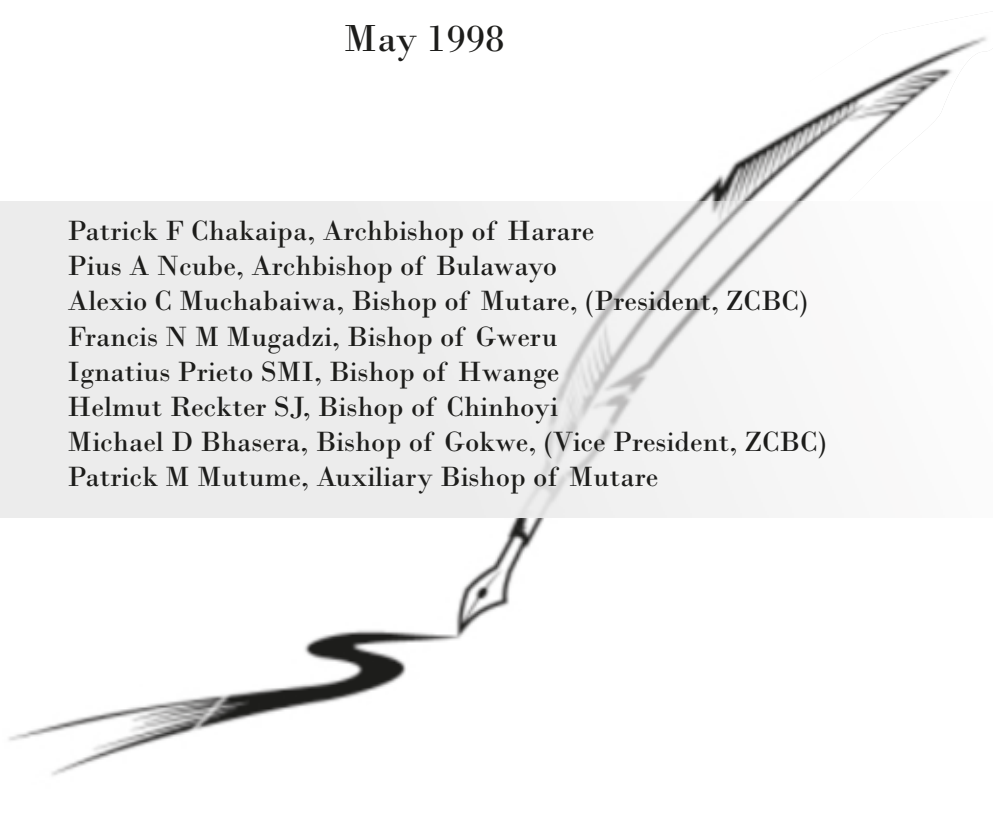
The common good requires that the redistribution of land be undertaken in such a way that the ability of our agriculture to feed Zimbabwe, and indeed neighbouring countries, is not affected. Regard for the ecological preservation of the land must also be a priority concern.

Finally, we repeat what we said in 1993: *“The goodwill of all partners concerned, as well as the expertise they have, are needed to bring about a land reform which is just and fair to all”*.

# **WORKING FOR THE COMMON GOOD**

## **Joint Pastoral Statement of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference**

**May 1998**



**Patrick F Chakaipa, Archbishop of Harare  
Pius A Ncube, Archbishop of Bulawayo  
Alexio C Muchabaiwa, Bishop of Mutare, (President, ZCBC)  
Francis N M Mugadzi, Bishop of Gweru  
Ignatius Prieto SMI, Bishop of Hwange  
Helmut Reckter SJ, Bishop of Chinhoyi  
Michael D Bhasera, Bishop of Gokwe, (Vice President, ZCBC)  
Patrick M Mutume, Auxiliary Bishop of Mutare**

**F**ellow Zimbabwean citizens, there is no doubt that we live in a time of crisis for our beloved country and its people. The recent food riots and two national stay away days are indications of a general deep discontent and resentment. Whilst we do not condone the violence of the riots, even as an expression of deep grievances, we acknowledge the situation out of which this behaviour arose. It is not difficult to see the root causes of widespread discontent in the sharply rising cost of living, deteriorating public health and educational services, huge unemployment, growth in corrupt practices and the decreasing purchasing power of many workers' salaries. At the same time there is resentment that a fortunate few can accumulate and flaunt such extremes of wealth in a display of power, oblivious to the serious poverty that is experienced by many.

Things seem so serious that many have a disenchantment in regard to the power of any agency to change things for the better, and seem to consider that the only morality possible is to allow market forces free reign and to act in one's own self-interest. The Bishops of Zimbabwe do not subscribe to such pessimism or to such pseudo-morality: we believe that things can change for the better, but change must be based on the principles of social justice, not on an unfettered free market capitalism, an undemocratic neo-liberalism. We do not believe that market forces are able to protect collective goods such as the environment, nor do we believe that market forces by themselves should control basic social services such as health, education, housing or transport. We also do not believe that the values of self-interest and greed are justified. "For beneath an outward appearance of indifference, in the heart of every person there is a will to live in brotherhood and with a thirst for justice and peace..."

## **Our hope**

It is our intention to read the signs of the times, in hopes of better promoting the cause of justice for the poor. Using the social teaching of the Church, we speak from the perspective of Christian tradition, based on Scripture, with a history of social service and a strong commitment to

education and health services in the country. We as Church do not identify with any one political party, in power or out of power, even though we do encourage individual Christians who possess a gift of leadership to become involved in politics. Our concern is more than political: we sense that economic or political solutions alone are not enough to solve the current situation, because our root crisis is moral. In fact we do not know all the answers to the dire situation in which we find ourselves, but rather we have a hope in the power of our people themselves to develop answers, a hope in our collective future, based ultimately on our hope in the risen Lord and his Kingdom. This faith has consequences for our society. Our conviction is that if we are able to dialogue constructively, openly and widely, with a special concern for those who are vulnerable or in any way marginalised, we will unite together, whether religious or not, as people of good will, for the common good of Zimbabwe and its future generations.

## **Poverty**

Zimbabwe has much poverty (the 1996 Poverty Assessment Study reckoned 64 per cent of households and three-quarters of the population were “poor” or “very poor”), and it is growing. Although by the standards of Africa, or even of the region, Zimbabwe is a moderately wealthy country, nevertheless this wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few, and the poverty that is there is growing, and its effects are severe. Too many of our people are suffering the effects of destitution.

In this situation it is simply unacceptable that, on the government's own admission, the Social Development Fund (designed to be a cushion against the human cost of ESAP) is bankrupt, whilst at the same time large amounts of public money are spent on apparent luxuries, military budget allocations are made at the expense of health and education, parastatals continue to absorb huge subsidies with little or no social returns, and Government expenditure and borrowing expanding seemingly without limit.

In addition the ethos of our public life needs a return to gospel values: inefficiency and corruption must be weeded out, and there must be a clear commitment to the ideal of service for others.

## **Historical background**

Our country has high expectations because a war of liberation was fought over the injustices of racism and colonialism. In the first decade of Independence we saw great strides in access to health and education services: for example, the primary school enrolment nearly doubled in a decade, and preventative and primary health programmes were successfully developed, thanks to the combined efforts of Government, local communities, churches, and NGOs.

Nevertheless serious problems in the economy saw the Government introducing ESAP in the 1990s, this being done with little or no consultation or due explanation. The end of shortages following ESAP brought about greater extremes in lifestyles. It satisfied the wants of the rich, but did little to meet the need of the poor. Although some macro-economic indicators improved, the effects on the lives of the poor have been severe and are well documented. “Cost recovery” measures, for example, seemed to cause drops in school attendance, especially for girls.

## **Health**

“Cost recovery” measures have seriously affected health services. Clinic visits have dropped, outpatient attendances and hospital stays have decreased, people arrive at health institutions late with more serious complications, and deaths of women in childbirth have increased.

In addition Government successes in, for example, improving nutritional status of children, and in developing 80 per cent coverage of children for immunisation, will be put at risk by the withdrawal of financing. Health spending has been cut to a level where real per capita spending is at its lowest since Independence, the quality of services has declined sharply, and the proportion of expenditure on preventative rather than curative



services has dropped. Certain essential drugs have become too expensive for some institutions. Measles has become a killer disease. Infant and child mortality rates also seem to have increased in the 1990s, and this increase is compounded by the tragic effects of drought years and the AIDS pandemic. Now one in every nine infants born in Harare is HIV-positive.

Church health institutions are eager to complement Government services in an atmosphere of respectful partnership - beds in church-related hospitals make up 35 percent of all available, and 70 percent of rural hospital beds - but difficulties remain. To work in partnership, and with a special concern for the poor, church-related hospitals should, at the very least, be treated no different to Government hospitals with respect to finance and personnel allocation. Church authorities also recognise the partnership they have with so many dedicated rural employees in hospitals, clinics and education institutions. We acknowledge with gratitude the service they give under difficult circumstances, allowing the Church to realise her desire to serve especially the poor in health and education.

## **Education**

Our educational system has achieved much through expansion, but it must now be used as a tool to overcome poverty by offering young people the tools with which to be productive, caring and moral citizens of the future. We must address the needs of quality and relevant education. Young people must receive encouragement, and for everyone there is a place in society where he or she can be educated to make a valuable contribution. The educational system also needs to be more equitable, because primary schooling has suffered more from the effects of ESAP policies than secondary, and particularly tertiary sectors; in particular the schools in commercial farming areas have larger classes, fewer qualified teachers, lower transition rates and fewer girls than the national average. Though we know of many dedicated teachers, we note with sadness what seems like an increasing lack of discipline and morality in the teaching

profession in general. There has to be a recommitment to professional ethics and morality, so that entrusting children to the care of others for so serious a task as education can be done in confidence and with the expectation of competence and dedication from the teaching profession.

## **Labour**

An economic system that brings so few young people into the world of work is seriously flawed. The economy must serve people, not people the economy. We need to feed, clothe and house all our people. However our present economic system is biased in favour of capital, at the expense of labour. To deal with this and the reality of falling real wages and youth unemployment increasing, we have to develop economic strategies that increase production and favour labour-intensive investment. We also have to ensure that everyone sees the need for a commitment to honest hard work.

We also recognise the important role those in the informal sector play, not just in providing livelihoods for many, but in creating many kinds of goods and services unavailable or uncompetitive in the formal sector. Government, both central and local, could do more in the protection and promotion of informal sector activities, which are a source of income for many poor, especially women.

## **Agrarian reform**

Much of our poverty in Zimbabwe is related to people having access only to poor land, a consequence of our colonial history that still has not been adequately addressed. We are aware that three quarters of our peasant farmers live in Natural Regions IV and V, with poor land and unreliable water sources. How should we alter this unjust situation? The Bible tells us that the earth is God's and He gives it to all his children. The Church's teaching has always stressed that, although it recognises private property as a right, there is a corresponding social mortgage or obligation. If private

property does not serve the people as a whole then “when a person is in extreme necessity he has the right to supply himself with what he needs out of the riches of others”. In our situations of injustice and poverty agrarian reform is not only an instrument of distributive justice and economic growth, but is also an act of great political wisdom.

But reform through land redistribution is only the beginning of a process that has to include adequate and appropriate planning, technology and infrastructure, access to credit, adequate social services and a comprehensive state commitment through juridical frameworks, protection of human rights, genuine decentralisation, and farmer-friendly reforms. The ultimate goal should be an honest and transparent programme of redistribution and resettlement, adequately funded and prepared, together with clear criteria for eligibility for resettled land. Women, who form at least 40 per cent of de facto heads of households in rural areas, must be equitably included for resettled land, along with other marginalised individuals and families. Displacement of farm labourers must be avoided, and their future assured. Previous programmes of resettlement have so far not used these combined criteria for just agrarian reform, and we call on Government to ensure these be used in future programmes.

## **Debt**

“Must we starve our children to pay our debts?” asked former President of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere. The Government sinks deeper into debt, though it has managed to avoid a large exposure of hard-currency debt. In five years Government expenditure on debt repayments rose from five to ten per cent of our Gross Domestic Product.

Increasing debt crowds out other claims on the fiscus, and it seems to us that the weakest groups in society suffer the most, for they have the least political influence. Savings from cuts in military expenditures and in ministerial budget allocations can be used for social sectors in assisting the poor.

Our levels of budget deficits and debt repayments are fuelling inflation and threatening our future. Thus the poor pay twice for this debt. We simply cannot sustain our levels of state expenditure, and we must readjust state priorities to protect the gains made so heroically after independence in health and education.

## **Solidarity**

Our country needs radical solutions but they are to be found initially at the level of the heart. We need to return to a spirit of self-sacrifice, a sense of collective sharing in the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. We are eighteen years old, which for individuals is usually a time for adulthood and assuming the responsibilities of citizenship. We need to accept full responsibility and act with circumspection. Intelligent and responsible reactions are interactions with others. Genuine dialogue between state and all sections of civil society is required. Solidarity also extends to those who may be classified as opponents, but who nevertheless remain fellow citizens. Taken literally some slogans call for physical assault on opponents, or worse, and evokes memories of the executions of the pre-Independence period, and are an obstacle to the dialogue for which we are pleading.

The call of solidarity also concerns those who suffer the disease of AIDS, their families, and those who have been made orphans by the death of their parents. A competitive society would have little time for such people, but our society should be marked by care and solidarity for people with AIDS. "The battle against AIDS ought to be everyone's battle".

The Constitution of a nation is the fundamental law Ñ the current constitution, enacted at Lancaster House and amended 14 times since, should be changed. We want wide-ranging dialogue for constitutional renewal: public debate about a constitutional instrument owned by the people, for the people and at the service of the people. We Bishops offer

our services to civil society and to Government in whatever way they may find them useful for this goal.

Such public involvement in the creation of a new constitution more appropriate for our times will give people a greater sense of security, of involvement and a greater respect for the rule of law, which is in danger of being diminished through recent events.

This solidarity and atmosphere of dialogue require free media. Existing media must be complemented by media owned and used by other social agents. In this process of supporting alternative viewpoints we have to ensure that such media are not monopolised by big business or Government either.

## **Change**

No social trend or force is above being changed for the better. Though the pace of change in our society is increasing rapidly and unpredictably, we have a belief in the power of individual choices to bring about positive change. If we keep in mind and apply the principles that flow from the gospel and Church social teaching -- solidarity and subsidiarity, a concern for the poor, for the common good -- then we will demonstrate a priority of ethics over technology, of persons over things.

## **Conclusion**

To seek to do more, to know more, to have more, so that one can be more, this is the legitimate desire of many in Zimbabwe, yet many also live in situations that make such a desire illusory.

*He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*

## Notes

1 Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Letter ***Octogesima Adveniens***, 1971, #48

2 “It is the responsibility of the local Christian community to analyse with objectivity the situation which is proper to their own country, to shed on it the light of the Gospel's unalterable words and to draw principles of reflection, norms of judgement and directives for action from the social teaching of the Church.” ***Octogesima Adveniens***, #4

3 “The obligation to earn one's bread by the sweat of one's brow also presumes the right to do so. A society in which this right is systematically denied, in which economic policies do not allow workers to reach satisfactory levels of employment, cannot be justified from an ethical point of view, nor can that society attain social peace.” Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter ***Centesimus Annus***, 1991, #43

4 Vatican Council II, ***Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Gaudium et Spes***, 1965, #69

5 ***Towards a better distribution of Land***, Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 1998

6 *ibid*, #49

7 John Paul II, ***The Church in Africa***, 1995, # 116

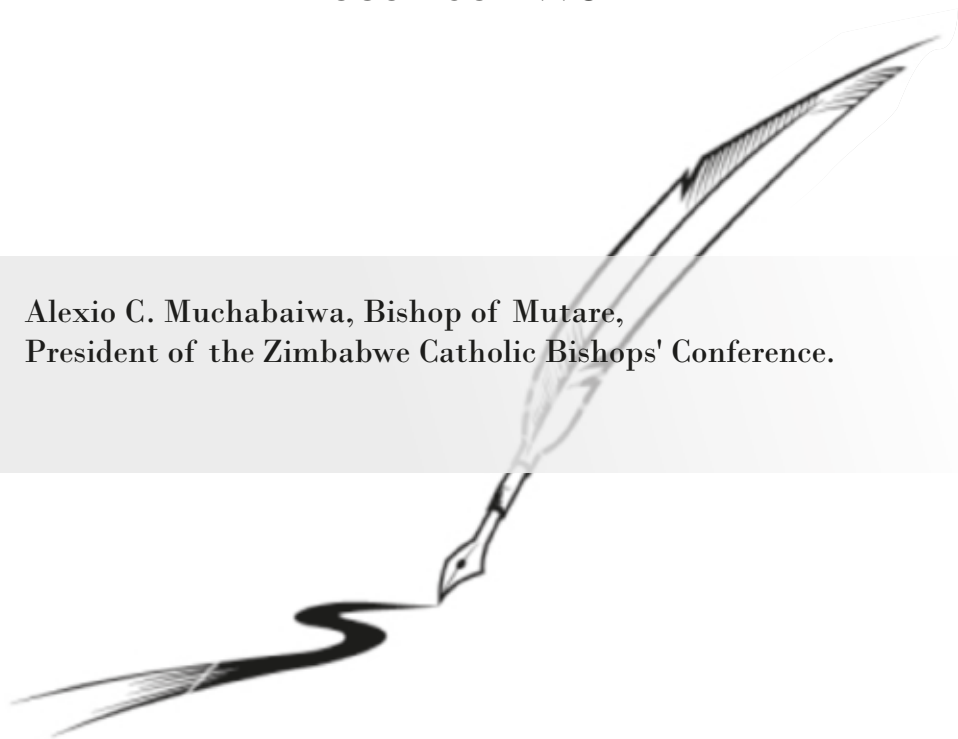
8 This important concept used in Catholic Social Teaching means that no superior agency should take to itself functions that can be performed by lesser bodies. Pius XI, writing in ***Quadragesimo Anno***, #79, even said that “it is an injustice, a grave evil and a disturbance of right order, for a larger and higher association to arrogate to itself functions which can be performed efficiently by smaller and lower societies”.

9 Micah 6:8

## **OUR CHANCE TO PROMOTE UNITY**

Joint Pastoral Letter of the Catholic  
Bishops of Zimbabwe to their Faithful on  
the occasion of the 8th World Assembly of  
the World Council of Churches in Harare  
in December 1998

Alexio C. Muchabaiwa, Bishop of Mutare,  
President of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference.



"Jesus himself, at the hour of his Passion, prayed 'that they may all be one' (Jn 17:21). .... To believe in Christ means to desire unity; to desire unity means to desire the Church; to desire the Church means to desire the communion of grace which corresponds to the Father's plan from all eternity" (The Call for Christian Unity, Encyclical Letter UT UNUM SINT of Pope John Paul II on Commitment to Ecumenism, n. 9).

Christian disunity is glaringly obvious in our country. Churches of different denominations, built alongside each other, demonstrate our loss of unity. Many Christians accept this situation as normal and take it for granted. But it is a scandal to the rest of the world.

**The Body of Christ is deeply wounded by Christian disunity.** "The Catholic Church cannot be anything but ecumenical [=striving for visible unity]. Ecumenical openness and longing for visible unity are not free options for Catholics, but obligations and duties. Ecumenism is part of our Catholic identity. The 'inner dynamism toward Catholic unity' is part of ourselves, and it should be so in the other churches" (*Pastoral Study Paper* No. 3, The Church and the Churches, Theological Commission ZCBC, 1996, p. 11).

## **The World Council of Churches Comes to Zimbabwe**

This year we are given a very special and rare opportunity to promote Christian unity, not just on a local, but on an international level. The 8th World Assembly of the World Council of Churches will bring 4000 delegates representing 320 member churches from all over the world to Zimbabwe. **"Turn to God - Rejoice in Hope"** is the theme of the assembly which will take place at the University of Zimbabwe in Harare, 3 - 14 December 1998. The World Council of Churches, 50 years old, brings together most Churches of the Reformation of the West and the Orthodox Churches of the East and serves as a platform for dialogue and cooperation. The Catholic Church is not a full member, but has observer status and has permanent contact with the World Council of Churches in Geneva. An official delegation of the Vatican, led by Bishop Mario Conti of Aberdeen, Scotland, with 25 members, will be present at the assembly.



Archbishop Patrick Chakaipa of Harare will be part of it.

The World Council of Churches invited the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe years ago to take part as much as possible in the 8th World Assembly. Dr Konrad Raiser, Secretary General WCC, Geneva, repeated this invitation when he met the Catholic Bishops of Zimbabwe in March this year.

Catholic groups are welcome to present their work for social justice and peace, for the poor and marginalised, in music, art and drama, and especially in the field of inculturation, liturgy and dialogue with African Traditional Religion at PADARE. Catholic parishes will host visitors from different countries, and Catholic families have been asked to offer hospitality to visitors.

## **Zimbabwean Christians Work Together**

Let us reflect at this moment on our situation in Zimbabwe:

Despite our many divisions Christians in Zimbabwe, including Catholics, have achieved at least a measure of practical co-operation in the field of healthcare, education and social services (Heads of Denominations, Christian Care, Zimbabwe Association of Church-Related Hospitals). Christians of different churches, especially women, come together for common prayer services. Ministers of different churches meet fraternally. Religious broadcasters work together. Our seminarians join students of different churches when they attend lectures at the University of Zimbabwe.

"Scholars of different churches working together in translating the Bible give a particularly striking example of Scripture playing a unifying and reconciling role for Churches separated by arguments and strife in the past" (The Church and the Churches, p.12). This is actually happening in our midst: for the last twelve years Bible scholars of different Churches, including the Catholic Church, have been working as a team translating Holy Scripture into Shona. We hope to have the fruits of their common labour, the new Shona Bible, in our hands by the year 2000.

## Where Do We Stand?

Unity is not achieved by superficial compromise, but by going to the very roots of our faith. We encourage you therefore to get to know Scripture better - the love of Scripture is something we can emulate in our fellow Christians of other churches - and to learn more about your Catholic faith. Only knowledgeable Catholics can make a contribution in the dialogue between Churches. Only well-informed Catholics can understand what caused the rift between Christians and how it can be healed. Humbly we will admit our sins against unity. But we will also witness to the "perpetual and visible principle and foundation of unity" (*Lumen Gentium*, quoted in '*Ut unum sint*', 88) that we have in the Bishop of Rome and his brother bishops, the successors of Peter and the apostles.

Only Catholics who have a very deep love for the Church, loving her with the love of Christ, can break down barriers. Only members of the Body of Christ deeply loyal to the visible Church with its unbroken tradition and its worldwide unity will be able to draw Christians more and more together towards a unity whose actual form only the Holy Spirit can reveal to us. Whereas people with little loyalty to the Church of their baptism are easily drawn to splinter groups, just causing further splits and disintegration. Only if we have a vision of unity can we pray and sacrifice and work for it.

Precisely because we love the Church as Christ loved her we deeply feel the pain of her brokenness and division. Nowhere do we feel this pain more than when the Church as the Body of Christ shares the Eucharistic Body of Christ. Our inability to share the Eucharist with Christians of other churches reminds us painfully of our division and lack of unity. "Eucharistic communion is inseparably linked to full ecclesial communion and its visible expression" (*Ecumenical Directory* 1993).

[But the Church "also recognizes that in certain circumstances, by way of exception, and under certain conditions, access to these sacraments may be permitted, or even commended, for Christians of other Churches and ecclesial Communities" (*Ecumenical Directory* 1993, 129)].

## **What Should We Do?**

We ask you, dear brothers and sisters, to accept the challenge of the 8th World Assembly of the World Council of Churches and renew your commitment to Christian unity, to pray for it, to long for it, to work for it.

We ask you not to be complacent about the present division, but to renew our Christian hope that the Holy Spirit can and will bring us together. "The Spirit is able to grant us clear-sightedness, strength and courage to take whatever steps are necessary, that our commitment may be ever more authentic" (*Ut unum sint*, 102).

We, your Bishops, ask you to respond generously and offer a helping hand wherever possible. We ask you to show those visitors from faraway countries our warm and cheerful African hospitality.

Since the events are concentrated in the capital, not all will be able to be personally involved.

But we do ask all of you to pray for Christian unity in your parishes, communities and families as well as at get-togethers with other Christians. These prayers will be our special gift to those many Christians from the entire globe when they meet in our country.

## **Conclusion**


We conclude this message to you with the words of St Paul (quoted by Pope John Paul at the end of "Ut unum sint"):

*"Mend your ways, encourage one another, live in harmony, and the God of love and peace will be with you..... The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all"* (2 Cor. 13:11,13).

# **“JESUS CHRIST THE SAME YESTERDAY, TODAY AND FOREVER.” (HEB. 13:8)**

ZCBC Pastoral Letter for the New Millenium  
2000 A.D.

December 1999



Archbishop Patrick E. Chakaipa, Archdiocese of Harare  
Archbishop Pius A. Ncube, Archdiocese of Bulawayo  
Bishop Alexio C. Muchabaiwa, Diocese of Mutare (President, ZCBC)  
Bishop Francis Mugadzi, Diocese of Gweru  
Bishop Robert C. Ndlovu, Diocese of Hwange  
Bishop Helmut Reckter SJ, Diocese of Chinhoyi  
Bishop Michael D. Bhasera, Diocese of Masvingo (Vice President, ZCBC)  
Auxiliary Bishop Patrick M. Mutume, Diocese of Mutare  
Rev. Monsignor Angel Floro, Bishop Elect of Gokwe Diocese

**T**oday we mark the beginning of the Great Jubilee year 2000, the anniversary of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ: “the same Yesterday, Today and Forever (Heb. 13:8)”. Together with us, many others in the world are celebrating, albeit in different ways and with different points of view. Some anticipate new opportunities for personal growth and advancement, others are predicting the end of the world, while others are just waiting and wondering. For us Christians worldwide the year 2000 is our jubilee year. It is a year of celebration.

A celebration is an occasion for joy. A joy brought about when “Lowliness was taken by majesty, weakness by strength, mortality by eternity” – a joy rooted in our firm conviction that we are sons and daughters of God. We are not alone, God is with us. He is with us as a loving Father, who “When the fullness of time had to come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman” (Gal.4:4), to reveal him to all the nations of the world. Time is indeed fulfilled by the very fact that God, in the Incarnation, came down into human history. Eternity entered into time, in the person of Jesus. His name is Emmanuel, God with us (Mt. 1:23). In this great act of incarnation, God sealed his eternal plan of salvation, that He should be our God and we his people, even as he said to Israel of old; “And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people.” (Lev.26:12). This is the joy we celebrate, the joy of being with God.

The Lord God fulfilled this plan, not in divine isolation but in co-operation with a creature, our Holy Mother Mary, to whom the Angel Gabriel announced, “Mary, do not be afraid, you have won God's favour; You are to conceive and bear a son; he shall be called Son of the Most High.” (Lk. 1:32). That most profound response, “*Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.*” (Lk. 1:38) changed Human history. The fullness of Light and Life came into the world. (Jn. 1:4). This act of redemption marked the high point of the history of humanity within God's loving plan. And time found its fullest significance.

## **Christ in the History of our Country**

Today, the Church in Zimbabwe, begins joyfully to celebrate the Great Jubilee Year 2000. We recall with gratitude the marvellous works that the Lord has wrought among us. We see God at work in our own history, leading us in Christ his Son towards that destiny for which he made us and to which he invites us all. Just as the Son, the eternal Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us (John 1: 14) through the humble co-operation of the blessed Virgin Mary with the support of the obedient Joseph, so has the same Word been brought to our nation through the generosity and self-sacrifice of men and women who came to us as missionaries of the Gospel of Christ.

The missionaries of today stand in a long line that dates back to the sixteenth century when the Jesuit Fr. Gonzalo da Silveira and his colleagues Fr. Andre Fernandez and Br. Andre da Costa, became the very first missionaries to evangelise our people at the time of the Great Mwene Mutapa empire. Fr. Da Silveira baptised almost the entire royal household. However the political tensions of the time led to his martyrdom in March 1561. Recently we have acquired new evidence to the effect that one of the Mwene Mutapa Kaparidze's sons, Dom Miguel, entered religious life with the Dominicans and laboured as a missionary in India where he died in Goa. With the death of Fr da Silveira, the earliest missionary efforts declined until the 19th century when the Jesuits (SJ) and the Dominicans (OP) arrived to continue from where Fr da Silveira had left off. It is in this group that we meet Mother Patrick who was among the first of the Dominican sisters to come to Zimbabwe.

Not only did these missionaries give their hands and hearts to the service of the gospel, but many also gave their blood, their very breath. Even as Christ proclaimed, "No one has greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends." (John 15:13). Among them were those missionaries who died at St. Paul's Musami in February 1977, some two months after Bishop Adolf Schmidt, the first Bishop of what is now the Archdiocese of Bulawayo and his companions were killed. These missionaries died during

our national struggle against an oppressive colonial system. In their own way they became martyrs of the local Church. There are also those of our own soil, like Fr Raymond Machikicho, who also died at this time in the service of the kingdom of God.

The earlier missionaries were later joined by other missionary congregations, namely, the Congregation of Missionaries of Marrianhill (CMM), the Bethlehem Mission Society (SMB), the Carmelites (O. Carm), and the Spanish Missionary Institute (SMI). Today we have missions and churches which are a result the efforts of these missionaries. Among these we can site Chishawasha in the Archdiocese of Harare, Triashill in Mutare Diocese, Empandeni in the Archdiocese of Bulawayo, Driefontein in Gweru Diocese, Gokomere in Masvingo Diocese, St Mary's in Hwange Diocese, Kutama in Chinhoyi Diocese, and Kana Mission in Gokwe Diocese. These mission stations became the bases for further evangelisation.

The birth of a local clergy was inevitable. In 1936 Chishawasha Seminary was founded by Archbishop Chichester. In 1947 the first two fruits of Chishawasha Seminary, the late Fathers Simon Tsuru and Isidore Chikore, were ordained to the priesthood. To date the number of local priests and religious has continued to grow. We now have different local congregations, the Little Children of Our Blessed Lady (LCBL), Sisters of the Infant Jesus (SJI), Servants of Mary the Queen (AMR), Handmaids of Our Lady of Mount Carmel (HLMC) and St Paul's Brothers (SPB). Today, we have missionaries working in our country who come from our very own continent of Africa.

The growth of the local Church has also found expression in the establishment of new dioceses. From the Archdiocese of Harare which grew out of the original Zambezi Mission, established on 2nd July 1879, came the Diocese of Bulawayo, on 23rd December 1930 (now Archdiocese), Gweru Diocese, 11th January 1955, Mutare Diocese, 15th February 1957, Hwange Diocese, 2nd March 1963, Chinhoyi Diocese, 5th January 1986, Gokwe Diocese, 19th October 1991, and Masvingo Diocese, 24th April 1999. This reflects that the Church in our country has taken root. And as we celebrate this jubilee year, we affirm this truth.

## The Jubilee Year is a Year of Favour

Our understanding of Jubilee as Christians comes from the Jewish tradition.

“Jubilee” derives from the Hebrew word *jobel* which means “a ram's horn”. A ram's horn was used on the Day of Atonement – calling people to repentance and then announcing the beginning of the Jubilee Year. (Lev. 25:9). The Israelites, unlike other nations, were by election, a theocratic (God-ruled) people. This stemmed from the Sinaitic Covenant wherein God promised them, “...if you are really prepared to obey me and keep my covenant, you, out of all peoples, shall be my personal possession...” (Ex.19:5). While ideally all Israelites were children of God, equal in his sight, the reality on the ground, especially with the settlement in Canaan, was different. During the early settlement, the notion of equality was a priority as the land was distributed fairly, as they believed in a God of justice, equality and mercy. Unfortunately all did not go equally well for every family every year. When, in a given year, one family's crop failed, it was forced to borrow from others. The form of payment was giving up part of their land. With persistent droughts in some areas, the implications were serious: whole families had to give up their lands and even sell themselves as slaves in order to survive. This, inevitably, ushered in inequalities: some becoming masters while others became slaves. Such a situation was only allowed as a temporary state of affairs that called for redress. Hence the introduction of the Jubilee Year or Year of Favour.

Already in the Jewish tradition the seventh (sabbath) day was a special one to be kept holy with no work to be done. (Ex.20:8-10). During the seventh year, or sabbatical year, the land was given a rest by allowing it to lie fallow. This brought benefits to both the land and its users. (Ex. 23:10-11 and Dt.15:1-4). The people had to recall in gratitude the Lord's goodness to them. Thus the Jubilee year coming 49 years or after seven seven-year cycles, was a crowning of seven sabbatical years. The Jubilee Year was a kind of year-long “retreat” during which people concentrated on the things of God and the implications of being God's people on earth. All were expected to reach out to their neighbour in love: remitting debts,



returning alienated property (acquired over the last 50 years) to the original owners, liberating people from imprisonment and slavery and having a great celebration of rejoicing and thanksgiving (Lev.25:10-12). The profoundness of the institution of the Jubilee Year lay in not accepting the social and economic inequalities as the norm but rather as the exception to God's plan. And this point remains significant for us today.

While Lev.25 sets out the ideal as God expected it of the Israelites, there is no record in the Old Testament regarding the celebration of one such jubilee. It was Jesus however who made the ideal of Jubilee concrete. In his statement as we find it at the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus sets out the programme of his mission which coincides with the component parts of the celebration of the Jubilee Year. “The Spirit of the Lord is in me, for he has anointed *me to bring the good news to the afflicted*. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, *to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord.*” (Lk.4:18-19). In the fullness of time, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, through his word and deeds fulfilled the whole meaning and tradition of jubilee. As it was possible for Jesus, so should it be for us that we, in and through our Christian lives may become the embodiment of the Jubilee Year ideals of generosity, forgiveness and justice. These ideals find practical expression in turning our gaze to God in prayer and contemplation, in letting go of wrongs done unto us, in asking forgiveness ourselves, in sharing, in developing our concern for the less privileged, in working towards an equitable distribution of our national resources.

## **Challenges to our faith**

As we celebrate the Great Jubilee Year in Zimbabwe we are acutely aware of the challenges facing the church and our society. We are aware of the difficult socio-economic conditions our nation is going through. Prices of basic commodities have risen way beyond the reach of many of our people, and they continue to rise. Life has become very expensive. Unemployment is high. There is a spirit of apathy and resignation among our people, with an underlying healthy tension that is longing for change

in our social systems. The desire for change arises from the burdens that people carry amidst their suffering and poverty. The crime which is on the increase in our society is but a symptom of a general sickness of society. It is also the consequence of the corruption that has infected our centres of power. Where there is blatant economic injustice people are bound to disregard the rule of both reason and law. Since rot is contagious, other values that we have always cherished are threatened. The values such as respect for order, respect for other people and their property, respect for decent family life are threatened. Violence in the home and the death of tolerance for one another has spelt disaster for many families – witness the increase in the divorce rate and domestic violence! As if this were not enough, our society is, along with other countries of the world, facing the deadly challenge of AIDS and its multifarious effects on society. While we support the work of scientists and their pursuit of sociological and medical solutions to the problem, we still maintain the call to spiritual rearmament as the lasting solution. We need God in our life. We need to take seriously the call to love through mutual respect, chastity and fidelity.

A great scandal of our times is the division within the Church of Christ itself. The divisions and what nourishes them, continues to weaken the power of our shared witness, and are an affront to the will of Christ (Jn.17:21) who willed that we may all be one. While we acknowledge that the wounds of our divisions run deep, we must never despair in our efforts to promote those activities which are a sign of the unity we hope eventually to realise. *“The concern for restoring unity involves the whole Church, faithful and clergy alike. It extends to everyone, according to the talent of each...”* That unity may take hitherto unforeseen forms, for this unity is the work of the Lord himself, as the Holy Spirit enlightens our path. It may defy our present definitions of unity and even challenge the very principles upon which we have built our vision of Christian unity. Humility therefore should be the mark of true commitment to the cause of unity. Humility will bring together what arrogance put asunder.

Our quest to face up to these challenges compels us to raise very basic

questions concerning our Christian commitment. How deeply rooted is Christ in our individual lives and in our life as a community of believers? To what extent has Christ become incarnated in our culture? What is the place of the Gospel in our list of priorities? Can we not in all sincerity still call for a new evangelisation? An evangelisation that aims at deepening our faith as a precious possession! Pope John Paul II underlines the importance of personal conversion: *"It is therefore to inspire in all the faithful a true longing for holiness, a deep desire for conversion and personal renewal in a context of ever more intense prayer and solidarity with one's neighbour, especially the most needy."* The media can be a useful tool for evangelisation. It can serve not only to advance the material and political interests of a few, but the good of all and also those values that lead to eternity, even as the Lord says; "What does it profit them if they gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit themselves?" (Luke 9:25.) We need to turn to Christ.

## **Christ is our Hope and our Salvation**

Christ, the Redeemer of the world through his life and teaching, is the one mediator between God and men, and there is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved. (cf. Acts. 4:12). In Christ, religion is no longer a blind search for God, (Lk.17:27), but the response of faith to God who reveals himself – a response that is so personal that we can address God as Father (cf. Gal. 4:6). In Jesus, God does not only speak to us but seeks us out, because we wandered away and hid amongst trees, as Adam did in the trees of the Garden of Eden. (cf. Gen.3:8-10). The temptation to stray is even stronger today, when there are so many pressures to conform to the standards of this world. St Paul, in his letter to the Romans warns; *"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that we may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect."* (Romans 12:2). The call of Christ rings out again today as when it was first heard; *"Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest in your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light."* (Mt.11:28-30).

The Church has therefore no option but to turn her gaze towards Christ. He is the Redeemer of humanity and the fullness of Revelation. Look to Christ with a new heart, turn to God in grateful prayer, forgive and be reconciled, for therein lies the secret of true happiness and joy. In this Holy Year, let not our joy be an affair of the individual's heart, rather, let our joy pour out in jubilation. The term "Jubilee" speaks of joy, not just an inner joy but a jubilation which is manifested outwardly, for the coming of God is also an outward, visible, audible and tangible event, as Saint John makes clear (cf. 1 Jn. 1:1). It is thus appropriate that every sign of joy at this coming Jubilee Year should have its own outward expression.

In our Dioceses we expect congresses to be held that will bring the celebrations home to the people. Mini-congresses for different guilds in the Parishes will be relevant and fruitful celebrations by the smaller parish units. The building up of Small Christian Communities and the strengthening of those already established is a priority. Pilgrimages, retreats, penitential services are also other ways of getting ourselves involved in the celebrations. The Jubilee Year 2000 is also the time to reconsider our participation in social justice issues. Unless there is justice, there can be no peace. We support the present development of the writing of the new constitution for our nation. We hope that it will uphold the basic rights of all citizens, and especially that sacred right to worship.

## **Conclusion**

Today as the Church of Zimbabwe joins the whole world in celebrating the Great Jubilee 2000, the most wonderful thing that we should be remembering and celebrating is that it is now 2000 years since the birth of Christ, who is the same today as he was yesterday and will be forever. Christ is for all time, He will be experienced in a unique way by generations after us. Ours is therefore to cherish the great joy of the Jubilee Year 2000 while it lasts.

We now pray that the God of peace, who sent us his only Son, may prepare us all “to do his will in every kind of good action, effecting in us all whatever is acceptable to Himself through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” (Heb.13:21.)

### **Notes**

Pope St. Leo the Great, **Divine Office**, L.28.3, p.79

2Pope John Paul II, **Tertio Millennio Adveniente**, No.9.

3John Paul II, **Redemptoris Hominis**, 1979, No.1.

4Mudenge, S.I.G. **Christian Education at the Mutapa Court**, p.3

5Ibid. p.17

6McLaughlin, J., **On the Frontline: Catholic Missions in Zimbabwe Liberation War**, p.227

7Decree on Ecumenism, **Restoration of Unity**, No.5

8Ibid., No.42

9Pope John Paul II, **Tertio Millenio Adveniente** 1;4

10Ibid. No.6

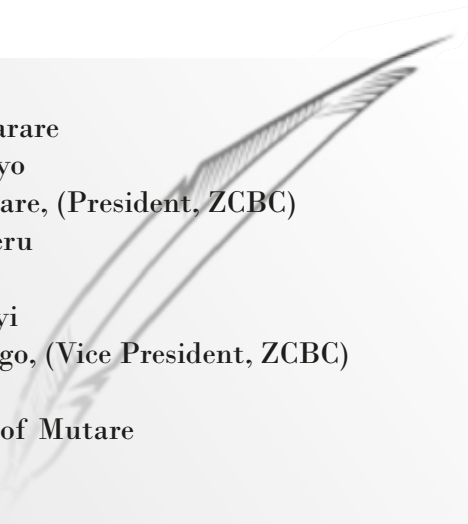
11Ibid. No.7

12Pope John Paul II, **Tertio Millenio Adveniente**, No.16

# **EASTER MESSAGE**

Issued by the Zimbabwe Catholic  
Bishops' Conference

17th April, 2000 (a)



Patrick F. Chakaipa, Archbishop of Harare  
Pius A. Ncube, Archbishop of Bulawayo  
Alexio C. Muchabaiwa, Bishop of Mutare, (President, ZCBC)  
Francis N. M. Mugadzi, Bishop of Gweru  
Robert C. Ndlovu, Bishop of Hwange  
Helmut Reckter SJ, Bishop of Chinhoyi  
Michael D. Bhasera, Bishop of Masvingo, (Vice President, ZCBC)  
Angel Floro, Bishop of Gokwe  
Patrick M. Mutume, Auxiliary Bishop of Mutare

Heads of Christian Denominations:  
Rev. Murombedzi Kuchera, Chairman, HOCD.

**T**he people of Zimbabwe have seen the horrors of war and political violence. As we celebrate Easter, the victory of the Risen Christ over death, we, the Catholic Bishops of Zimbabwe and Leaders of Christian Churches, implore all citizens of this country to refrain from violence and urge them to learn how to settle conflicts peacefully.

The real problems of this country, and indeed of Africa as a whole, cannot be solved by violence.

Communal farmers have a legitimate claim on more and better land. The urban homeless need decent housing. Unemployed young people need work and a place in our society.

The sick, especially those infected with HIV/AIDS, need better health care. No part of our society must be allowed to settle their grievances by violence.

Even verbal violence must be avoided. Threatening, insulting and racist language cannot be tolerated. The laws of the country that protect people from abuse and physical assault must be enforced.

The courts of law must be respected. The law enforcement agencies must do their duty without fear or favour. Voters must not be intimidated. Political opponents must not be attacked physically. This country must never go back to war. Instead we must go back to reconciliation.

There is a price to be paid for reconciliation: sharing the land and its resources more equitably. While land is being shared out care must be taken that the redistribution is not distorted by corruption. There must be a place for all to earn a living for their families. The country needs the talents and skills of all.

Twenty years after attaining our Independence we must not revert to old confrontations, but together face the challenges of the new century. We promise to work for reconciliation even among Christians and between churches.


Together with all Christians in this country we believe in the power of the Risen Christ to heal divisions and overcome hatred. We believe that love and justice will triumph if only we let the Risen Christ guide us.



## **“USE YOUR VOTE, IT IS YOUR RIGHT”**

A Pastoral Statement by the  
Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops'  
Conference

7th June 2000 (b)



Patrick F. Chakaipa, Archbishop of Harare  
Pius A. Ncube, Archbishop of Bulawayo  
Alexio C. Muchabaiwa, Bishop of Mutare, (President, ZCBC)  
Francis N. M. Mugadzi, Bishop of Gweru  
Robert C. Ndlovu, Bishop of Hwange  
Helmut Reckter SJ, Bishop of Chinhoyi  
Michael D. Bhasera, Bishop of Masvingo (Vice President, ZCBC)  
Angel Floro, Bishop of Gokwe  
Patrick M. Mutume, Auxiliary Bishop of Mutare

## **Working for Peace during Elections**

**Z**imbabwe is richly blessed, having a young, well-educated, hardworking and creative population of people from different backgrounds. She has many natural resources; good agricultural land; and well-developed infrastructure (roads, railways, dams, telecommunications). People the world over regarded Zimbabwe as a success story – a country whose people reconciled after a bloody war. However as we move towards the elections this picture has deteriorated due to political disturbances.

On June 24-25 this year, we are going to vote and choose our representatives for the new parliament. The Gospel of John speaks of Jesus as the way, the truth and the life (Jn. 14:6). His light shines on all human activity – religious, economic, social and political. We the CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF ZIMBABWE wish to reflect that light of Christ through the teaching of the Church on this important moment in the life of our country. In this light we condemn the pre-election violence and the killings that have taken place in our country. Human persons have dignity and honour due to them, which allows freedom to search for truth, voice opinions, as well as to freely choose their leaders. Nobody shall ever have to suffer reprisals for honestly expressing and living up to their convictions, be they intellectual, religious or political. We can only regret that this seems not to be the case in some parts of our country. Some people have already paid dearly for holding different political opinions or for supporting a particular political party.

Violence has already claimed more than 26 lives and injured many more. Property worth millions of dollars has been destroyed. Some people have fled from their homes and are now living like refugees in their own country. Some vital institutions of our country like schools, hospitals, farms etc. have been severely disrupted. Such a situation of violence creates an atmosphere of resentment among the people. It breeds a climate of fear and mistrust. This fear of harassment and suspicion destroys the atmosphere for development.

We therefore issue a plea to all political parties and their supporters to desist from any form of violence. We call upon the government to ensure that its organs like the police and the media revisit their national obligation of service to the nation and all its citizens and not be partisan. We need firm assurances from all contenders in the elections that they will not interfere in the voting process and that they will accept the verdict of the sovereign people of this country. This is the only way towards peace and prosperity in Zimbabwe.

### **Pre-election terror and intimidation must stop!**

It is a great shame that Zimbabweans are spilling the blood of their fellow Zimbabweans in political violence.


We the CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF ZIMBABWE say to our brothers and sisters in Christ, to all fellow Christians, and indeed to all citizens of Zimbabwe: *Use your vote, it is your right and nobody can take it from you.*

Make your choice in the freedom of your conscience. Do not be afraid. Act as a free citizen. Whatever choice you make, remember to vote for people who are God-fearing, who will respect human rights and dignity, who will foster the oneness of the Creator, our common Father. We therefore ask all our parishes, Christian communities, families and all people of goodwill to pray continuously for peace and tolerance in our Country. Let us remember that God reminds us to “do justice, show constant love and live in humble fellowship with Him” (Micah 6:8).

## **WORKING TOGETHER AFTER THE ELECTIONS**

A Pastoral Statement of the Zimbabwe  
Catholic Bishops' Conference

2000 (c)



Patrick F. Chakaipa, Archbishop of Harare  
Pius A. Ncube, Archbishop of Bulawayo  
Alexio C. Muchabaiwa, Bishop of Mutare, President ZCBC  
Francis N. M. Mugadzi, Bishop of Gweru  
Robert C. Ndlovu, Bishop of Hwange  
Helmut Reckter SJ, Bishop of Chinhoyi  
Michael D. Bhasera, Bishop of Masvingo  
Angel Floro, Bishop of Gokwe  
Patrick M. Mutume, Auxiliary Bishop of Mutare

**T**he citizens of Zimbabwe have just finished a historic event of electing new Parliamentarians for the sixth Parliament of Zimbabwe. Two days of voting were conducted in an atmosphere of non-violence and peace. In our last statement we appealed to all Christians to pray for peace and the light of the Holy Spirit, we thank God for the peace that prevailed during the two days. We the CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF ZIMBABWE would like to congratulate all the citizens for conducting themselves in a manner that was peaceful during the elections. We also extend our congratulations to those that have been elected into Parliament both from the ruling and opposition parties. We also congratulate the Election Directorate, the Electoral Supervisory Commission, Monitors from the Churches and foreign observers, Civic Groups and the Zimbabwe Republic Police in the orderly and peaceful manner in which they conducted themselves to maintain the spirit of calmness.

We also wish to thank the electorate for the mature response demonstrated especially after the results were announced. At independence in 1980 a hand of reconciliation was extended to everyone and that all should work together, this is the spirit we desire our nation to continue even now. We have come of age and may this culture of tolerance prevail and the love of neighbour as God's love for his people be our National Motto. Elections come and go but we will always continue to live as neighbours and must therefore always work together in peace.

We say to the new Parliamentarians that you should now endeavour to work together for the common good of all Zimbabweans. Your differences of opinion must not be the cause of division and discrimination, but the source of enrichment and positive contributions that are constructive for the sake of progress and development of our nation. You indeed have very important issues to address and this is the time to bury the hatchets and start addressing the developmental issues that you have promised the electorate to implement when you have been elected. Among these issues, we reiterate the importance of working for unity, eradication of corruption and working in a transparent manner, economic recovery


programmes, adequate housing, job creation and better health and education programmes for our people. Resettlement of land should be done in a legal and orderly manner.

Above all, we stress again the option of working for the poor in our society. Jesus Christ teaches us to ask his Father for anything, (Luke 11: 9-13) and therefore we ask all Christians to continue to pray for peace, unity, and development in our country, and to pray also for all the Parliamentarians that they may live up to their important challenges for which they were elected by the people.

# **TOLERANCE AND HOPE**

A Pastoral Letter by the  
Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops'  
Conference

May 2001



Patrick F. Chakaipa, Archbishop of Harare  
Pius A. V. Neube, Archbishop of Bulawayo  
Alexio C. Muchabaiwa, Bishop of Mutare (ZCBC President)  
Francis Mugadzi, Bishop of Gweru  
Helmut Reckter SJ, Bishop of Chinhoyi  
Michael D. Bhasera, Bishop of Masvingo (ZCBC Vice President)  
Robert C. Ndlovu, Bishop of Hwange  
Angel Floro SMI, Bishop of Gokwe  
Patrick M. Mutume, Auxiliary Bishop of Mutare

**T**he Lord God created the human person, male and female, in his own image. He gave them a dignity, which is above all creatures. Each person, whether old or young, poor or rich, has got the right to it and society with all its various organisations must recognise and uphold this dignity. No government or political party can appropriate it but must recognise, uphold and protect this human dignity which is God-given.

In our country the holders of political power, including those claiming to be Christians, do tend to abuse their fellow human beings. They just use them to achieve their own political ends and then dump them afterwards. A person is only useful as long as he is a means to their political ambitions. A human being is reduced to a thing that one uses and in fact abuses.

A case in point is the way political figures and political parties have used our unemployed youth during election times. Violence, intimidation and threats are the tools of failed politicians. We must point out to them that they are engaging in an unjust activity. As your pastors, dear brothers and sisters, we call upon you to uphold the dignity and sacredness of each person.

We would like to underline the fact that it is an inherent right of the person to take part in the political activities of his or her society. In dialogue with other members of society he or she will advance her political views or opinions. Society has the obligation to ensure that each member is free to express his or her political views without fear of being victimised. Political ideas or views are man-made and therefore tend to vary with times, places, and situations. Frustration of this basic right of the person leads to turmoil in society.

It impedes the harmonious development of the person and of society as a whole. In fact in a society such as ours, which multi-cultural and multi-racial, we will always differ in opinions, and therefore we call upon every citizen to exercise a very high degree of tolerance.



The lack of this tolerance is clearly evidenced by the violence that continues to grip our country. It is a shame that we who claim to be modern resort to violence in order to advance our political ideas. We have witnessed with sadness the loss of human life and the destruction of property due to differences in political views and opinions. We Zimbabweans fought for justice, peace, democracy and economic well being of all our people. Each Zimbabwean has a right to security of life and property and no politician has a right to deprive any person of this right.

Public offices are supposed to serve the common good. We pay tribute to all those politicians and public officers who take seriously their role in working for the welfare of all. However, we note with sadness that in many cases public officers come to be associated with self-enrichment and corruption. There is need for transparency and accountability in public office. Allegations of corruption in such institutions as NOCZIM, GMB, War Victims Fund and so forth have undermined the government's moral ground from which it should operate. Those who have a case to answer should be brought to court.

The activities of war veterans, in both urban and rural areas, are not solving problems in the proper manner. The closure of local government offices have denied essential services to the people. It is the duty of government to ensure that the nation is not held to ransom by a few. We urge the government to allow the law enforcement agents to perform their duties without interference so that there is a sense of security in the country. Let us remind each other of the fact that no one person or group of persons liberated this country alone. The great majority of Zimbabweans because of their love of freedom and a sense of justice liberated it through their sacrifices. We believe that what was true in the hard sixties and seventies, that people loved freedom and justice, is still true today.

The one pressing issue which must be settled urgently, in fact it should have been settled long ago, is the question of land. We acknowledge that there is an urgent need of economic reform to redress the imbalances that

exist in our society today where we have 75 percent of our population living under the poverty-datum-line. Unfortunately, the distribution of land has been marred by violence, deaths and intimidation. The programme of land distribution should target the people who are really in need of it. We should be careful not to create more injustices in the process of addressing legitimate concerns. It is also important that the farm labourers are catered for in the exercise. Priority should also be given in the setting up of infrastructure and providing resources. Small-scale farmers have proved that they can contribute meaningfully to the economy of the country.

The problems of developing society are immense. No one person or party has all the answers. We need national dialogue. We need to listen to what all groups in society have to say. All citizens must be allowed to speak freely what their concerns are, fathers and mothers, farmers and industrial workers, the young starting out in life and the old who have seen life and its troubles.

This national dialogue, the media – both print and electronic – should help facilitate. To do this the media and media workers must be allowed to work in an atmosphere of freedom. There must not be any threats of physical violence against them.

Communicators must be committed to searching for truth and the truth alone while respecting the dignity and integrity of every man, woman and child, and no one must hinder them in their task. Media must serve society as a whole, not just the narrow interests of the ruling party and government of the day or of the business sector alone. We need genuinely public broadcasting, complemented by competing broadcasters speaking for different groups in society. We therefore call upon all the media to help in the nation building process and not to fan violence in their coverage of events.

The poor health delivery system is seriously affecting the majority of our people who are already suffering from the harsh economic environment.

Our health institutions cannot even procure some essential drugs. We therefore urge our government to make enough financial resources available to the health sector.

The reality of HIV/AIDS pandemic is adding to the misery of our families and society as a whole. This really calls for behaviour change in our attitude towards morality and for Christian principles of abstinence before marriage and faithfulness in marriage to be observed.

In the present situation of social strife, political stalemate and economic decline, we should not lose hope. We should have hope in God and in the gifts and talents he has given us. During this Easter season we celebrate that Jesus Christ conquered sin and death. This is our source of hope that we too, through his power, will overcome the problems and challenges that face the nation now. The first thing is that each Zimbabwean should seriously examine himself or herself and honestly admit to themselves what they contribute to the present situation of insecurity and fear.

The will to build Zimbabwe for all of us is still there, and God who gave us victory in the past is still present and with us. It is through dialogue, tolerance and confidence in the power of God that we will come to build this nation as a family.

In unity we freed ourselves and today once more we need that unity; unity of purpose and vision, in spite of different ideas of how best to achieve our goal. This means we should be ready and willing to accommodate different views and really tolerate different viewpoints. There is no single Zimbabwean with the monopoly of truth. We need each person's contribution in order to really build up a true Zimbabwe. No person should be excluded from positively making a meaningful contribution to nation building. Let our common enemy be poverty, disease and ignorance, not fellow citizens. Let us unite our efforts to defeat those enemies and we shall earn our rightful place in the family of nations.

We, the Catholic Bishops of Zimbabwe, urge the government, the private sector and indeed all the people of Zimbabwe to make every effort to foster this culture of tolerance and to work for unity to rebuild our nation. St. Paul tells us that Christ's church is a single body with many parts (1 Cor.12:12f). Similarly as a nation we are one body with many parts, therefore whatever one part does affect the whole.

# **A CALL TO WORK FOR UNITY, PEACE AND HARMONY**

February 2002 (a)

The Most Rev. Patrick F. Chakaipa, Harare Archdiocese

The Most Rev. Pius A. V. Ncube, Bulawayo Archdiocese

The Rt. Rev. Alexio C. Muchabaiwa, Mutare Diocese (ZCBC President)

The Rt. Rev. Francis Mugadzi, Gweru Diocese

The Rt. Rev. Helmut Reckter SJ, Chinhoyi Diocese

The Rt. Rev. Michael D. Bhasera, Masvingo Diocese (ZCBC Vice President)

The Rt. Rev. Robert C. Ndlovu, Hwange Diocese

The Rt. Rev. Angel Floro SMI, Gokwe Diocese

The Rt. Rev. Patrick M. Mutume, Auxiliary Bishop of Mutare

Our country has earned a high level of admiration for having hardworking and peaceful people. Many people admire the manner in which the country moved from the horrors of colonialism into a new political dispensation which upheld the rights its citizens and the policy of reconciliation which helped our country in establishing an era of national development and peace.

However, 21 years after independence we have become disturbed by increasing cases of political violence and intolerance among our people especially when it comes to party affiliations and election campaigns. This violence has caused much destruction, loss of life and property and untold suffering among our people. In our last Pastoral Letter we made a fervent appeal for tolerance. Unfortunately in some areas the degree of intolerance has increased.

As we approach the 9 – 10 March Presidential elections, we wish to be close to you at this important moment in the history of our country. It is a call to responsibility and integrity to all of us as Christians and Citizens of Zimbabwe.

We appreciate the President's appeal for an end to political violence and henceforth call upon the nation to heed this call from the President. We say this because violence begets violence and under no circumstances can we condone it as well as the physical threats and intimidation which accompany it. This is a most serious violation of our freedom which strikes at the heart of human dignity. It is the duty of the government and indeed all citizens of Zimbabwe to ensure that the nation is not held to ransom by individuals who believe in violence. We call upon the government, party leaders and the people at large to allow law enforcement agents to perform their duties without interference so that security will be enhanced. In the same way appeal to law enforcement agents and security forces to be more accountable to the people by maintaining order, peace and security, shunning any form of violence, intimidation or bias. We call upon them to bring the perpetrators of political violence to book.

Inflammatory and intimidatory statements and shouting slogans against fellow Zimbabweans and other parties engenders feelings of hatred and incites people to violence. We ask the leaders of different political parties and their followers to refrain from such verbal violence which often results in physical violence and is in contradiction with moral and Christian principles. We also ask for an immediate halt to the system of ferrying people from one place to another to commit acts of violence. These things compromise our hope for free and fair elections.

The media, both print and electronic, should facilitate national dialogue, tolerance, peace and unity. The media must serve society as a whole, not the narrow interests of a particular party or of the business sector. Unfortunately some sections of the media have polarised the people by reporting in a biased and unbalanced manner. We appeal to the media to help curb violence by reporting events with objectivity.

We, the Catholic Bishops of Zimbabwe, strongly call upon our Government to use the organs and institutions of the state to bring about true peace and harmony as we move towards the presidential and mayoral elections in March 2002. We also call upon all parties to refrain from any acts of intimidation, violence or any anti-social activities that diminish peace. We once again call upon all our youth to resist being used to perpetrate violence against their parents or any persons that have contrary views to their own. We call upon them not to follow leaders bent on using violence to achieve political ends. Peace is not merely the absence of war, it is actively a prevailing of harmonious interrelationships among persons or communities. In the atmosphere of peace, each person can actively cast their vote for the candidate they choose and it is easy for the nation to accept the result of an election conducted in an atmosphere of peace and harmony. Therefore each one of us has a duty to live and work for such a desirable state which is realised by working for true justice through dialogue and not violence.

The Holy Father Pope John Paul II in his message for the World Day of Peace stresses that there is *"No peace without justice, no justice without*

*forgiveness” (1 Jan. 2002, No. 15). He explains, “Forgiveness always involves an apparent short-term loss for a real long term gain. Violence is the exact opposite; opting as it does for a short-term gain, it involves a real and permanent loss. Forgiveness may seem like weakness, but it demands great spiritual strength and moral courage, both in granting it and accepting it. It may seem in some way to diminish us, but in fact it leads us to a fuller, richer humanity, more radiant with the splendour of the Creator” (ibid. No. 10).*

We ask all the political leaders to make a positive contribution to peaceful free and fair elections, by addressing themselves to the real issues of governance, land redistribution, high cost of living, unemployment, corruption, health delivery services, education and to find the proper ways of strengthening our economy.

We once more ask for tolerance. We, your Shepherds, repeat what we said before, *“Respect and love ought to be extended also to those who think or act differently than we do in social, political and religious matters, too. In fact, the more deeply we come to understand their ways of thinking through such courtesy and love, the more easily will we be able to enter into dialogue with them”* (**Peace and Unity and Freedom**, 1985; see Vat. II, **The Church Today**, No. 28).

We appeal to all party leaders and supporters, the security forces, and the people, to remain calm and peaceful after the election, accepting the verdict of the people, united and committed in the way forward to continue to build-up our country. As human beings we belong to God the Father and Creator of all beings. We are meant to belong to each other, live in happiness and peace with each other and in harmony with the rest of God's creation.

We call upon all of you once again to make the optimum use of your vote for the good of the country. “Use your vote, it is your right and nobody can take it from you. Make your choice in the freedom of your conscience. Do not be afraid, it is a secret. Act as a free citizen ... whatever choice you make



remember to vote for people who are God fearing, who will respect human rights and dignity” (**Working for Peace During Elections, 2000**).

At independence, we extended the hand of reconciliation to each other and we your Bishops and Shepherds called for unity among all the people of this nation. Hence it is imperative that we do not lose sight of these values. While we should accommodate differences in opinion, these should be dealt with in the context of dialogue, tolerance and respect for each other. We ought to be on our guard against forces and tendencies that divide us, both within and outside our nation and society. Such forces often work for their own selfish advantages. In fact the whole human race could promote those qualities that bring about unity. Unity is strength, and as a nation we need to work for unity all the time, so that we can achieve true development for ourselves and for others. For divided we cannot achieve success. Jesus says, *“Every kingdom divided against itself is heading for ruin, and a household divided against itself collapses”* (Lk.11:17). As teachers of the Good News, we encourage everyone to strive for unity and cultivate all those qualities that build our multi-cultural communities into one nation with one unity of purpose.

As we face another crossroads of our history, we your Bishops urge all of you to remain bold and determined to build on the gains of peace that we achieved. It is in our hands to save our country or destroy it. *“Here then I have today set before you life and prosperity, death and doom. I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life then, that you and your descendants may live”*. (Deut.30:15, 19). Let us pray and ask Our Heavenly Father to give us the gifts of tolerance, unity, peace and harmony so that life and property may not be lost but development and progress upheld and sustained. We reiterate what the Holy Father has said, that “Prayer is of the very essence of building the peace of order, justice and freedom”, (John Paul II, *ibid.* No. 14) and call upon all Christians and people of good will to pray now and always for our nation as we move towards elections and beyond.

Let our hope in the Risen Lord be our guide for a better future in our country.

# APPEAL FOR FOOD IN ZIMBABWE

August 2002 (b)



The Most Rev. Patrick F. Chakaipa, Harare Archdiocese  
The Most Rev. Pius A. V. Ncube, Bulawayo Archdiocese  
The Rt. Rev. Michael D. Bhasera, Masvingo Diocese (ZCBC President)  
The Rt. Rev. Robert C. Ndlovu, Hwange Diocese (ZCBC Vice President)  
The Rt. Rev. Francis Mugadzi, Gweru Diocese  
The Rt. Rev. Helmut Reckter SJ, Chinhoyi Diocese  
The Rt. Rev. Alexio C. Muchabaiwa, Mutare Diocese  
The Rt. Rev. Angel Floro SMI, Gokwe Diocese  
The Rt. Rev. Patrick M. Mutume, Auxiliary Bishop of Mutare

*“For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink” (Mt.25:35).*

The most valuable treasure of any nation is its people. Without this asset true nationhood cannot be possible. The growth of a nation, its development, prosperity and quality of life of its people depend on the very people that constitute it. Every individual therefore is of the highest worth, not simply because the person contributes to nation building, but above all, because every person is created in the image of God and therefore worth the dignity that God has accorded his treasure. (Gen.1:27). This is the basis of both God's commandment “Love thy neighbour” and its corollary from the social teaching of the Church to insist upon the duty of everyone to practise social justice in a community.

Our country Zimbabwe and most of the Southern African region is faced with a severe food shortage. The limited harvest that was made has a direct bearing on the current food shortage. Most of the family households find it difficult to get enough for their consumption. This situation has not only made people suffer, but has created further problems of severe suffering. The working people are also severely affected by the scarcity of commodities which are very expensive if they are available. The unemployed get poorer and deteriorate faster in their health because of lack of food. Zimbabwe currently has a large number of orphans because of the scourge of HIV/Aids. A large number of widows, street kids and the sick are affected by the food shortage more severely than those who have someone to provide for them. We, as your Spiritual leaders are seriously concerned with the plight of the people and we cannot continue to preach to people with empty stomachs. The United Nations research estimates that up to half the population of Zimbabwe are at risk due to the worsening food shortage.

We note with great sadness that some heartless people have taken advantage of this drought situation to get rich quickly. Unfair hoarding of necessary commodities in order to create artificial shortages and raise prices to unimaginable levels for ordinary people is deplorable.

Corruption levels in the country have filtered to the grassroots and make it difficult for the ordinary poor citizens to make ends meet and exploitation of man by man has risen to unprecedented levels. As we said before "Although by the standards of Africa, or even of the region, Zimbabwe is a moderately wealthy country, nevertheless this wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few, and the poverty that is there is growing" (**Working for the Common Good**, May 1998, p.2). It is most unfortunate that the government Social Development Fund that should cushion the less advantaged in our society is bankrupt. Traditionally, sharing a concern were always imperatives in the village and were a sign of love for one another. We call upon all of you to listen to the call of your inner voice of conscience to desist from enrich yourself through exploitation of fellow human beings. Instead, respond in charity and follow ethical principles in this time of need.

For the sake of the nation and its survival, we urge government to quickly depoliticise the procurement and distribution of food and put in place controls to minimise acquisition of food by threats or any other means, corruption and exploitation. For maximum benefit to the people who are in dire need of food, the government should invite and accommodate other organisations which are able to help our nation. This will enable those who have resources to buy food and distribute it to all the people regardless of their sex, creed and political affiliation. We the Catholic Bishops of Zimbabwe and all other Churches who feel the same, appeal to you the faithful of this country to share what you have. As there is not enough food in Zimbabwe, we especially extend our appeal to our sister Churches in the world, to donors, and all people of goodwill to urgently come to the assistance of Zimbabwe. Jesus said, "give them something to eat yourselves" (Mt.14:16). And accordingly the early Christians "shared the proceeds among themselves according to what each one needed" (Acts 2:45).

We, your Shepherds want to assure all our donors, brothers and sisters, that as much as possible, assistance received will be distributed in a transparent manner and given to our most needy people. All our urban,

semi-urban, mining towns, farming and rural communities need food. We therefore appeal to whoever is involved in the distribution of food to uphold the principles of honesty and transparency in the sharing of food. In the past droughts, we have always distributed food successfully and we should use the experience acquired to distribute food now, at this very difficult time.


We, together with you pray that the Lord may touch our hearts so that we are ready to give and share what we have with our needy brothers and sisters.

May the blessings of God be upon us during these difficult times.

# **A CALL TO *METANOIA*: LISTEN TO THE INNER VOICE**

Lenten Pastoral Letter

March 2003 (a)



Mt. Rev. Patrick F. Chakaipa of Harare  
Mt. Rev. Pius Alec V. Ncube of Bulawayo  
Rt. Rev. Michael D. Bhasera of Masvingo (ZCBC President)  
Rt. Rev. Francis Mugadzi of Gweru  
Rt. Rev. Alexio C. Muchabaiwa of Mutare  
Rt. Rev. Helmut Reckter S.J. of Chinhoyi  
Rt. Rev. Robert C. Ndlovu of Hwange (Vice-President)  
Rt. Rev. Angel Floro of Gokwe  
Rt. Rev. Patrick M. Mutume, Auxiliary Bishop of Mutare

We greet you and we pray that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.

## **Introduction:**

During this Lenten Season, Our lord is once again calling us to genuine repentance: *"The time has come, and the Kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the Good News"* (Mk.1:15). We your Bishops would like to invite each one of you to seriously reflect upon these words so that they may not remain mere words, but transform the life of each of the faithful and have a positive impact of the lives of all people of good will. In the Liturgical cycle of the Church, this Lenten Season is meant for every Christian to scrutinise oneself, reflect on one's way of living, call upon God for forgiveness of sins and be renewed in righteousness and grace. Only through true repentance can we be healed and live. For Jesus clearly says: *"I have not come to call the virtuous, but sinners to repentance!"* (Lk.5:32). In this proclamation Jesus states the programme of his ministry: to call all mankind in and through His life, death and resurrection to conversion and witness. People of every culture and every age are called to this conversion and to respond in commitment and faith. In order to realise and acknowledge our own sinfulness, we need to look into our conscience, a God-given gift that inwardly teaches us what is good and what is evil and how to make the right choices.

## **2. The Mission of the Church**

We your Bishops have spoken many times through our Pastoral letters, Statements and Instructions on various matters affecting the lives of our people. Our mandate and mission came from Christ himself who was anointed by the Father in order to bring about the Kingdom of God: *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach the Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord"* (Lk.4:18-19).

Before he ascended to heaven, Christ gave clear instructions to the group of Apostles he had carefully chosen to continue his mission so that all mankind may come to the knowledge of the Gospel and bear witness to the Gospel values and teaching. Christ said: *“Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you”* (Mt.28:19-20). It is in this spirit that we, your leaders in faith, come to share with you in conviction what this faith invites us to do as a church in Zimbabwe today. This sharing is aimed at both challenging our conscience as well as inspiring us to respond in faith to those same Gospel values and commands of Christ that we are meant to bear witness to in our daily lives. The purpose of this letter therefore is not to accuse anyone, but to fulfil a prophetic mission in the face of common concerns.

### **3. Compassion and Concern**

Our Lord Jesus Christ spent his whole life doing good, teaching, healing, forgiving, comforting and showing compassion and concern for all forms of human suffering. At the same time, he openly confronted the evils that oppress people. The Church as the visible sign of Christ today imitates him in showing compassion and concern for the suffering. We, your Bishops, note with great concern the various complex factors that continue to bring this suffering to our people. The greatest of these factors is sin, which is both personal and structural. During this time of Lent, we intend this letter to arouse the conscience of the people as well as to be a word of encouragement to all who hear or read it and turn to God. A change of heart is needed of each believer in order to transform our society and rid all of suffering and oppression by ridding ourselves of our sinful ways. Our social, economic and political structures should also be a means for expressing this compassion and concern for people.

We stress what we already said before as we appealed for 'change of heart' in our country, *“It is at this point that we must appeal to you, our brothers and sisters in Christ, and to your Christian consciences. Your own personal contribution and sacrifice is needed”*. **(Socialism and the Gospel**



of Christ, ZCBC Pastoral Statement, Jan. 1984, p.4). Therefore we need a change of heart and a radical transformation of the structures of sin.

## **4. The Social Teaching of the Church**

Following the mission of the Church, the social teaching of the Church emanates from the teaching of the Gospel of Christ. The Church Fathers have articulated from the Gospel teachings and God's commandments, principles and guidelines that indicate how every human being and society should act and live. They also should inform the way we structure our society. The principles include respect for life and the dignity of the human person; the need for social solidarity especially with the poor and marginalised; the search for the common good, the principle of subsidiarity which requires that decisions are made as close as possible to their points of implementation; the stewardship of the environment – the creation of God. These are indeed basic requirements that should be respected and honoured by every human being.

These requirements summarised in the social teaching of the Church act as a thermometer to our conscience and test to our way of living. It is during this season of Lent that we should give ourselves time to reflect on some of these important principles so that our own lives may truly bear witness to Christ's call to uprightness. While all human beings have recognised rights as well as duties, the God-given right to life is of paramount importance and must be upheld by all. For a balance of rights and duties to prevail, mankind needs dutifully to obey God.

Pope John XXIII clearly states, *“Peace on earth, which all men of every era have most eagerly yearned for, can be firmly established only if the order laid down by God be dutifully observed”* (Peace on Earth, John XXIII, no. 1, p.7). In January 2003, Pope John Paul II wrote for the 'World Day of peace' a document to commemorate forty years of **Pacem in Terris** (Peace on Earth) of Pope John XXIII. *“The Encyclical spoke to everyone of their belonging to the one human family, and shone a light on the shared aspiration of people everywhere to live in security, justice and hope for*

*the future” (Pacem in Terris: A Permanent Commitment, John Paul II, on World Day of Peace, 1 Jan. 2003, no.3, p.4). What is of great importance is to highlight the four pillars of Peace that the Pontiff enumerated. “With the profound intuition that characterised him, John XXIII identified the essential conditions for peace in four precise requirements in the human spirit: **truth, justice, love and freedom**” (World Day of Peace, John Paul II, 1 Jan. 2003, no.3, p.5).*

We your Shepherds see it as relevant and urgent to uphold these four pillars and invite all of us to reflect upon them, especially in our context in Zimbabwe and during this period of Lent. We must also reflect on the character of our social institutions to see how they can fulfil the conditions for peace. The Social Teaching of the Church has become more relevant to us than ever before and hence we call upon all the faithful and people of good will to have a sincere introspection and utilise this season for true repentance and turn to God in our everyday lives.

## **5. The current situation**

We must acknowledge with gratitude to God, the good efforts you as a Christian are making in response to your Christian call to be the light and salt in society and thus bear witness to Christ. Further, we appreciate your contribution towards the material, spiritual and moral development of the Church and our beloved nation. We also appreciate efforts made by various people and social organisations in working towards the establishment of a better society. In spite of all these efforts economic inequalities have become worse, the gap between the rich and the poor has continued to widen. People have continued to suffer social and political violence. There is no sign that corruption is being dealt with effectively. Government has failed to provide leadership that enables the creation of an environment that enhances truth, justice, love and freedom. This can be seen in how the media have been polarised and how democratic institutions and processes have been tempered with.

However, we cannot ignore some elements which need to be challenged by the Gospel if we are to be more faithful to and better witnesses of Christ our model. *“Do not model yourself on the behaviour of the world around you...”* (Rom.12:2). We note with sadness that at times as Christians we have failed to adhere to the standard of Christ and have followed the model of the world and hence we come into suffering and pain that only Christ can set us free from. As Paul says: *“But it is not just creation alone which groans; we, who have the Spirit as the first of God's gifts also groan within ourselves, as we wait for God to make us his sons and set our whole being free”* (Rom.8:23). While our nation is in a transitional period at the moment, the majority of people are experiencing hardships and suffering.

Due to the decline of the economic situation, basic commodities have become scarce. The majority of ordinary people in this country struggle and often fail to get basic commodities like mealie meal, bread, sugar, cooking oil, paraffin, petrol, sanitary pads, cotton wool and peace of mind. This is without mentioning jobs, homes, security, freedom of expression and association as scarce commodities. On the other hand, the few commodities that are available are often sold on the black market at unaffordable prices. The sense of concern for one another is completely submerged in an attempt to make as high a profit as possible. Again, we implore all those who supply, particularly basic commodities to others, to rekindle their spirit of honesty and solidarity with the ordinary people, particularly the less fortunate members of our society.

## **6. Aspects that raise Concerns**

We are fully aware that our nation has inherited a complexity of inequalities from the colonial period to the present. Some of these complexities have been engraved into our culture so that not even our laws have managed to rectify them.

We all rejoiced, when we gained independence in the hope that we were all going to work in unity as a nation to remove the inequalities and

injustices that prevailed then. We also know that change and development are a process and not an event. There are, however, developments which are a cause of some concern to us.

## **6.1 The culture of violence in our society**

It is historically true that our country was colonised in a violent manner. Our forefathers fought for their land, but were violently defeated by new settlers. After this first phase, the nationalists tried to negotiate a power-sharing settlement with the new occupiers, but to no avail. The response to this failure was a resort to armed struggle where violence was used on both sides. For instance, the Bishops' Commission of justice and Peace stated: *"Both sides pursue their aspirations in the name of justice and peace. While the politicians push their strident rhetoric, now for black majority rule, now for white power, the focus of the fight – the people who live in the country – experience increased violence and a desperate helplessness"* (**The Man in the Middle**, by CCJP and Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1975, p.1). Eventually the struggle brought independence. The philosophy that if you wanted to attain success, violence is the means, seems to have been sown into our nation.

After independence, for a while there was peace in the land, but with the development of Opposition parties in the last parliamentary elections, violence once again erupted. The competing parties engaged in acts of political violence as a tool to success. There were accusations and counter accusations from all those involved. The faithful too belong to the various parties and were also perpetrators as well as victims of violence. Violence once more came to the forefront during the period of land occupation and land redistribution. Some members of our society felt that only through violence could injustice be rectified. But violence breeds violence. Not only on the national level, but sometimes on the community and family level the culture of violence has been witnessed. We, your Shepherds condemn all acts of violence, including inherited institutionalised violence of injustice. Our society needs to develop and cultivate more a culture of tolerance and unity in diversity. We remind you of what we already said,

“We, the Catholic Bishops of Zimbabwe, urge the government, the private sector and indeed all the people of Zimbabwe to make every effort to foster the culture of tolerance and to work for unity to rebuild our nation” (**Tolerance and Hope**, ZCBC Pastoral letter, May 2001). The acts of violence, especially in the recent past, render a disservice to the process of nation building, unity and peace. Even when we have cause to correct injustices, we need to remember the ethical principle that the end does not justify the means.

## **6.2 Governance**

We your Pastors, remember the remarkable start that the Government had at independence. We re-state that it *“made remarkable efforts at reconciliation ever since it first took office at Independence in 1980. Its essential task is to forge the many peoples of Zimbabwe into one nation, living at peace with itself and with others”* (**Reconciliation is still Possible**, a Pastoral Statement of ZCBC, Easter, 1983, no.1). We call upon the government to continue to create an atmosphere of nation building and peace.

It is sad to note that attitudes and entrenched positions have become polarised rather than accommodative. The responsibility of government is to govern all citizens including persons and groups of communities of different persuasions. The government is not only for the ruling party, but must protect all its citizens, their rights, as well as their welfare. All arms of government must do their duties and be allowed to carry out their responsibilities with impartiality. Preferential treatment and selective justice undermines the stability and credibility of the government. We condemn some members of government who have practised partiality, have openly refused to serve people who do not belong to their own party, for this discredits the proper manner of governance. *“When a country assumes political independence and becomes self governing, there is a need for the participation of all the people in the governance of the country. Hence, the citizens of an independent nation have the right to participate in the decision making process of the country directly or*

*through their representatives” (The African Bishops on Human Rights, pub. Paulines, 1995, p.97).*

We as teachers, therefore call upon government to carry out its duties to all citizens with fairness and commitment. It should be clear to citizens as well as government that “no social group or political party has the right to monopolise power”. (**The Conscience of Society**, ed. Mejia, SJ, pub. Paulines, 2001, p.95). In fact, power rests with the people who should duly elect whatever party or whoever they choose according to the just laws of the country. The question of just laws is absolutely important. Hence the need to safeguard just laws and develop a balanced Constitution that removes unjust structures.

### **6.3 Corruption**

The African Bishops during the African Synod in Rome in 1994 highlighted many of the cultural values found among African peoples. These are values not only to talk about but to adhere to and live by. The Bishops said, *“African cultures have an acute sense of **solidarity** and **community** of life in the extended family. Feasts are celebrated with the whole village. Africa must preserve this priceless cultural heritage and never succumb to the temptation of individualism which is so alien to its best traditions” (Africa Synod, simplified text, no. 43, pub. Paulines, p.28).*

Unfortunately, we are witnessing the erosion of some of these values within our society. Both in the private and public sectors corrupt practices are becoming increasingly common. It is demoralising to witness that at times even the law-enforcement agents are also found participating in corrupt activities for selfish reasons. People have tended to become more individualistic in pursuance of hedonistic values. Because the principle of survival of the fittest seems to apply as people become more materialistic, values of community and concern for each other are no longer appealing. As people want to get rich quick, and at times without sweat, corrupt practices are slowly eating our values away. The level of corruption is in fact frightening as it has embraced both the leadership

levels as well as many of the ordinary citizens. In addition to corruption, there is a high degree of human greed which has been demonstrated in the context of current shortages of basic commodities. Current shortages of basic commodities have provided an opportunity for corruption by people in strategic positions including government ministers and other government officials.

In appealing to the conscience of everyone, we remind you what we have already said before; it is disheartening that, *“Those with strong elbows grab a big slice, trampling the weaker ones underfoot. Almost every day the media tell us about embezzlement, corruption and large-scale theft. There is much irresponsibility in the use of public assets. There is much dishonesty: even people who consider themselves respectable engage in stealing at the workplace, bank fraud, and white-collar crime, while pick-pocketing, burglaries and violent robberies are on the increase. Leaders have been hiding immoral behaviour behind facades of respectability”* (**Responsibility-Honesty-Solidarity**, ZCBC Pastoral Statement, April 1997, p.2). We therefore strongly condemn all such corruption that will surely destroy our society. We encourage the re-cultivation of our cultural values that will enhance the sharing and solidarity of our nation.

## **6.4 Food distribution**

We deeply appreciate the humanitarian assistance that the international community, churches and NGOs are giving to our needy people. We appeal to them to continue the good assistance in the spirit of solidarity. There is immense starvation in the country due to drought and poor planning on the part of our government. It is no longer a hunger confined to rural areas, but to urban areas as well. However we are disappointed by the bureaucracy and cumbersome processes that have been put in place by government in order to procure the much-needed food and grain for the people. The situation calls for concerted effort by government, churches, NGOs and all people of good will to assist each other in the spirit of solidarity in providing food for all the people of Zimbabwe.

We want to acknowledge with gratitude the response of our brothers and sisters in Christ, to our appeal for food. Many organisations have taken it upon themselves to assist our nation in these difficult times. However, we are greatly disturbed by corrupt practices mainly by some GMB officials, drought relief committees, some councillors, chiefs, headmen, as well as war veterans. Some NGOs have been intimidated and harassed by political activists and some stopped distributing food altogether. The need for food is so great that the government cannot feed all the people alone. It needs help, and therefore must facilitate easier distribution of food, as in the previous droughts that this country has gone through. People's lives are at stake and the nation cannot afford to entertain the politicisation of food while people are starving. This is immoral. It is our sincere hope that everybody has learnt from these mistakes.

From the standpoint of moral concern, we call upon government, especially the individuals that represent government on the ground, to deal urgently with those elements in our society that have placed themselves above the law and are constantly harassing other citizens. The demand for citizens to produce a party card before receiving food should be stopped forthwith. This violates the individual's freedom of association. Those harassing other citizens should be brought to book. We are one nation and the food should be distributed to all the needy people of Zimbabwe without fear or favour.

## **6.5 The state of the economy**

Zimbabwe's economy was one of the strongest economies on the whole continent. Such an economy assisted the state to maintain the rights of every individual to an adequate standard of living. The rights include the right to adequate food, the right to health, the right to adequate clothing, the right to shelter and housing and the right to continuous improvement in the conditions of living" (**The African Bishops on Human Rights**, pub. Paulines, p. 193).



Unfortunately the same economy was controlled by a few. In the attempt to have a broad-based economy there were many forces and factors that militated against the process. On the one hand there was selfishness of wanting to gain continuous control over the economy, on the other, there was bad planning with political decisions dictating economic processes. Other factors such as “stay aways” by employees, lack of enough export produce, growth of the parallel market, lack of foreign currency, lack of proper funding for the land reform programme, disruption of farming activities, lack of confidence of investors, and other factors, culminated in the drastic weakening of the Zimbabwe dollar and non-growth of the economy. Because of the decline of the economy the lives of the citizens are affected adversely and poverty has increased. It therefore follows that the rights of individuals stated above can no longer be sustained. In these circumstances the rich become richer while the poor drown into abject poverty. Exploitation of each other has become the order of the day, for the sake of making ends meet.

In his message of Lent this year, the Holy Father says, *“Exploitation of others, indifference towards the suffering of our brothers and sisters and the violation of basic rules of morality are just a few fruits of the thirst for gain. Faced with the tragic situation of persistent poverty which afflicts so many people in our world, how can we fail to see that the quest for profit at any cost and the lack of effective, responsible concern for the common good have concentrated immense resources in the hands of a few while the rest of humanity suffers in poverty and neglect?”* (John Paul II, **Message for Lent**, 2003, no.2). For our economy to turn around, all involved, the private sector, government, donors, should engage in meaningful dialogue and have the sincerity and commitment for real development.

## **66. Adequate health services for all**

We acknowledge with appreciation the great strides that the government of Zimbabwe made in the health sector after independence. Many rural hospitals were upgraded and renovated, a lot of clinics were built to bring health services nearer to the thousands of people who had no easy access

to these facilities. The dream at independence was “Health for all by the year 2000”! Alas, this dream was never to come true.

The situation in hospitals and health centres has deteriorated to shocking levels. Drugs are scarce and if available, the ordinary people are unable to buy them. To make matters worse, the HIV/AIDS pandemic is ravaging our society and Zimbabwe has one of the highest rates of infection in sub-Saharan Africa. We call upon government, especially the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, to get priorities right. Caring for the sick is a calling from God of special dignity and importance. It can never be seen as just another job or another way of earning one's living. While we greatly value the generous dedication to service of many of those who work in the medical field, we cannot ignore the fact that the quality of medical care is often seriously inadequate, e.g. patients being unattended for long periods of time; the lack of commitment on the part of some personnel, the failure to recognise each patient as one's brother or sister in need. We therefore remind the Ministry and all health workers that:

Equity among citizens and the demands of justice call for policies which aim to provide adequate health care for all without distinction. The following principles have always guided us in this vital area of concern:

Life is sacred. It is a gift from God to be valued from the moment of conception until natural death.

Human beings can never be reduced to the status of objects. We recognise that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit.

Every person is of equal dignity. The value of life is not to be measured by one's age, possessions, or position in society

## **6.7 The Youth**

The youth are an essential asset for any nation. They represent the future of a nation. The values and virtues of a society, its structures and institutions are passed on through the youth. For any society to survive, it ought to pass on its youth those values which are life giving. We have said, as the Church, the pillars of peace, namely truth, justice, love and

freedom are the values that will build up our nation. It is disheartening to observe the systematic undermining of these essential values through the National Youth Service. The current means and facilities for the programme could be used to teach our youngsters out of school, skills, and give them professional training for a job and employment that will give them a future, and the nation and economy better service. Further, we urge all those who train the youth in different fora that they should teach them our African heritage and the objective of history of our country. In particular, they should cultivate in the youth the spirit of unity and patriotism and thus prepare them to be responsible citizens and good future leaders. One should guard the youth against the spirit of indiscipline which can easily degenerate into a culture of violence.

## **7. Way forward**

We call upon the government to re-establish an environment of peace and justice which encourages full participation of all citizens in the affairs of their nation. The state machinery and the government must be seen to uphold the rights of its nationals. We are in some sense blessed that our structures and institutions have not completely collapsed, as has happened elsewhere. This is therefore a basis for having hope to reconstruct our society in a positive way. But this will require the effort and participation of everyone. Without dialogue, a spirit of give and take, we cannot get far in resolving our impasse. Government has to take the lead in encouraging this dialogue.

### **7.1 Purpose of public authority**

Pope John XXIII clearly stated that the purpose of public authority is to attain the common good. This is the guiding principle for all in public responsibilities and offices. The task is even more imperative the greater the area to be served. This means that the government has a duty and responsibility to work for the common good and see to it that all its arms and state institutions strive for the same goal. This important goal is to be attained through the four pillars already mentioned above, **truth, justice,**

**love and freedom.** Pope John XXIII said, *“The civil power must not serve the advantage of any one individual, or of some few persons, in as much as it was established for the common good of all”* (**Pacem in Terris**, no.56, p.19). As your Shepherds, we once again remind those in public office that they have a duty to the nation, the whole nation, and must carry it out with the diligence and honour that befit the office that they occupy.

## **7.2 Participation of all in public life**

God has given various gifts to different people for the purpose of building the body of Christ. Similarly, different people have been bestowed gifts to work together in unity of purpose. *“On each one of us God's favour has been bestowed in whatever way Christ has allotted it... To some his gift was that they should be apostles; to some prophets; to some evangelists; to some pastors and teachers...”* (Eph. 4:7-16). African society has traditionally captured this value in its proverbs, e.g. Gumwe rimwe haritswanyi inda! (Many hands make work lighter). This is a recognition of the gifts of all in the community and of allowing these gifts to flourish and be used for the building up of the same community. This means each member of society is valuable. Therefore those who guide and lead the nation, of necessity, should allow the participation of all members, directly or through genuine representation to participate in issues of national affairs. It is again relevant to repeat what we said in our Pastoral Statement **Working for the Common Good**, that *“Our conviction is that we are able to dialogue constructively, openly and widely, with a special concern for those who are vulnerable or in any way marginalised, we will unite together, whether religious or not, as people of good will, for the common good of Zimbabwe and its future generations”* (**Working for the Common Good**, ZCBC Pastoral Statement, May 1998, p. 2). We therefore urge our government, its institutions and all those who are in public office, and all the citizens of Zimbabwe, to participate positively in the affairs of public life.

### **7.3 A call on Catholic leaders**

“It is the right and duty of Catholics and all citizens to seek the truth with sincerity and to promote and defend, by legitimate means, moral truths concerning society, justice, freedom, respect for human life and the other rights of the human person should be upheld” (Doctrinal note, no. 8, 2003). We your Shepherds call upon all those Catholics who hold special responsibilities in society, be it government, the business community or other spheres of influence to exercise your duties according to the social teaching of the Church. It is your rights and also your duty as lay faithful to participate in 'public life', that is, in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas which are intended for the common good of the people. We fully support you in your positive contribution to nation building, as long as you follow the Gospel teachings and values. “The social doctrine of the Church is not an intrusion into the Government of individual countries. It is a question of the lay Catholic's duty to be morally coherent found within one's conscience, which is one and indivisible. There cannot be two parallel lives in their existence, the Pope reminds you” (*Christifidelis laici*, no. 59). We therefore, dear brothers and sisters, cannot lead a double way of life, one for Sunday services in Church and another for our public tasks, be they political, economic, social or other kind. We are always called to be guided by our conscience and to live our Christian faith as an integral unity.

### **7.4 Call to Prayer**

We learn from the life of Jesus who prayed and kept in constant communication with his Father that prayer is very important in our life. He prayed when he selected the Apostles, he prayed when he fed the hungry, he prayed in the garden before his arrest, crucifixion and death, and on many other occasions. If Jesus prayed, we need to pray much more ourselves.

The Holy Father has called for intensified prayer for peace at the beginning of this Lent. He has also encouraged all of us to pray the rosary

more, during this year of the rosary, to make intercession through Mary, the Mother of Jesus. We therefore call upon all the faithful to pray incessantly and fast for justice, peace, love and freedom in our country and in the world.


## **Conclusion**

We are aware that there is a lot to reflect upon during this time of Lent, but it is necessary for us to transform ourselves and our nation, so that we can live in the Joy of the risen Lord, when we have overcome the difficulties we are going through. We are confident that when we all play our part, and fulfil our God-given call in truthfulness, God will bless our efforts and we will succeed. Zimbabwe has been a star, and this beautiful country can continue to shine when we are united and work together in truth, justice, love and freedom. We conclude with part of the Holy Father's message of Lent: *The love of God poured into our hearts ought to inspire and transform who we are and what we do. Christians must not think that they can seek the true good of their brothers and sisters without embodying the character of Christ. Even in those cases where they might succeed in improving aspects of social and political life, without charity every change would remain short-lived. The possibility of giving oneself to others is itself a gift which comes from the grace of God. As Saint Paul teaches: 'God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure', Phil. 2:13 (John Paul II, **Message of Lent**, 2003, no.4).*

# **PEACE IN A DIVIDED ZIMBABWE**

## **Pastoral Statement**

**| (Advent, 30th November 2003 c)**



**Mt. Rev. Pius Alec V. Ncube of Bulawayo  
Rt. Rev. Michael D. Bhasera of Masvingo (ZCBC President)  
Rt. Rev. Francis Mugadzi of Gweru  
Rt. Rev. Alexio Churu Muchabaiwa of Mutare  
Rt. Rev. Helmut Reckter S.J. of Chinhoyi  
Rt. Rev. Robert C. Ndlovu of Hwange (ZCBC Vice President)  
Rt. Rev. Angel Floro of Gokwe  
Msgr. Kizito Mhembere, Administrator of Harare  
Rt. Rev. Patrick M. Mutume, Auxiliary Bishop of Mutare**

In commemoration of ***Peace on Earth*** by Pope XXIII, 40 years ago

*“Peace on earth, which all men of every era have most eagerly yearned for, can be firmly established and sustained only if the order laid down by God be dutifully observed” (Pacem in Terris, AAS, 55, 1963, p.257)*

## Introduction

Forty years ago the Holy Father, Pope John XXIII published a great Encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*. In this letter he prayed and encouraged other to pray for peace. This was very appropriate given the world context in which people were divided against one another. The letter was published two years after the Berlin Wall in Germany was erected. This wall was symbolic of the way in which peoples were divided against one another. This was also the time of the Cuban crisis. The Encyclical was written to give hope for peace in the world.

Divisions between peoples have continued, on racial, tribal, gender, class, party politics, religious and many other lines. In Zimbabwe today we are experiencing the negative effects of some of these divisions. The message of peace in *Pacem in Terris* which states that the order laid down by God must be observed in order to have peace is still very relevant to us today. As we enter the season of Advent, we yearn for this peace, with Pope John XXIII prayed for in 1963. In his message he reaffirmed the four conditions for peace as ***truth, justice, love and freedom***. Pope John Paul II reflecting on *Pacem in Terris* as a commemoration of 40 years emphasizes these same four pillars on which peace must be founded. Advent is a period of hope, where we prepare ourselves to receive Christ in our midst, and receive the Prince of Peace, who comes to re-establish the dignity of the human person.



## **1. Human dignity**

We, the Catholic Bishops of Zimbabwe, speak to you at a time when life in Zimbabwe is at its lowest ebb. The political situation is tense; the economic situation chaotic and the social situation unbearable for the majority of the people. The situation is undermining human dignity. It is this dignity that is God given from the very moment of creation or conception of man and woman that makes a human being unique (Gen.1:27). When human dignity is construed to be subordinate to political expediencies or economic imperatives or any other material gain, then it is being violated and the human person degraded. All human beings, regardless of their social status or class have the same worth before their Creator. To violate this principle will not only cause disharmony and injustice, but also militates against the Creator himself and therefore peace is compromised. Peoples the world over have struggled for the full recognition of their dignity and independence. We also struggled for the same values for the sake of the common good. We honestly ask ourselves whether we have made the best use of our achievements in the more recent years, especially in view of the fact that the common good takes priority over any individual interests. During this time of Advent, let us take a fresh look at ourselves to refocus and practise that human dignity towards one another in our society which Christ came to restore.

## **2. The four pillars of peace**

What pope XXIII called pillars of peace are the fundamental requirements needed by human beings to establish peace in society. Without the pillars of peace: *truth, justice, love and freedom*, peace is unachievable. Understanding and acceptance of the four pillars as foundations of peace is fundamental to the Zimbabwe society today. This peace which is a gift from God has become a rare commodity in our country.

During the season of Advent let us make serious effort to redress these elements which disrupt peace. In our society, children have lost

protection, men and women live under exploitative and oppressive circumstances, hunger, disease, mistrust and fear. We therefore call upon those in authority to urgently create the required and enabling conditions so that peace, prosperity and development can be achieved. Christ taught, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.” (Mt. 5:9).

## **2.1 Truth**

Pope John Paul II explains that “*Truth* will build peace if every individual sincerely acknowledges not only his rights, but also his own duties towards others.” Truth is a requirement of the human spirit, hence a genuinely peaceful society is built on truth and not on lies, and deceit. This is because lies and deceit destroy relationships between human beings. Consequently Pope John Paul II says that truth requires not only an acknowledgement of one's rights but also an acknowledgement of one's duties towards others. In Zimbabwe today it is the norm for people to quickly claim their rights, but disregard both their duties and responsibilities towards others.

For instance the media must both be reminded and allowed to act professionally and take responsibility for what they say and write. Their duty is to inform truthfully, as well as educate and entertain. That objective has unfortunately been lost in our country at the moment. Interrelationships of individuals must be characterised by truth so as to build trust and peace.

## **2.2 Justice**

The Holy Father, John Paul II states that “*Justice* will build peace if in practice everyone respects the rights of others and actually fulfils his duties towards them.” We know that if we want peace we must work for justice. Pope John XXIII highlighted the importance of justice in society in the following words: “Any human society, if it is to be well-ordered and productive, must lay down as a foundation this principle, namely, that

every human being is a person, that is, his nature is endowed with intelligence and free will. Indeed, precisely because he is a person, he has rights and obligations, flowing directly and simultaneously from his very nature. And as his rights and obligations are universal and inviolable so they cannot in any way be surrendered” (**Pacem in Terris**, p.259). This quotation stresses that justice comes from respecting the intelligence and free will of human beings. While the challenges to peace were experienced when “Peace in the World” (**Pacem in Terris**) was written, the world today continues to face the same challenges: Iraq war, Liberia, threat of terrorism, biological weapons, social and economic imbalances.

Zimbabweans today are suffering economic, social and political ills. The poor are getting poorer, while the rich are getting richer. Unaffordable high prices of commodities, inflation has gone out of hand, scarcity of cash, taxes erode salaries and the poverty datum line is unmanageable. The time spent in queuing for commodities erodes many working hours. We call upon all people of good will to stop the exploitation of others, violation of basic rules of morality in business, and the unfair pricing of commodities, and be seriously concerned about the common good of Zimbabwe. Those who have the responsibility to correct this situation must act now.

Selective justice is not justice and also justice delayed is justice denied. State institutions should never be used in an unjust manner. We therefore expect administrators to show that justice is being done.

## **2.3 Love**

“Love will build peace if people feel the needs of others as their own and share what they have with others, especially the values of mind and spirit which they possess”, says Pope John Paul II. In one of our Pastoral Letters, **Tolerance and Hope**, May 2001, we called for tolerance. “In fact in a society such as ours, which is multi-cultural and multi-racial, we will always differ in opinions, and therefore we call upon every citizen to exercise a very high degree of tolerance”, p.1. This Advent we call upon

citizens to go beyond tolerance and accept the demands of love. Love is recognition of the humanity of others and the reality of their needs. The economic hardships on people have fostered individualistic tendencies: for instance, at supermarkets, public offices, health services, educational institutions. While it is true that economic crisis often leads people to take desperate measures in order to survive, it is equally important that we should retain our moral responsibility towards our neighbours, particularly towards the poor members of our society. The injustice of greed has made some people to acquire more than one farm. In some cases some families were forcibly removed from their farms and farmhouses without being allowed to take their basic belongings. This is sinful and evil and everyone is answerable for his or her actions to God. We appeal to the law enforcement agencies not to allow anybody to take the law into their own hands.

## **2.4 Freedom**

“Freedom will build peace and let it thrive if, in the choice of the means to that end, people act according to reason and assume responsibility for their own actions”, said the Holy Father. Freedom is the capacity to make choices after rational deliberation and take responsibility for the choices and resultant actions. Institutions in a society should assume and indeed respect the freedom of human persons. To deny this freedom is to deny their dignity, dehumanise and to treat human beings as if they were sub-human. A system which encourages citizens to operate on the basis of race, tribe, religious affiliation and sex is working against free will and human dignity. If people are forced to act in fear, coerced, bribed, it is against principles of freedom and peace.

Making choices is a God-given right, but those choices we make, also in Zimbabwe, have short-term and long-term consequences. The choices we have made for this country have brought us where we are today. With this situation we must admit that we have gone wrong. To correct the situation, we must know where we went wrong. But to run away from the situation is no way to correct the situation. Surely, Zimbabweans have got

the capacity to think, to evaluate and to rectify their own situation, if they are allowed and willing to put their heads together without fear or favour.

## **Conclusion**

We cannot have lasting peace without **Truth, Justice, Love and Freedom**. These four pillars enable us to build a society that is more humane and peaceful. The government has a responsibility to create an environment where individuals – children, men and women – learn, appreciate and develop in themselves a culture of truth, justice, love and freedom. It also enables social structures and institutions to impart patriotism. As we prepare to accept Christ the Prince of Peace at Christmas we the Catholic Bishops of Zimbabwe urge all the faithful and people of good will to pray and work for the establishment of the four pillars of peace in our hearts, families, in our communities and in our country. We pray for the people of Zimbabwe to see the light and have courage to implement the pillars of peace.

# **A CREDIBLE ELECTORAL PROCESS FOR A RESPONSIBLE AND ACCOUNTABLE LEADERSHIP**

Joint Pastoral Statement of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference

August 2004

Mt. Rev. Robert C. Ndlovu of Harare (ZCBC Vice President)  
Mt. Rev. Pius Alec V. Ncube of Bulawayo  
Rt. Rev. Michael D. Bhasera of Masvingo (ZCBC President)  
Rt. Rev. Alexio Churu Muchabaiwa of Mutare  
Rt. Rev. Angel Floro, of Gokwe  
Rt. Rev. Patrick M. Mutume, Auxiliary Bishop of Mutare  
Very Rev. Fr. Alphonse Mapfumo - Administrator of Gweru  
Very Rev. Fr. Matthew Jonga - Administrator of Chinhoyi  
Very Rev. Fr. Albert Serrano, SMI - Administrator of Hwange

## 1. Introduction

We greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In our last pastoral letter of Advent 2003, we outlined the four pillars of peace: truth, justice, love and freedom (Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*).

In this pastoral letter we intend to share with you some Christian insights with regard to a credible electoral process for a responsible and accountable leadership. We hope this letter will be a source of guidance to all peace loving Zimbabweans as we come towards parliamentary elections in 2005. This in itself is a good thing that our Constitution has a clear guide and timetable for elections. However, the way elections have been conducted in our country since 2000 has been controversial and marked by serious violence. It is not our intention to dwell on the past but to focus on the imminent election and the hope it offers for peace.

An Election is not an event confined to a window period of registration of candidates, days of balloting and counting the votes. An election is rather a process which takes place over a considerable period of time. This process embraces the social, political and economic climate in which the technicalities of electing political leaders take place. This climate exercises a major influence on how the voting population decide who will represent them. An electoral process that aspires to be technically free and fair must be based on a moral integrity that alone makes freedom and fairness a reality. Without such moral integrity, an electoral process will lack authenticity and credibility, becoming a source of controversy. Hence our present effort, as your shepherds, to urge you to establish a credible electoral process, whose outcome will be a people's choice with local and international recognition.

The Church is not partisan. Christians may belong to various parties but the Church as such does not align itself with any single party. In fact, the Church looks beyond the parties and derives its ethos from the eternal

Kingdom of God, a kingdom of love, truth, justice, freedom and peace. What we shall be in the hereafter is what the Church seeks to prepare humanity for in the present by building the foundations here on earth of the Eternal Kingdom.

Individual Christians can make their own decisions as to which party comes closest to the Christian ethos and their aspirations in this life and vote accordingly. The Church respects each individual decision and this reality is evident in all our congregations composed of members belonging to all existing parties. While the institutional Church must not get involved in party politics, this does not apply to individual Christians. They have a right to join a particular party of their choice and to promote its policies and activities (campaigning, recruitment of new members, fund raising, etc.) Within that party however, they must act as salt and light. There must be “a firm commitment to justice and solidarity by each member of the people of God. Catholic professionals and teachers, businessmen and civil servants, lawyers and politicians are especially expected to bear witness to goodness, truth, justice and love of God in their daily lives” (Church in Africa, nos. 105 and 108).

## **2. Scriptural background**

The temptations of Jesus in the desert can help us discover the various ways in which leaders are tempted to betray the people they are asked to lead. In times of such temptations, a good leader will always follow the example of Jesus Christ (cf. Mt. 4:1-11).

**2.1 The first temptation** is that of the politics of the stomach, food. “If you are a true Son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves of bread.” Jesus is tempted to be self serving and to win people through bribery providing free food miraculously. He discards the idea that people follow him simply for the fact that he gives them material things. Leaders can also be tempted to use material things such as food, in order to woo people to vote for them. Good leadership discards bribery and blackmail.



**2.2 The second temptation** is that of 'relinquishing responsibility'. "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for scripture says: "He has given his angels orders about you and they will carry you in their arms in case you trip over a stone" (Mt.4:6). Satan wanted Jesus to act irresponsibly out of presumption. Leaders can be tempted to adopt an 'I-don't-care attitude'. Leaders should always act responsibly and then ask God to complement what is beyond their reach.

Good leaders do not make decisions that thwart the welfare of the communities they lead and then expect God to intervene and save the community from the consequences they would have willingly precipitated. Good leadership entails acting responsibly. Responsible leadership does not put the Lord God to the test!

**2.3 The third temptation** is that of adopting evil means to acquire a perceived good end. "I will give you all these, if you fall at my feet and do me homage" (Mt. 4:9). Leaders are often tempted to use evil means to realise their objectives. Some leaders reach the extent of torturing and eliminating those who stand the chance of depriving them of power.

Some are tempted to rig elections. Some are tempted to threaten or to force people to vote for them. Employing such evil means to attain power goes against Christian principles. Good leadership is Christlike. "The Lord your God is the one to whom you must do homage, him alone you must serve" (Mt. 4:10).

Responsible leaders are God-fearing. They know that good leadership is from God and is all about taking care of God's people.

From his experience in the desert, Jesus shows us an example of what style of leadership should be adopted and avoided in order to have responsible leadership in our society. We consider election time as a time to 'go back to the desert' and choose the type of leaders we want for our present Zimbabwean society. Gospel values are there to guide us.

### **3. Church and society**

The institutional Church is duty-bound by the Gospel to speak clearly, openly and courageously about issues that affect people's lives (food, security, housing, employment, health, education, good governance, human rights, etc). "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts" (Vat. II, *Gaudium et spes*, No.1). We make it clear that the Church has a moral duty to proclaim the Gospel to society. The Bible has a message for every sphere of life, including politics. To denounce and fight against all that is unjust is part of the ministry of evangelisation and prophetic role of the Church (*Church in Africa* No.107).

### **4. Church and democracy**

#### **4.1 Christian view of Democracy**

Democracy is one among many other forms of government. Here we offer one Christian perspective. Our Christian view of democracy is best summarised by Pope John Paul II: "The Church values the democratic system in as much as it ensures the participation of citizens in making political choices, guarantees to the governed the possibility both of electing and holding accountable those who govern them, and of replacing them through peaceful means when appropriate. Authentic democracy is possible only in a State ruled by law, and on the basis of a correct conception of the human person" (*Centesimus Annus* No.46). Thus the Church cannot encourage the formation of narrow ruling groups which usurp the power of the State for individual interests or for ideological ends.

Addressing the new ambassador of Zimbabwe to the Holy See on 15 May 2003, the Pope said that "for governments to cope with their problems

today, the values of democracy, good government, human rights, dialogue and peace must be close to the heart of leaders and peoples” (ZENIT News 13th December, 2003).

Democracy is one system of government in which the citizens or members choose leaders or make other important decisions by voting. Democracy, therefore, is about informed and responsible choices we make when we participate meaningfully in choosing without coercion or intimidation. While we acknowledge the lack of a people-driven constitution as yet, nevertheless, The Constitution of Zimbabwe allows for multiparty democracy which means that any individual is free to join a properly-constituted political party of his/her choice and that party has the right to openly campaign in the public forum. We approve of this democratic legislation and pray that it become more apparent in our country.

A Country's constitution is a sacred document which defines the rights of its citizens, the powers of those who govern, electoral processes, legal systems, etc. Writing a constitution should involve all citizens of State whose views should be ascertained and respected. The national constitution is the supreme law of the land and all citizens, regardless of their position, are subject to it. The function of the supreme court is to ascertain that the laws made by the members of parliament are in accordance with the constitution. State structures belong to all and should serve all and should continue to exist no matter what political party is in temporary power. Abuse of State structures occurs when what belongs to the State is used to favour a particular party.

The Church does not have a blueprint for democracy but assesses the particular system in the light of the demands and principles of the Kingdom of God. We are concerned that human life, human rights and human dignity be upheld in all things.

The Christian desires that all democratic processes be enlightened by the Word of God and the dictates of his Kingdom. Our temporary democracies should allow us to prepare for life in the eternal Kingdom of God. It is

because of this Christian perspective that the Church cannot keep silent in the face of falsehood, wrong and evil.

## **4.2 Basis of Democracy**

Democracy bases itself on the understanding that all people are equal and by virtue of their human dignity enjoy a capacity to participate in decisions concerning their social life and common future.

Human dignity gives rise to basic human rights that are enshrined in international law and often in the national constitution of a country. Some of the human rights recognised by national constitutions include the right to life, freedom of expression, movement, association, to property, etc. Our national constitution recognises these rights.

Legislation to the contrary would be a source of concern. Social justice, or right relationships between members of society, requires that an environment is created in society which promotes the flourishing of economic activity, public debate, media freedom and social harmony, which is largely the work of Government.

A democratic government is based on the 'rule of law'. The rule of law implies that government authority is exercised in accordance with written laws that were passed through established procedure. This principle ensures that supreme principles such as the respect of human dignity are observed.

## **4.3 Aim of Democracy**

Democracy is not an end in itself. It is a political system that aims at promoting the common good of society. Authority in such a system is only legitimate if it is at the service of the common good. This common good has also to be achieved through solidarity or participation of every citizen.

Democracy seeks to provide itself with good laws. Good laws are those that respect and promote respect for the equal dignity of all citizens regardless of their different cultural, ethnic, gender, religious and racial backgrounds.

#### **4.4 Political Parties**

In a democratic system people are free to form political parties. These are groups of people that intend to assume power and govern the nation. Political parties can recruit, nominate and campaign to elect public officials. Zimbabwean Law allows many parties to contest for power. It is lawful for people to attend meetings of the political party of their choice. Political parties can lawfully hold public meetings in order to explain to the citizens how they intend to govern them if they are elected into power. A political party elected into power can draw up policy programmes for the government.

Politics is concerned with the organisation and governance of society. In democratic societies different political parties provide different options as to how this should be done. This is known as multi-party politics. In free and fair parliamentary elections, the members of society decide which party best represents their interests. This then forms a government for a period of time.

Involvement in political life in any society should be a worthwhile and noble task. The abuse of politics occurs when politicians exclusively serve their own personal or sectional (party, tribal or racial) interests instead of serving all members of society. Thus authority and power no longer rests with people, but with a dominating elite group. Democracy may exist in name only but not in reality, and the electorate are betrayed.

Opposition parties are entitled to offer constructive criticisms and alternative policies. All political parties should mobilise support for common policies among different groups, educate the people about public issues and work for the common good.

## **4.5 Media**

Both State and Independent media should fulfil their educative and informative roles in society. They are the watchdogs of the human rights that are enshrined in the National Constitution. In doing so, the media should also observe the moral principles such as passing, not lies, but true information to the citizens and avoiding publications directly targeted at injuring particular persons.

Press freedom is to be safeguarded in the interest of promoting and protecting the common good. The media should serve all sections of society. It is important that all political parties have access to media coverage so that they can inform citizens about how they intend to govern if they are elected into power. A political system that operates in such a way that only one party has access to a proper coverage by media cannot claim to be democratic. This is an abuse of State structures that leads to various consequences like media propaganda, favoritism and discrimination against those seen as disloyal. Public institutions must never be used for party political advantage.

## **5. Elections**

As we head towards general elections of 2005, we would like to remind you of the importance of a credible electoral process. Zimbabwe follows a democratic form of government. Our government is supposed to be governed by the people. Elections are one way through which we can exercise our participation in governing our country. As citizens we have a duty to participate in decision making on matters that affect our life. In other words, we have the right and duty to vote. Candidates elected in constituencies shall have seats in parliament. These elected candidates shall represent the interests of the constituencies they represent. As shepherds we are very much concerned about the atmosphere that prevails before, during and after elections. A peaceful atmosphere should prevail throughout.

## **5.1 Before Elections**

The period before elections is as important as the period during and after elections. All campaigns done by all political parties should be done peacefully. Political parties should be free to campaign.

This is important because it helps people to judge which political party will best serve their interests. People should, therefore, be free to attend party meetings of their choice. It is not a crime to belong to either the ruling party or one of the opposition parties. On the contrary, it is actually healthy to be citizens that hold various political opinions. We call for tolerance among members of different parties.

Coercion and harassment of opposing parties, of political opponents and prohibition of political meetings are incompatible with democracy. The violence and intimidation that have been witnessed in the past dishonour our democratic status as a nation. Violence and intimidation breeds fear and tension in the citizens. No free will can be exercised under fear. As a result the elections may not be free and fair. We therefore, call upon all contesting parties to be non-violent during the campaign period.

Political parties that contest in the forth-coming elections should have equal access to State resources. This can be in the form of media coverage, financial subsidies, etc. People have a right to be fully informed before they make their choices.

To help in promoting informed choices, there are programmes for voters' education. The State, civic groups and churches can arrange for that. People need to be educated and motivated to go and vote. An informed citizen produces an informed government. An open-minded citizen yields an open-minded government. None of us would want to be led by a narrow-minded government. The State machinery concerned with education, civic groups and all voluntary organisations should team up together and educate people about elections.

It is important to instil in the voter that his/her vote is important and that it is a special contribution to the future of the nation. Voters' education should create awareness that through secret ballot, votes are indeed secret.

## **Qualities of the Candidates**

As bishops we are not there to tell people which political party or candidate to vote for. People choose their leaders on their own. Most of the voters are deceived by sweet-tongued politicians whose true colours only come out when they come into power. Such leaders tend to forget people who voted them into power as they chase after their own personal interests.

The period before elections should be a period when citizens closely examine the candidates, behaviour and policies of contesting political parties.

## **Service**

A good candidate is willing to serve. In the cabinet, we have ministers for various ministries. To minister is to serve. A minister is a servant - a servant of the people. A good candidate is not selfish. He has the people who elected him at heart. The interest of the people comes first before his own personal interest. Jesus said, he who wants to be great among you must be your servant (cf. Mk 10:43).

Examine whether the candidate or party you want to vote for is interested in your needs as a community. Does the candidate or party accept different ideas? Is the candidate or party only after power for the sake of power or for the sake of service? To minister in Cabinet, is to serve. The assessment and decision is up to the voter. Those who will be leaders should use persuasion not force.



## **Responsibility**

Does your candidate have a sense of responsibility? A responsible leader sets goals and makes a follow-up in order to see that those goals are fulfilled. Irresponsible leaders do not usually care about fulfilling promises they make to the people.

## **Accountability**

An accountable candidate is ready to explain to the people the motives of his directions and performance. He has no problems with being transparent when it comes to handling public funds. Lack of accountability and transparency has seen our country land into the deep pit of corruption. A government that is only accountable to itself cannot be democratic.

## **Truthfulness**

A good candidate is truthful. A good leader does not necessarily need to be perfect. A leader who admits failure wins respect among the people because he admits the truth. People value honesty and truthfulness. It is important for Zimbabweans to go for a candidate who considers truth to be of value. Such a person can impart this value to the whole of our society.

## **Respect for human Dignity**

This is a fundamental quality that a leader should have. A good leader should have respect for human dignity. All human rights such as right to life, decent accommodation, freedom of worship etc. are based on the need for respect and promotion of the human dignity. A candidate who subjects citizens to abusive treatment like torture, killings, abusive language, threatens people with torture if they don't vote for him cannot be said to be a good leader. Such a leader creates perennial fear in the

citizens. A good candidate treats all citizens with respect and would want to offer all citizens equal opportunities as much as possible. Jesus speaks to us all, "So always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that is the law and the prophets" (Mathew 7:12).

The period before election is for you as a voter to watch closely and judge whether the candidate or party has respect for human dignity.

## **5.2. During Elections**

This is the time to exercise your vote. As your shepherds we encourage that there be an atmosphere of peace. Apathy, a situation whereby many citizens that are eligible to vote do not in fact go and vote is highly discouraged. It means leaving other people to decide your future and is irresponsible if done out of negligence. Remember, it is good people who put bad governments into power.

We appeal to the authorities-that-be to make sure that the electoral process is such that all those willing to cast their vote do so, without difficulty. Too long queues especially in urban areas tend to frustrate and discourage some voters from turning up and some go back home without casting their votes. An efficient electoral procedure is a way of promoting the citizens' right to decide the future of their nation.

Monitoring is an important aspect. Monitors are there to establish whether the elections are free and fair. They see to it that voters cast their votes through secret ballot. Hence, if this is properly done, no voter should be afraid of being detected with regard to the vote they cast.

Monitors and observers also watch and point out at instances that threaten free and peaceful elections, be it prior, or during or after the election. If an atmosphere of peace, freedom and fairness during elections exists, Zimbabwe should really be proud to invite both local and international observers to witness to democracy in action.

### 5.3 After Elections

Be magnanimous in victory, gracious in defeat. Tolerance must prevail. The atmosphere of peace should continue to prevail after elections. It is sad when violence and victimisation erupt well after the election period.

Losing candidates of a free and fair election do not find it difficult to accept defeat. This is a noble attitude. Good losers are also peacemakers. Good losers also command respect. The losing political parties become the opposition. They owe allegiance to the government like any other citizen. As opposition they make use of the vote they have in parliament to challenge government policies and performance that in their view is not to the best of the public interest. This is constructive criticism. Both opposition and government should have one common aim - achievement of the common good of the society.

The winning party becomes the ruling party. It is entitled to form the government. It remains the ruling party until it is voted out. The government does not belong to the party. Neither should the party be the government. It is a party-led government that belongs to all the citizens. The ruling party should always remember that it is there to serve, not party interests but the interest of the whole nation. This is to be done without discrimination of say regional background or political affiliation. It is not acceptable for a ruling party to be vengeful against citizens that would not have voted them into power.

Government should not sacrifice the richness of the diversity in society in order to achieve uniformity - that uniformity will obviously be superficial. A government that has respect for human dignity will give no room to any form of discrimination. It will treat all citizens equally. This is the key way to achieve peace in our society. Christian principles do not compromise on human equality and dignity. We implore election winners not to forget their people. Most election winners find themselves more accountable to their financial backers and power-brokers than to their voting

constituencies. Some are pressurised to represent big business and landlord interests instead of the interests of the ordinary citizens who voted them into power. A wise government always seeks to serve and be accountable to the citizens. It is these citizens that give the government the right and the power to govern.

While the government and the opposition play their part in building the nation, the citizens and various institutions should also make their own contributions in order to build the nation. Whereas during elections people voted as members of different parties, after elections, the same people should join forces in solidarity as citizens of one nation in order to build one Zimbabwe. It is refusal of responsibility to blame it all on the government while we do not raise a finger to improve our social life and the economy of the country. We appeal to all citizens to adopt a spirit of oneness and solidarity. Lack of solidarity increases the gap between the rich and the poor in society. Pope John Paul II advises us, "Solidarity helps to see the 'other'... not as some kind of instrument... to be exploited... and then discarded, but as our neighbour to be made a sharer with ourselves in the banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God" (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, No.39).

## **6. Conclusion**

We your bishops, have written this letter to you when our country is preparing for elections in 2005. As a nation we all belong to one family of God and this God is our custodian. In the elections, it is He who will help us. No individual or politician can rightly claim to be our saviour unless they accept to be instruments of God. The psalmist reminds us:

"If the Lord does not build the house in vain do its builders labour; If the Lord does not watch over the city in vain does the watchman keep vigil" (Ps 127,1). All our efforts have to be blessed by the Lord himself. We invite all Christians to pray that the Lord himself may build Zimbabwe lest all citizens will, as builders, labour in vain.

We also invite all Christians to pray for our leaders and would-be-leaders in all sections of our society so that they may adopt a leadership style that respects human dignity. May our leaders in the society, be God-fearing people and overcome misleading attitudes as Jesus did when he was tempted in the desert.

The apostles spent the whole night fishing but caught nothing. When the Lord instructed them to cast the net in the deep, only then did they have a great catch (cf. John 21:6). Our efforts to build our country will come to nothing if we try to do it all by ourselves without help from the Lord. We need God's assistance. In fact, it is the Lord himself who takes the lead in saving his people.

No individual, politician, political party can claim to single-handedly provide solutions to our nation. It is the Lord himself who can do it. We are all called to participate in God's project as builders and watchmen but without him in vain do we build.

This letter shall be a waste of time and money if all sit on it and do nothing about it. We encourage all priests, religious and pastoral agents to do their best and make sure that Christian communities do not only receive this letter but come up with a programme of discernment based on the spirit of this pastoral letter. We also encourage families and communities to pray for peaceful elections and general peace in the country. We also commit ourselves, as your bishops, to monitor the election on the basis of the principles just mentioned, and to judge the outcome using these principles.

Every situation is an opportunity to observe and realise God's intention for us who says in the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart and all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself," (Mt. 22: 37-39). Let this electoral process help us grow in the love of God and neighbour.

As a nation, we are confident we can fulfil this commandment in all its demands including justice and charity.

May God bless you all the days of your life.

# A CALL TO CONSCIENCE

Zimbabwe Silver Jubilee, 1980-2005  
Joint Pastoral Letter of the ZCBC,  
ZCC, EFZ and HCD

April 2005

Rt. Rev. Michael D. Bhasera, Bishop of Masvingo  
*(President of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference)*  
Bishop Khumbulani P. Nemapare  
*(President of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches)*  
Bishop Trevor Manhanga  
*(President of the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe)*  
Very Rev. Murombedzi C. Kuchera  
*(Chairman of the Heads of Christian Denominations)*



"The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me,  
for Yahweh has anointed me.  
He has sent me to bring good news to the poor,  
to bind up hearts that are broken;  
To proclaim liberty to captives,  
freedom to those in prison;  
To proclaim a year of favour from Yahweh,  
a day of vengeance for our God,  
to comfort all those who mourn and to give them  
for ashes a garland;  
For mourning robe the oil of gladness,  
for despondency, praise." Isaiah 61: 1-3

## **1. A year of favour**

Zimbabweans celebrate twenty-five years of independence this year, 2005. Married couples often celebrate their first twenty five years together, their silver jubilee. It is a celebration of their love for each other, in which their children join them, but it is also a celebration of achievement. Despite difficulties, disappointments and maybe misunderstandings, they are still together. A silver jubilee is not just an excuse for a party. It is a real celebration of faithfulness.

2. Are we approaching our jubilee in this mood of celebration? Are we happy with the relationships we have lived together these past twenty-five years? Have we built a society in which each feels at home and at peace with his or her neighbour?

## **3. Ancestral home**

The biblical concept of the 'jubilee year' (Leviticus 25) has two major thrusts: returning to one's ancestral home and giving the fields and vines a rest. Both of these are connected with renewal. It is now a tradition among us in Zimbabwe to visit our 'ancestral home' at Christmas and



Easter and on other occasions according to our means. It is wonderfully refreshing to go back to one's roots. You see again your life's journey from where it all began. And you meet some of the people with whom you lived those early years. To see where you have come from is a great help in reflecting on where you are going.

4. Silver Jubilee is an opportunity for us here in Zimbabwe to reflect and see where we have come from. Many of us can remember vividly the suffering and trauma of the liberation struggle. We would have preferred, in the 1950s and 60s, to achieve our freedom through non-violent means but every attempt ended in frustration. We were driven by the prevailing circumstances to embark on a violent road. We did it knowingly and deliberately. To be fully human is to be free and we were determined to be free. Our dignity, our sense of who we are, had been trampled on for decades. The conviction grew among us and within us that we had to embark on this great struggle.

5. The option for violence, once taken, has to be unequivocally renounced once the reason for that violence is no longer there. As we revisit our ancestral homes, either in spirit or in body, this jubilee year, we cannot fail to notice that violence has really made its home among us. We are familiar with the increase in robberies in our cities and towns. We know of the difficulty of people to obtain services in public offices. This is a kind of violence. We know that HIV and AIDS have spread among us because men have taken advantage of women, especially girls. This too is violence. And there is much evidence of public servants, particularly politicians, using violence to obtain what they want. We have allowed a culture of violence to persist among us since the time of the liberation war.

## **6. Giving the fields a rest**

The second way the bible tells us of celebrating the jubilee is to give our fields a rest.

"You must not sow your field or prune your vine, or harvest your ungathered corn or gather grapes from your untrimmed vine. It is to be a year of rest for the land," Leviticus 25: 4,5.

In our profit driven global economy the idea of giving fields, factories or computers 'a rest' sounds like pure foolishness. Yet the idea of resting one day a week is built in both in our traditional culture and in our Judeo-Christian heritage. Even God took a rest on the seventh day, (Genesis 2:2,3). The biblical idea here is to recognize that human beings are not totally in charge. We do not know everything. 'It is God who makes things grow,' (I Cor 3:6). 'Of its own accord the land produces first the shoot, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear,' (Mark 4:28).

7. The image of the mechanic and gardener can be helpful here. The mechanic fixes things. He imposes solutions on problems according to a set idea he has in his mind. He follows physical principles, which lead to preconceived ends. There is little room in his craft for unpredictable results.

8. The gardener on the other hand prepares the way. He does all that is necessary to create the conditions for growth. He cultivates the soil, sows the seed, manures it, weeds it and waters it. But once he has done all he can he remembers that he is only a servant who 'has done no more than (his) duty,' (Luke 17:10). He is open to whatever happens next. In the image of the gardener there is room for surprise.

9. A jubilee year is a special occasion when we can stop and listen and open our lives to the 'God of Surprises.' It is a time of allowing the values that are there within the soil of our hearts to produce their fruit. It is a time for us to come in touch with our deepest desires.

## **10. Achievements of the new Zimbabwe**

As we reflect on our first twenty-five years as an independent country, we are conscious that the values we live now are not altogether the ones we

aspired to during the struggle and at the time of the raising of our multi-coloured flag at midnight on 17th April 1980 in Rufaro Stadium. Many speeches at that time put flesh on the idea of freedom. It was to mean equality of all before the law; equitable access to opportunities in education, employment, housing and land; the ability to associate with others; participation in the processes of decision-making and production. The list was impressive and inspiring. It amounted to the proclamation of a new state where all would be equal and free and where the instruments of the state would be used to promote the good of all the citizens. Reconciliation with old enemies was proclaimed. There was euphoria and an atmosphere not unlike that of a wedding feast.

11. Some of these great ideals were achieved in the early years. There was a tremendous drive in education. The school building programme of the 1980s was truly impressive. Similarly the health services were expanded: hospitals and clinics were built and medical staff welcomed from abroad, notably Cuba, to meet the shortfall among our own personnel. Opportunities opened up in business, industry and agriculture and in the public service. We improved roads and extended electricity to some rural areas.

12. Today the achievements of the 1980s look deeply flawed and the lofty sentiments of that time tawdry. The reality in our homes and schools, our hospitals and public buildings, is one of bleak decay. Our money loses value between the time it is put into our pocket and the time it is taken out and used. Most families in the country focus on how to find their next meal. Planning for the future is a forgotten luxury.

### **13. How did we come to where we are?**

Perhaps before asking this there is a prior question: how is it that up to today we remain hopeful, cheerful and resourceful as a people? Foreign newspapers paint a scene of gloom. But that is not our experience. Wherever we travel we find resilience, hope and even joy. It is as though our people recognize the words of Paul:

“It is by faith and through Jesus that we have entered this state of grace in which we can boast about looking forward to God's glory. But that is not all ... we can boast about our sufferings. These sufferings bring patience, as we know, and patience brings perseverance, and perseverance brings hope, and this hope is not deceptive, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.” Romans 5: 2-5

14. In our hearts we know that we are on a journey. Every Zimbabwean tries to progress in that journey even if it involves suffering. He knows where he has come from. He has experienced, or heard his parents speak of the bad old days of Rhodesia. He knows that the present situation is, in substance, a huge advance on those days. He also knows, in spite of the gloss politicians put on our situation, that up to now we have failed to develop our country in any meaningful way. But he further knows that he is learning all the time how things could be. Zimbabweans are forming a vision, maybe at this stage still a bit confused, but it is a vision nonetheless. We are full of hope.

15. Freedom has been won but it is like a parcel that is held up in customs. You know it is there but you cannot get at it. Nonetheless, we know that a time is coming when we will soon 'get at it.' Then we will be able to unwrap it and set democratic institutions and structures in place. These allow each person the space to live their life fully and in peace. People will realize their potential. That is why people are cheerful. They have a hope founded on belief in their own genius. They know they can do wonders in this richly endowed and beautiful land that God has allotted to Zimbabweans.

16. Our path since 1980 has been strewn with achievements and failures. This will help us design the future if we understand the past. Certainly, we have enjoyed relative peace. We had terrible civil conflict in the 1980s but that did not reach the stage of tearing the country apart as what happened among our brothers and sisters in other parts of Africa. We have held together and discovered confidence as a people. We know the future will be brighter than the present. We are going to make it so.

17. We have to accept responsibility for the path we have walked. If we go on denying the part we played in the present failures and blaming others for our problems, we are only postponing the day of recovery. Without repentance we waste energy trying to justify our faults. We have to admit that in the assertion of our dignity we have asserted our power; in asserting our own freedom we have trampled on the freedom of others; in safeguarding our own security we have taken away the security of others; in proclaiming our own message we have closed our ears to the message of others. Through strong-arm tactics we may have attained what we want in the short term, but by alienating other people in the process, we may eventually lose all.

## **18. A house of fear**

The result has been that we have built a house of fear. Some people do not feel free to speak their mind. Some no longer give their opinion without first checking if there is anyone listening, who could be a threat. Even the Preacher cannot preach the Word of God contextually for fear of harassment and even deportation if expatriate. For certain crimes, people will not seek redress from the law because they know they will not receive it. The vision of Zimbabwe as a free nation is stifled. The people are frozen in a war mode with the language and practices of a command structure. All this we have lived each day, prisoners in a concentration camp from the Zambezi to the Limpopo.

## **19. The death of conscience**

All of this has happened because we have not listened to our conscience, which is the voice of God within us. We have buried it away because it is too uncomfortable to live with. We have resorted to lying, deceit and equivocation as tools of survival. We have obeyed orders without allowing ourselves to ask whether they are good or evil. We have cooperated in commercial practices that further marginalise the poor. We have also connived in sycophancy towards the rich and powerful. We have regressed to the blindness of the Jews in Isaiah's time:

*"Woe to the legislators of infamous laws,  
to those who issue tyrannical decrees,  
who refuse justice to the unfortunate  
and cheat the poor among my people of their rights,  
who make widows their prey  
and rob the orphan," Isaiah 10 1,2.*

When we return to our ancestral home and allow the soil of our heart to bring forth what it wills, we face the raw message our conscience speaks to us. In the stillness we discover that things do not have to be as they are. Like Elijah of old, we learn our mission again, (I Kings 19:9-15).

## **20. Reconciliation**

We have reached our twenty-fifth birthday. Is there a way we can draw a line under the juvenile delinquency of the past and begin to live our mature years in justice and peace? In order to do this, we have to learn to listen to the Good Spirit speaking in our heart. As a first step, we call upon all the people of Zimbabwe to be reconciled among themselves.

21. We need to begin with the ancient hurts and honestly recognize that, although we have achieved a great degree of unity. We still need to enhance the relationship between the two great groups of people: the Ndebele and the Shona. Some animosities stretch as far back as the pre-colonial times. These were suppressed for a time, under the colonial government but re-surfaced in the liberation struggle and the years immediately succeeding independence. The Gukuruhundi of the 1980s shall remain a festering wound until it is squarely faced. One of the practices of the ancient jubilee was the freeing of slaves and the canceling of debts all with the purpose of rebuilding relationships among people. In a situation not unlike ours, Martin Luther King wrote;

"We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive. We bring it out into the open, where it can be seen and dealt with. Like a boil that can never be cured so long as it is covered up but must be opened

with all its ugliness to the natural medicine of air and light, injustice must be exposed, with all the tension its exposure creates, to the light of human conscience and the air of national opinion before it can be cured," Why We Can't Wait, 1963.

22. We have also had a long history of mutual suspicion, fear and even hatred, between black and white people in our country throughout the twentieth century. This spilled over into violence and rapine in the first years of this new century.

23. We have minority groups in Zimbabwe. There are approximately two million of our people that are neither Ndebele nor Shona. We refer to the Shangaans in Chiredzi, the Sothos in Gwanda, the Tongas in Binga, Nyaminyami and Gokwe North, the Nambyas in Hwange, the Vendas in Beit Bridge and the Kalangas in Plumtree and Bulilima Mangwe. Because they are relatively few, divided by language and geography and in generally poor-soil areas, they have not featured much in the national agenda. They have suffered from a marginalisation of cultural respect. By and large their languages have not been taught in their schools. The Tonga, in particular, have never had their grievances, dating back to the building of the Kariba Dam, addressed. 'If one part of the body is hurt, all parts are hurt with it...it is precisely the parts of the body that seem to be the weakest which are the indispensable ones ...' (I Cor 12: 26,23).

## **24. Hope**

Reconciliation looks to the past; hope to the future. There are signs of economic improvement after the upheavals of the past five years. This can be seen in the economic indices, such as inflation, but also in the economic activity of the people. Formal employment has plummeted but many people are finding ways of employing themselves in small businesses and small plots. It does not amount to a turn around in the economy but it does underlie the wonderful resourcefulness of the people. If they can show such initiative in economic matters they can show it in other spheres as well.

25. Our leaders have often called the Churches the 'conscience of the nation' and truly we believe we have a contribution to make. We believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Lord of history. Many in roles of authority in this land say they are Christians. So we can say they share this belief. The expression 'Lord of history' means that Jesus is working (John 5: 17) to draw (John 6: 44) all people to the Father, the source of all life and the goal of all history. Jesus is fully aware of the promises we make, the hopes we hold to, as well as the failures, compromises and evil deeds we fall into. But he never abandons us (Isaiah 49:15). His Spirit 'hovers' over the land as it did in the beginning of creation (Genesis 1:2). He knows what we are made of (John 2:25) and waits for us to return to him and then he will prepare a feast (Luke 15:20-24).

## **26. Our heritage**

We truly celebrate our silver jubilee with joy and thanksgiving. We have much hope for the future. We have set our hand on the plough and we will not look back (Luke 9:62). By happy coincidence our independence is celebrated each year at the time of Easter. For the Christian this is a time of immense joy, which we want to share with all our fellow citizens. In our capacity as leaders of Churches in Zimbabwe, we invite all people of good will to join with us in rising up in spirit and laying hold of our heritage.

27. This heritage calls us to listen to the voice of conscience within us and courageously to follow it; it calls us to compassion and leaving our own security to reach out to others in pain and poverty; and it calls us to the civic duty enshrined in the aspirations of the founders of this nation. Some of the aspirations were that the common interests of the people be paramount in all efforts to exploit the country's resources; that the productive processes involve them as full participants, in both the decision making process, management and control.

28. This jubilee is a moment of grace. No one would deny that the past five years have been hard for the majority of our citizens. The Lord did not



promise us peace (Luke 12:51). In fact He expressly invited us to 'take up our cross' (Luke 9:21). The disciples were slow to understand this. But eventually they did and were 'glad to suffer humiliation for the sake of the name.' (Acts 5:41). We are on the same journey and we are facing the same sufferings.

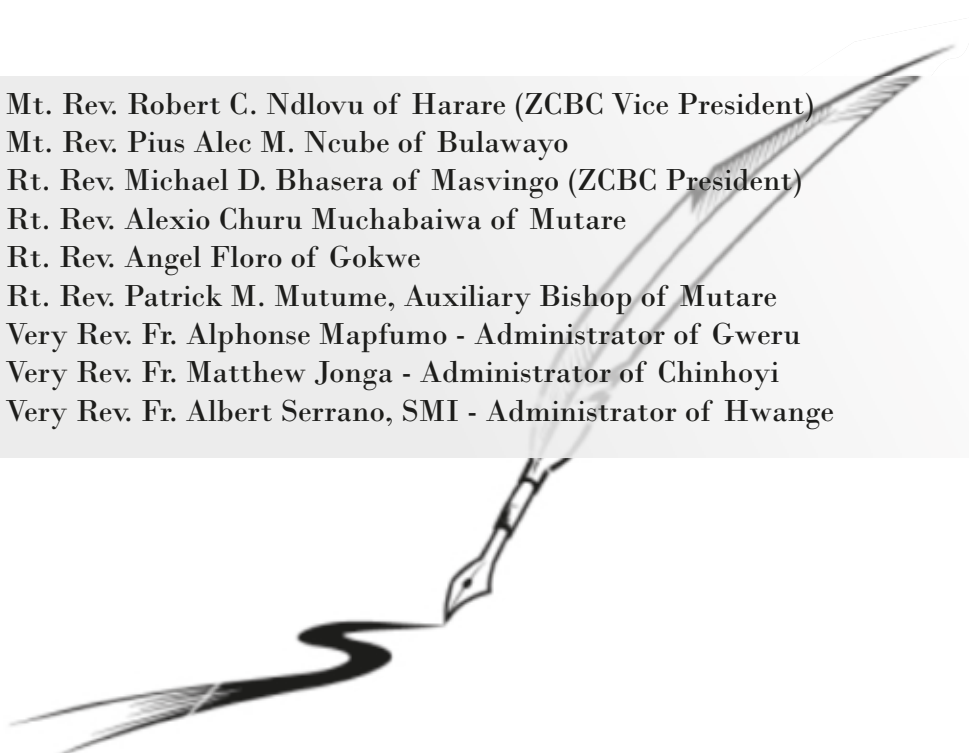
29. Our perseverance, our hope and our joy will bear fruit. Let us pray for our country: for reconciliation, for honesty and integrity, for compassion for others, for justice for all and for true peace in our hearts, our homes and our communities. Let us remember that prayer alone is not enough. The word constantly on the lips of the disciples in the early church was not 'prayer' but 'witness.' Prayer is essential but it is useless if it is not backed up by the witness of our lives. We realize as Churches that counting solely on good will in Nation and Peace Building is not enough. While Government should play its part in enabling a people-driven Constitution to help consolidate the good and remedy some of the ills experienced in the past twenty five years, the Churches should intensify their efforts in the coming years in imparting the necessary social teaching based on the Gospel and skills in Nation and Peace building.

'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all,' (2 Cor13:13).

# **THE CRY OF THE POOR**

Pastoral Letter of the Zimbabwe  
Catholic Bishops' Conference -  
June 2005

Mt. Rev. Robert C. Ndlovu of Harare (ZCBC Vice President)  
Mt. Rev. Pius Alec M. Ncube of Bulawayo  
Rt. Rev. Michael D. Bhasera of Masvingo (ZCBC President)  
Rt. Rev. Alexio Churu Muchabaiwa of Mutare  
Rt. Rev. Angel Floro of Gokwe  
Rt. Rev. Patrick M. Mutume, Auxiliary Bishop of Mutare  
Very Rev. Fr. Alphonse Mapfumo - Administrator of Gweru  
Very Rev. Fr. Matthew Jonga - Administrator of Chinhoyi  
Very Rev. Fr. Albert Serrano, SMI - Administrator of Hwange



**O**n June 2nd, 2005, we issued a press statement in regard to the 'Operation Restore Order.' In the statement, we expressed our dismay at the suffering and hardship experienced by the most vulnerable members of society in some areas nationwide. Up to now, many people, women with babies, children of school age, the old and the sick, continue to sleep in the open air at winter temperatures. These people urgently need shelter, food, clothing, medicines, etc. Any claim to justify this operation in view of a desired orderly end becomes totally groundless in view of the cruel and inhumane means that have been used. People have a right to shelter. This shelter has been deliberately destroyed in this 'operation' without much warning. While we all desire orderliness, alternative accommodation and sources of income should have been identified and provided before the demolitions and stoppage of informal trading. We condemn this gross injustice that has been inflicted on the poor. As a follow-up to our press statement, we wish to offer a pastoral reflection on recent events based on Scripture and the Social Teaching of the Church.

## **Scripture**

In the gospel of Sunday, June 5, while these events were taking place, Jesus tells us "what I want is mercy, not sacrifice' (Mt. 9:13). His words reflect those of the Old Testament prophets who continually state that prayers and sacrifices are of no value unless there is concern for the poor and needy (Amos 5:21-24). There has been no concern for the poor and needy in this Operation and the prayers and offerings of those responsible find no favour before God.

The prophet Isaiah reminds us "to share our bread with the hungry, to shelter the homeless poor and to clothe the man seen to be naked... (Is. 58:5-7). The entire ministry of Jesus is marked by concern for the weak and vulnerable. Jesus tells us that we will be judged at the end of time on whether we have shared this concern, and he has terrible words to say to those who saw him hungry, thirsty, a stranger, or naked, or sick (or homeless...) and neglected to help him (Mt. 25:42 -46).

As Christians we must hear the cry of the poor and the homeless in our townships and villages and support them in their efforts to gradually rebuild their lives. In this task we should be motivated and guided by the Social Teaching of the Church.

## **The Social Teaching of the Church**

The Social Teaching of the Church sheds the light of the gospel on issues that affect our lives in society, and offers the church's wisdom, insight and experience in dealing with them. This teaching, based on scripture, has developed over more than a hundred years, and is mainly found in Papal letters and documents emanating from Synods and Conferences of Bishops. It contains a number of principles, which are particularly relevant at this time:

### **1. The Dignity of the Human Person**

Created in the image and likeness of God (Gen.1:26-27), each person has an innate human dignity, given to us, not by secular authorities, but by the Creator himself. This dignity was gravely violated by the ruthless manner in which 'Operation Restore Order' was conducted in the townships and other areas.

Every violation of the personal dignity of the human being cries out for vengeance to God and is an offence against the Creator of the individual (Christifideles Laici, 37 - Pope John Paul 11).

### **2. The Basic Rights of the Human Person**

Basic human rights are an offshoot of our God-given dignity. Every human being - man, woman and child - has the right to life, shelter, clothing, food, education, health care, employment, etc. These basic rights have been and are being violated. No secular authority, no group, or individual should be allowed to violate such rights.

As Christian leaders we must continually remind authorities of both their duty to respect and uphold human rights, and of the serious consequences of failure to observe such rights. Furthermore, it is our duty as a teaching Church to form and educate Christian people in rights, values and principles - a task that we will continue to perform.

### **3. The Promotion of the Common Good**

Public authorities should promote the common good of all members of society - not the good of an elite group - by creating an environment in which economic, social, cultural and political life can flourish. In such an environment, all citizens - including those who have lost their homes and livelihoods - can have access to the goods of the earth which are intended by God to be equally shared. The promotion of the common good should be the first priority of public policy, not the promotion of party political aims.

"It is the proper function of authority to arbitrate, in the name of the common good, between various particular interests; but it should make accessible to each what is needed to lead a truly human life: food, clothing, health, work, education and culture, suitable information, the right to establish a family, and so on." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1992, par. 1909) In the order of things, people always come first and cannot be subservient to an economy, a political agenda or an ideology for that matter.

### **4. The Option for the Poor**

In the application of the principle of the common good, some people remain poor and marginalised. The church must show particular concern for them. The moral test of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable members. As Christians, we must continue to examine public policy decisions, including policies related to housing, health care and food security, in terms of how they affect the poor and bow our heads in shame at the nation-wide operation that has greatly increased poverty and

destitution in all areas. The interference with informal trading, which supports formal trading, can only accelerate our economic decline. The option for the poor, most of whom are informal traders, is an essential part of society's effort to achieve the common good of all its members. To the Church, the poor are a treasure (St. Laurence, in Butler, Lives of the Saints, 10 August).

## **5. Subsidiarity**

The principle of subsidiarity refers to passing powers downward from the top to the grassroots or as close to the grassroots as possible. The principle implies a preference for local over central decision making. Central authority should support local authority efforts and only undertake those tasks which local bodies cannot achieve. If there is a 'clean-up' required on our streets or if there is a problem of criminality in the townships, it is essentially the task of local authorities - including community/residents associations and church bodies - supported by the police and the courts, to deal with these problems. This should take place in an ordered process over a period of time, and in a way that promotes and preserves human dignity, people's rights and the common good.

## **6. Solidarity**

As sons and daughters of our loving Father, we are all sisters and brothers who are called by God to build a society where we can live together in solidarity with each other. Solidarity means being ready to see the other person as another "self" and to regard acts of injustice done to others as done to oneself. Solidarity is not a passing feeling of distress at the suffering of others. Rather, it is a commitment to stand side-by-side with those who are without shelter and means of livelihood, to do what one can do to rectify a situation of grave injustice, and to promote the common good. The principle of solidarity reflects St. Paul's theology of the body of Christ: where one person suffers, each person suffers and the whole body is weakened (1 Cor 12:12-30).

Reflection on the above six principles should concern all members of society, for a whole nation has suffered because of recent and ongoing actions. As Christians, we cannot pick and choose which principles to follow; all of them are binding. Putting them into practice in daily life is as important as going to Church on Sundays.

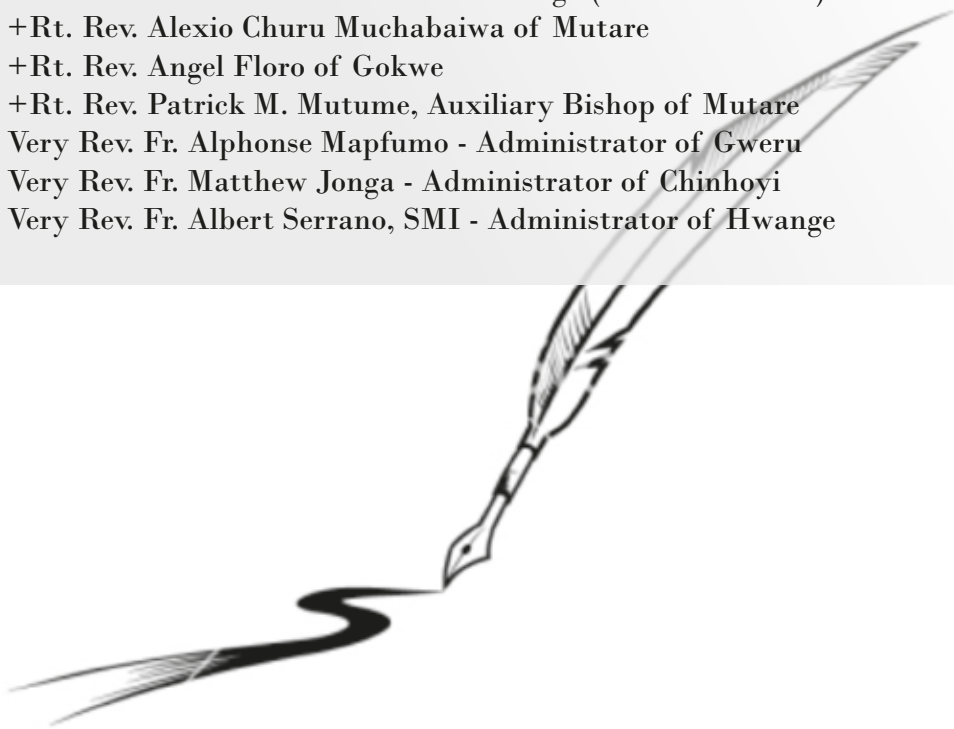
Finally, as we said in 2003, '...we call upon all those (Christians in particular) who hold special responsibilities in society, be it government, the business community or other spheres of influence, to exercise your duties according to the social teaching of the Church ... We cannot lead a double way of life, one for Sunday services in Church and another for our public tasks, be they political, economic, social or other kind. We are always called to be guided by our conscience and to live our Christian faith as an integral part of our lives, ' (ZCBC, Lenten Pastoral Letter, March 2003, Par.7:3).

As always our prayer for you is PEACE BE WITH YOU.

## **PUBLIC ASSOCIATIONS OF CHRIST'S FAITHFUL VIS A VIS SECTS LIKE THE 'LIGHT OF LIFE CHRISTIAN GROUP' OR SUPA ROMA**

(7th December 2005 c)

+ Mt. Rev. Robert C. Ndlovu of Harare (ZCBC Vice President)  
+Mt. Rev. Pius Alec M. Ncube of Bulawayo  
+Rt. Rev. Michael D. Bhasera of Masvingo (ZCBC President)  
+Rt. Rev. Alexio Churu Muchabaiwa of Mutare  
+Rt. Rev. Angel Floro of Gokwe  
+Rt. Rev. Patrick M. Mutume, Auxiliary Bishop of Mutare  
Very Rev. Fr. Alphonse Mapfumo - Administrator of Gweru  
Very Rev. Fr. Matthew Jonga - Administrator of Chinhoyi  
Very Rev. Fr. Albert Serrano, SMI - Administrator of Hwange





## **1. Introduction:**

**I**n the Church there are associations, which are distinct from institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life. In these associations, Christ's faithful, whether clerics or laity, or clerics and laity together, strive with a common effort to foster a more perfect life, or to promote public worship and Christian teaching. They may also devote themselves to other works of the apostolate, such as initiatives for evangelization, works of piety or charity, and those, which animate the temporal order with the Christian spirit. Christ's faithful are to join especially those associations, which have been established, praised or recommended by the competent ecclesiastical authority (Canon 298). The household of God is 'built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone' (Eph. 2:20).

## **2. Context of Current Pastoral Statement:**

It has come to our attention as shepherds of the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe that there is a secretive sect called the Light of Life Christian Group or Supa Roma comprising of some Catholic clergy, religious and the laity, together with members of other denominations. Because of the prevalence of Catholics in this sect, we wish to make it categorically clear to all members of the Catholic Church that the Light of Life Christian Group or Supa Roma is not a Catholic Public Association but a sect, that is not in communion with the Roman Catholic Church practically and doctrinally. It has been noticed that because of the confusion created by the Light of Life Christian Group or Supa Roma there are now some Catholics in some parishes who question Catholic doctrine about, for example, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the rosary, the way of the cross, why we make the sign of the cross etc. This statement serves to clarify that, the mixed community, which is the origin of false doctrine, is not Roman Catholic.

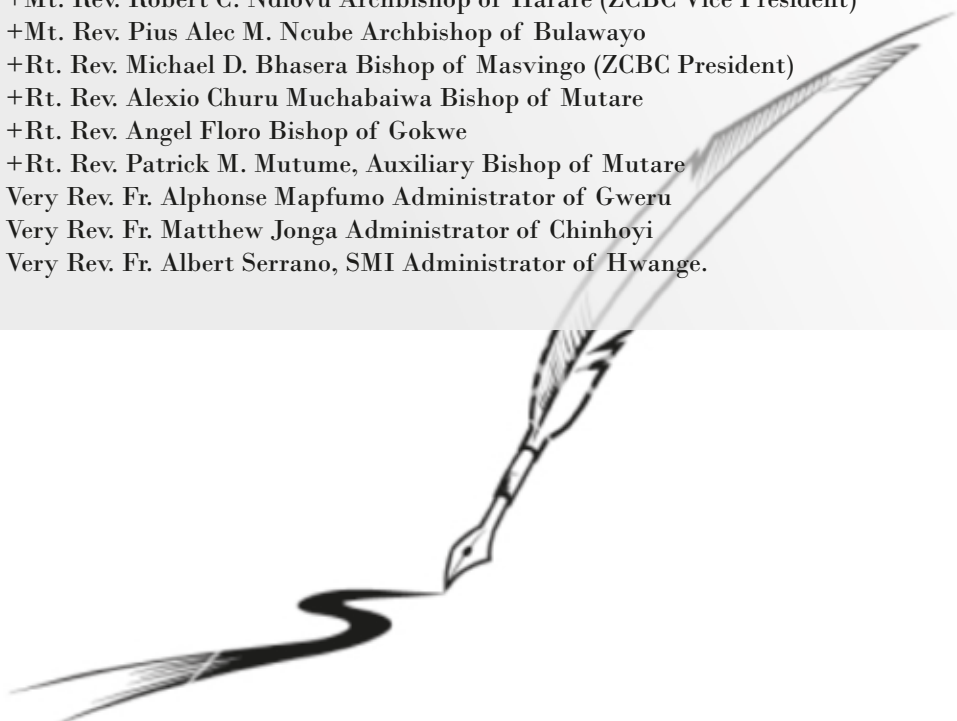
### **3. Supa Roma is Not In Communion with the Roman Catholic Church:**

Canon 312 states clearly the norms governing the establishment of public associations of Christ's faithful in the Catholic Church. The competent authority to establish public associations is the Holy See, the Episcopal Conference or the Diocesan Bishop. The written consent of the Diocesan Bishop is required for the valid establishment of an association or branch of an association in the Diocese. None of the church Canons pertaining to the establishment of public associations has been fulfilled in relation to Supa Roma. We, therefore, strongly advise the Catholic Clergy, Religious and the Faithful against participating in any activities of the Light of Life Christian Group or Supa Roma as it is not in Communion with the Roman Catholic Church and in fact openly contradicts Church doctrine and practice.

# "YEAR OF THE EUCHARIST"

2005 (d)

+Mt. Rev. Robert C. Ndlovu Archbishop of Harare (ZCBC Vice President)  
+Mt. Rev. Pius Alec M. Ncube Archbishop of Bulawayo  
+Rt. Rev. Michael D. Bhasera Bishop of Masvingo (ZCBC President)  
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Very Rev. Fr. Albert Serrano, SMI Administrator of Hwange.



## **1. Introduction**

In the wake of the "Great Jubilee of 2000" and the "Year of the Rosary", Pope John Paul II has inaugurated another special year, the "Year of the Eucharist". The year of the Eucharist began on the 10th of October 2004, with the opening of the International Eucharistic Congress in Mexico and will close in October 2005, with the end of the ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome, 2 - 29 October 2005.

The theme of that Synod will be: "The Eucharist, Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church". The opening of the year dedicated to the celebration, adoration and contemplation of the Eucharistic mystery coincided with the Holy Father's Apostolic letter, "Stay with us Lord", (**Mane Nobiscum, Domine**, 7 October 2004).

## **2. "Stay with us, lord" (Lk. 24:29)**

The initial words of the Apostolic Letter, "Stay with us Lord", are taken from the Gospel of St. Luke. In the afternoon, on the day of the resurrection, two disciples of Jesus are walking with a stranger on the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus.

Along the way, the stranger, Jesus, teaches them, beginning with Moses and all the prophets. By so doing, he draws darkness, sorrow and despair out of them. It gets dark, so they invite their fellow traveller, "Stay with us, Lord", (Lk. 24:29). The Pope adopts this invitation of the two disciples as symbol for the Year of the Eucharist.

## **3. They recognise him in the breaking of the bread (Lk. 24:35)**

The unknown traveller sits at the table with the two disciples. He says the blessing and breaks the bread. With the breaking of bread, the same gesture he used at the Last Supper, on the evening before his passion and

death, Jesus shows that he is risen and alive. Having prepared the two disciples with his Word along the way, Jesus proceeds to break the bread for them. Their eyes are opened. The story of these disciples clearly shows the two tables of Holy Mass: the Word and the Eucharist.

#### **4. "I am with you always" (Mt. 28:20)**

Through the Eucharist, the Lord is with us as we make our own journey in life. He travels with us, attending to the many questions, worries, doubts and bitter disappointments. The central aspect of the Eucharist, which makes a real demand on our faith, is the real presence.

#### **5. Eucharist, sacrament of communion:**

The letter of the Pope, "Stay with us Lord," considers the Eucharist as the source and expression of communion. This communion, which is both hierarchical and fraternal, is the fruit of the Eucharist. Since the Eucharist is, itself, a community of persons - the Trinity, it inevitably fosters unity among people.

In this context the Pope insists that there be a special commitment to discovering Sunday and living it fully as the day of the Lord and of the Church this year. He especially urges priests to give special attention to the Sunday Mass. An experience of Christ's real presence through a proper and devout celebration of the Eucharist is the key to unity of the faithful and establishing authentic communities of faith.

#### **6. The eucharist sends us on mission:**

The fourth chapter of "Stay with Us, Lord", deals with the Eucharist as principle and plan of mission. It has its basis in the story of the two disciples. When they recognise the Lord, they set out immediately to report to the Apostles the joy of their having seen the Lord (Lk. 24:33).

Meeting with Christ in the Eucharist moves the Church and each Christian to witness and proclaim the Good News. The Eucharist changes the quality of life of every believer. It gives one a new mode of being and vision of life.

Through intimate contact with Christ in the Eucharist, all Christians become natural missionaries. One good example of such a missionary is the Holy Father.

He spends many hours in silent adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. He now sees it as a special joy for him, in the twenty-seventh year of his Pontificate, to call the whole Church to contemplate, praise and adore the Most Blessed Sacrament.

## **7. Conclusion:**

We, your Bishops, invite you to celebrate the Eucharist in a manner that brings out the richness of this Sacrament. Holy Mass must be set at the centre of the Christian life and celebrated by the community with dignity and reverence.

In a special way, we invite all priests to cultivate a lively awareness of Christ's presence both at Mass and before the Blessed Sacrament. This awareness is apparent through the tone of voice, gestures, postures and general bearing. Moments designated for silence during Mass and Eucharistic adoration must be observed.

Finally, we your Shepherds, invite and encourage you all, priests, religious and lay faithful, to organise special celebrations on the Eucharist such as congresses, night vigils, processions etc. This may be done at parish, sub-parish, mission and mass centre levels.

We also recommend celebrations at diocesan level in order to foster and celebrate the unity of the local Church since the Eucharist is the sign and expression of the unity of the Church.

We also invite you to celebrate Corpus Christi with particular devotion this year, characterised by the traditional procession.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

# **THE ZIMBABWE WE WANT:**

“Towards a National Vision for Zimbabwe”

September 2006

The Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference  
The Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe  
The Zimbabwe Council of Churches





## Preamble

At the dawn of independence in 1980, a nation was born out of a protracted armed struggle and many years of pain, suffering and oppression. The ideals of the liberation war, of *one person one vote* and the yearning for freedom: freedom from oppression, freedom from racism, freedom from human indignity and violation, freedom from poverty and hunger, ignorance and disease coupled with the urgent and pressing need for the recovery and restoration of the land were the driving force behind the fight for liberation. Our new found national status amongst the family of nations created high hopes and expectations for a prosperous life. It was these ideals that fired our vision of a new Zimbabwe and unlocked the energies of people to work for a better Zimbabwe.

In the first fifteen years or so of post independence, Zimbabwe made tremendous strides in almost all spheres of life. It was a country full of promise and indeed the envy of most of the countries in Africa, South of the Sahara. We were able to build on the solid infrastructure which the colonial regime had managed to maintain despite the economic sanctions imposed by the United Nations after the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965. Zimbabweans enjoyed a great sense of patriotism and earned a great deal of respect from their peers on the continent and the world at large.

Yet in 2005, Zimbabwe celebrated 25 years of independence facing a situation which was a far cry from the lofty ideals that gave birth to the Nation that 18<sup>th</sup> April 1980. The patriotic fervour, national pride and the once lofty and romantic ideals of independence were lost in the stark reality of a nation divided, traumatised and impoverished by a political, economic and social crisis whose solution does not seem to be anywhere in sight.

Development indicators revealed that Zimbabwe had suffered a severe, downward spiral, an unrelenting economic melt-down characterised by the denudation of professionals and skilled personnel through massive brain drain, hyper-inflation (currently the highest in the world), shortages,

decline in agricultural and manufacturing productivity, shortages of foreign currency, escalating corruption, drying up of foreign investments, and tourism dwindling to a trickle.

These negative indicators inflicted a heavy toll on the generality of the population. Health and education deteriorated. The quality of life generally has suffered immeasurably. We have seen the rapid growth of numbers of the rural and urban poor. In addition, the insidious HIV/AIDS is having a catastrophic effect on social and economic life. The turn of events has led to disillusionment.

It is well to remember that the liquidation of colonialism in Africa did not automatically deliver genuine participatory democracy. One of the consequences of Africa's flirting with the one party state whether *de facto* or *de jure* was to prevent or at least delay, democracy, both in theory and practice from taking root. In Zimbabwe the forging of unity between ZANU PF and PF ZAPU in 1987 created a *de facto* one party state, but this was progressively accompanied by the development of political and social intolerance. Throughout the post independence period the country has not been able to respond adequately to the fundamental challenges of mobilizing consensus on constitutional and governance arrangements and the forging of a shared national vision and values.

In all these years and through the pain and suffering of the liberation war and the challenges of independence, the Church has been part of the unfolding national landscape, many times unseen and unnoticed as it went about its core business of preaching the gospel to the poor, and as it contributed to national development through schools, hospitals, humanitarian programs and care for the orphans, widows and the disadvantaged. Even though many-a-time the Church or its components has appeared too slow and unresponsive to the ebb and sway of current affairs, particularly in the political arena (only because such issues are often emotive, controversial, sensationalised and potentially divisive) it has remained faithful to its mandate or has made great effort to take corrective action. The Church has always sought to enter the arena of

current national affairs with caution, consideration and positive contribution towards the peaceful resolution of issues. Its diversity of creeds, denominations, tribes, races and constituencies demand a weighed and measured approach to national issues and as a result tended to be seen as laborious, tentative and diffuse.

In times past the Church's nation building initiatives were pursued from three different platforms – the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ), the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference (ZCBC) and the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC). In recent times however, the common and continued suffering of the people of Zimbabwe, with no end in sight, has not left the Church untouched and now, in a common desire to bring an end to the daily suffering and pain of our people, the Church has come together to speak with one voice, one faith, one hope and one vision in order to bring about the Zimbabwe that we all want.

This document is an invitation to all Zimbabweans and all friends of Zimbabwe to dialogue with us so that we can together define a national vision of the Zimbabwe we want and agree on strategies on how to get there. The document holds no brief for any political party or pre-conceived political agenda. It reflects a vision of the three ecumenical bodies regarding the Zimbabwe that we want, distilled from over 10 years of armed struggle, 25 years of independence, national aspirations, pain, suffering and disappointment. It is inspired by our faith in a sovereign God who in Jesus Christ demonstrated His solidarity with suffering humanity and his power to transform our thinking and relationships through the power of the Gospel.

The document is not an exhaustive prescription for all our ills as a nation, but is merely our humble contribution to the search for a solution to the challenges faced by our nation. It is a call to a *kairos* moment of reflection, repentance and a new vision of a Zimbabwe that will be shared by all, owned by all, and loved by all its citizens regardless of religion, tribe, race, gender, or political affiliation. For it is only when we unite in our diversity, that we can build a nation where peace and prosperity will flourish. It is a

call to do collective reflection on our dire national situation and the toll that it is having on our economy, our quality of life, our families and the future of our children and of our nation. It is an attempt to inspire ourselves to draw lessons and nation building principles from our past mistakes so that we can envision a better and greater Zimbabwe – the Zimbabwe we all want.

Where there is no vision the people perish (Prov.11:14). Zimbabwe needs a new national vision to restore our self-confidence, dignity, and hope. A people without a vision is like a ship without a rudder. To this end we the Church leaders of Zimbabwe commit ourselves and the Churches that we lead to do all within our power and faith, to inspire, encourage and facilitate national dialogue, debate and national reconstruction across the broad spectrum of national opinion, constituencies and stakeholders.

May God Almighty bless the nation of Zimbabwe and grant it the faith, the vision and the courage to build a Zimbabwe that is free, tolerant, peaceful, prosperous and God fearing.

## **Section 1**

### **The current situation - where did we as a nation go wrong?**

#### **1.1 Introduction : so much promise**

The first 15 years of an independent Zimbabwe showed so much promise and was highly esteemed on the continent and the world as the greatest promise of success yet in Sub-Sahara Africa. The economy as a whole made remarkable progress – in some respects, it was booming. Productivity in agriculture in both the rural and commercial farming sectors was so phenomenal that it earned the country recognition as the '*bread basket*' of the region, thus demonstrating the potential that Zimbabwe could achieve if the colonial land inequities were to be addressed in a comprehensive, orderly, peaceful and sustained way.

Communications systems which had lagged behind since the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965 were quickly modernized and brought the country into close contact with the rest of the world.

The expansion of education was unprecedented in all sub-Sahara Africa. The new Zimbabwean government facilitated for people who had lost educational opportunities to go back to school. Many primary and secondary schools were opened, especially in rural areas. Students, parents and teachers, in solidarity with one another, and working to achieve the common good, contributed to the building of the new schools. Universities and colleges were multiplied and expanded to allow for more Zimbabweans to be educated.

Expansion and quality of medical services was stupendous. Mission hospitals which provided the bulk of medical services, particularly in rural areas, received unprecedented support from the new government which was appreciative of the contribution of Churches and recognised their efficiency in running these institutions. Government not only paid salaries of all mission hospital staff but also provided funding for infrastructural developments in these institutions. The training for the medical and nursing staff was expanded to reduce the staff-patient ratio.

While the injustices of the colonial period and the inequities in the distribution of power and resources continued to exist, most Zimbabweans were confident that they would be overcome. The adoption of the policy of reconciliation at independence was a major step towards a rapprochement of the various components of the Zimbabwean society.

More successes were seen in the areas of social welfare and legislation to protect the workers and the marginalized. Special attention was paid to those who had been marginalized and impoverished by years of colonial rule. Zimbabwe had a good international image. The list of achievements could go on and on. These were the years of promise, the years of hope.

## **1.2 Yet so much disappointment: what are the sources?**

Despite the above gains, in 2005 Zimbabwe celebrated its Silver Jubilee in the grip of disappointment and depression. A number of things had either gone wrong or had not been put right within the first 25 years of our independence. Our nation is desperately in need of a physician, and that physician is none other than us the people of Zimbabwe. Treatment always begins with a correct diagnosis of a malady. We are not seeking to blame any one person, party or group. We are all as much a part of the problem, and must therefore all be a part of the solution. We must honestly face the sources of national disappointment so that we as a nation may have the determination to collectively seek appropriate remedies. We look back to the first 15 years of our independence with pride and thankfulness, but also admitting that it was not all rosy. But what went wrong until we got to where we are? The following are some of our weaknesses and failures which in our view have contributed significantly to our disappointment.

### **1.2.1 Lack of a Shared National Vision**

Lack of a shared vision has been at the root of our political crises since 1890. During the colonial era Zimbabwe was monopolized by a few. Since then the country continued to be a fort, or laager protecting some against others – a minority against the majority or the majority against the minority. In this sense, Zimbabwe has never experienced the spirit of comprehensive social solidarity. As a nation we have never really experienced what it means to live in harmony and how to handle democratic processes in the political, social and economic spheres. The accommodation of different opinions and diversity of cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds continues to elude us.

1980 was the year Zimbabwe was supposed to be shared by all. Yet we have continued to think and act in our old ways, jealously protecting our old narrow turfs, privileges and keeping old enemies. Some of us are so used to the old enemies that we do not want to give them up. We do not

know what to do without them. Where these enemies have withdrawn or disappeared, we continue to reinvent them. We are in a spiritual crisis because we have attempted to think and live in our old ways in a new world. Zimbabwe must embrace all who desire and deserve to live in it.

We needed to cultivate non-partisan State structures which would be accessible to and protective of all Zimbabweans. We needed to develop a political culture of tolerance and respect of all. Yet by the end of 2002 Zimbabwe was already disproportionately dominated by party-politics and political violence. It is now deeply polarised on party-political lines. These tensions and polarizations threaten the existence of any sense of national common good and nationhood that might have been hoped for in the early years of political independence. National State structures, institutions, and processes have been politicised along party-political lines to the extent of undermining their public and national character.

In a democracy that takes seriously the concept of the common good, political parties cannot replace structures of the state. As Zimbabweans, we have failed to recognize the fundamental institutional priority of a non-partisan public state that recognizes and protects all Zimbabweans. The importance of maintaining the distinctions between party, government and state, their respective and balanced roles is now being demonstrated. Obfuscation of these distinctions in the imagination of our political leaders, our professionals, and in the imagination of the majority of the people of Zimbabwe has placed us into the lacuna we find ourselves in today. The idea of regarding the party as supreme to the government and the State has effectively helped to privatize the State and government, thereby making them virtually inaccessible to many Zimbabweans.

This idea has helped encourage the tendency to narrow the meaning of our liberation struggle and to reduce it only to the armed struggle. Such a tendency has the unfortunate consequence of failing to recognize various contributions made by many Zimbabweans to their own Liberation.

### **1.2.2 Political intolerance**

**Political intolerance has unfortunately become a culture in Zimbabwe. This has mainly taken the form of** intolerance of dissent and political plurality. The unwillingness to accommodate political differences is shown by the tendency to label anyone who criticises the dominant view as an enemy of the revolution. The trading of insults and hate speech has unfortunately been characteristic of inter- and intra-political parties.

**Intolerance breeds hatred, and hatred breeds violence, and violence leads to destruction.** This cycle became particularly visible before some elections in the past where intimidation of political opponents, violence, murder, extortion, and dispossession were commonly reported. The culture of violence, fear, suspicion and hate cannot build a nation.

### **1.2.3 Oppressive Laws**

Some repressive pieces of legislation exist in our statute books, with the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) being of particular concern. Legislation that inhibits **peaceful** assembly and the free flow and exchange of ideas seriously impairs the efficacy of participatory democracy and the accountability of those who govern. Government has itself acknowledged that at least some of the provisions of POSA and AIPPA need to be amended for consistency with the spirit and ethos of human rights as contained in our constitution.

### **1.2.4 Failure to produce a home grown democratic constitution.**

A people centred and people crafted constitution is the centrepiece of governance and development. The current Lancaster House constitution was not inspired by the collective consent and consensus of the people of Zimbabwe. The primary object of the Lancaster House conference was to



facilitate and secure the irreversible transfer of political power from the colonial power and its surrogates to the indigenous majority. It was not concerned with the details of capturing and expressing the ideals and aspirations of the people of Zimbabwe. There is and there has remained a need to indigenize the constitutional order. The absence of a home-grown constitution remains a source of great dissatisfaction.

### **1.2.5 Economic mismanagement**

Upon attainment of independence the challenge was how to open up the economy for the greater participation of the majority of the population while keeping its viability intact. We needed to find ways of dismantling the apartheid-type structures of the colonial economy, while keeping and enhancing further the economic successes and the culture of honest, hard, creative self-reliance and resilience that had so far been attained. Such delicate manoeuvring demanded a wealth of skills in economic planning and development.

Unfortunately, however, our economy suffered from a number of factors which included corruption, under-performing para-statal which kept draining national resources, the inability to balance free market forces with a social welfare approach to economics and a host of other problems.

### **1.2.6 Corruption**

**Lack of accountability and corruption, have gradually become endemic in the Zimbabwean society. They mostly involve** self-benefiting conduct by people or entities in positions of public trust such as police, corporates, media, civil servants and others. In January 2006 the Reserve Bank Governor called corruption a cancer that is fast taking root in our midst. He advised that this problem was overtaking inflation to become the nation's number one enemy.

**From 1987 Zimbabwe saw an exponential rise in cases of corruption, and by 2002 it was out of control. The rise in corruption was accompanied by the progressive disintegration of the national morale and a decline in our national economic well-being. The vast majority of corruption scandals involved high ranking politicians. The elites sought to gain and keep economic enrichment at the expense of the common good. Resources meant for the poor or for the common good have been converted to the use of individuals in positions of trust. These scandals have helped to derail our economic progress and produce social misery.**

The press which for years crusaded against corruption has itself been sucked up in the same groove. Allegations have surfaced of bribes being demanded from business executives, politicians and musicians, in return for positive media coverage, or good ratings on the local music and business charts.

### **1.2.7 The Land Issue**

The struggle for liberation was primarily about our land which had been siezed and allocated to colonial settlers. People were forcibly removed from their arable lands and resettled in crowded “reserves”. Since the whole struggle was about the recovery of our land it was clear from the beginning of our independence that the struggle was not over until the land has been returned to its rightful owners. Regretfully the Lancaster House Constitution did not sufficiently recognise this fact and the entrenched clauses in the constitution did not allow for a speedy response to the people's cry for the land. The promised finances to speed up the process were not forth-coming as expected. The people who needed the land most became impatient and began to occupy some of the farms illegally, thus putting a great deal of pressure on government.

As Churches we have repeatedly expressed our full support for the redistribution of the land. While we understand the constraints on the part of government we believe the land redistribution should have been

done much earlier in a systematic manner. Regretfully, the sudden, rushed and unplanned comprehensive seizure and redistribution politicised the land question and rendered the process most controversial and impacted negatively on the country.

By the year 2000 the national economy was already declining and the morale among the people was already low. In redistributing the land the government was at last doing the right thing which was long overdue, but regretfully it was done the wrong way, at a wrong time, and for the wrong reasons. It is therefore critical that corrective measures be taken immediately to inspire confidence, both nationally and internationally, and enable Zimbabwe to flourish once again. The economy of Zimbabwe and the wellbeing of its people are inseparably tied to the land. We will never be able to deliver the Zimbabwe we want unless the land issue is immediately laid to rest.

### **1.2.8 Loss of Friends and our Isolation**

During the years of our struggle for liberation against an oppressive colonial regime our political as well as our military structures enjoyed a great deal of encouragement and support from many groups, governments, as well as Christian organisations throughout the world. Our neighbours sacrificed the lives of their citizens for the liberation of Zimbabwe. We cultivated many friends throughout the world who celebrated our successes and indeed walked with us in the first years of our independence. These many friends of Zimbabwe today are disillusioned and pained by what they see happening in Zimbabwe. We have not been willing to take their advice regarding some of our approaches to issues that have resulted in so much conflict and pain among our people.

Regretfully, we suddenly perceived those of our friends who saw things differently from us to be our enemies as we began to pursue agendas that would bring personal benefit at the expense of the common good.

We did not want to take advice from friends and those who genuinely cared about us. When friends told us the truth about our situation or told us what we did not want to hear they immediately became enemies and allies of our former colonial power. The result is that we became isolated and some nations began to apply targeted sanctions against some of our leadership as a way to influence changes in some of our policies. We all agree that Zimbabwe is a sovereign state and as Zimbabweans we must defend our sovereignty at all costs. But in a world that has become a global village it is no longer possible for any nation to exist in isolation. Doing otherwise can only inflict unnecessary pain and suffering on the people.

### **1.2.9 Inability of the Churches to Speak with One Voice on National Issues**

The question to be raised is: How could the situation degenerate to this extent as described above when more than 80% of the population is Christian, including many of those in political leadership positions? What happened to our Christian values of love, peace, justice, forgiveness, honesty, truthfulness? Where was the voice of the Church which is called upon to be the conscience of the nation? Clearly we did not do enough as Churches to defend these values and to raise an alarm at the appropriate time. We too have often tended to look inward rather than outward and also ignore the wisdom from our Christian sisters and brothers outside Zimbabwe. Maybe we used tinted same glasses used by secular authority to evaluate the advice given to us by other members of the body of Christ outside Zimbabwe. As Churches we confess we have failed the nation because we have not been able to speak with one voice. We have often not been the salt and the light that the Gospel calls us to be. We therefore confess our failure and ask for God's forgiveness.

The Church entered the dispensation of the new Zimbabwe with a largely other worldly detachment from things social and political except for the Roman Catholic CCJP and the ZCC, who even amid objections from some of their members, thought through the relevance of the

Gospel values to the political and economic realities of the nation. Issues of democracy, human rights and development were, by and large, viewed as out of the jurisdiction of Church activity. Some Church members fell into the pit of political appeasement at the expense of maintaining the integrity of the Church.

This traditional aloofness and metaphysical disengagement have made the Church an officious bystander caught in between the anguish of its constituents and the spiritual interpretation of its mandate. Divisions within the Church based on differences of political affiliation and/or sympathies have hindered the Church from providing a more coherent and unified voice of leadership to the nation. This division has been further exploited by some political leaders wanting to use the Church for their own purposes. The sum total of these factors has been a Church leadership that has done well in trying to mitigate the impact of the current hardships, but has not adequately responded to the causes of the suffering of its constituency and the nation as a whole. Church leaders have not always provided exemplary leadership.

Rather than being salt and light to the nation some of the church leaders have been accomplices in some of the evils that have brought our nation to this condition. Some have been sentenced to jail terms for rape and financial impropriety. This has cast some doubts on the credibility of the moral voice of the Church.

The Church in Zimbabwe is now, since about 2000, only beginning to wake up to its role in the social, political and economic affairs of Zimbabwe in a more comprehensive way. As opposed to non-engagement some Christians have chosen the path of aggressive engagement or confrontation with the government. The three umbrella bodies have, however, chosen the path of **constructive engagement**. In the short term, this involves engaging the government with the purpose of helping to end the present crisis and quickly returning the nation to some normalcy. In the long term, we intend to engage the nation as a whole in the development of guiding national vision and values as stipulated in this document.

## SECTION 2

### The mandate of the church

The Church is a divine institution in the world comprising men and women called to serve God and humanity through the preaching of a liberating Gospel and service to alleviate human suffering in this world. We have heard it repeatedly stated within the context of our situation in Zimbabwe that the Church should stay out of politics. Without being defensive we need to explain why we as a Church are so concerned and why we have taken the course of constructive engagement described above. The question is: Are we now meddling in a sphere that does not properly belong to the Church? The Church must be concerned when the material and political conditions impinge on the spiritual wellbeing of people.

#### 2.1 Theological mandate

- The nature of the Gospel demands that we be involved in the transformation of the social, economic and political systems or environment within which God's people live. God affirms our humanity by bringing us salvation through Jesus Christ – the Second member of the Godhead in human form. God is therefore involved in every activity where human beings are involved. This is what the incarnation means. But God's incarnation did not end with Christ's ascendance to heaven. It continued with the Church as the sign of God on earth. While the Church has its human nature, it also has its divine mandate. The Church as '*the people of God*' incarnates the divine presence in the world. It continues the work started by Christ of transforming the world for the better, improving people's relationships with each other, challenging corrupt and unjust people and structures, supporting the poor and marginalized and healing the sick and troubled. Like Christ, the Church announces the Good News of salvation and denounces injustice.

- The God that we have come to know in Jesus Christ is a God of love, justice, peace, and reconciliation and He has made us ambassadors of these divine values. Our task is to **manifest** God's presence and activity in all spheres of life. Politics and economics are serious activities which affect people's lives and can therefore not be left to secular authority alone. We are therefore mandated by the nature of the Gospel to address all the issues that hinder the fulfilment of our hopes as proclaimed by God through Jesus Christ: "I came so that they may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10).
- The Church's concern with issues of **good** governance, justice and peace, is demonstration of God's concern for humanity. For God created human beings not in order to suffer, but to have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10). To have abundant life is to grow and be fulfilled spiritually, physically, emotionally, intellectually, socially and culturally. Christ's approach to life is holistic and as Christ's disciples we have no option but to be holistic in our proclamation of the Gospel. Hence proclamation, worship, and service are integral to the life and mission of the Church. God wants us to be free and happy. This is part of the implication of Christ's Good News of salvation.

## **2.2 Historical mandate**

The Church has a long history of dealing with social needs of the people of Zimbabwe and the world over. It has a proven record, which dates as far back as 2 000 years, of caring and supporting those that are in need. It has handled the challenges of refugees, war victims, poverty, education, health and other social issues. Informed by the Gospel and guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church has learnt to respond to the cry of the poor, the cry of the widow and the cry of the orphan. It has developed the tradition of becoming the true neighbour to those who fall among the robbers of this world. It does so by responding to emergencies and by working to transform social realities with the power of the Gospel. It is therefore natural for the Church to engage in public debates and show concern over how the world is organized, ruled, and developed. It legitimately engages the way wealth is owned, controlled and distributed.

In Zimbabwe, in particular, the Church has always been engaged in nation-building through the schools, hospitals, relief and development programs established throughout the country. In many ways the Church was also heavily involved in securing the liberation of Zimbabwe from the yoke of colonialism.

Where the Gospel of Christ has become rooted in the lives and culture of the people it can only lead to **social** transformation. Consequently, the Church's activities include a commitment to a social teaching ministry where it deals with general themes of public policy, the duties of citizenship and the relationship of personal and public virtue. At this level, however, the Church carries out its teaching ministry through a non-partisan and objective exposition of the biblical and ecclesiastical moral principles in a general way to enable its members to make informed choices on policies that directly affect their lives. There are times, however, when the Church needs to apply those principles in concrete policy debates or to take a clear position where there is clear violation of those moral principles, thus actively supporting specific policies and opposing others. A good example of this is the ZCBC pastoral letter on the 2005 Parliamentary elections and the joint pastoral letter of the ZCBC, ZCC, EFZ and HOCD of April 2005, *A Call to Conscience, Zimbabwe Silver Jubilee 1980-2005*. Such a prophetic-witness approach can mean actively advocating the dismantling of the structures that promote corruption and any other immoral behaviour that negates the values of love, justice, peace and reconciliation that are central to the Gospel of Christ.

## **2.3 The church as the people's representative**

As a religious organisation the Church embraces the vast majority of the people of Zimbabwe. It is closest to the people. They trust their religious leadership and we can **claim** to know their desires and aspirations better than any other organisation. Together we know every home and every family, including the non-Christians. We can therefore be their voice, and perhaps, the only credible voice they have.



## **2.4 The church in Zimbabwe as part of the world-wide body of Christ.**

We are members of a universal institution in which all its members are bound together in a family relationship through faith in Jesus Christ. When one member of the family suffers we all suffer (1 Cor.12, 26). During our struggle for liberation the entire Christian family throughout the world was in solidarity with us, either individually or through the World Council of Churches and other bodies. When God's people anywhere are groaning or are suffering, all the people of God feel the pain and hear the groans. This means that the Church in Zimbabwe has the potential to unleash global support and solidarity for a holistic reconstruction of Zimbabwe. The global family of Christians is feeling the pain with us; it wants to walk with us and to listen to our story just as Jesus walked with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24, 13-35).

We believe that the solution to our current difficulties in Zimbabwe lies with the people of Zimbabwe. It has to be home grown. Our sisters and brothers throughout the world want to walk with us. We need to show them where we want to go and advise them on how together we can walk that journey. The Church in Zimbabwe, therefore, has the potential to assist with the building of bridges within Zimbabwe and help our nation to once again connect with the rest of the world. The Church can also help explain our situation or play an advocacy role outside Zimbabwe. We have that potential and we can make a positive contribution in this regard.

## **2.5 The church as a sign of hope**

In our message of love, forgiveness, peace, justice and reconciliation we have all that that is needed for the healing of the nation. We have God's promise: "If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chron. 7:14).

We want to take seriously our task as the Church in Zimbabwe to work for the reconciliation of the people of Zimbabwe and to bring about national unity. Through this document we seek to make a positive contribution towards a national vision for the reconstruction of our nation. Thus the Church, as God's divine incarnation, has a moral duty to contribute to the creation of social, economic, political and cultural institutions, systems, structures, processes and personalities that facilitate the integral growth and fulfilment of every human person. Our hope is that through this document the people of Zimbabwe can reach a consensus regarding the ***Zimbabwe We Want*** and how to get there.

## **Section 3**

### **Vision and values of the Zimbabwe we want**

We are convinced beyond any reasonable doubt that as a way forward Zimbabwe needs to clearly redefine a vision of the **Zimbabwe we want** and the core values upon which to build the nation. That vision and those values need to be owned by all and together we need to come up with strategies as to how this can happen. This section of the document is our humble contribution to the redefinition of a vision for the nation of Zimbabwe and its underlying values.

#### **3.1 Our vision**

Our vision is that of a sovereign and democratic nation characterized by good governance as reflected in all its structures and operations at all levels and in all our institutions; a nation united in its diversity, free, tolerant, peaceful, and prosperous; a nation that respects the rights of all its citizens regardless of creed, gender, age, race and ethnicity as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and with a leadership that puts the interests of the people of Zimbabwe above all personal gains; and above all a nation that is God-fearing.

### **3.2 Core values for nation building**

The vision of the nation of Zimbabwe articulated above must be underpinned by certain values if it is to be a reality. A nation needs shared values in order to avoid destroying itself. It is the absence of shared core-values that is at the heart of the crisis we are witnessing in Zimbabwe today. We need to redefine our national values if we are to get to *the Zimbabwe we want*.

Values are fundamental convictions and standards by which particular actions are judged as good or desirable and which therefore act as general guides to behaviour. Values help us to decide how we as Zimbabweans should live and what we should treasure. Our values must include the following:

#### **3.2.1 Spirituality and Morality**

*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second one is like it: love your neighbour as yourself. All the law and the Prophets hang on these two commands” (Mt 22:37-40). These words by Jesus form the core of spirituality and morality that will assist us to build the Zimbabwe we all want.*

here is a very real danger of secularism eroding our spirituality and our morality. If we define our personhood apart from the biblical concept that we are created in the image of God, we inevitably devalue one another leading to violence, permissive sex or political corruption. Morality must be built on spirituality.

iving moral lives includes preserving our bodies from sexual sins. Paul writes: “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). If we were to heed this command much of the

HIV/AIDS scourge that is devastating a significant part of our economy and contributing to our economic problems would be solved.

However, morality must not be limited to sexual matters. It includes honesty and sincerity in all our dealings. Honesty is held as a very important value throughout the Bible, and deception is prohibited. “Speak the truth to one another, and render true and sound judgement in our courts; do not plot evil against your neighbour, and do not swear falsely. I hate all this, declares the Lord” (Zech 8:16-17). Deception can be manifested through false statements, half-truths or innuendo. It is all too common in advertising, business dealings, politics and everyday life. This we must strongly resist. Sincerity goes along with honesty. It means practising what we preach; saying what we mean and meaning what we say. The opposite of this is hypocrisy, which Jesus could not stand (e.g. Mt 23, 1-11).

“Integrity makes a nation great, but sin is a disgrace to any people” (Prov 14:34). We cannot expect God to bless our nation, and individuals in it, unless integrity becomes a cherished core-value in our nation. **The role of the Church, and other religious groups, in shaping the spiritual and moral fibre of the nation should continue to be encouraged in Zimbabwe.**

### **3.2.2 Unity-in-diversity**

The principle of unity-in-diversity is at the core of our definition of a nation. A nation is the aggregation of individuals, families, communities and ethnicities bound together by a combination of history, birth, geography and a common system of governance. In general a nation cannot be an individual or a select group of individuals and communities that define history, birth-right, geographic space and political power to the exclusion of a significant portion of individuals, families, communities and ethnicities.

The Biblical analogy of the tribes of Israel, who were originally the children of Jacob, gives us an idea of the divine gravitation from

singularity to diversity. This gravitation towards diversity is exemplified right through the Bible: from Adam, Noah, Jacob, the twelve disciples, the diversity of the four gospels, the unity in diversity of the early Jerusalem Church and the grand finale of the multitudinous throng of thousands upon thousands from every tongue and tribe before the throne of God (Revelation 7). Modern day Christianity is a plethora of diversity of doctrine, creed, belief and practice but all co-existing in tolerance and non-violence.

By its definition, therefore, a nation is a composite co-existence of diversity of families, tribes, ethnicities and opinions. The individuality and diversities of persons and communities must be recognized, protected, regulated, allowed expression and representation, harmonised and balanced for the greater good and progress of the nation. Any nation that does not acknowledge, affirm and protect the diversity of individual and collective rights and expressions of those rights will produce a trail of division, conflict, disintegration and retrogression. Many a country has been ravaged by incessant civil war and blood-shed that arose from a sense of exclusion by a radicalised minority section of the population.

Zimbabwe enjoys considerable variety among its people evidenced by racial, cultural and political diversities. These diversities can be mutually enriching provided we adopt the stance of accepting one another and tolerating those differences that may not be to our liking, such as political differences. Intolerance has made the Zimbabwean society highly polarized. This has in turn bred a culture of violence in the home and different spheres of the public life. This we must detest and resist as we work together towards the **Zimbabwe we want**. It is normal that members of the same family will have different opinions on all aspects of life. Yet they must live together harmoniously and respect each other. This is possible where they exercise mutual tolerance.

Despite our diversities we must cherish peace and harmony. Such peace and harmony does not merely mean the absence of war and conflict. Peace in a community must not be confused with either stability or complacency. At the time of Christ there was a peace of sorts. It was known

as the *Pax Romana* – the Roman peace – and was a 'peace' established and maintained by force. But this is not peace. To believe that peace can be established by force is an illusion, a scandal. Stability is not peace. Nor is peace complacency and it is a mistake for anyone to claim that peace exists where there is injustice. True peace requires justice and so no Christian can live complacently with injustice. There is a significant truth in the statement 'if you want peace then work for justice'.

### **3.2.3 Respect for Human Life and Dignity**

Since human beings are created in God's image, human life is sacrosanct. Everything must be done to safeguard basic rights of every member of our society in accordance with the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (1981) to both of which Zimbabwe is a signatory. It was largely to secure independence and freedom that the war of liberation was fought. Therefore, we ought to respect all human life. Deliberate and avoidable taking of human life should be regarded as immoral and against the will of God. In the Zimbabwe that we want, we as human beings, and our social, political, economic, cultural and military institutions, systems and processes should always respect human life.

### **3.2.4 Respect for Democratic Freedoms**

There are certain freedoms that are universally recognised as inherent in any democratic society. They provide a conducive environment for good governance and democratic participation and ensure that the basic human rights are adhered to. Our struggle for liberation was for freedom and the **Zimbabwe we want** must allow every member of our society to enjoy those freedoms that contribute towards nation building. We therefore need to safeguard those rights, particularly the following:

- **Freedom of association:** *Article 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides for everyone to have the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association and that no one may be compelled to*

belong to an association. The fact that the law allows citizens to join any party of their choice is to be applauded. All segments of society must however respect the practical outworking of this freedom as enshrined in the law. Nobody should in any way be victimized by reason of their party belonging by being denied developmental or relief assistance, denied a job or promotion or by having his/her freedom of movement restricted. This freedom of association should also find expression in religious freedom.

- **Freedom of speech and expression:** Article 19 of the *Universal Declaration of Human rights* says: “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers”. This freedom – and its extension, freedom of the press – is so essential that its absence jeopardizes other freedoms and undermines the whole democratic process. It is essential for self-actualization, for assisting in the search for truth, and in promoting democracy by influencing government's choice of policies. Therefore its restriction must only be allowed in very limited circumstances, such as the outlawing of hate-speech and the promotion of terrorism. Restrictions to free speech should be the exception and free expression the rule. It is in the light of these considerations that existing and proposed legislation such as POSA and AIPPA should be re-examined and either abolished or amended.

### **3.2.5 Respect for Other Persons**

Every human being – regardless of race, tribe, gender, age, national origin, religion, economic status, intelligence, achievement or any other distinguishing characteristics is created in the image of God, and therefore is valuable and worthy of respect as a member of the human family.

To respect others is to take seriously and value what they think, their goals and desires in life, and to support them in overcoming their weaknesses, disabilities and inabilities. It is to create appropriate environments which

allow them to grow naturally in their physical, spiritual, intellectual, social and cultural aspects. Thus the provision of educational, health, recreational facilities, information, food, shelter, security, and the recognition of freedom of thought, freedom of association, and freedom of religion are all ways of treating human persons with the respect they deserve.

Respect for others presupposes the need for humility. Humility involves being courteous and respectful of others. It is the opposite of aggressiveness, arrogance, boastfulness, and vanity. Acting with humility does not in any way deny our own self worth. Rather, it affirms the inherent worth of all persons.

### **3.2.6 Democracy and Good Governance**

*The Zimbabwe we want* must be characterized by democracy and democratic participation, built on the premise that all its citizens, in their diversity and divergence with respect to the colour of their skins, ethnic backgrounds, social or economic status, gender, religious or political persuasions, are equal and must be given equal opportunity to participate in the definition of our collective destiny. Our diversity is a source of enrichment to the nation as it provides opportunity for us to look at issues from different perspectives in the light of our different experiences.

In a democratic system every citizen has a right to contribute to a shared and common destiny and must therefore be heard and protected as they exercise their democratic rights. It is through this dialogue of diversity that we construct a future where each one of us becomes a significant benefactor and beneficiary. The essence of democracy is the government by the highest consensus and the affirmation, recognition and engagement of all, including minority groups, marginal sectors of our stakeholder communities, informal sector players, children, women, the poor, the disabled, the senior citizens, and the alien.



*The Zimbabwe we want* recognizes and affirms a collective, comprehensive and inclusive citizenship and national stakeholder base that does not exclude, repress or vilify any section of the community on account of gender, class, ethnicity, place of origin or political affiliation. Our view of democracy therefore seeks to include rather than exclude.

This requires the deliberate choice by leaders of different social, economic, political and religious persuasions to initiate and sustain a process of national reconciliation, reconstruction, peace building and nation building.

### **3.2.7 Participation and Subsidiarity**

People have a right and a duty to participate in society in order to search, in collaboration with others, for the common good and well-being of everyone especially the poor and marginalized.

People grow physically, intellectually, socially and economically by participating in the activities of their communities and societies. To be shut out from participating is to be denied opportunities for growth and opportunities for contributing to the growth of others. As Martin Luther King (JR) said, “When an individual is no longer a true participant, when he no longer feels a sense of responsibility to his society, the content of democracy is emptied”.

- Particular attention must therefore be paid to those segments of our society whose participation at various levels of society has been restricted. There is need for mainstreaming gender and the needs of disadvantaged groups such as children, youths, people with disabilities, minority groups and others in all policy programmes.

Participation also assumes the principle of subsidiarity. This principle is meant to guide the complex social relationships by defining the responsibilities and limits of government, the essential roles of voluntary associations, civil society, families and individuals. It says it is wrong for higher levels of social organization or government to do for individuals

and groups what they can do efficiently and effectively by their own initiative and hard work. Thus government should not do for people what they can do for themselves. This means that individuals and groups of individuals who are close to social issues should be allowed to deal with them before higher institutions and government itself take them over. This also insures that decisions are made as close as possible to their point of implementation. That is the kind of **Zimbabwe we want**.

### **3.2.8 Sovereignty**

**The Zimbabwe that we want is a sovereign state** – autonomous, equal to other states and self-governing. Our sovereignty, however, needs to be balanced against a recognition of inter-dependence in the global family of nations. This implies mutual accountability as each nation seeks to uphold commonly agreed standards of governance and human rights. International law and the treaties that bind nations together act as a check on our sovereignty.

### **3.2.9 Patriotism and Loyalty**

“Why should my face not look sad when the city where my fathers are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?” (Nehemiah 2:3). These are the words of a patriotic man called Nehemiah. Although he held a very good job in the office of the Persian Emperor, it was the welfare of his own country that became his driving force. He was like other exiled Jews who sat down and wept by the rivers of Babylon when they remembered Zion (Ps 137:1)

Patriotism is a love of one's country and allegiance to its state institutions. This necessitates that we cultivate a sense of belonging which should override sectional, tribal, ethnic and other loyalties.

Some Zimbabweans have unfortunately become very unpatriotic in their thinking, words and behaviour. They refuse to see any good in their nation, or to work for the welfare of that nation. This may be in part because we have not taken the development of national values seriously.

In order to develop patriotism certain features of the nation must be regarded as a common heritage of all Zimbabweans. These must include our history, our heroes, the national constitution, flag, national anthem, defence forces, the civil service, national holidays etc. None of these must be seen as the preserve of one party or one sectional interest. A national approach to those institutions and national events would unite us as a nation in the Zimbabwe that belongs to all of us.

Patriotism does not mean that we develop uniformity in our thinking, culture or political party. Citizens should be able to constructively criticize their government without fearing that they will be accused of being unpatriotic. That is the **Zimbabwe we want**.

### **3.2.10 Gender Equity**

By gender we mean “the expectations and norms within a society with regard to appropriate male and female behaviour and roles, which attribute to men and women different access to status and power, including resources and decision-making power”. Women experience systematic oppression. They are excluded, marginalised, and rendered invisible in language and public life. They are stereotyped as mindless, emotional and weak; and that stereotyping is then used to legitimize their subordination to men. UN statistics show that while forming one-half of the world's population, women do three-fourths of the world's work, receive one-tenth of the world's salary, and own one-hundredth of the world's land. Over three-fourths of starving people are women and their dependent children. Furthermore women are bodily and sexually exploited, used, battered, and raped. Thus sexism both oppresses and marginalizes women – hence negatively impacting on their sense of identity.

Furthermore, this power disparity between men and women makes the fight against HIV and AIDS very difficult. Women generally have fewer possibilities than their male partners to determine whether, and under what conditions sexual intercourse will occur. The fact that men are more

likely than women to have multiple sexual partners while many women are not in a position to insist on safer sex makes women more vulnerable to the HIV infection.

The domestication and subservience of women in our society is not imposed by biological or other natural necessity. Above all, the social, economic and religious marginalization of women is not prescribed by God. We acknowledge that women and men are of equal value before God, both created in the image of the one God (Genesis 1:26). Therefore we stand by the principles of inclusiveness and interdependence between men and women. All limitations to the fullness of life envisaged in Christ must be completely uprooted, including homosexuality and lesbianism as stated in Leviticus 18, 22-25. We advocate gender equity, by which we mean that women must fully participate in decisions and operations that affect the Church, politics, economics and society as a whole. We assert that social roles of men and women can be reconstructed and transformed by society; since they are culturally constructed they can also be socially deconstructed.

### **3.2.11 Social Solidarity and the Promotion of the Family**

Human beings are social creatures by nature. They grow in communities. Human dignity can be recognized, developed and protected only in community with others. Since we are all created in God's image, each person is brother or sister to every other and can develop as a healthy human person only in a community of relationships rooted in love and justice.

We all belong to one human family. As such, we have mutual obligations to promote the rights and development of all people across communities, nations and the world. To be in solidarity with others is to recognize that all other humans have the same humanity as us. They have their needs, desires, life plans and goals just like we do.

Thus to be in solidarity with others is to be moved by other people's suffering and to be uplifted by their happiness. To be unmoved by other people's suffering is to show moral and spiritual underdevelopment.

Human beings achieve their fulfilment in solidarity with others – in families, communities, and other social institutions that foster growth, protect dignity and promote the common good.

In the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-28), Jesus made the point that we should extend our Christian love to all people, regardless of race, religion, nationality or any other artificial distinction. We must practise that love even toward our enemies!

The first and most basic community for every person is the immediate family. Family stability must therefore always be protected and never be undermined. This calls for:

- The protection and support of marriages.
- Promotion of family life through pensions, inheritance laws and policies that enhance family togetherness.
- Support for child headed households.

### **3.2.12 Stewardship of Creation**

We acknowledge that God created the universe and made humankind the stewards of that part of it called the earth and its atmosphere. As stewards we are accountable to God for our management of the earth and its resources (Gen 1:26-28). Our role is to be living reminders of the Creator. The kingdom of God not only offers salvation to us but also points to the future renewal of all creation (Romans 8:18-23). As stewards, therefore, we will participate in this salvific future of God's creation by protecting, sustaining, and restoring it and addressing the links between human poverty and environmental degradation. Therefore our vision of the sustainability of the Zimbabwe we want incorporates both social justice and ecological restoration.

The command for us to exercise dominion over the earth does not therefore mean we must destroy it, but work it and take care of it (Gen 2, 15). Dominion requires responsible stewardship. Such stewardship must uphold the common good of humanity, while also respecting the end for which each creature was intended, and the means necessary to achieve that end. If we exercise dominion in a way that ultimately destroys nature's creative potential or denies the human family the fruits of creation, such action constitutes an offence against God's original plan for creation. Rather we must exercise care and responsibility for God's domain particularly in the interest of those who are poor and marginalized.

As stewards we recognize that human beings form the apex of God's creation. Our stewardship can never therefore be merely environmental; it also addresses the links between human poverty and environmental degradation. We cannot exploit the environment for selfish reasons without causing human beings to suffer sooner or later. Hence, our vision of sustainability incorporates both social justice and ecological restoration.

The imperative for human work to meet human needs and restore our fallen world, which is implied by the process of development, appears throughout Scripture. The Church therefore places greater value on human labour as perhaps no other religion in history. Work and discovery are essential to God's plan for human fulfilment. To the greatest extent, the value of human labour finds its fulfilment in the discovery of those ways in which nature can be most responsibly and effectively placed at the service of the human family. This is the most authentic definition of human progress.

Throughout the world where Zimbabweans are scattered, we are known to be resourceful and hardworking people. Being industrious and resourceful has made Zimbabweans survivors, even under harsh economic conditions. This is a value we must continue to cherish in the Zimbabwe we want.

Our resourcefulness must lead us both to produce raw materials, and also to turn those raw materials into finished products. Our economy is currently suffering in part because we export raw materials at the price determined by the industrialized nations, and then import finished products at a very high cost, also determined by those same nations which are enriching themselves on the basis of our raw materials. A true spirit of industry must make us like the ant that Solomon talked about. Like Jesus we need to glorify God by completing the work he has given us to do for the benefit of our nation and its future.

Our stewardship therefore embraces the following imperatives:

- We care for creation as a God-given responsibility, but the love of neighbour as a being with an eternal destiny, is a still higher demand. We should protect the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death, taking all possible steps to see that each person's basic needs are met.
- As wise stewards, we must refine our knowledge of God's world through the natural sciences, environmental ethics, and a vision of sustainability.
- Ecology and economics must go hand in hand. Sound environmental stewardship is the link between the two. Greater prosperity generally correlates with greater concern for dealing with environmental questions.
- Legislation and resources must be provided for the protection of our environment against evils like unregulated gold panning, deforestation, atmospheric pollution, soil erosion, uncontrolled wild fires, siltation of rivers, poaching of wild animals and other environmental concerns.

### **3.2.13 Justice and the rule of law**

“He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God”. These resounding words from Micah 6:8 show that justice is high up on God's agenda for his people. They were addressed to the people of Judah, where greed (3:1-4), dishonesty (6:10-11) and corruption (7:2-4) were the order of the day. It was a situation where the poor ended up being exploited by the rich and the powerful. So God demands that justice should be done. It is a demand echoed by all pre-exilic prophets – Amos in particular.

But what does justice mean? The justice that the prophets demanded is not abstract; it is very practical, down-to-earth actions which take place to ensure that the weak are protected from abuse, that the poor have what they need, and that the socially disadvantaged are cared for. It means giving to everyone what God has intended for them regardless of gender, status or any other distinction.

In this regard the history of Zimbabwe has been characterized by injustice. Colonialism involved land being taken from our forefathers, and Zimbabweans being made third class citizens in the land of their birth. Until recently there has been a great imbalance in land ownership and utilization, the majority of Zimbabweans being crowded in poor “reserves” while the tiny white population (never greater than 5% at any point in our history) occupied the greater part of the best land. That was great injustice. Under UDI, certain jobs, schools, hospitals and residential areas were reserved for whites. That was great injustice. The majority of blacks had no voting rights and the few whites ruled over the majority blacks by reason of their skin colour. That was great injustice. The effort to overcome these great injustices eventually led to the liberation war.

But sadly, new forms of injustice emerged or were perpetuated after independence. The fact that many voters remain unrepresented in Parliament because of the first past the post system is an injustice. The



fact that 30 seats in parliament are not contested but are directly or indirectly the result of presidential appointment gives a very unfair advantage to the ruling party. The fact that only the ruling party has the right to nominate heroes, while using the national fiscus for the burial of such heroes is wrong. This is not the Zimbabwe we want.

But injustice is also experienced in the private sphere. Within commerce and industry labourers are underpaid while the management enriches itself. In the home, continued gender preference for the boy-child against the girl-child is injustice. These are but a few examples of injustices, which Zimbabweans must detest and correct. Without justice there can be no peace and harmony.

### **3.2.14 Service and Accountability**

Service, as opposed to self-centredness, is a practical way of promoting unity and harmony among our people. The call to serve one another in love stands in stark contrast to the normal human desire for position and self-preference. The spirit of service also seeks to add value to others. It acknowledges that meaning is found in meeting the needs of others rather than in self-centredness. No better example of service exists than Jesus' willingness to give up his life in order that others might be saved. As he said of himself, he 'did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many' (Mt 20:28). Following Jesus' example, selfless service and a concern for the weak and the powerless became the distinguishing mark of the early Christian community.

### **3.2.15 Promotion of the common good**

The goods of this earth are meant for the benefit of everyone. Thus all created things and those produced by humans should be shared justly. The right to private property is good in so far as it facilitates the realization of the common good. When private property ceases to serve the common good, it also ceases to be morally justified.

The common good is the sum total of all those conditions of social living – i.e. economic, political, social, cultural and technological, which make it possible for all women, men, and children to fully achieve their natural potential by growing physically, emotionally, psychologically, intellectually and socially. The role of the Church is to contribute to the common good and must be understood in this way. The Church has sometimes allowed itself to be intimidated and persuaded to withdraw from this role. Or if it is allowed or encouraged to take up this role, it has been given instructions on how to do it. For example, it has been told to participate in health and education but not in politics or economics.

The conditions which encourage the full growth of human capacities presuppose respect for the human person, the social wellbeing and development of the group, and the maintenance by public authority of peace and security.

At the national level, promoting the common good requires creating employment for all, making sure that everyone has access to healthcare, education, recreation and cultural development. It requires caring for the impoverished, the marginalized, and the vulnerable. It also requires providing for the future. That is the Zimbabwe we want.

Today, in an age of global interdependence, the principle of the common good points to the need for international structures and organizations that can promote development of a just human family across regional and national lines.

### **3.2.16 Option for the impoverished and marginalized**

This is what the Lord Almighty says: “Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other” (Zechariah 7:9-10).

Both Old and New Testaments exhort God's people to pay special attention to vulnerable members of society like widows, orphans, aliens and the poor. The hunger that occurred in Jerusalem triggered a significant relief effort spearheaded by the Apostle Paul. Indeed God says: "I desire mercy not (ceremonial) sacrifice, and acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6:6). These exhortations are very relevant for our situation where the majority of our people are very poor while a few are very rich. We cannot meaningfully talk of love and harmony when there are so many uncared for orphans and widows due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and where so many unemployed people can only live through stealing or begging.

The principle of the Common Good requires that all social, political, economic and cultural structures, systems and processes be accessible to all. However, in reality, some people are marginalized, impoverished and made vulnerable by the institutions we create. The preferential option for those in poverty is a conscious effort to correct the moral mistakes, failings and shortcomings of our social institutions, cultures and systems. The impoverished, marginalized and forgotten, need special care and attention. The Church and all the people of good will must choose to be on their side. The option for the impoverished is an option that is inspired by the Jubilee vision laid out in the Book of Leviticus through the proclamations of the Hebrew prophets and Jesus' identification of his vocation as "bringing good news to the poor ... and proclaiming the year of God's Jubilee" (Luke 4:16-19).

### **3.2.17 Excellence**

After Jesus healed a deaf man, people "were completely amazed and said again and again, 'Everything he does is wonderful. He even makes the deaf to hear and gives speech to those who cannot speak'" (Mark 7:37). What people saw in the actions of Jesus was that quality we call excellence. He excelled in whatever he did. To excel is to go beyond average. Leadership expert John Maxwell writes: "Excellence can be attained if you care more than others think is wise; if you risk more than others think is safe; if you dream more than others think is practical; if you expect more than others

think is possible; and if you work more than others think is necessary". Excellence means exceeding expectations, going the second mile when you have only been asked to go one.

As Zimbabweans we need to foster excellence in all aspects of the nation's affairs. We need to avoid the current speculative tendency which opts for short-term gains at the expense of long-term development. We must both demand the best and give of our best in all spheres of national life.

### **3.3 Outcomes**

Our Vision of the **Zimbabwe we want** will inform and have a direct bearing and long term impact on the kind of political, economic, social and developmental strategies, structures, competencies and resources that are needed to make a desirable, profitable and attainable national destiny. The implementation of our core-values will ensure that Zimbabwe becomes a nation that will:

- Guarantee personal and environmental security where there is no embedded systematic and systemic threat to the exercise of ordinarily accepted norms of individual and collective expression.
- Safe-guard the personal worth and dignity of all.
- Guarantee personal and economic progress, maximisation and actualisation regardless of race, tribe, gender and political affiliation.
- Facilitate the creation of an atmosphere conducive to individual, family, community and social tolerance, acceptance, integration and participation.
- Create and defend a democratic, just and responsible system of governance, that upholds the constitution as the bedrock of national democracy and individual freedom and security through the rule of law and the impartiality and verity of the judiciary and civil service.

### **3.4 Recommendations**

The core-values articulated above need to be inculcated into the national consciousness in several ways:

- 3.4.1 Some of them, like justice, must be reflected in our constitution, particularly when it comes to levelling out the electoral playing field.
- 3.4.2 The values must be exemplified in the operation of all the three organs of state: the legislature, the executive and the judiciary.
- 3.4.3 Every social unit must practice these values, starting from the family level and going into Churches, schools, commerce, industry and every government department.
- 3.4.4 Values education must be introduced in our schools and tertiary institutions. In some nations this is already being done and we could learn a lot from their example which is committed to making values a core part of schooling. This is in recognition of the fact that education is as much about building character as it is about equipping students with specific skills.

## **Section 4**

### **Towards a home grown constitution**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Zimbabwe is made up of a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-lingual society. It is characterized by unity-in-diversity. This is not a weakness but strength. The bond that binds us together is that we are Zimbabweans. Our failures in life harm us all in some way and our successes ought to benefit us in some way. Any efforts aimed at arriving at a national consensus must be predicated on the existence of the social reality of political, social, religious and cultural pluralism.

We pride ourselves in our sovereignty but that sovereignty does not reside in one individual or one group. It resides in the people of Zimbabwe as a collective. The authority to govern is derived from the people. Those who govern, regardless whatever political opinions they may have, must be accountable to the people. Failure to observe this principle will result in a fractured and dysfunctional society.

Success in the management of a country's affairs depends in large measure on the consensus in shared values and a system of governance which provides space for democratic participation of the people. Consensus gives the people a sense of ownership of their institutions. Governance by consent and consensus is the key to peace, stability, social and economic development. A people centred and people crafted constitution is the centrepiece of governance and development.

## **4.2 The Lancaster Constitution**

We have already stated that the current Lancaster House constitution was not inspired by the collective consent and consensus of the people of Zimbabwe. It does not reflect the **Zimbabwe we want**. The fact that our constitution has been amended 17 times during 25 years is clearly indicative of the sorry state of our constitution. The piecemeal amendment of the Constitution is highly unsatisfactory and shows the need for constitutional review. The piecemeal approach destroys the coherence which ought to characterize a constitution.

A scrutiny of the proposed Constitutional drafts by the Government Constitutional Commission, the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) and other groups reveals that there are no fundamental or ideological differences that are irreconcilable or non-negotiable. A constitutional accommodation is achievable provided there is commitment on the part of all major players to put the interests of the country first. Any resolution of the polarization which exists now in Zimbabwe demands an inclusive approach to issues of constitution making and governance.

The overriding interests in any constitutional reform process should be to create an enabling and conducive framework for good, peaceful and stable governance. There is no need to re-invent the wheel. There is sufficient comprehensive constitutional material to enable a reasonably sized and representative commission or team to draft a constitution which can be put to a national referendum. What is of paramount importance is to agree on the composition of such a commission or team.

## **4.3 Main areas of divergence, contention and convergence**

### **4.3.1 The Executive Authority**

There is broad agreement that the powers enjoyed by the President under the current constitution need to be circumscribed. The main differences are in the manner and extent of the circumscription. This was expressed in different formulae in the different constitutional drafts. For example the question is whether the office of the Prime Minister should be recreated with the executive powers being shared between the President as Head of State and the Prime Minister as head of government

### **4.3.2 Legislature**

- The Constitutional Amendment 17 re-established a bi-cameral legislature by creating the Senate and House of Assembly. The critical issue in respect of the Legislature relate to the composition and system of elections of members of both Houses. In respect of composition the contentious issue is that the President has patronage of directly appointing a total of 18 members of Parliament (12 members of the House of Assembly and 6 Senators) out of a total of 216 (150 members of the House of Assembly and 66 Senators) and this compromises the democratic character of the Legislature.

## • **Electoral System**

The electoral system is one of the pillars of the parliamentary democratic representative process. Elections and their management have become one of the key criterion for evaluating the extent to which a country has adopted the ethos and practice of democracy. It is so fundamental that it should be provided for in the constitution, which is not the case in Zimbabwe. It is currently regulated by an Act of Parliament; which means it can be modified by a simple majority and not by Constitutional Amendment which is more accountable.

The first-past-the-post winner-takes all electoral system can produce grossly distorted and inequitable results which can lead to the alienation of significant portions of the population. The Lesotho crisis of 1996/7 is a poignant and painful example of this. The party that won 79 of the 80 Parliamentary seats garnered 60% of the votes while 40% of the voters had no representation (one of the candidates died before the election). Most SADC countries have wisely adopted proportionate representation or a mixed system.

## • **Electoral Process and Institutions**

The electoral process provides an opportunity for the choice, installation and change of governments and the transfer of power in peaceful circumstances. In other words electoral systems are the vehicle that gives expression to the will of the people. One of the most important electoral bodies is the Election Commission. It is vital that the Election Commission inspires confidence and protects the integrity of the process in the delivery of elections which can be regarded and seen to be free and fair. The body must be impartial and not seen as amenable to political or other pressure. Such a body must be the main custodian of the electoral process-the election campaign, access to media and media coverage. Because of its fundamental role the composition, mandate and status of the commission should be provided for in the Constitution and thus put it beyond the power of any majoritarian parliamentary alteration.



### **4.3.3 The Judiciary**

The doctrine of the separation of powers and checks and balances are very fundamental when it comes to the role of the judiciary. The appointment of the judiciary must inspire confidence and safeguard it from being beholden to the executive or other influence. Secondly the exercise of its powers in pronouncing on legislation vis-à-vis the constitution and the role it plays in upholding the rule of law and defending individual democratic rights needs constitutional and structural protection.

### **4.3.4 Bill of Rights**

- The constitution of Zimbabwe sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual in the Declaration of Rights, Chapter III. But the constitution is riddled with exceptions which seriously impair the efficacy of the Bill Of Rights. The exception clauses have been used to justify the constitutionality of the enactment of such repressive legislation as the Public Order and Security Act (POSA), and The Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA). It is clear that the exception clauses in the constitution provide loopholes that can be used to curtail the full and unfettered enjoyment of the Bill of Rights.

- **Social, Economic and Cultural Rights**

The provisions of the constitution focus completely on justiable rights i.e. political and civil rights and make no reference at all to social, economic and cultural rights which are currently non-justiable. This is a weakness.

- **Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission**

Constitutional amendment 18 is now on its way to create the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission. While the broad concept is good, a great opportunity may be lost to mobilize consensus, inspire confidence and bring healing and relief to many who have suffered needlessly in the past.

## **SECTION 5**

### **National economic and social transformation**

#### **5.1 The economic policies and performance**

At independence, the economy was war ravaged and the newly elected government was faced with serious challenges: the need for reconstruction and rehabilitation, the need to fight the economic war which would usher in a balanced ownership of the economy against a two thirds foreign ownership of invested capital, and the need to open up social services which were previously accessed by the minority regime.

The extremely high expectations from the general population did not afford the newly elected government the time for the necessary adjustments commensurate with the expected demand for goods and services. Inherent in the opening up of existing social services without corresponding economic expansion is the stretching of such services beyond their hitherto intended capacity, and their consequent inevitable deterioration. The high expectations following the liberation war were so visible that even before the new government was sworn in, the nation was engulfed in nation-wide strikes, a situation which demanded some form of fire fighting both in the social and economic front. There was need for a radical, rather leftist approach to the transformation of the economy in order to meet the high expectations. However, government was cautious in order to maintain international lines of credit , hence it remained practically right wing though rhetorically left.

However, as a result of the opening up of the economy to the international world, renewed access to international aid and borrowing from abroad, favourable terms of trade, good weather conditions, excess capacity and increased aggregate demand arising from agricultural and wage incomes, the economy experienced a major boom during the first two years of independence. Real Gross Domestic Product (**GDP**) grew by 11% in 1980, and 10% in 1981 (ZCTU, 2003). This economic boom resulted

in the introduction of liberal policies on foreign exchange allocation, remittance of dividends and profits, and an expansionary incomes policy that contributed to macroeconomic instability.

Various economic policies and programmes were tried since independence, as Government continually tried to redress the dualism in both the social and the economic sectors which was characterized by a relatively well-developed modern sector and a largely poor rural sector. The programmes included:

*Growth with Equity* policy of 1981

- *Zimbabwe Transitional National Development Plan (1982-1985)*
- *Zimbabwe first five-year National Development Plan (1986-90).*
- *Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP)* from 1991
- *Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation*  
(ZIMPREST) launched in April 1998
- *Millennium Economic Recovery Programme (MERP)* launched in 2001
- *National Economic Revival Programme (NERP): Measures to Address the Current Challenges*, 2003

The multiplicity of development programmes, particularly within the second decade of the country's independence, is indicative of the failure to reverse the deterioration of the economic situation since the 1990s. The failure to transform the economic systems at the onset of independence, largely because Government's hands were tied by the Lancaster Agreement, made economic liberation a distant reality and a nagging problem for Zimbabwe.

## **5.2 The economic crisis**

The Zimbabwean economy is currently in an unprecedented crisis characterised by:

- High levels of inflation, currently estimated around four digit figures;
- High levels of national debt and the consequent disruption of international lines of trade;
- High levels of poverty with the rural and women folk suffering the brunt of such poverty;
- Food insecurity resulting from periodic droughts and the disruption of production within the programme of equi-distribution of land;
- High levels of unemployment as companies reduce production. This necessitates once again the phenomenon of split families, which was characteristic of the dual colonial economy, as people emigrate in search for jobs;
- Shortages of critical basic commodities on the formal market. Where such commodities are available, they are neither accessible nor affordable to the majority of the poor.
- A thriving parallel market for basic commodities. The beneficiaries of the price controls are therefore the speculators and dealers who are capitalizing on the shortages by importing the needed goods which they sell at exorbitant prices.
- A thriving foreign currency parallel market which determines the prices of imported goods;
- The production of lower quality products, as producers are, forced to reduce inputs in order to maintain profit margins against a backdrop of rising input costs.
- The criminalization of the average Zimbabwean, as people are, scrambling for survival. There is mass stress, tension and bitterness as people fail to meet their daily needs.
- The consequent politicization and militarization of the economy where government is now a major player instead of being a neutral facilitator.

### **5.3 Theological reflections**

We believe that the current state of the economy in Zimbabwe is not what God intended any part of this world to be. The first Biblical account of creation is concluded with the words “God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good” (Gen. 1:31). As stated earlier, God wants us to be happy and to live fulfilling lives. When God created the world he gave to human beings everything that they needed to live well. The earth was endowed with all the means needed to live a life of happiness. Human beings were endowed with the brains to be co-creators with God as testified in advances in all areas of human development. The earth itself was created with a great deal of wealth, minerals, plants, animals, birds of the air, fish of the sea, etc. All these were entrusted to human beings to sustain their lives so that they can live happily for ever. The intervention of sin in Genesis 2 brought all the misery and greed that has impoverished other human beings while others became very rich.

In the New Testament Jesus testified that he came not to kill or destroy but that God's people “may have life and have it in its fullness” (John 10:10). His was a holistic approach to life. Our social and economic life was equally a major concern to him, and not just the spiritual life, hence the preferential option for the poor and disadvantaged. Where there is poverty or any form of suffering there is no fullness of life.

The same holistic approach continued in the early Church. The early Christians cared for one another. They even went to the extent of selling their lands and houses and shared the proceeds to ensure that the needs of the entire community are met (Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-35). Special collections in congregations were made for the poor in order to improve the quality of their lives as well. The prophets in the Old Testament were not afraid to denounce any socio-economic injustices. The message of love which is central to the Gospel of Christ negates any unjust economic system and demands prudent economic policies that ensure an equitable sharing of the resources available to sustain life.

It demands equal opportunity and access to the means of production, to jobs, to health and education facilities, the absence of which negates the individual's participation in life in its fullness. From a theological perspective this is what we see as the challenge faced by our nation: How do we create a socio economic environment that will enable every individual to look forward to a new day with every hope for a fulfilling life with food to eat and ability to send ones your child to school and be able to provide for one's other physical and spiritual needs? As we search for a solution to our economic hardships, let us do it in humility and in the spirit of God's love for us and for one another, and in the light of the core values that we have identified in order to build *the Zimbabwe we want*.

## **5.4 Recommendations**

### **5.4.1 Targeted Relief**

Having to deal with a membership which is groaning in poverty with people failing to meet their daily needs such as food, housing and clothing, the Church recommends the provision of targeted relief assistance to distressed households, as present intervention methods are not adequately addressing these needs . An audit which will identify distressed households is necessary. Such relief must be de-politicized.

### **5.4.2 Policy Formulation**

There is need for a broad-based formulation, implementation and monitoring of an economic policy which is owned by people. Such a policy must be inclusive, gender sensitive and responsive to the interests of all marginalized groups. It is time that the Zimbabwean people openly share a vision of their economy; a shared vision will enhance the success of a policy if the views of other consulted stakeholders are taken into account. If there is any good that might emanate from this economic depression if well managed, it is a shared vision and approach to economic management. There is need for consensus building, a springboard for development.

### **5.4.3 Economic stabilization**

There is need for economic stabilization through the adoption of appropriate monetary and fiscal policies. There is need to reduce inflation to manageable figures, while achieving positive interest rates that will facilitate investment, hence development. It is necessary to normalize relationships with development partners for this will enhance the inflow of foreign currency, aid and investment.

### **5.4.4 Good governance and the creation of a facilitative environment for development**

As highlighted by the ZIMPREST, fiscal discipline on the part of government is needed, and so is good governance and the elimination of corruption. Accountability is an indispensable ingredient for economic recovery. The use of the code of conduct such as the one used before is necessary.

### **5.4.5 Mainstreaming the informal sector**

It is necessary to mainstream the informal sector dominated by the marginalized groups such as women, children and the poor in general, into the formal economy. Government must endeavour to strengthen people where they are currently eking a living, and not to be inhibitive and punitive. There is need to build bridges between people and government.

### **5.4.6 Sustained economic development**

There is need for the eradication of poverty through sustained economic development which can be achieved by the involvement of the majority. To achieve this, it is necessary to empower people through skills training and resource redistribution to cater for those with entrepreneurial capacity and for the employment of those without the requisite skills.

Zimbabwe can learn from its experience in the mid 1980s where the new farmers were provided with skills and resources; this culminated into resounding agricultural production. The involvement of all Zimbabweans will destroy the deeply entrenched enclavity while producing an integrated internally driven economy where growth is people centred and equitably shared. Participation of the stakeholders must be institutionalized.

#### **5.4.7 Building bridges with the international community**

As a Church we commit ourselves to utilize our global Church network throughout the world, particularly those related to our development partners to lobby their governments and other institutions to support Zimbabwe in the reconstruction efforts through the cancellation of our international debt and making generous grants towards the reconstruction of our economy. This will only be possible if as Zimbabweans we can speak with one voice, hence this initiative by the Church to bring about reconciliation and unite our nation.

### **Section 6**

#### **The land question as part of the economy**

##### **6.1 Introduction**

The land question remains the single most emotive subject in our nation and its resolution will have far reaching benefits for the nation. This is so because agriculture has always been the mainstay of our country's economy. Between 1980 and 1999, it contributed over 40% of national exports and 18% of Gross Domestic Product (**GDP**), employed 30% of the formal labour force and 70% of the population. Close to 50% of **GDP** growth depended directly or indirectly on agriculture and agro-industry.



However, the agrarian structure before independence was highly inequitable, largely along racial lines. This situation continued late into the 90s. In 1999, the large-scale commercial farming (**LSCF**) sector comprised 4,000 white families owning about 9,000 farms, and about 20 large agro-industrial estates. By 2000 about 400 blacks held **LSCF** farms while another 400 held middle sized state leasehold-to-buy farms. By contrast, over 1.2 million smallholder producer families held an average of 3 hectares each of marginal arable land with limited infrastructure, while approximately 300 000 households were landless or land short. The **LSCF** sector comprised 75% of the most fertile land, 90% of the irrigation and agricultural electricity resources and the bulk of various rural public infrastructural resources. Sooner or later there was bound to be some unrest resulting from the glaring inequitable distribution of land. This situation was morally indefensible and certainly needed to be corrected.

However, the process of correcting this situation has been fraught with controversy and was accompanied by a lot of pain, leaving our society highly polarized. Since 2000, the Government has been implementing the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (**FTLRP**) to re-distribute land to the landless. This was mainly a result of the moral obligation to redress the injustices of the past, and partly in response to the social pressures that were building as a result of the slow land reform process between 1980 and 1999. Under the **FTLRP**, 11 million hectares of land have been acquired and are in the process of being re-distributed. By mid 2003, 135 000 smallholder households and small to medium commercial farmers had benefited from the programme.

Between 2000 and 2003 the land redistribution process gave rise to numerous social and political conflicts on the farms and elsewhere. Some standing crops, livestock, equipment and other property were lost or affected through theft and grabbing by some opportunists. In general, the land reform process has been mired in various implementation irregularities and the misapplication of policy in some aspects.

This situation, coupled with the frequent droughts during the implementation period, inadequate capacity and resource constraints of the new farmers and other external factors, contributed to a decline in agricultural production that impacted significantly on the overall economy.

However, between 1980 and 1999 Zimbabwe's agricultural sector grew steadily, albeit slowly. The country was generally self sufficient in food production, although there were some imports, especially during drought periods. During the 1990s agriculture was increasingly liberalised, with agricultural pricing and marketing being decontrolled. Greater incentives led to the growth of diversified traditional and non-traditional commodities.

The cry for land continued. Land reforms of a gradual type were initiated from 1980 up to 1996. Government was unable to meet its targets for the land to be acquired for distribution due to the weaknesses of the Lancaster Constitution, escalating land prices, inadequate external funding of the programme, and poor cooperation from the former large scale commercial farmers. This resulted in sporadic “illegal” land occupations which sought to redress the land imbalances.

## **6.2 Biblical and theological perspectives**

Our point of departure in any discussion about the land is the recognition that land is a gift from God. Human existence is inextricably bound to the land, which means that without land there can be no human existence. Every people must have a piece of land that they can call their own if they should exist at all. It is that means that God created and gave to human beings together with everything that is in it to sustain all life (Gen. 1:25 – 30). It is a gift to everybody irrespective of their ethnic background, political or religious affiliation, gender or race. This means that everybody by virtue of their being a child of God is entitled to a piece of land for shelter and as a means of livelihood. We are dealing with a fundamental human rights issue.

The use of race, gender, religious or political affiliation as criteria to deprive another person or group of their right to land is contrary to the will of God, and is a clear manifestation of human alienation from God and from one another as a result of sin.

Secondly, because of sin and human greed, the Bible is full of examples where the rich and powerful grabbed other peoples' lands, thus disempowering them and leaving them homeless, without food and other means of livelihood. With their land taken many of them became slaves of the powerful. They became economically disempowered and relegated to a life of poverty, hunger and starvation, and were completely at the mercy of the rich and powerful. A very good example is found in Nehemiah where a situation had arisen where the poor were oppressed not by an external power but by their own kindred to the extent that they had to mortgage their fields with its vineyards and homes in order to survive. The oppression was by their own kindred, hence they complained to Nehemiah: "Our flesh is the same as that of our kindred; our children are the same as their children; and yet we are forcing our sons and daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters have been ravished; we are powerless, our fields and vineyards now belong to others" (Nehemiah 5:5). This very much sounds like our experience in Zimbabwe today where a few people have amassed land and other properties at the expense of the poor, rendering the poor even poorer.

In the biblical tradition the only way to redeem the situation was through the Jubilee whereby on every 50<sup>th</sup> year those who had grabbed or used their monitory power to take other peoples land were required to return that land to its rightful owners. Jesus began his ministry by proclaiming the Jubilee year – "the year of the Lord's favour" (Luke 4:18-19). In His teaching the Good News is clearly linked to the liberation of the poor, the oppressed, and those suffering in many ways the restitution of their lands. In Biblical terms land restitution is seen as an integral part of freedom. The freedom of those who have been oppressed is manifest in the repossession of their land. Until the land is redeemed the people will continue to groan and to be restless; the land will continue to groan.

According to Paul's letter to the Romans the redemption of God's people also means the redemption of all of God's creation (Rom. 8), which in our understanding means the restoration of the land to its rightful owners.

What we are saying is that land restitution must follow the liberation of a people. It is a process that God in His love ordered in the Jubilee year for the empowerment of the poor and dispossessed. Since our God is a God of order and not chaos, that process must be done in an orderly fashion and should never be intended to make the powerful more powerful or the rich richer. There must be a deliberate preferential option for the poor in any redistribution of the land as this is in line with the divinely instituted Jubilee concept. It must not take away even that little that the poor may still possess as is often experienced. Any land redistribution must be intended to sustain life and not to destroy life and not increase the misery of the poor.

The cry for the redistribution of land is indeed a cry for justice. Our situation in Zimbabwe poses many challenges and as a nation we can benefit significantly if we respond to these challenges in the light of the Biblical understanding of land and under the guidance of our core values as articulated above.

### **6.3 Challenges**

The fast track land reform programme (FTLRP) redistributed over 80 percent of former large scale commercial farming (LSCF) farmland, and the racial distribution of access to land has been radically improved, thus redressing a key social and political problem. This process was accompanied in the immediate term by significant losses in production and of capital stock. The outcome has also entailed uneven distribution of land and infrastructure, insecurity of tenure, and the displacement of some ex-farm workers. Government increased its interventions in input, output, financial and foreign exchange markets, alongside increasing inflation and, inputs and forex shortages, resulting in reduced farm

profitability of key commodities. The combination of the severe problems resulting from the land distribution program, declining profitability, poor weather, financing and inputs supply constraints and declining external aid, led to reduced cropped area, yields and outputs, and overall agricultural production decline. Agricultural production declined by about 26% between 2000 and 2004. There are two exceptions to these adverse trends: the communal areas, where despite the adverse conditions, production levels have been surprisingly resilient, declining by less than 2.5% in non-drought years and the plantation and export sectors where production has fluctuated at plus or minus 7.0%.

The Utete Report and this review show that the implementation of the **FTLRP** has left much to be desired, and the losses in production, capital stock, and employment have been substantial. Moreover, many intended beneficiary groups have benefited far too little from the land allocation, and decongestion of communal areas is insufficient. Perhaps the most serious problem is that former farm workers have not only been largely left out of the benefits of the land reform, but many have lost their employment, become homeless and destitute.

Most agricultural markets and institutions have been seriously weakened as a result of the changes implemented during the **FTLRP** period. Although new marketing institutions and processes have emerged, their effectiveness has been constrained by policies, resource gaps and weak capacities of some of the farmers.

Given the differential capabilities of farmers and the fact that markets are thin in general, the weakest actors have had the least access to the limited agricultural resources and markets. These are mainly people in communal and resettlement areas, and those belonging to vulnerable social groups (HIV and AIDS) affected, women, farm workers, etc). The range of the vulnerable and poor has expanded and food insecurity has been exacerbated by drought and the land transfers. Likewise, agricultural production trends were severely reduced in former **LSCF** areas because of the land transfers, as well as the effects of government policy, resource gaps and drought, which led to dramatic output and yield

declines. Our assessment, however, is that there is considerable room, and a range of existing farmer and agency capabilities and potentials, to reverse these declining production trends, and that agricultural recovery can feasibly be instituted in the medium term. This will require appropriate land, agricultural productivity and economic policy reforms, various corrective measures in land reform implementation, and these will need to be accompanied by a sound social protection program.

Emerging from this review are a number of challenges that need addressing both in the short and the medium to long-term. These challenges can broadly be put into three categories. The first category is policy related, the second relates to agricultural productivity while the third category relates to the need for social protection for marginal and vulnerable members of our society.

### **6.3.1 Land Reform and Policy**

There can be no doubting the need to bring finality to the land question so as to allow agricultural recovery. For this to happen, the following policy challenges need to be seriously addressed:

#### **Completing the Legal Transfer of Land**

**The delay in completing land acquisition is causing anxiety and instability in the agricultural sector (for resettled, displaced and remaining large-scale commercial farmers) with detrimental effects on productive land use. Chief among the challenges are issues of securing legally agreed land transfers and compensation for farm investments on acquired farms, as well as finalization of the acquisition process. A related issue souring negotiation of land transfers has been the broadening of farm acquisition to include moveable property such as tractors and other equipment.**

## **Tenure Security**

This is perhaps the biggest determinant of agricultural recovery in the country. There is currently a lack of clarity on the legal status of the newly created farms and this, needs to be addressed if new farmers are to invest in farming. Land rights on estates and conservancies also need to be clarified. Related to this as well is the lack of clarity in the treatment of plantations, export processing zones, specialized enterprises such as dairy, seed production operations and protected areas (forest and wildlife areas). Equally important is the question of farms that are under Bilateral Investment Protection Agreements (**BIPAs**). Ambivalence on the question of **BIPAs** has negatively impacted on the credibility of the country regarding its preparedness to honour its international obligations.

## **Land Acquisition and Settlement on Special Enterprises**

Related to the tenure security issue is the problem of lack of clarity in the treatment of plantation, export processing zone agro-industrial concerns, farms under government to government agreements, and specialised enterprises such as dairy, seed production operations and forestry enterprises (timber and wildlife).

## **Improving Equity in the Allocation of Land**

Another challenge that needs to be addressed is the need to rationalise land allocations to accommodate a broad range of interest groups a number of which have hitherto been marginalized in the reform programme. Among these are the interests of women, war veterans, former farm workers and some displaced farmers who are willing to continue farming under the new dispensation. Most worrying is the seemingly unfair advantage captured by highly placed officials and those connected to them in land and water allocation over poor communal farmers and other disadvantaged groups.

## **Comprehensive Land Policy and Administrative Institutions Review**

Finally, the wide-ranging land and agriculture sector transformation demands a comprehensive review of policies and institutional structures governing land for its effective administration and use.

### **6.3.2 Agricultural Productivity**

There is a broad range of challenges that need to be addressed if the agriculture sector is to recover. Most agricultural markets and institutions have been seriously weakened as a result of the changes implemented during the FTLRP. There is, however, considerable room, and a range of existing farmer and agency capabilities and potentials to reverse the declining production trends and recovery can feasibly be instituted in the medium term. The following challenges, however, need to be addressed:

#### **Profitability Constraints**

A combination of exchange rate controls, output price controls, marketing and trade restrictions, as well as conditions that have limited the capacity utilisation of input industries, have combined to make inputs largely unaffordable and output prices too low, negatively affecting farm viability. As discussed in the next section, restoring agricultural profitability is key to the resumption of production and investment in agriculture and to the recovery of the sector.

#### **Water**

Unclear water use partitioning following land reform, lack of financial resources to exploit available water and a lack of effective co-management arrangements for water in the resettlement areas have combined to reduce areas under irrigation with detrimental effects on yields.



## **Accessibility of Inputs**

Agricultural inputs have largely been unavailable and expensive to all classes of farmers. Adverse macroeconomic and sectoral conditions, including high interest rates, lack of foreign currency for raw material imports, government instituted non-viable prices, electrical power cuts and limited rail capacity, all contributed to low capacity utilisation of input producing firms, leading to shortages. Input shortages, coupled with defective parastatal input allocative processes, resulted in leakage of inputs to parallel markets where prices have been unaffordable to poorly resourced farmers. The supply of seeds has been limited by acquisition of seed producing farms which has largely not been balanced by development of new capacity from within the newly resettled sector. In addition, newly resettled areas are generally under-served by private input dealerships, having to incur huge transaction costs to acquire inputs.

## **Limitations in agricultural machinery**

The majority of land reform beneficiaries lack adequate machinery and draught power and do not have sufficient resources to acquire these in the short-term. Public equipment and draught hire services are under capitalised to fill the gap while private hire services have been slow in developing, due to a lack of technical and financial resources.

## **Output Marketing**

A number of output marketing constraints severely limit the recovery of the agricultural sector. Grain marketing controls, and government fixed prices combined with late payment by the GMB in a highly inflationary environment, have severely reduced realisations by grain producers. Exportable crop producers also experienced low returns as a result of indirect taxing of products through exchange rate overvaluation, as well as from export bans on oilseeds which cut off the positive influence of international prices.

Poor commercialisation of the communal cattle herd severely limits market opportunities at a time when the commercial beef cattle herd has gone down due to farm acquisitions. The situation is compounded by a generally slow development of output market outlets closer to the newly resettled farms.

## **Technology Generation and Transfer**

The state of agricultural advisory services is currently limiting in its support of the transformed agricultural sector. A significant number of reform beneficiaries do not have adequate farming skills. The reforms have created an expansion of the grower base not matched by expansion of extension support. This has led, in some cases, to diversion of extension personnel from communal areas, where the need is great, to newly resettled areas. Currently, the scope for self-provisioning of knowledge services, as practiced by the large-scale commercial farmers in the past, is rather limited. In addition, the changed scales of production necessitated by farm subdivisions have made some production processes uneconomic, necessitating moving to more intensive production processes, the skills which are underdeveloped in the public agricultural knowledge services.

## **Farm Finance**

Over the past fifteen years, smallholder farmers have experienced difficulties in accessing finance. The expansion of this farming sub-sector in the Fast Track Reform period has increased the extent of areas not covered by financial services. In the A2 schemes, unclear tenure and lack of track record in farming have been barriers to private sector provision of credit. In addition, prevailing hyperinflation has made credit financing uneconomic. Thus the bulk of available farm finance has been from government sources which have been rather limited due to fiscal constraints and been largely inaccessible to smallholder farmers due to capture by elites.

## **Limited Farmer Capacity**

The state of agricultural advisory services is currently limiting in its support of the transformed agricultural sector. A significant number of reform beneficiaries do not have adequate farming skills.

## **Food Security**

Droughts and land transfers have led to significant food production shortages and depleted food reserves. The general lack of foreign currency has limited the country's ability to import food. In addition, the effects of droughts and HIV/AIDS have led to asset disposal by the chronically food insecure, further increasing their vulnerability. In urban areas, controls on maize movements have reduced access to grain from rural areas, forcing households to depend on expensive industrially milled grain.

## **Foreign Currency Earnings**

Historically, the agricultural sector has been a major contributor to foreign currency earnings for Zimbabwe. Land transfers have, however, led to drastic reductions in tobacco, horticulture and soya bean production with detrimental effects on foreign currency earnings at a time of great national need.

### **6.3.3 Social Protection**

Very few former farm workers were resettled in the reform program and the newly resettled farmers have, as yet, not employed significant numbers of former farm workers. Thus within the rural areas there are large numbers of former farm workers without stable means of livelihood. In all smallholder areas there is, also a large proportion of chronically vulnerable groups of households, including the old, resource poor and those affected by HIV/AIDS, whose situation is particularly precarious due to the effects of the recent droughts.

The situation of these vulnerable groups is even worse in the newly resettled areas which lack essential social infrastructure including roads, health facilities, schools, retail outlets and other small non-farming industries offering social services and alternative income generating opportunities. Development of viable communities following the reforms will be difficult if such groups are not catered for. The loss of urban employment opportunities, due to closure and / or downsizing of some major industrial and commercial operations, is also a serious issue, strengthening the case for a strong social protection program.

## **6.4 Way forward: towards finalizing the land question**

As indicated earlier, the land question has been the most emotive national question that has left our nation highly polarised. Now is the time to galvanize all our energies to bring finality to this vexatious issue in a manner that heals the wounds of the past six years. Now also is the time for the Government to show magnanimity by extending its hand in reaching out to all its citizens, regardless of political affiliation, race, gender or ethnicity to seek consensus on the way forward.

As a start, there is general recognition that the current reforms are irreversible but what is required is developing a national consensus on how best to address the outstanding issues and correct the imperfections in the land redistribution process to the benefit of all citizens who want to build their future on the land as well as to the benefit of our national economy. Our vision ought to be guided by the principle that there should be no winners and losers but rather we should all come out of this experience as winners.

The following are considered critical priorities to finalization of the land reform programme:

### **6.4.1 Increase Tenure Security and Complete Land Reform Programme**

The first priority here is the need to stabilize the farming sector by bringing finality to land acquisitions so that both the new and old farmers may feel secure on their pieces of land. A major imperative is the need to complete the legal basis of land transfer (i.e. procedures that, following agreed compensation, lead to surrender of title deeds). It is noted that the Government intends to adopt a 99 year transferable lease system as the legal foundation of land tenure in the A2 farming areas while adopting a permit tenure system as a variant of the communal land tenure system for the A1 resettlements. It is important that these issues be finalized as soon as possible. It is also observed that land acquisition and compensation remain incomplete, and existing and future allocations of land remain in dispute on many acquired farms. Land tenure security will thus hold back investment and production unless these issues are addressed as quickly as possible. Tenure security will obtain when land allocations are firmly offered to all farmers, new and old and when such farmers are accorded legal protection of such land rights.

Land tenure security is critical in this process and will require participative consultation and/or negotiation processes involving all stakeholders. It is pleasing to note that a number of consultative processes are already underway, e.g. national and provincial dialogues on land and agrarian reform, and stakeholder consultations on wildlife conservancies, forest plantations and on indigenous forest reserves. In many areas consensus could emerge quickly. Well-planned participatory processes can be carried out in a limited period of time and participation and consensus building are therefore not an insurmountable constraint to speedy action.

The currently proposed land tenure policy which differentiates the land tenure forms for A1 and A2 resettlement lands should be publicised and continue to guide administration in the mid term, during a transitional period over the next three to five years.

The tenure policy for A1 farms is based on unifying their conditions of tenure with that of the communal areas, i.e. providing a form of 'customary' tenure for residential and arable land to individuals and group tenure for common grazing lands. But, where new self-contained A1 plots are in demand, a program to facilitate conversion should be implemented. The policy on the forms of land tenure in communal and resettlement areas needs to be thought through more deeply, along the lines of a decentralised customary tenure administration system as previously proposed by the Rukuni Commission.

#### **6.4.2 Allocation of Remaining and Additional Land.**

In the short term, the Government should seriously consider implementing the following recommendations adopted from the Utete Report, particularly those that enhance equity and allow for the allocation of some larger land sizes in selected specialist land uses and enterprises in A2 and the remaining LSCF. We are concerned that the needy stakeholder groups, such as the former farm workers, women, inhabitants of selected congested communal areas, and the unemployed urban/peri-urban, have not benefited sufficiently from the land reform, while urban and other well-off and well-connected groups have benefited disproportionately in terms of quantity, quality, location, and irrigation of the land they were allocated.

It is urgent that the land which remains unallocated, and additional land which will become available in the future as a consequence of downsizing of plantations, estates, conservancies, remaining LSC Farms, and oversized new A2 and A1 farms is used to correct these serious blemishes on the land reform program. A decision to reserve all the remaining and additional land to these underserved or left out categories of farmers would be a first step, followed by the design of the respective targeting rule and transparent implementation mechanisms.

We very much regret that very few former farm workers were resettled in the reform program, and many of them are now destitute. They also constitute a valuable resource in agricultural production. In the short

term, to help keep this resource within the farming community, Government should excise pieces of newly resettled lands, especially those with farm compounds and social services, and develop these as local authority satellite service centres to cater for the residential and social service needs of former farm workers, new workers, retired workers and non-farm artisans.

These would provide for residential plots that include small garden areas, and social services as required per capita in new resettlement schemes and should be the focus for providing common utilities such as schools, clinics and business centres for the entire resettlement population.

In the medium term, there will be a need for Government to support, for a period of about three years, the completion of the rehabilitation of displaced farm workers. Government assistance will be required (e.g. through public works programs) in housing development, Government-farm worker collaboration in developing infrastructure in the new farm worker communities (schools, roads, clinics and other amenities) as well as in developing the capacity to protect their employment condition. Government, (NGOs and donors) also need to assist in meeting the food and health needs of the very vulnerable among the farm workers.

The resettlement process created conflicts between settlers and former farm workers which need to be healed if harmony is to be restored. In the medium term, the coexistence of former farm workers and new settlers should be promoted, through counselling and mediation, to enhance unified local community structures, including social committees and development associations which encourage the integration of former farm workers and ensure that they continue to provide a valuable service to the farming communities.

### **6.4.3 Handling of Special Enterprise Farms.**

A number of farm enterprises are critical to the country's industrial base and export potential. As such Government should strive to retain former farmers in special enterprises (e.g. horticulture, seed, agro-industrial

complexes, and those under BIPAs) on right sized plots. In this regard, two issues need to be addressed simultaneously: the allocations of right sized plots to remaining white farmers, and the completion of the repossession or surrender of multiple owned plots by indigenous and white farmers.

#### **6.4.4 Compensation.**

It is important to note that real security of tenure on acquired farms may not be realised until the former owners have been fully compensated for farm infrastructure. It is also a known fact that some of the former owners actually bought their farms after independence and as such, there is a moral obligation to consider some form of compensation beyond just the infrastructure. Towards that end, constructive dialogue with the international community, especially the British Government, is critical to assist such farmers who have become innocent victims of the political impasse currently prevailing with the British Government.

#### **6.4.5 Dispute Resolution relating to Disputed Land and Infrastructure Acquisition**

There still remain considerable uncertainties in land policy and its implementation procedure resulting in disputes on many acquired farms. The complexities of settling such disputes, is very high, as each of the farms has its unique characteristics and history. Initial allocation decisions are specific to each farm, as are the real or perceived claims of those inadequately served or left out altogether. This stems both from the incompleteness of the laws, regulations and implementation mechanisms, as well as a lack of information and knowledge about these among those charged with implementation throughout the country, as well as among the population at large. It is thus imperative to get clarity on all these issues as a basis for resolving these disputes.

It is important to adopt a comprehensive and inclusive approach in addressing all the outstanding issues around the land reforms so as to begin a process of recovery for the agricultural sector and the economy as



a whole. A comprehensive programme thus needs to be developed, with the participation of all stakeholders, to address all these outstanding issues. There is need to harness all available technical expertise. As stakeholders in this process, it is important that we start talking to each other, rather than to ourselves, in considering these issues. Government leadership and magnanimity in reaching out to all stakeholders is vital. In such a sensitive issue, a broadly consultative approach is more likely to yield desired results than a prescriptive approach.

## **Section 7**

### **National reconciliation and forgiveness**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

*The message of reconciliation through faith in Jesus Christ is at the core of the life and ministry of the Church. The incarnation is all about God who had been wronged and seriously wounded by the human rebellion against him in Adam and Eve taking the first step to bring about reconciliation between himself and humanity. In our human understanding it is the guilty party that must take the first step and seek forgiveness from the person who has been wronged. What transpired in Jesus Christ defies all human imagination and understanding of what reconciliation is all about. The Church as the bearer of that message is the instrument through which God continues to reconcile humanity and the entire creation to himself, and to reconcile people with one another regardless of race, colour of skin, or religious affiliation. The message of reconciliation is therefore at the heart of the Church and constitutes its core business.*

*However, reconciliation is not something that must just be proclaimed, but must be lived out, and in that way bring about social transformation as people begin to live in harmony with one another, with God, and with the entire creation. Reconciliation is about restoring broken relationships through forgiveness; it is about healing the spiritual and the physical wounds. The result can only be a peaceful environment in which people*

*love and care for one another, live in true fellowship with God and one another, and seek nothing but the common good and the wellbeing of one another. Zimbabwe is yearning for peace and justice. At the root of that yearning is a cry for reconciliation and forgiveness.*

## **7.2 The cry for reconciliation in Zimbabwe today**

Several historical developments in our nation demand that a process towards national reconciliation be initiated so that we can begin to move in the same direction, share the same vision of the Zimbabwe we want, and begin to reconstruct our broken economy and national pride, and heal the wounds. Several issues have left the nation torn apart and must be attended to in order to reconcile the nation and to achieve consensus on the fundamental developmental issues that concern our nation. At the moment national reconciliation is indeed the key to nation building and development in Zimbabwe. What are some of the issues that have led to so much alienation of the people of Zimbabwe from one another and from the rest of the world? The following are but some of the critical ones.

### **7.2.1 The Land Question**

The land issue must be resolved once and for all. For decades the African people of Zimbabwe were very bitter about their land which had been violently taken by the colonial settlers. Twenty years after independence they continued to watch a white minority enjoy the fat of their land while many of them became more and more impoverished. On the other hand the white Zimbabwean community failed to see that their occupation of the bulk of the Zimbabwean soil could not be allowed to continue for too long because it was grossly unjust. They invested a great deal in those farms and for some of them it was their entire life savings. When the government moved to repossess the land and redistribute it to others, the white community was shattered, remained angry and is as we speak today very much hurting.

The whole land issue regretfully has resulted in the emergence of a culture of racial hatred and in the alienation of the people of Zimbabwe

in the first place along racial lines. The fast track land redistribution programme created new forms of alienation because of its retributive, chaotic and racial overtones. Let us admit that many of those white people were born and bred in Zimbabwe and know no other country than Zimbabwe as their homeland. We have to live together and the only way for this to happen is through confession, reconciliation, forgiveness, and a fair redistribution of the land and all its wealth to all the people of Zimbabwe regardless of race, creed or political affiliation. For reconciliation to take place there must be consensus on how this land must be distributed as well as resolving the question of compensation.

### **7.2.2 The National Constitution**

The constitution of this country has been a source of conflict because of its genesis and original objectives. The Lancaster House Constitution is considered to be a document designed to transfer power from a minority white regime to majority rule. It was never presented to the people in a referendum when it was crafted because the country was in a war situation. The people of Zimbabwe accepted what was negotiated by their leaders in good faith as an interim measure. Unless Zimbabweans find an alternative constitutional document where their values are well articulated, the current constitution remains one of the areas that generate serious conflict.

### **7.2.3 Party-politics and the vision of the state/nation**

Ever since the split of ZANU from ZAPU in 1963, the people of this country have never been spared from the ugly face of political rivalry. To date politics in this country is governed by hatred and inter-party violence and killings. The coming of independence and the arms cache issue brought back the hostilities people thought had died out in the late 1960's. The dissident element followed by the Gukurahundi response, reflect the deep-seated feelings that characterize our political landscape

and this too is calling for healing. Gukurahundi is part of the politics of intolerance, which kills the desire to share political space with persons of the opposite party. Gukurahundi has left the people of Matebeleland and part of the Midlands hurting and very angry. This reflects a nation that is torn apart and this time not along racial lines but along ethnic lines. No matter how much we pretend reconciliation was achieved with the merger of ZANU PF and ZAPU in 1987, deep down the people in Matebeleland are hurting and need to know the truth about their relatives who were victims of Gukurahundi. Genuine reconciliation is possible only when the truth has been told, confession made, and forgiveness received.

#### **7.2.4 Murambatsvina.**

In May 2005, and for some months thereafter, an urban clean-up operation code-named Murambatsvina (drive out filth) took place. According to official explanations this operation was aimed at ridding our cities of filth, illegal housing and illegal businesses. These objectives are noble. However, the methods and timing of this operation have left many scars of bitterness calling for healing. The destruction of poor people's shelters and their means of livelihood before any alternatives were provided caused great suffering. Hundreds of thousands of people, including women and children found themselves with no shelter in the middle of winter and later the onset of the rain season. Some victims of this operation failed to access social services such as education, health, water and sanitary facilities.

#### **7.2.5 State Media**

Last but not least, in our catalogue of causes of our current conflict situation is **the media**. Our state-controlled media promotes a situation of violence by narrowing space for a meaningful reconciliation process to take place, so that it has created more confusion than solutions to the **process** of nation building. Like the colonial media which sought to divide Africans along ethnic, party and geographical lines, the current media is perpetuating the same, regrettably, in an independent Zimbabwe.

## **7.3 Motivation for reconciliation**

Reconciliation implies that the parties concerned both move ritually and physically from previous entrenched positions of advantage, comfort and defence to positions of discomfort, vulnerability and compromise. Generally, people fear to enter into the process of reconciliation because it leaves both parties with no claim for advantage. But there are strong motives for Zimbabwe as a nation to move to a position of reconciliation.

### **7.3.1 Disharmony is Destructive and Disruptive**

Disharmony disrupts the mind, spirit and body so that society lapses into an abnormal state of being that affects the body-politick the same way an illness does. Society loses a sense of its values and integrity and drifts into a state of chaos. The strength of reconciliation is clearly seen and demonstrated when humanity forgives each other and live as brothers and sisters (Ps 133:1).

### **7.3.2 Harmony Promotes Prosperity**

The vision of the nation that we have portrayed in this document is not attainable without reconciliation. Both social well-being and economic prosperity presuppose harmony, tolerance of diversity and mutual acceptance.

## **7.4 Reconciliation and renewal.**

*In his inaugural address on Independence day in 1980 the then Prime Minister Robert Gabriel Mugabe stunned the world by declaring reconciliation as the corner stone of his government's policy in the new Zimbabwe. The events in Zimbabwe today show that reconciliation was not achieved. We were as a nation never taken through a process where the truth was told about the pain experienced during the years of the struggle for liberation and our oppression by the colonial regime. The nation needed to end the years of conflict in a formal way by the ritual of*

*truth telling and forgiveness. Even in our African cultures conflict was never resolved by simply believing people will forget and everything will be back to normal. It involved some ritual ceremonies that would reconcile the warring families or factions through forgiveness. Equally important was for us to recognise from the beginning that as part of the process towards reconciliation, it was crucial for the nation to set in motion a process to address the socio-economic imbalances inherited from the past, which were a major source of the conflict. At Independence there were very high expectations for the renewal or restructuring of the socio-economic life of the nation. It could not be allowed to be business as usual. The people wanted to see change in their lives for the better and not to see the gap between rich and poor widening, with most of the wealth in the hands of the whites and a few black Zimbabweans. Reconciliation goes hand in hand with renewal of the socio-economic and political structures.*

*What we are saying here is that the movement towards reconciliation presupposes an equally important movement toward the creation of a just society. There can be no reconciliation without an effort to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor. A new social order has to be created. This even brings in the issue of reparations which is a biblical ethic in which those who have acquired wealth through cheating or exploitation of fellow human beings were required to return that wealth plus the interest.*

*The story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-9) is a very classic example of what reconciliation with God demands on the part of those who want to be reconciled with God and fellow human beings. Face to face with Jesus he could not help but to be converted to a new way of looking at things and relating to others. His whole life changed and he immediately took concrete and visible action to reconcile himself not only with God but with fellow human beings and committed himself to returning whatever he had taken from others through unjust means: "Here and now I give my possessions to the poor, and if I have ever cheated anybody of anything, I will pay back four times the amount" (Luke 19:8). Only after taking that gigantic step did Jesus say to him "Today salvation has come into this house" (Lk19:9).*

*The same ethic is articulated in the Book of Nehemiah chapter 5. Nehemiah demanded that those among the Jewish community who had acquired their wealth through exploitation and impoverishment of their kindred should immediately take action “restore to them, this very day, their fields, their vineyards, their olive orchards, their houses, and the interest on money, wine, grain, and oil you have been exacting from them” (Nehemiah 5:11). To this challenge from Nehemiah the rich responded by saying “We will restore everything and demand nothing more from them” (Vs. 11). A deliberate action on the part of those in our society who have benefited from the exploitation of the poor by voluntarily contributing to the creation of a just society is what the Gospel of Christ demands.*

*This therefore is the challenge not only to our white Zimbabweans who benefited from the unjust colonial system, but to black Zimbabweans who have taken advantage of the present economic crisis to defraud, cheat, and enrich themselves through corrupt means. Setting in motion a credible process towards the renewal of our society and addressing the economic imbalances is a step in the direction of national reconciliation and forgiveness. The rich in our communities must voluntarily contribute towards that end.*

*As Churches in Zimbabwe we would like to identify ourselves with the position taken by the authors of the Kairos Document in South Africa in the days of the struggle against apartheid and declare that also in our situation we would regard it “to be totally unchristian to plead for reconciliation and peace before the present injustices have been removed” since any “such plea only plays into the hands of oppressors by trying to persuade those who are oppressed to try to accept (their) oppression and to become reconciled to the intolerable crimes committed against (them). This is not Christian reconciliation, it is sin. No reconciliation is possible without justice.” We therefore sincerely appeal to our government and our former colonial masters and others who have participated in injustices to seriously consider the issue of reparations as a means to build a just society in Zimbabwe in the process towards genuine reconciliation.*

## **7.5 Ways the church can engage in national reconciliation**

Since reconciliation is at the core of the Gospel that we proclaim, we are obliged by virtue of our calling as Christians to participate actively in bringing about national reconciliation in Zimbabwe. In this regard we commit ourselves in the process towards reconciling the diverse groups in this country. The Church has been spectating for a long time fearing to get dirty if it engages in 'politics'. It is acknowledged that the process will be painful, because it is a moment of truth, when the community of Zimbabwe is being offered the opportunity to open themselves and pour out. There will be moments of anxiety, denial, and even surprises, and yet that is what it should be. Ultimately, what is important are the benefits to be derived from this. The nation is invited to enter into dialogue with humility, honesty and sincerity, but without arrogance and pomp.

Some of the ways the Church wishes to promote national reconciliation include the following:

### **7.5.1 Church to Church Activity**

**We want to begin by building bridges between ourselves. We too are suffering from the effects of the conflicts and the partisan and ethnic approaches to the critical issues that divide our nation as articulated in this document. This strategy will involve inter-church programs and exchange visits which would bring people together through already existing facilities or structures such as ministers fraternal meetings. Through such structures, teaching and discussions, we will seek to reconcile people at grass roots levels as we create space for people to share their experiences in a spontaneous and friendly setting. When we are reconciled we can indeed become the salt of the earth in the communities in which we live and others can say “See how they love one another” and begin to emulate our example.**



### **7.5.2 Use of Formal Ecumenical Organisations**

EFZ, ZCBC and ZCC organs and others will work together or individually on programmes and resources that promote peace. People will even be encouraged to compose songs that share the message of reconciliation and peace. Ecumenical public events will continue to be utilized for peace-building. These will include prayer breakfast gatherings, national days of prayer, street marches and other open meetings. The objective of these activities is to bring visibility to the national reconciliation process, and to invite support from the public who may not be aware of the initiative. Joint declarations of commitment to reconciliation initiatives will be made from time to time. The joint declarations may take the form of confessions where the people repent of past negative attitudes, words and actions that have fostered hatred and divisions within and among our traditions.

### **7.5.3 Use of Printed Material**

The church will not ignore the power of the pen and visual aids. Fliers, pamphlets, notices billboards and programmes on radio and Television will be utilized to promote peace and reconciliation. .

### **7.5.4 Truth and Justice Commission**

The truth must be told in order to heal the wounds. Many people are hurting and are raising questions and need to know what happened to their loved ones. They need to know why and who performed brutal actions against their communities or their sons and daughters. In this regard we believe that as part of the healing process the nation should explore the possibility of setting up a Truth and Justice Commission in collaboration with the Church and civil society as a whole to monitor the process and receive testimonies from the public. Coming to terms with the truth can be a painful experience, but as a nation we have to go through it as a process towards the Zimbabwe we want.

## **Section 8**

### **Conclusion: Way forward**

**In conclusion we would like to draw attention to all the recommendations that follow each of the sections. Some of these are short term while others are long term. We however would like to single out some that we believe need immediate and urgent attention to initiate the process towards building the Zimbabwe we all want. We therefore recommend the following:**

1. Since in our analysis of the different Constitution drafts produced by government and civil society there are no fundamental or ideological differences that are irreconcilable or non-negotiable, it is urgent that a Commission comprising representatives of all stakeholders be appointed immediately to come up with a democratic, home-grown Constitution utilising the information already gathered by government and civil society and submit the draft to a referendum by mid-2007. The challenge is to produce a constitution around which there is national consensus and this is only possible when everybody is brought on board in the drafting of the new constitution.
2. We believe there can never be a substitute for national dialogue process around critical issues such as land, micro-economic policies, constitutional debate, electoral framework, human rights, governance and national reconciliation. We wish to urge government to accept an inclusive consultative process on these issues. These are issues that have negatively impacted on the image of the country in the eyes of the international community. In most of these issues government tends to talk to itself rather than to its people.
3. It is critical that a credible independent Land Commission or authority be established to ensure transparent, equitable and fair land distribution.

It is important that all stakeholders recognise that the on going land redistribution process is irreversible and interested parties should buy into the process. A mechanism should be put in place to resolve all land acquisition disputes and for the reconciliation of all parties through mediation and reparation.

4. Government should immediately initiate a process in parliament to repeal or amend POSA and AIPPA in order to create an environment that is conducive to free dialogue and public debate on all issues of concern in order to bring about the healing and reconciliation as well as a rapid national economic recovery.

5. Once constitutional reforms are underway, steps must be taken to build bridges with the international community but particularly with those development partners who have significantly contributed to our development in the past. The country needs a lot of support: Balance of Payment, Trade and Investment, Technology Transfer, etc. This is only possible if government shows willingness for reforms, and there is a national consensus regarding the nature and process towards the Zimbabwe we want.

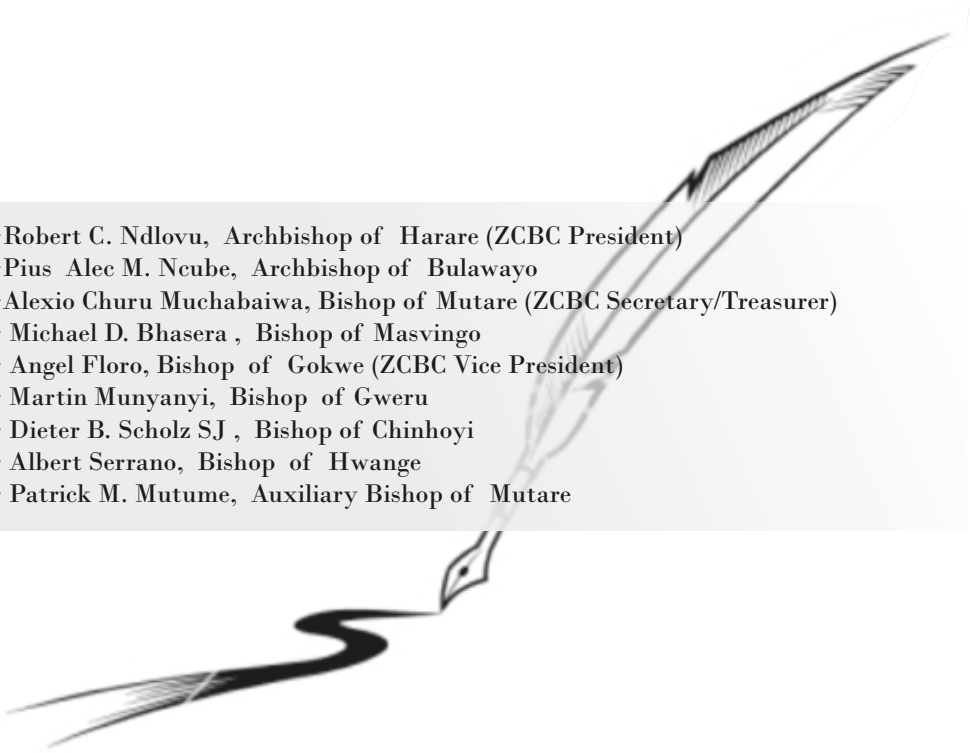
6. As Churches we pledge to use our local and global networks to help build bridges among Zimbabweans and between Zimbabwe and the international community, and mobilise spiritual and material support for the **Zimbabwe We Want**.

**To God be the glory**

# **GOD HEARS THE CRY OF THE OPPRESSED**

Pastoral Letter on the Current Crisis in Zimbabwe

Holy Thursday, 5 April 2007

- 
- +Robert C. Ndlovu, Archbishop of Harare (ZCBC President)
  - +Pius Alec M. Ncube, Archbishop of Bulawayo
  - +Alexio Churu Muchabaiwa, Bishop of Mutare (ZCBC Secretary/Treasurer)
  - + Michael D. Bhasera , Bishop of Masvingo
  - + Angel Floro, Bishop of Gokwe (ZCBC Vice President)
  - + Martin Munyanyi, Bishop of Gweru
  - + Dieter B. Scholz SJ , Bishop of Chinhoyi
  - + Albert Serrano, Bishop of Hwange
  - + Patrick M. Mutume, Auxiliary Bishop of Mutare

*“Among the gentiles it is the kings who lord it over them, and those who  
have authority over them  
are given the title Benefactor.  
With you this must not happen.  
No, the greatest among you  
must behave as if he were the youngest,  
the leader as if he were the one who serves”  
(Lk 22:25-27)*

## **1. Introduction**

*Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

As your Shepherds we have reflected on our national situation and, in the light of the Word of God and Christian Social Teaching, have discerned what we now share with you, in the hope of offering guidance, light and hope in these difficult times.

## **2. The Crisis**

The people of Zimbabwe are suffering. More and more people are getting angry, even from among those who had seemed to be doing reasonably well under the circumstances. The reasons for the anger are many, among them, bad governance and corruption. A tiny minority of the people have become very rich overnight, while the majority are languishing in poverty, creating a huge gap between the rich and the poor. Our Country is in deep crisis. A crisis is an unstable situation of extreme danger and difficulty. Yet, it can also be turned into a moment of grace and of a new beginning, if those responsible for causing the crisis repent, heed the cry of the people and foster a change of heart and mind especially during the imminent Easter Season, so our Nation can rise to new life with the Risen Lord.

3. In Zimbabwe today, there are Christians on all sides of the conflict; and there are many Christians sitting on the fence. Active members of our Parish and Pastoral Councils are prominent officials at all levels of the ruling

party. Equally distinguished and committed office-bearers of the opposition parties actively support church activities in every parish and diocese. They all profess their loyalty to the same Church. They are all baptised, sit and pray and sing together in the same church, take part in the same celebration of the Eucharist and partake of the same Body and Blood of Christ.

While the next day, outside the church, a few steps away, Christian State Agents, policemen and soldiers assault and beat peaceful, unarmed demonstrators and torture detainees. This is the unacceptable reality on the ground, which shows much disrespect for human life and falls far below the dignity of both the perpetrator and the victim.

4. In our prayer and reflection during this Lent, we have tried to understand the reasons why this is so. We have concluded that the crisis of our Country is, in essence, a crisis of governance and a crisis of leadership apart from being a spiritual and moral crisis.

## **5. A Crisis of Governance**

The national health system has all but disintegrated as a result of prolonged industrial action by medical professionals, lack of drugs, essential equipment in disrepair and several other factors.

6. In the educational sector, high tuition fees and levies, the lack of teaching and learning resources, and the absence of teachers have brought activities in many public schools and institutions of higher education to a standstill.

The number of students forced to terminate their education is increasing every month. At the same time, Government interference with the provision of education by private schools has created unnecessary tension and conflict.

## **7. Public services in Zimbabwe's towns and cities have crumbled.**

Roads, street lighting, water and sewer reticulation are in a state of severe disrepair to the point of constituting an acute threat to public health and safety, while the collection of garbage has come to a complete standstill in many places. Unabated political interference with the work of democratically elected Councils is one of the chief causes of this breakdown.

8. The erosion of the public transport system has negatively affected every aspect of our Country's economy and social life. Horrific accidents claim the lives of dozens of citizens each month.

9. Almost two years after the Operation Murambatsvina, thousands of victims are still without a home. That inexcusable injustice has not been forgotten.

10. Following a radical land reform programme seven years ago, many people are today going to bed hungry and wake up to a day without work. Hundreds of companies were forced to close. Over 80 per cent of the people of Zimbabwe are without employment. Scores risk their lives week after week in search of work in neighbouring countries.

11. Inflation has soared to over 1,600 per cent, and continues to rise, daily. It is the highest in the world and has made the life of ordinary Zimbabweans unbearable, regardless of their political preferences. We are all concerned for the turnaround of our economy but this will remain a dream unless corruption is dealt with severely irrespective of a person's political or social status or connections.

12. The list of justified grievances is long and could go on for many pages.

13. The suffering people of Zimbabwe are groaning in agony: "Watchman, how much longer the night"? (Is 21:11)

## **14. A Crisis of Moral Leadership**

The crisis of our Country is, secondly, a crisis of leadership. The burden of that crisis is borne by all Zimbabweans, but especially the young who grow up in search of role models. The youth are influenced and formed as much by what they see their elders doing as by what they hear and learn at school or from their peers.

15. If our young people see their leaders habitually engaging in acts and words which are hateful, disrespectful, racist, corrupt, lawless, unjust, greedy, dishonest and violent in order to cling to the privileges of power and wealth, it is highly likely that many of them will behave in exactly the same manner. The consequences of such overtly corrupt leadership as we are witnessing in Zimbabwe today will be with us for many years, perhaps decades, to come. Evil habits and attitudes take much longer to rehabilitate than

to acquire. Being elected to a position of leadership should not be misconstrued as a licence to do as one pleases at the expense of the will and trust of the electorate.

## **16. A Spiritual and Moral Crisis**

Our crisis is not only political and economic but first and foremost a spiritual and moral crisis. As the young independent nation struggles to find its common national spirit, the people of Zimbabwe are reacting against the “structures of sin” in our society. Pope John Paul II says that the “structures of sin” are “rooted in personal sin, and thus always linked to the concrete acts of individuals who introduce these structures, consolidate them and make them difficult to remove. And thus they grow stronger, spread, and become the source of other sins, and so influence people's behaviour.”<sup>1</sup> The Holy Father stresses that in order to understand the reality that confronts us, we must “give a name to the root of the evils which afflict us.”<sup>2</sup> That is what we have done in this Pastoral Letter.



## **17. The Roots of the Crisis**

The present crisis in our Country has its roots deep in colonial society. Despite the rhetoric of a glorious socialist revolution brought about by the armed struggle, the colonial structures and institutions of pre-independent Zimbabwe continue to persist in our society. None of the unjust and oppressive security laws of the Rhodesian State have been repealed; in fact, they have been reinforced by even more repressive legislation, the Public Order and Security Act and the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, in particular. It almost appears as though someone sat down with the Declaration of Human Rights and deliberately scrubbed out each in turn.

18. Why was this done? Because soon after Independence, the power and wealth of the tiny white Rhodesian elite was appropriated by an equally exclusive black elite, some of whom have governed the country for the past 27 years through political patronage. Black Zimbabweans today fight for the same basic rights they fought for during the liberation struggle. It is the same conflict between those who possess power and wealth in abundance, and those who do not; between those who are determined to maintain their privileges of power and wealth at any cost, even at the cost of bloodshed, and those who demand their democratic rights and a share in the fruits of independence; between those who continue to benefit from the present system of inequality and injustice, because it favours them and enables them to maintain an exceptionally high standard of living, and those who go to bed hungry at night and wake up in the morning to another day without work and without income; between those who only know the language of violence and intimidation, and those who feel they have nothing more to lose because their Constitutional rights have been abrogated and their votes rigged. Many people in Zimbabwe are angry, and their anger is now erupting into open revolt in one township after another.

19. The confrontation in our Country has now reached a flashpoint. As the suffering population becomes more insistent, generating more and more

pressure through boycotts, strikes, demonstrations and uprisings, the State responds with ever harsher oppression through arrests, detentions, banning orders, beatings and torture. In our judgement, the situation is extremely volatile. In order to avoid further bloodshed and avert a mass uprising the nation needs a new people driven Constitution that will guide a democratic leadership chosen in free and fair elections that will offer a chance for economic recovery under genuinely new policies.

## 20. Our Message of Hope: God is always on the Side of the Oppressed

The Bible has much to say about situations of confrontation. The conflict between the oppressor and the oppressed is a central theme throughout the Old and New Testaments.<sup>3</sup> Biblical scholars have discovered that there are no less than twenty different root words in Hebrew to describe oppression.

21. One example is the Creed of the chosen people, which we read on the First Sunday of Lent: “My Father was a homeless Aramaean. He went down to Egypt to find refuge there, few in numbers; but there he became a nation, great, mighty and strong. The Egyptians ill-treated us, they gave us no peace and inflicted harsh slavery on us. But we called on the Lord, the God of our fathers. The Lord heard our voice and saw our misery, our toil and our oppression; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with mighty hand and outstretched arm, with great terror, and with signs and wonders...” (Deut 26:5b-8).

22. The Bible describes oppression in concrete and vivid terms: Oppression is the experience of being crushed, degraded, humiliated, exploited, impoverished, defrauded, deceived and enslaved. And the oppressors are described as cruel, ruthless, arrogant, greedy, violent and tyrannical; they are called 'the enemy'. Such words could only have been used by people who in their own lives and history had an immediate and personal experience of being oppressed. To them Yahweh revealed himself as the God of compassion who hears the cry of the oppressed and who liberates them from their oppressors. The God of the Bible is always on the side of the oppressed. He does not reconcile Moses and Pharaoh,

or the Hebrew slaves with their Egyptian oppressors. Oppression is sin and cannot be compromised with. It must be overcome. God takes sides with the oppressed. As we read in Psalm 103:6: “God who does what is right, is always on the side of the oppressed”.<sup>4</sup>

23. When confronted with the politically powerful, Jesus speaks the language of the boldest among Israel's prophets. He calls Herod 'that fox' (Lk13:32) and courageously exposes the greed for money, power and adulation of the political elite. And he warns his disciples never to do likewise: “Among the gentiles it is the kings who lord it over them, and those who have authority over them are given the title Benefactor. With you this must not happen. No, the greatest among you must behave as if he were the youngest, the leader as if he were the one who serves” (Lk 22:25-27). And he warns Pilate in no uncertain terms that he will be held to account by God for his use of power over life and death (John 19:11).

24. Throughout the history of the Church, persecuted Christians have remembered, prayed and sung the prophetic words of Mary: “[The Lord] has used the power of his arm, he has routed the arrogant of heart. He has pulled down princes from their thrones and raised high the lowly. He has filled the starving with good things, sent the rich away empty” (Lk1:50-53).

25. Generations of Zimbabweans, too, throughout their own long history of oppression and their struggle for liberation, have remembered, prayed and sung these texts from the Old and New Testaments and found strength, courage and perseverance in their faith that Jesus is on their side. That is the message of hope we want to convey in this Pastoral Letter: God is on your side. He always hears the cry of the poor and oppressed and saves them.

## **26. Conclusion**

We conclude our Pastoral Letter by affirming with a clear and unambiguous Yes our support of morally legitimate political authority. At


the same time we say an equally clear and unambiguous No to power through violence, oppression and intimidation. We call on those who are responsible for the current crisis in our Country to repent and listen to the cry of their citizens. To the people of Zimbabwe we appeal for peace and restraint when expressing their justified grievances and demonstrating for their human rights.

27. Words call for concrete action, for symbols and gestures which keep our hope alive. We therefore invite all the faithful to a Day of Prayer and Fasting for Zimbabwe, on Saturday, 14 April 2007. This will be followed by a Prayer Service for Zimbabwe, on Friday, every week, in all parishes of our Country. As for the details, each Diocese will make known its own arrangements.

# **ONLY WHEN POWER STANDS UNDER GOD'S BLESSING CAN IT BE TRUSTED**

## **ZIMBABWE ELECTIONS 2008**

Published 16 December 2007



+Robert C. Ndlovu, Archbishop of Harare (ZCBC President)  
+Angel Floro, Bishop of Gokwe (ZCBC Vice President)  
+Alexio Churu Muchabaiwa, Bishop of Mutare  
+Michael D. Bhasera, Bishop of Masvingo  
+Martin Munyanyi, Bishop of Gweru  
+Dieter B. Scholz SJ, Bishop of Chinhoyi  
+Albert Serrano, Bishop of Hwange  
+Patrick M. Mutume, Auxiliary Bishop of Mutare  
Very Rev. Monsignor Martin Schupp, Apostolic Administrator of Bulawayo

**D**ear Brothers and Sisters in Christ. Peace be with you. In August 2004 we published a pastoral letter in which we shared with you some Christian insights with regard to a credible electoral process for a responsible and accountable leadership. We want in the current pastoral letter to continue in the same vein to offer guidance to all peace loving Zimbabweans as we come towards combined elections in 2008. The Church's obligation to teach about moral values that should shape our lives, including our public lives, is central to its mission.

Past elections have been marred by controversy and violence. This time, we urge Government and all the contesting parties, to create a social, political and economic climate that enhances moral integrity. We urge those responsible for organizing the elections to establish a credible electoral process, whose outcome will be free and fair and with local and international recognition. The Church looks beyond political parties and derives its ethos from the eternal Kingdom of God, a kingdom of love, truth, justice, freedom and peace. The Church therefore aims to build the foundations here on earth of that Eternal Kingdom.

Individual Christians can make their own decisions as to which party comes closest to the Christian ethos. They have a right to join any party of their choice. Christians should become more involved in political life, running for office, working within political parties and communicating concerns to the elected officials. Voting should be guided more by one's moral convictions than by one's attachment to a political party or interest group. Christian voters should use the Christian Social Teaching to examine the views of the candidates on pertinent issues and should consider the candidates' integrity and their past or potential performance.

The Church respects each individual decision and this reality is evident in all our congregations composed of members belonging to all existing parties. However, within the party of their choice, Christians must act as salt, leaven and light. There must be "a firm commitment to justice and solidarity by each member of the people of God. Catholic professionals and teachers, businessmen and civil servants, lawyers and politicians are

especially expected to bear witness to goodness, truth, justice and love of God in their daily lives” (Church in Africa, Nos. 105 and 108). We recognize that the responsibility to make choices in political life rests with each individual in light of a properly formed conscience, and that participation goes well beyond casting a vote in a particular election.

## **2. Electoral System**

In 'The Zimbabwe We Want' the Ecumenical Church Bodies stated that the electoral system is one of the pillars of the parliamentary democratic representative process. Elections and their management have become one of the key criteria for evaluating the extent to which a country has adopted the ethos and practice of democracy.

### **2.1 Electoral Process and Institutions**

The electoral process provides an opportunity for the choice and installation of governments and the transfer of power in peaceful circumstances. In other words an electoral system is the vehicle that gives expression to the will of the people.

One of the most important electoral bodies is the Electoral Commission. It is vital that the Electoral Commission inspires confidence and protects the integrity of the process in the delivery of free and fair elections. The body must be impartial and not amenable to political or other pressure. Such a body must be the main custodian of the electoral process-the election campaign, access to media and media coverage.

Concerning the media we want to reiterate what we said in our August 2004 Pastoral Letter that both State and Independent media should fulfill their educative and informative roles in society. Press freedom is to be safeguarded in the interest of promoting the common good and promoting the human rights enshrined in the national constitution. The media should serve all sections of the society. All parties should have access to media coverage to explain their programmes.

We are concerned about the environment and atmosphere that prevails before, during and after elections. We therefore wish to recapitulate some of the important points from the 2004 pastoral letter, as later summarized by our Justice and Peace Commission for easier understanding, in Responsible and Accountable Leadership.

## **2.2 Before Elections**

The environment before elections is critical and must be conducive to free and fair elections. People should be afforded ample time to register as voters at their own pace. There should be clearly designated registration offices, where it is easy for all to register. Long queues discourage some people from registering.

Political parties should not be provocative in their campaigns. All campaigns, therefore, should be peaceful and respectful of other parties, while challenging their stand and opinions on various issues. All Political parties should be free to campaign and have equal access to State resources in the form of media coverage, police protection, financial subsidies, etc. Civil servants, in particular, are not party cadres and must render the all important and impartial civil service throughout the elections to ensure free and fair elections.

People should be free to attend party meetings of their choice. To promote informed choices, all those organizations concerned with civic education should team up to educate people about elections and encourage open-minded citizens. It is healthy for citizens to hold different political opinions and engage in rational disputation, while all the time respecting each other's dignity. Human dignity has its rooting in the dignity of God and must not be violated. We therefore call for tolerance among members of different political persuasions.



## **2.3 During Elections**

As your Shepherds, we encourage you to vote in an atmosphere of peace. To neglect your duty to vote is to be irresponsible for you leave others to decide your future for you. Remember, it is good people who allow bad governments to get into power. Participation in political life in the light of fundamental moral principles is an essential duty of every Christian and all people of good will.

We appeal to the relevant authorities to make sure the electoral process is efficient and user friendly. Long queues discourage potential voters from voting. Monitors and observers help to create a free, fair and peaceful atmosphere. Zimbabwe should be proud to invite both local and international observers to witness to democracy in action.

## **2.4 After Elections**

Be magnanimous in victory and gracious in defeat. Losing candidates and parties in a free and fair election do not find it difficult to accept defeat. Good losers are also peacemakers. Good losers also command respect. Losing parties become the opposition which can make use of their vote in Parliament to challenge government policies and performance through constructive criticism. Both opposition and government should have one common aim, which is the realization of the common good of the society.

All citizens and various institutions and organizations should, in the spirit of social solidarity help government and opposition parties by making their own contributions in national reconciliation and restoration. After elections, all citizens should join forces to build the Zimbabwe we all want. We appeal to all citizens to adopt a spirit of oneness and solidarity. Lack of solidarity increases the gap between the rich and the poor in the society. Pope John Paul II taught that, "Solidarity helps to see the "other..." not as some kind of instrument... to be exploited.... and then discarded, but as our neighbour to be made a sharer with ourselves in the banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God" (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 39).

### **3. Conclusion**

We your Bishops, have written this letter to you when our country is preparing for elections in 2008. As a nation we all belong to one family of God, who loves and cares for each one of us. Let us turn to him in fervent prayer as we prepare for the forthcoming elections and rebuild our nation. The psalmist reminds us: "If the Lord does not build the house in vain do its builders labour; If the Lord does not watch over the city in vain does the watchman keep vigil" (Ps 127, 1).

Let us use this time to pray for our nation privately and in our congregations. In our Parish Churches we share the story of world conversion and world unity, of persecution and new life, of triumphs and defeats, of saints and sinners. It is in our Parish Churches too that God's people have been baptized with parental hopes and joys, here they have been married with hopes for their own family and here, they have been buried with the promise of eternal peace. Let us converge at our Parish Churches in prayer as we prepare for the forthcoming elections. May the leaders we choose lead us in Godly ways. Jesus said, "I came so that they may have life and have it to the full" (Jn.10:10), and that includes Zimbabwe. As we choose our leaders, and they in turn govern us and engage the world, may the exercise constitute a win for Jesus, leading to love not hatred, life not death, justice not oppression, peace not violence, and prosperity not poverty. This is voting wisely that, like the biblical three wise men, we always choose, in each election, those leaders who enjoy God's blessing and will lead us in the direction that takes us to Jesus and to national well-being. Only when power stands under God's blessing can it be trusted.

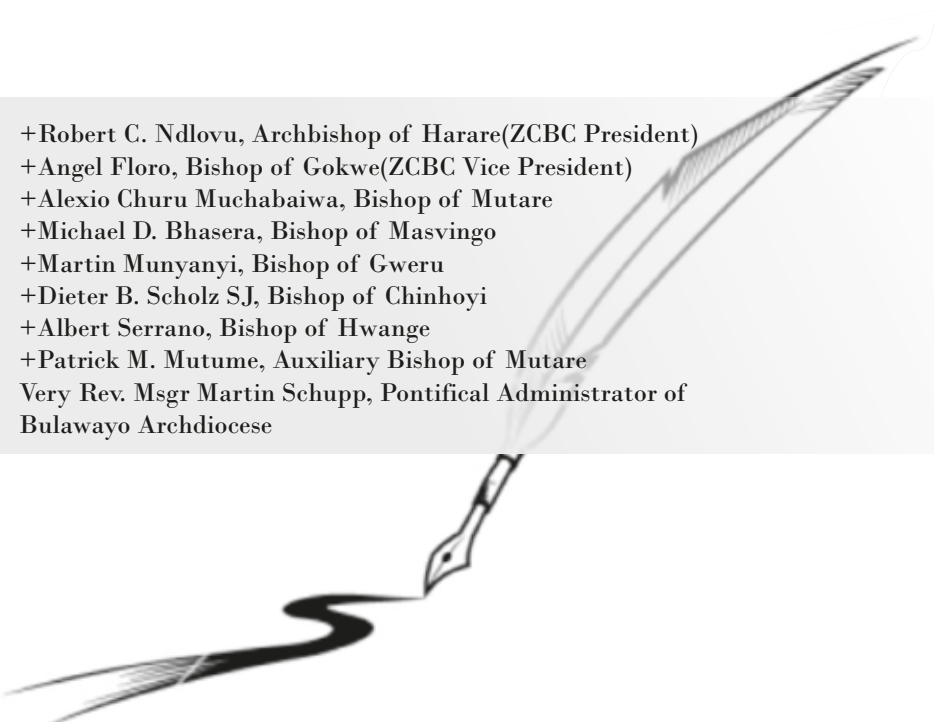
We, therefore, invite all Christians to pray for our leaders and would be leaders in all sections of our society so that they may adopt Christlike leadership that is God fearing and respects human dignity. Every situation is an opportunity to observe and realize the intention of the Lord Jesus Christ when he says, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart and all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as

yourself," (Mt.22:37-39). May the electoral process of 2008 bring us a national rebirth and help us to grow in the love of God and neighbour, as Zimbabwe regains its rightful place among the nations of the world.

## **A CALL FOR AN IMMEDIATE STOP TO VIOLENCE**

Press Statement by the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops'  
Conference on the Current Crisis of Our Country

Thursday, 12 June 2008



+Robert C. Ndlovu, Archbishop of Harare(ZCBC President)  
+Angel Floro, Bishop of Gokwe(ZCBC Vice President)  
+Alexio Churu Muchabaiwa, Bishop of Mutare  
+Michael D. Bhasera, Bishop of Masvingo  
+Martin Munyanyi, Bishop of Gweru  
+Dieter B. Scholz SJ, Bishop of Chinhoyi  
+Albert Serrano, Bishop of Hwange  
+Patrick M. Mutume, Auxiliary Bishop of Mutare  
Very Rev. Msgr Martin Schupp, Pontifical Administrator of  
Bulawayo Archdiocese

In our Pastoral Letter on 'Zimbabwe Elections 2008', published in December 2007, we offered some guidelines on a credible electoral process. We pointed out that the environment before, during and after the elections, has much to contribute in judging whether a particular election is free and fair. Our experience before the March 29, 2008 harmonised elections and on polling day was encouraging. It was the post-election period that discredited the whole process. What we are experiencing now is putting into question the credibility of the Presidential run-off elections scheduled for 27 June 2008.

The reign of violence that has been unleashed on the country, especially in the rural areas and former commercial farming areas, is unacceptable. Base camps from which militias terrorise defenceless rural populations must be disbanded as a matter of urgency. People are being force-marched to political re-orientation meetings and are told that they voted 'wrongly' in the Presidential poll on 29 March 2008 and that on 27 June 2008, they will be given the last opportunity to 'correct their mistake', else the full-scale shooting war of the 1970s will resume. It is in this context that despicable atrocities are being committed by members of both contesting parties, ZANU PF and MDC. The words of Genesis 4:10 come to our mind, "Your brother's blood cries out to me from the soil". Innocent blood is being spilt. The perpetrators are known. We appeal to the political parties to exercise restraint.

It is sad to see Christians, including Catholics, among the perpetrators of such violence. Where are our Christian principles and values? The prevailing animosity will make post-election reconciliation, unity and healing more difficult to achieve. We call for a conducive environment that enables people to vote according to their consciences. Hatred, intimidation and violence cannot have the last word in our society.

As we move closer to the Presidential run-off on 27 June 2008 we insist on the principles for a credible electoral process. Potentially disenfranchised people by way of displacements or deprivation of their IDs must be enabled to exercise their right to vote. We urge all State Security Organs to value and protect the life and human rights of every individual. We call


for the de-politicisation of the armed and uniformed forces and traditional leaders. We call for an immediate cessation of violence and all provocative statements and actions. We appeal for the immediate deployment of SADC, AU and independent monitors and observers throughout the country, particularly the rural areas. We call for a balanced coverage of the two contesting parties and candidates on State Media, which is funded by public funds. We call upon ZEC to fulfil its Constitutional mandate as a truly independent and impartial authority for the run-off election.

Finally, we renew the call to prayer for all our needs, which include a credible electoral process, food and provisions for our families, education for our children, medicines for the sick and respect for every human life and dignity. "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Mt.22:39). Electoral processes and outcomes are not an excuse for breaching God's commandments. The sun will still rise on 28 June 2008, well after the elections. May our present conduct help Zimbabwe rise too to assume its rightful place among the Nations of the World. "The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you" (2Cor.13:13).

# **BE COMPASSIONATE!**

## Reclaiming Our Right to Give Food to the Hungry

11 December 2008



+Robert C. Ndlovu, Archbishop of Harare(ZCBC President)  
+Angel Floro, Bishop of Gokwe(ZCBC Vice President)  
+Alexio Churu Muchabaiwa, Bishop of Mutare  
+Michael D. Bhasera, Bishop of Masvingo  
+Martin Munyanyi, Bishop of Gweru  
+Dieter B. Scholz SJ, Bishop of Chinhoyi  
+Albert Serrano, Bishop of Hwange  
+Patrick M. Mutume, Auxiliary Bishop of Mutare  
Very Rev. Monsignor Martin Schupp, Apostolic Administrator of Bulawayo

**W**e, the Catholic Bishops of Zimbabwe, are deeply concerned about the continuing harassment, by some Government officials, of our priests and other Church personnel who distribute food to the hungry. In Zimbabwe, as elsewhere in the world, all charitable and development activities of the Catholic Church are based on the principle of subsidiarity, which accords Government the primary responsibility towards ensuring the welfare of all citizens. Our role is to support Government and complement its efforts in discharging its social obligations. We, therefore, readily accept Government's coordinating role in the allocation and distribution of food and other emergency services. What we object to is the unwarranted obstruction, for political objectives, placed in the way of the Church's relief workers.

Only recently, one of our parish priests was hauled before a committee of hostile district officials who demanded to know who had given him permission to assist a few starving parishioners with small quantities of upfu. This harassment is inhuman and unjustifiable on any grounds. At times it seems to us that in their struggle for freedom and independence, some political leaders have lost their humanity. In the face of the multiple crises currently putting the lives of millions of Zimbabweans at risk, we appeal for compassion and demand that all party political considerations be set aside immediately in order to maximise the limited resources available to us. We also demand free access to our people, without political 'escorts'.


The moral and physical space we are requesting in this Statement to carry out the Church's relief work is nothing extraordinary, rather it is the demand of simple justice based on the Word of God and the social teaching of the Church: "Blessed are the merciful, they shall have mercy shown them" (Mt 5:7). "Be compassionate just as your Father is compassionate" (Lk 6:36). "Charity is the greatest social commandment. It respects others and their rights. It requires the practice of justice and it alone makes us capable of it" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, para 1889. Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, para 583).



# NATIONAL HEALING AND RECONCILIATION

God Can Heal The Wounds Of The  
Afflicted

1 October 2009



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+Alex Thomas, Archbishop of Bulawayo  
+Alexio Churu Muchabaiwa, Bishop of Mutare  
+Michael D. Bhasera, Bishop of Masvingo  
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+Dieter B. Scholz SJ, Bishop of Chinhoyi  
+Albert Serrano, Bishop of Hwange  
+Patrick M. Mutume, Auxiliary Bishop of Mutare

## **1. Introduction**

The Spirit of the Lord is upon our land and God is ready to heal us. Today, as we struggle with the Global Political Agreement, national economic recovery, the national constitutional process, national healing, national visioning, etc., we must acknowledge and recognize the significance of this historical moment. God has given us an opportunity to face and resolve our crises.

We, your Bishops, said in 2007 that “Our crisis is not only political and economic but first and foremost a spiritual and moral crisis”. Every problem has a religious dimension. Noone's heart can be at rest as long as people are haunted by evil memories, never acknowledged and straightened out. This crisis can only be resolved if we, the people of Zimbabwe, confess our sins, are forgiven, fully accept each other and once more commit ourselves to work together in solidarity, justice and peace.

We, Zimbabweans, have hurt each other in many different ways and over long periods of time. We are all guilty, for those who have been victims at one time have been aggressors at another and many more have done nothing in the face of atrocities perpetrated before their eyes. Today, we all need healing from these hurts and from our guilt. This healing will facilitate reconciliation within and among ourselves and also with our Creator. With healing and reconciliation, our nation will recover and set itself up for political, social, cultural and economic development.

## **2. Why we all need healing**

Without seeking to minimize or divert attention from current injustices, we can turn to our history to help explain why we have conflicts today.

2.0 The pre-colonial era, the colonial era, and the post-colonial era serve as easily identifiable historical periods in which our conflicts have taken place. Each era has its own sources of conflict that can be seen as political, economic, and cultural. However, the different eras have deeply influenced each other. What makes the situation complex is the fact that

conflicts that existed before colonialism were used by the colonial system's divide and rule strategies for the purposes of maintaining power and control, only to have some of the same modes of thinking, strategies and institutions inherited and perpetuated in the post-colonial period. This makes the challenges of healing, reconciliation, justice and peace in Zimbabwe very complex as it becomes necessary to deal with the present hurts and wounds as well as trace the wounds of the past. Historical wounds have been carried to the present through memories, oral traditions and recorded reports. Members of one group that was victim to violence in one era have sometimes turned out to be the perpetrators in another. The following are some of the major historical conflicts that need our attention for the sake of national healing.

2.1 Pre-Colonial ethnic conflicts around control of resources and demarcation of territories are deep sources of conflict in our history. One of the most significant conflicts is the one that involved the Ndebele raids on Shona groups. The Shona have passed on to their children stories about the raids which involved the confiscation of cattle, food, strong young men and beautiful women by the Ndebele. The Shona have, over the years, cultivated negative feelings towards Ndebele groups. These feelings include hatred, contempt, suspicion and the desire to retaliate. These feelings may explain continued rivalry of the groups that has been shown during the liberation struggles and in sport, cultural and political activities. We need to heal hurtful memories from this ethnic rivalry. For reconciliation to take place we will need to ask ourselves pertinent questions. For example, what are these stories? For what purposes have these stories been told over the years? How useful are these stories? Can these stories be told differently? How has the psyche of the rival groups been shaped by these historical events? What effect has the need for jobs that have seen the ethnic groups settle in all parts of the country had?

2.2 The colonial era was dominated by racial conflicts stemming from racial discrimination in all sectors. Inferiority complexes developed among the blacks and superiority complexes developed among the whites. This created resentment among the blacks who then waged

liberation struggles. These struggles further triggered hatred between the racial groups. These perceptions and feelings still do affect us today. We need healing from them. But before that can be achieved, racial groups need to repent of their respective sins. How can black and white people have genuine integration and solidarity with each other?

2.3 The Post Colonial Era started with the joy of independence from colonialism. Post independence expansion in education, health care, social services and general freedoms were recorded. As we pointed out in *The Zimbabwe We Want*, “We were able to build on the solid infrastructure which the colonial regime had managed to maintain despite the economic sanctions imposed by the United Nations after the Unilateral Declaration of independence in 1965”.

However, as a nation, we made mistakes in the euphoria of independence. We forgot to attend to the needs of those who were traumatized by the war especially the ex-combatants. We ignored those who were physically and psychologically devastated by poverty, discrimination and oppression. They all were neither counseled nor treated. Whites who lost political power were not helped to heal from the trauma of that loss. Some of them tried to recreate Rhodesia even in the middle of a new nation and a black government. We all pretended that we could start afresh in a new Zimbabwe without dealing with our past or defining collectively what future we desired for our nation. We pretended that the anger and hatred that had accumulated over many years could simply vanish with independence. This failure to deal with our past continues to haunt us. We now have, however, a second chance. We must use it.

2.3.1 Political sources of conflict include the unrelenting pursuit for power which has been demonstrated by groups and individuals in our history. Some groups and individuals have shown the desire to monopolize power and political control at the expense of other groups and individuals. Those who have been marginalized have resisted the exclusion. The resultant conflicts have formed the basis of the political

conflicts that have arisen among us and the contexts within which we have done wrong against each other and sinned against God.

Our political history is characterized by the use of state institutions as partisan tools to support the ruling party. Those who have opposed the ruling party have been marginalised and sometimes criminalised. In our history, there has not been space created to allow for healthy political debates and contestation. This has caused a lot of frustration and resentment.

The formation of strong political opposition parties has become a source of strong political conflicts and violence. Women, the youth and minorities feel that they are not fully included in the development of the country. So, politically, our country is deeply divided.

2.3.2 Economic sources of conflict are to do with control of the country's resources including wealth, land, minerals, property and other national resources. Poverty of the marginalised majority, corruption, mismanagement of resources, sanctions, lack of transparency and accountability are continuing sources of conflict. In fighting for our undermined dignity and in defending our economic advantages, we have lost sight of the humanity of others.

We have been divided by disagreements on how national resources and social goods are to be owned, used and distributed. At the centre of economic conflicts has been the distribution and re-distribution of land. The post independence economic downturn that was partly caused by the experimentation with structural adjustment programmes, and the crisis of leadership that has continued to dog our country led to frustration. This frustration and impatience eventually led people to resort to using violent and non-transparent means of accessing the land. Corruption, incompetence, mismanagement, arrogance, and economic greed led to the collapse of our economy. With high inflation, unemployment and poverty many fled to the diaspora where they continued and continue to experience economic hardships.

2.3.3 Social sources of conflict are to do with perceived cultural differences, ethnic groupings and divisions, religious differences, and

divisions in race, gender, and class. The desire and attempts by some groups to culturally dominate others has led to social and cultural conflicts. In Zimbabwe, intolerance, mistrust, lack of respect for other cultural groups were deepened by divide and rule tactics of the colonial systems. These tactics have been re-invented in the post-colonial context where political parties and factions have been ethnicised or tribalised. The distinction of those who are supposed to have participated in the liberation struggles and those who are seen to have contributed nothing to the struggles has also been used as a source of socially destructive division.

Social conflicts have been complex and deep. Fundamental human rights have been violated. Violence has been institutionalized as demonstrated in various successive instances in the pre-independence war period, Gukurahundi, land re-distribution, Murambatsvina, violence during elections of which the worst was the period after the harmonized elections of 29 March 2008. Many people in Matabeleland still feel that Gukurahundi was meant by the Shona to eliminate the Ndebele people. They are wounded and they do not feel that they have enough solidarity from fellow Zimbabweans even as they struggle with regional development challenges. This has helped to build frustration and anger which needs to be dealt with if we are to have national healing and reconciliation. The nation needs to acknowledge and respond to the deep wounds of Gukurahundi.

The violence that took place after the harmonised elections of 29 March 2008 has left deep scars on the Zimbabwean people. In its press statement of 30 April 2008, the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) reported on “country-wide reports of systematic violence in the form of assaults, murders, abductions, intimidation and wanton destruction of property against innocent civilians whose alleged crime is to have voted 'wrongly'”.

Post colonial social conflicts have been caused by ways of thinking, emotional responses and social institutions we have built for ourselves as individuals and as social groups. What we believe about ourselves and our

relations with others informs how we relate to each other. So far, our ways of thinking have been divisive, exclusivist and aggressive. This has been true of our party politics, racial conflicts, ethnic divisions, gender and generational schisms. We must acknowledge and recognise the various cultural animosities which have impacted on our politics, economics, Church and other gatherings and social activities. This is a serious area in need of healing and reconciliation.

### **3. We have sinned**

As Zimbabweans, we have made very serious social, political and economic mistakes over the years. It is essential to identify the areas in which we have made these mistakes in order to respond to them. The main cause of conflicts in Zimbabwe is the consistent violation of human dignity and therefore human rights. We have prevented each other from attaining human fulfillment by depriving each other of life, education, shelter, health, information, freedom of speech and association, freedom of conscience, justice and peace.

As Zimbabweans we should focus on what brings us together more than what separates us. The Good News of Christ tells us that we are one. It is important that this Good News transforms us to see this fact. If we are truly transformed, our faith will become our culture. As Pope John Paul II points out, “a faith that does not become culture is not fully accepted, not entirely thought out, not faithfully lived,”

We recommend that there be open and public admission that violence has been part of our life and history. The truth about this violence needs to be told. Victims need to tell their stories in a free and supportive environment. Perpetrators also need to take responsibility for their sins, but also in a humane environment. The cycle of violence, humiliation, oppression, and exploitation must stop. Anybody who has used his or her position to direct, command, plan or directly commit acts of violence should not be allowed to hold any public office that he or she can use to perpetrate further violence in future.

## **4. We are wounded**

Since pre-colonial times, Zimbabwe, has experienced a lot of suffering. Notwithstanding, we have seen many blessings come our way. We have a country that is rich in human and resource diversity. We have benefited from many cultures and traditions both local and international. With commitment and hard work, Zimbabweans from many backgrounds have over the years developed decent social, political, economic infrastructure. Our rich cultural and religious heritage has generally responded well to the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And yet we have not used our blessings well. We have allowed our different backgrounds to be sources of suffering rather than happiness. The richness in our racial, ethnic, gender, age, class and educational backgrounds have been turned into sources of our suffering when they could be the reason for our joys. Over the last ten years those divisions have really plunged our country into an unprecedented abyss characterised by economic, social, and political woes and unimaginable forms of political intimidation and violence. We broke the world record of high inflation. Our economic crisis allowed most of our industries and infrastructure to breakdown to the extent that over 90% of the people are now unemployed, diseases such as HIV and AIDS, cholera and malaria have spread at an alarming rate. Poverty has deepened. Schools and universities have stopped functioning properly, if they do function at all. Political conflicts have broken individuals, families and communities. In April 2007, we described the situation as “extremely volatile”. In 2008, that description became a sadly gross understatement. Today our nation is deeply traumatised. As a nation, we are wounded physically, emotionally, and spiritually. “There are Christians on all sides of the conflict,” we noted in 2007. The Church itself has not been spared of conflicts, intimidation and violence.

There is now general and open admission that our situation is a real crisis which cannot be left unattended. We are grateful that through negotiations facilitated by SADC, the major political parties in the country



reached a Global Political Agreement (GPA) in September 2008 although the agreement itself has some limitations. It was reached through a process that was not all inclusive. It is basically a political agreement and yet our crises are more than political. However, we regard the Agreement as a moment of grace that can and should be turned into “a new beginning”.

In this agreement between ZANU PF and the two formations of the MDC, the principals to the agreement, admit to the reality of the “divisions, conflicts and intolerance that have characterised Zimbabwean society”. The facts about our crises speak for themselves despite attempts to minimise the gravity of the situation. Reading through the “Preamble” of the Agreement, it is clear that the principals admit to the seriousness of the situation. When they say that they are “determined to build a society free of violence, fear, intimidation, patronage, and corruption” they acknowledge how these ills have debilitated Zimbabwe and its people. This point is confirmed in Article 18 entitled, “Security of persons and prevention of violence”. More explicit acceptance of what has happened in the country is found in Article 7, with the title, “Promotion of equality, national healing, cohesion and unity”. The parties to the agreement agree that the unity government:

c) Shall consider setting up of a mechanism to advise on what measures might be necessary and practicable to achieve national healing, cohesion and unity for victims of pre and post independence violence.

The agreement took cognizance of the fact that there were periods in Zimbabwe's history that were fraught with conflict and during which acts of political violence were committed, and also the fact that unless the hurt, pain and sense of loss that were occasioned by these conflicts were effectively addressed, Zimbabweans would never experience genuine peace, unity and national cohesion. It is also clear from Section c) of Article 18 that the principals need help to establish mechanisms for national healing. In this area, the Church is prepared to offer the mechanism, not just to advise; to play a significant role not only in healing

and cohesion but also in the much needed reconciliation. But real genuine healing and reconciliation can only take place when the environment is open, free and democratic. When such an environment does not exist, as is currently the case, the church commits herself to work towards its establishment.

## **5. Role of the Church**

We, as leaders of the Church, are committed to help this country achieve normalcy. As the theme of the Second African Synod encourages us, we commit the Church to be in the service of reconciliation, healing, justice and peace. The Church aspires for the greater justice of the Kingdom, which goes beyond law; it is a virtue. It does not deny human justice, but integrates it and transcends it. In this way, justice becomes a path leading to forgiveness and true reconciliation, and thereby restoring communion. We urge Government to show political willingness by creating a conducive environment for national healing, reconciliation and integration.

The Church has already been contributing to the healing of those who have been wounded and whose lives have been destroyed. We invite the support of all the Christians and people of good will, the government, civil society, NGOs, all our Church organs, Parishes in all their sections and funding partners to support this effort to heal those who have been wounded over the years of our history. We believe that restorative justice will help to heal those whose rights were undermined and with the help of the Lord, they will achieve reconciliation and peace. Our Lord Jesus provides the best example of one who pays the ultimate price on the cross for the sake of our reconciliation with God. "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross" (Colossians 1:19-20).

"Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was

the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:4-5).

This is not by any means an easy or short term task. We accepted without discrimination and looked after those whose hands were chopped off, those whose homes were burnt and those wounded in crossfire. We saw victims of inhuman torture in our hospitals. Through our faithful, we were made to be the good Samaritan, prepared to heal, often at own expense (Luke 10:25-37). This work we have begun, we desire to complete it with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We appeal to those among us who can afford to contribute towards the expenses of addressing the injustices of the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras to join us in this great task.

We appeal to the perpetrators of these atrocities, accomplices, and instigators of violence to acknowledge the evil deeds and in conscience to own up and make restitution as Zacchaeus did (Luke 19,8). You need to be justified before God to find peace.

Finally, we appeal to the victims of any of the evil acts in our country, the offended, to forgive. It is not easy. Do not expect total compensation but what the community can afford in the circumstances we find ourselves. Let the following words from the letter of St. Paul to the Romans give you an attitude that fosters healing, peace and reconciliation, even though what is provided may fall short of meeting the requirements for full retributive justice:

“Repay no one evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12,17-19)

Forgiveness does not mean that you submit to injustice or let people walk all over you or that you do not stand up for your rights. Nor does it mean

that forgiveness should be all one sided. The person who causes the hurt should help bring forgiveness into being by saying, “I was wrong, I am sorry, I should not have done that, forgive me”. It is much easier to reduce a grudge if two people resolve to address it together. But even if the other party will not take any blame, or meet halfway, the Christian message is: You do not have to make the same mistake again – but let your bitterness go. Jesus asked for forgiveness for his crucifiers even when they had nailed him to the cross and were not repentant. Even in the heat of their hate he was forgiving them. “Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing” (Lk. 23:34).

## **6. Recommendation**

Reconciliation is a very demanding responsibility which calls for great commitment, dedication and sacrifice. We must support processes which are already happening in various communities. In May 2009 the Churches and Civil Society came up with a framework for national healing and reconciliation, which proposes a comprehensive process for intervention by Government, the Church, Civil Society and all levels of our society. The framework could serve as a starting point for healing our nation.

## **7. Repenting to Bring Healing**

For national reconciliation and healing to take place effectively, it is necessary that the entire nation participates in a comprehensive, all-inclusive, holistic and clearly defined national process underpinned by strong political will and desire to reconcile and heal the nation. We envision National Healing and Reconciliation as a home grown inclusive process that will lay the foundations for a peaceful and cohesive Zimbabwean society; where the security of individuals and communities is guaranteed; where the dignity of the individual is respected; where broken relationships are healed; where trust is restored; and where diversity is celebrated.

In 2007, we, your Sherpherds, pointed out that, “Our Country is in deep crisis. ...Yet, it can also be turned into a moment of grace and of a new beginning, if those responsible for causing the crisis repent, heed the cry of the people and foster a change of heart and mind ...” We need this moment of grace and the new beginning now more than ever before. We need more and more people both within and outside Zimbabwe to be humble enough to admit their responsibility by commission or omission for the evils that have happened in this country. We all need to repent for the suffering of the black people who were forced from their homes, enslaved, exploited and oppressed during colonialism; the many white people who became victims of circumstances; the migrant communities who have suffered humiliation and exploitation; the victims of Gukurahundi and Murambatsvina who have suffered persecution and violence; women, youth and children who struggle for recognition and violence-free lives; and for many more wounds plaguing our nation. We are wounded but we can also be healers if we make a deliberate effort to follow the example of the Wounded Healer as he hung upon the Cross. By His wounds let us be healed.

*Indeed, God can and will heal the wounds of the afflicted.*

# LET US WORK FOR THE COMMON GOOD

Let us save our nation

14 January 2011



+Angel Floro, Bishop of Gokwe (ZCBC President)  
+Robert C. Ndlovu, Archbishop of Harare  
+Alex Thomas, Archbishop of Bulawayo  
+Alexio Muchabaiwa, Bishop of Mutare (ZCBC Vice President)  
+Michael D. Bhasera, Bishop of Masvingo  
+Martin Munyanyi, Bishop of Gweru  
+Dieter B. Scholz SJ, Bishop of Chinhoyi  
+Albert Serrano, Bishop of Hwange  
+Patrick M. Mutume, Auxiliary Bishop of Mutare

## **1. Introduction**

**A**s we begin the New Year 2011 we, the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference, address this pastoral letter to Catholics and to all people of good will. We invite you in this New Year to work for the Common Good and to save our nation. The theme of this pastoral letter arises from recent and current experiences within our country. We continue to hope for a time when we can genuinely make the song of the heavenly host our own, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!" (Lk. 2:14). However, the evolving trends in our country are worrying and, if not corrected, can lead to our loss of nationhood, the disintegration of our society and to the forming of degenerate militias with opposing loyalties. The Social Teaching of the Catholic Church urges us to 'Work for the Common Good'. Indeed, "How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1)

## **2. The Social Teaching of the Church**

"The joys and the hopes, the grief's and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the grief's and anxieties of the followers of Christ" (Vatican II, The Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes*, no. 1). To this end the Catholic Church has over the years developed ten principles that form the pillars of its social teaching. The ten principles provide criteria for judgment and directives for action in matters of justice, integrity, truth and social well being. They are, the Dignity of the Human Person; the Common Good; Option for the Poor; Human Rights and Responsibilities; Participation; Subsidiarity; Solidarity; Economic Justice; Stewardship of God's Creation; and Promotion of Peace.

It is clear that all the ten principles are relevant to our situation but for the present we have chosen to dwell on the second principle as we invite you to work for the Common Good and save our Nation.

### **3. The Common Good**

Everyone has a responsibility to contribute to the Common Good of all members of society. A better society is not for the benefit of an elite but for all. The way in which we organize our society directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow together in community and contribute to the Common Good.

The Common Good is the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily. The Common Good concerns the life of all and consists of three essential elements: respect for the person; the Social Well Being and Development of the Group; and Peace, which gives stability and is the source of security for a just order.

### **4. Signs of Hope in our Nation**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we, your Shepherds, congratulate you for your patience over the many years of suffering and hardship. You have proved to be very innovative in overcoming or at least alleviating economic hardships and working for the survival of your families, dependents, the Church and our country. To fight misery and to struggle against injustice is to promote the human and spiritual progress of all people and, therefore, the Common Good of Humanity. Peace is something that is built up day by day, in the pursuit of an order intended by God, which implies a more perfect form of justice among men (Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, On the Development of Peoples, no. 76).

The signing of the Global Political Agreement in September 2008 and the forming of the Government of National Unity in February 2009 bore signs of hope for the restoration of our nation, notwithstanding the worrying and tragic circumstances which gave rise to those developments. These were positive steps whose value have been eroded by lack of collective commitment and political will.



## **5. Our Concerns**

We are concerned that not all the tenets of the Global Political Agreement have been implemented, leading to the continued isolation of the country by most of the international community and the postponement of national healing, recovery, restoration and the enjoyment of fundamental human rights by all.

Given our situation it is important that we express openly and strongly our concern that every political party should engage in serious discussion about the Common Good. Without this sincere engagement we will continue to be dogged by violence, political intolerance, hate language in the public media, injustice, rigging of elections, fear, deception, etc. It is disheartening that State media never really went out of its way to promote COPAC and its quest for a people-driven constitution. So too, national healing, reconciliation and integration, which are so vital for national well-being, never seem to be given much serious media coverage.

We are concerned about incidences of politically motivated violence in some provinces. The liberation of Zimbabwe was achieved through the efforts of those who were inside the country (both armed and unarmed), outside the country and by the international community. The claim to have monopoly in the liberation struggle by any single sector or party, is therefore, false and may be the misconception solely responsible for the abuse of human rights and the erosion of the sovereignty of the citizens in Zimbabwe.

## **6. A Spiritual and Moral Crisis**

In our Pastoral Letter for Easter 2007, we insisted that “the crisis (in our Country) is not merely political and economic but first and foremost a spiritual and moral crisis. As the young independent nation struggles to

find its common national spirit, the people of Zimbabwe are reacting against the 'structures of sin' in our society. Pope John Paul II said that the 'structures of sin' are rooted in personal sin, and thus always linked to the concrete acts of individuals who introduce these structures, consolidate them and make them difficult to remove. And thus they grow stronger, spread and become the source of other sins, and so influence people's behavior.' The Holy Father stressed that in order to understand the reality that confronts us, we must 'give a name to the evils which afflict us.' (God Hears the Cry of the Oppressed, Pastoral Letter, Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference, Holy Thursday 2007, No 16.)

## **7. Save Our Nation: Our Recommendations:**

In its final message, the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops held in Rome in October 2009, had a word for African Catholics in public life saying, 'We commend the many of you who, not minding all the dangers and uncertainties of politics in Africa, have generously offered yourselves for the public service of your people, as an apostolate to promote the common good and God's kingdom of justice, love and peace, in line with the teachings of the Church (cf. *Gaudium et spes*, 75). You can always count on the encouragement and support of the Church. EIA (the Church document *Ecclesia in Africa*) expressed the hope that saintly politicians and heads of state would emerge in Africa. This is by no means a futile wish. It is heartening that the cause of the Beatification of Julius Nyerere of Tanzania is already on course. Africa needs saints in high political office: saintly politicians who will clean the continent of corruption, work for the good of the people, and know how to galvanize other men and women of good will from outside the Church to join hands against the common evils that beset our nations.' (no. 23).

### **7.1 We urge our political leaders to:**

i) Prioritize poverty eradication by using proceeds from natural resources like diamonds, land, etc., for the development of the whole nation and all

its citizens. In its final message, the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops noted that Africa is rich in human and natural resources but 'many of our people are still left to wallow in poverty and misery, wars and conflicts, crisis and chaos. These are very rarely caused by natural disasters. They are largely due to human decisions and activities by people who have no regard for the common good.' (No. 5).

ii) Stop the active and tacit collusion of those undermining the fight against corruption. Corruption is a cancer destroying our nation.

iii) Prosecute wrong doers and widely publicize any disciplinary action so that no one is seen to commit crime with impunity.

iv) Desist from intimidating and mistreating members of the public, the media, civic communities, etc. Uphold human rights.

v) Uniformed forces should maintain peace and security for all citizens at all times and especially before, during and after elections, and do so impartially.

vi) We implore our political leadership in the coalition government to reflect deeply on the timing of elections bearing in mind the unhealed state of the nation and the fragile state of the economy. They shoulder a heavy responsibility to serve and save Zimbabwe. They must think and act in pursuit of the Common Good. In the event of elections, implement the SADC guidelines in full.

vii) We expect our members of Parliament to make an effort to spearhead the mitigation of the pressing needs of the people they represent and desist from being preoccupied with enriching themselves.

## **7.2 All Catholics and People of Good Will:**

i) We can be confident that God is with us, loves us and will save us. We, your Shepherds, therefore, urge you to be more faithful in your prayers. We need to pray as a nation without ceasing, for the restoration of our country.

ii) As citizens we must put into action the tenets of our faith and beliefs. In its final message, the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of

Bishops reminds all lay faithful that you 'share in the mandate of the Church to be ambassadors of Christ, working for reconciliation of people to God and among themselves. This requires of you to allow your Christian faith to permeate every aspect and facet of your lives; in the family, at work, in the professions, in politics and public life. This is no easy task. That is why you must assiduously access the means of grace, through prayer and the sacraments. The scripture text of the theme of our Synod, addressed to all followers of Christ, refers in a special way to you: "You are the salt of the earth ... You are the light of the world" (Mt. 5:13-14).'<sup>1</sup> (no.22). Never as citizens must we lose respect for the dignity of another by being involved in violence, corruption, etc. God commands us to love Him and our neighbour always (Lk. 10:27), that is, even during heated elections. One cannot be a true Christian and a perpetrator of violence at the same time. Having different political views is normal and healthy in building our nation. We do not have to fight over our different views.

iii) It is not enough to recall principles, state intentions, point to crying injustice and utter prophetic denunciations; these words will lack real weight unless they are accompanied for each individual by a livelier awareness of personal responsibility and by effective action. It is too easy to throw back on others responsibility for injustice, if at the same time one does not realize how each one shares in it personally and how personal conversion is needed first. The Christian's hope comes primarily from the fact that he knows that the Lord Jesus Christ is working with us in the world (Paul VI, Octogesima Adveniens, A Call to Action, no. 48).

## **8. Conclusion**

Many of you, who have endured much, are beginning to show signs of losing hope as the political, economic and social hardships, which should have disappeared by now, still persist. This is especially true of most people in rural areas who can hardly access foreign currency. Our situation is volatile. We can still move forward but can also just as easily return to our difficult past. Let us be exemplary so that we set the pattern for moving forward in faith. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for

righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Mt. 5:6). When we work together for the Common Good we succeed in building a Kingdom of justice, respect for the dignity of persons and their rights, truth, unity, forgiveness, political tolerance, service, free and fair elections, good national ethics, good media, solidarity, peace and good stewardship of God's creation.

A bare reading of this pastoral letter may have limited impact on the reader. Discussing with others will be beneficial. Bringing the fruit of one's discussion before God in personal prayer will lead one to seek the Holy Spirit's gifts of wisdom and courage. Strengthened by these gifts, we can strive to apply the Social Teaching of the Church to our daily lives for the promotion of a more just Zimbabwe, which upholds the Common Good. Let us all say the prayer at the end of this Pastoral Letter for our country, Zimbabwe.

# **PROCLAIMING A GOSPEL OF LIFE**

ZCBC - Pastoral Letter

March 2012



+Angel Floro, Bishop of Gokwe (ZCBC President)  
+Robert C. Ndlovu, Archbishop of Harare  
+Alex Thomas, Archbishop of Bulawayo  
+Alexio Churu Muchabaiwa, Bishop of Mutare (ZCBC Vice President)  
+Michael D. Bhasera, Bishop of Masvingo  
+Martin Munyanyi, Bishop of Gweru  
+Dieter B. Scholz SJ, Bishop of Chinhoyi  
+Albert Serrano, Bishop of Hwange  
+Patrick M. Mutume, Auxiliary Bishop of Mutare

In November 2011 Pope Benedict XVI visited Benin so as to hand over the Apostolic Exhortation 'Africae Munus' (Africa's Commitment). This was the fruit of the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops held in October 2009. The theme of the Synod had been: 'The Church in Africa at the service of reconciliation, justice and peace', and it sought to encourage the Catholic Church on the continent of Africa to become 'salt of the earth and light of the world' (Mt 5:13, 14); a true sign of the redeeming presence of Christ in our world today.

How best can we as Catholics be at the service of reconciliation, justice and peace in Zimbabwe today? The Holy Father suggests in *Africae Munus* that if we are to be true witnesses to the power of Christ then we need to transform what we believe into concrete pastoral actions. We are shaped by our faith and in turn our faith shapes and informs the choices we make. To be light and salt will involve living the truth of the Gospel in the daily choices and circumstances of our lives.

This is particularly important for us as we have begun the debate concerning a new Constitution for our nation. Writing a new Constitution is one thing but the words that are written need to be a serious reflection of the values we as people of Zimbabwe long to live by. We need a Constitution that is grounded and rooted in a living faith that bears witness to human and spiritual values. A Constitution that has a profound respect for the dignity of each human life and that takes us into the future confident that it will promote good governance and the lasting well-being of our country.

Among the many topics that have arisen in discussion in recent months have been issues surrounding capital punishment, abortion and same sex unions, these are all matters that touch the very core of our Christian values. We believe as Catholics that each person has been created in the image of God (Gen1:26f). It is therefore the responsibility of every society to ensure that every human life is protected and respected from the moment of conception until natural death. This is a basic principle of Catholic social teaching and so this is an opportune moment for us to

reflect on what the Catholic Church teaches about the value and dignity of human life.

We do so because we have a responsibility to facilitate the formation of a genuinely informed Catholic conscience that can be salt and light in Zimbabwean society today. We do so in order 'to offer the faithful' a 'catechesis which leads...to a deeper knowledge of Jesus Christ.' We do so to encourage all of us to take the path that proclaims the great value of our God given life.

## **Choose Life not death:**

Addressing the Israelites, Moses put before them a clear choice, life or death (Deut 30: 15-20). Of course given the choice none of us would willingly choose death. We desire to live. Indeed in his encyclical, 'Evangelium Vitae' (The Gospel of Life), Blessed John Paul II reminds us that at the very heart of Jesus' message is a 'Gospel of Life'. His entire mission can be summed up in the words: 'I came that you may have life, and have it abundantly' (Jn10:10). We are made for life, because we are made by 'life' itself and we share God's life and have been given the seed of eternal life through Baptism. The word 'life' is thus rich in meaning.

Yet we do not always choose life, why? In the passage from St John's gospel mentioned above, where Jesus invites us to embrace life he also points out that the sheep that belong to him 'listen to his voice' (John 10: 27-30). Perhaps here we meet the reason for our failure to live our faith fully. Are we always sure that it is the voice of Jesus we are following in the choices we make?

We are surrounded by many conflicting and seductive voices. We live in a world that at times seems to have grown tired or deaf to the voice of God and Christians too seem to chase after and absorb the most popular opinions of the day regardless of whether they reflect gospel values. We need to take to heart the plea made by Pope Benedict XVI when speaking to political and religious leaders in Benin. He invited them to adopt 'a



courageous ethical approach' to their responsibilities and to become 'promoters of your people's future...true servants of hope.'

It is not only political and religious leaders who should be 'servants of hope', and 'promoters of the future'. Rather all who follow Jesus Christ should strive through their witness to make every element of human life correspond to the true dignity divinely given to every person. As Christians we have been given a mission to promote and defend life. When the Holy Trinity decided to enter creation through the incarnation, human beings became sharers in the very life of God hence every human being has immense value. The gospel of God's love for each person, the gospel of the dignity of each human being, and the gospel of life are therefore a single and indestructible gospel.

In the light of this we invite you to choose life and to be genuine catalysts of hope and life.

Pause for reflection: Pope Benedict has declared October 11th 2012 – Christ the King 2013 a 'Year of Faith'. How does your faith challenge and affect the choices you make?

What challenges to human dignity and respect of life do you encounter?

St Paul in Rom12: 1-4 invites us to not be conformed to the pattern of this present world but to be transformed by the 'renewal of our minds'. Where have your own ideas about moral issues been influenced by the media and popular opinion?

## **Justice and peace have embraced:**

Discussion surrounding the issue of capital punishment calls for careful and prayerful reflection because it deals with values of utmost importance: respect for the sanctity and protection of life, the preservation of law and order in society so as to provide a safe environment for our citizens and the dispensation of true justice. As Bishops we are aware that there are no simple solutions to these complex

issues. Yet we recognise that our Catholic tradition has much to contribute to the current debate.

The teaching of the Catholic Church, as expressed in the Catechism, explains clearly the principles that are fundamental to understanding the issues surrounding the death penalty. The Church has accepted that a State has a duty to protect its citizens' from harm. Thus on this basis the death penalty has, in the past, been justified. The question for our present consideration is whether capital punishment is truly the most humane and Christian way of attending to the problem of criminal behaviour. Does depriving an individual of life change society?

Traditionally three arguments have been put forward to justify capital punishment: retribution, deterrence and reform. In reality it is doubtful whether the threat of capital punishment actually deters people from committing serious criminal acts. Indeed there are strong arguments to suggest that people who are going to commit crime rarely consider the consequences. Reform likewise cannot be used as a justification since the person who is deprived of life is also deprived of the possibility of reform. As for retribution, of course it is true that people should pay for their crimes, but nothing is gained by taking the life of another as the person executed has no opportunity of making amends or reforming their character. Punishment for crimes, therefore, must be determined by moral objectives which go beyond the mere infliction of injury on the guilty person.

In the context of the gospel message of life, justice is always at the service of mercy. It is only the mercy of God that establishes justice and without mercy there can be no justice. Therefore the question of justice, mercy and forgiveness are intimately related to the debate surrounding capital punishment. Indeed faced with the teaching and example of Jesus we are confronted with the fundamental question: What is the prime purpose of our penal system? If we answer that prison is concerned with punishment, then logically we can take someone's life for a serious crime. On the other hand, if we consider prison to be a place of reform, then we see it also as a means of redemption.

Clearly people who commit crimes need to take responsibility for their action and that will require them to serve a prison sentence but the reformation of their character is the ultimate purpose of incarceration and taking their life does not in fact restore to others what has been taken from them. Prison does not address the problem of criminal behaviour unless it involves a genuine program of rehabilitation. We believe that the punishment that any State imposes upon those who have broken the law needs careful monitoring and 'ought not to go to the extreme of executing' another human being.

Sacred Scripture makes clear, we do not have the right to deprive someone of life, even if they themselves have committed this crime. Life is sacred, God takes "... no pleasure in the death of anyone..." rather he wants everyone to live (Ezk18:32). The message of the gospel of life began with creation when human beings were given dignity because they were bearers of the image and likeness of God (Gen1:26; 9:6) Thus the very blood of Cain cried out against the crime of murder (Gen 4:9-12). Through the experience of the exodus God reveals that he is the sole giver of life and saves rather than destroys (Ex 1:15-22). As the Lord and giver of life God alone has the right to take away the gift that has been given. In fact he teaches through his revelation that life is sacred by proclaiming: "You shall not kill" (Exd20:13). The deepest desire of God is to protect life and thus requires that we follow him by showing reverence and love for each person (Wis 2:33).

This culminates in the teaching of Jesus. "An eye for an eye" is radically changed by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:21-26; 38-42). He declares himself to be the 'way the truth and life' (Jn15:6). To believe in him is to have eternal life (Jn11:25f) and his very personal experience of torture and crucifixion leads him to ask for forgiveness for the perpetrators (Lk23:34). On this basis we firmly believe that the abolition of the death penalty would send a clear message to the citizens of Zimbabwe concerning our deep belief in the worth and dignity of each person, no matter what they have done. Indeed it reminds us that the destructive cycle of violence can be broken, that the taking of another person's life ultimately solves nothing. More humane methods of

responding to serious crimes can be envisioned.

We are clear, that the death penalty goes against God's law of life and the revelation that each person is unique. As Blessed John Paul II has written:

*“..to kill a human being, in whom the image of God is present, is a particularly serious sin. Only God is the master of life!”*

Furthermore capital punishment is open to mistakes and misuse. People can and have been wrongly accused, and sentenced for crimes that they have not committed. To have deprived an innocent person of life is a moral evil. There is no justice system throughout the world that is totally free from error and to continue along the path of capital punishment is to inflict deep emotional as well as physical harm upon a creature made by God, upon their families and upon those who must carry out this tragic order as servants of the State. Zimbabwe is one of the few remaining nations in Africa that has retained capital punishment.

If we proclaim Jesus' respect for life then we do not have the right to deny life to anyone. This is why the Catholic Church speaks out in defence of the sacredness of human life from the moment of conception until natural death. Capital punishment should be abolished because it is God alone who can give and take away life. By standing for the abolition of the death penalty in our country we are not unaware of the need to offer sympathy and support to victims of violent crime and their families. We know that reform of our prison system is not an easy task but we are convinced that it is necessary so that we can become agents of genuine reform and rehabilitation of convicted criminals. Rather than maintaining the death penalty let us look towards a more creative and pastorally fruitful way of empowering people to choose to live life in the way God intends.

Pause for reflection: Read carefully Gen1; Ezk18; Jn19. Do these passages and the reflections above change your thoughts concerning the death penalty? If so how? If not, why?

In what one or two practical ways could the Catholic Church improve its pastoral care of those in prison and those newly released?

## **The Right to life:**

If we are truly to be at the service of justice then it is important to recognise that the first victim of abortion is the unborn child whose life has been deliberately ended. Taking the life of a child in the womb is as unjust as taking the life of any human being. The Catholic Church speaks out against abortion because it acknowledges the human rights and dignity of all people. To wilfully destroy life is an “unspeakable crime” against an innocent and defenceless gift from God.

The Church's defence of life is based on the intrinsic value and inalienable rights that each individual has. Because, as we mentioned above, we are made in the image and likeness of God, this gives to each life a divine property. Human life is thus untouchable and those who destroy this gift are attacking the creator Himself. From the first to the last the message of scripture is unambiguous, the very foundation of human dignity and human rights is to be found in God's creative plan and purpose. The Catholic Church has thus a duty to incarnate this message in every culture and in every constitutional and social system.

The logic of abortion begins in the mentality that underpins the concept of contraception, abortion becomes yet another form of contraception, and a means of disposing of what is considered inconvenient and challenging. This naturally leads to a move to dispense with the sick, disabled and the elderly. With the willing complicity of many governments throughout the world colossal means have been used against people, at the dawn of their life or when thought to be a burden on national medical resources. It is for this reason that the Catholic Church has consistently stood against abortion because it degrades human rights and dignity.

What the Church teaches is consistent with the whole Christian teaching about the rights of the innocent to live. Without it, no other human rights are secure. Long before science was able to reveal the stages of development within the womb the Catholic Church has regarded the

unborn, at all stages of pregnancy, as possessed of a distinct new life which no one could willingly choose to destroy. As our understanding increased the Church began to defend life from the moment of conception. From the moment the father fertilizes a living cell from the mother 'the adventure of a human life begins'. This is an important principle: Each new life is the life not of a potential human being, but of a human being with potential. It is impossible to point to the actual week of pregnancy and say that this is the time when the foetus suddenly becomes a human being.

The moment of conception begins the life story of each person and so is to be protected. No human law can thus legislate for the deliberate killing of a human being and 'there is no obligation in conscience to obey such laws'. If we speak of human rights then the child in the womb has rights no matter whether we choose to call this child a neonate( newly born) a foetus or embryo (child within the womb). The Catholic Church is clear, human rights are not arbitrary and there should be no interference with the natural development of the child in its mother's womb. Not even the parents have this right since the child is an independent life. To go against this teaching and to procure an abortion is to put oneself outside the Church and incur the penalty of excommunication. This can only be lifted through the sacrament of reconciliation with a special dispensation of the Bishop.

We acknowledge that people find themselves facing difficult and confusing situations. Young girls find themselves used sexually by older youths or men and deserted when found to be pregnant. There are cases of rape and occasions when the pregnancy could injure the mothers' health. These are real life situations. The pressure to terminate can be great but we cannot use murder of the innocent as a solution to an unwanted problem.

Acting justly and facilitating reconciliation and peace in these tragic situations will involve us as Catholics in upholding the teaching of the Church concerning the sanctity of life. A possible response to this pastoral letter is for parish communities and religious congregations to evaluate

how best we can give practical support to women in their choice for life. Pre-abortion counselling, practical guidance and medical help during pregnancy, a safe place to deliver and the appropriate adoption advice are all concrete measures that we as the Catholic Church ought to see as our contribution to eradicate a culture of death. Teaching the sanctity of life is one thing but we need to minimise the stress and confusion of those who find themselves with difficult life choices to make.

It is crucial that no matter how traumatic the conception of the child, no matter whether the woman intended to get pregnant or not, the newly conceived life cannot be blamed for its existence, the child surely has a right to life. This child is not to be labelled as an inconvenience, an obstacle, a problem; ultimately it is a human being who has a right to life. When we acknowledge the basic principle of the sanctity of life, the unique value of every person made in the image of God and the dominion of God over each life, we then see that abortion can never be in the plan of God. As Jesus said the golden rule is to be found in the way we treat one another: "What you did to the least of my brothers and sisters, you did to me!" (Matt 25:31-46) Human life not only has its origin in the manner of its creation but it carries within itself the promise of eternal life. We simply have no right to destroy the gift of God.

Pause for Reflection: In what ways could we better understand the Church's teaching on the value of each human being so as to promote a culture of life?

What practical steps could we take so as to assist married couples and single mothers to choose life rather than abort?

## **Created to Love as God loves:**

We come now to the issue of homosexuality, which is certainly not unconnected with human dignity and respect for life. Increasingly over the years homosexuality has become an accepted "alternative lifestyle" in

many societies. Indeed many national Constitutions have enshrined the acceptance and protection of same-sex unions as another form of liberation and safeguard against discrimination. While we must uphold and work for the human rights and respect of each person created by God, while we cannot tolerate discrimination, prejudice and violence against any sector of our society because of gender, age, political views or sexual orientation, we must equally be clear what the Church teaches concerning sexual orientation and sexual acts.

As we approach this issue we do so recognising that we are not dealing with an academic topic for debate, a question of personal likes or dislikes, rather we are touching the lives of real people, men and women who struggle daily with an orientation that they have not freely or at times willingly chosen. There is, however, a deep and profound meaning in our sexual orientation, human sexuality and sexual activity go to the very core of who we are as human beings.

When it comes to homosexuality the Catholic Church has seen a distinction between tendency and behaviour. What we might call sexual desire and sexual expression. Our sexuality points to who we are as male or female, it is something we have no choice about, we are simply born male or female. Sexual expression on the other hand is a choice.

Consider for example those who struggle with alcohol abuse or eating disorders. They have a strong desire to drink or eat in excess or starve themselves. These desires are not a matter of sin, but that does not mean that they can freely indulge their desires. When God created us male and female our sexuality became inseparable from our call to a life-giving communion in the image and likeness of God. Original sin has obscured this call and we do not therefore see one another in the way that God intended. Hence one could validly say that all sexual desire, whether it is heterosexual or homosexual, suffers from a distortion because of the sin of Adam and Eve (Gen 3).



Written into the very fabric of our bodies is a 'nuptial' meaning, we are made for marriage, (Gen2:24f) because marriage expresses God's original purpose for creation. If someone experiences a strong attraction towards the same sex then this attraction, real as it is, cannot be said to be in accordance with God's original plan. It departs radically from God's creation of the complementary nature of male and female.

It is in this sense that the Catholic Church speaks of homosexual orientation as 'disordered' which sounds harsh but what in reality is being said is that homosexuality is not the intended mode of sexual attraction and expression given by God. But disordered is not the same as saying that homosexuals are evil or sinful and beyond redemption. Homosexuality simply departs, as does so much of what passes as sexual expression among heterosexuals, from the original order established by God.

To experience true freedom in the area of human sexuality we all need redemption and must allow our sexual desires to be transformed by Christ. In this way we can begin to express ourselves sexually in the way God intended. To love as Christ loves, calls us to learn the true meaning of our selves as male and female. It calls for conversion of heart. When God created human beings the invitation was to love either through marriage or celibacy. This is what Adam and Eve discovered when they looked at each other for the first time. What they saw was the plan of love, the plan of God inscribed in their bodies. What they desired was to love as God loves in and through their bodies. Sexuality and sexual activity unite us to the love of God. It is therefore not about mere physical pleasure or satisfying our curiosity.

True sexual union is union between a man and a woman, a union that is open to the possibility of children. It is simply impossible for members of the same sex to engage in the kind of sexual act that God had in mind. Homosexuals are to be treated justly but the Catholic Church could never sanction a legal category such as 'same sex marriage'. This would be a contradiction, as marriage can only be between a man and woman. This however is not the same as 'civil partnerships' which is a legal acceptance

of a bond of friendship, by the State, for matters of insurance, funeral arrangements, medical care, rights of inheritance etc.

People struggle with same-sex attraction and while we must never do anything that contributes to their being alienated or discriminated against, we must do everything in our power to help them, and ourselves, work towards a true redemption of our human sexuality in conformity to Christ. The Catechism of the Catholic Church is clear, chastity is the only acceptable expression of love for those who experience themselves as homosexual. Abstaining from our disordered sexual desires is the true path to justice, peace and reconciliation for all of us no matter what our sexual orientation.

*Pause for Reflection: How best could we create a deeper understanding of the beauty of human sexuality in our schools and Church groups?*

As agents of reconciliation, justice and peace how can we provide pastoral care to those who are homosexual while upholding the sanctity of marriage between a man and a woman?

## **Conclusion:**

On his return to Rome from Benin Pope Benedict said: 'In Africa, I saw freshness in the 'yes' to life...a freshness of hope.' It is to that Gospel of Life, that 'yes' to life, that we have tried to point in this pastoral letter. As we reflect on 'Africae Munus' and seek to implement its fundamental guidelines we offer this pastoral letter as a step towards becoming "salt to the earth" and light to the world". We need to grow deeper into our faith so that we can 'bear witness to Christ in the power of the Spirit.....while holding fast to the values of the Gospel.'

We need to create opportunities where we can reflect more deeply upon the great gift God has given through the Gospel of life. We need to be promoters of respect for life at all stages and in all ages and conditions. We need to integrate into our daily faith-filled living the teaching that we are not, as human beings, mere accidents of history. We are at root windows into the very heart of God and it is from that theological context

that all discussion and understanding of capital punishment, abortion, and same sex unions should begin and find their fulfilment.

May our Mother the Blessed Virgin Mary, who bore the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the life of the world, help us to be people who choose life not death.

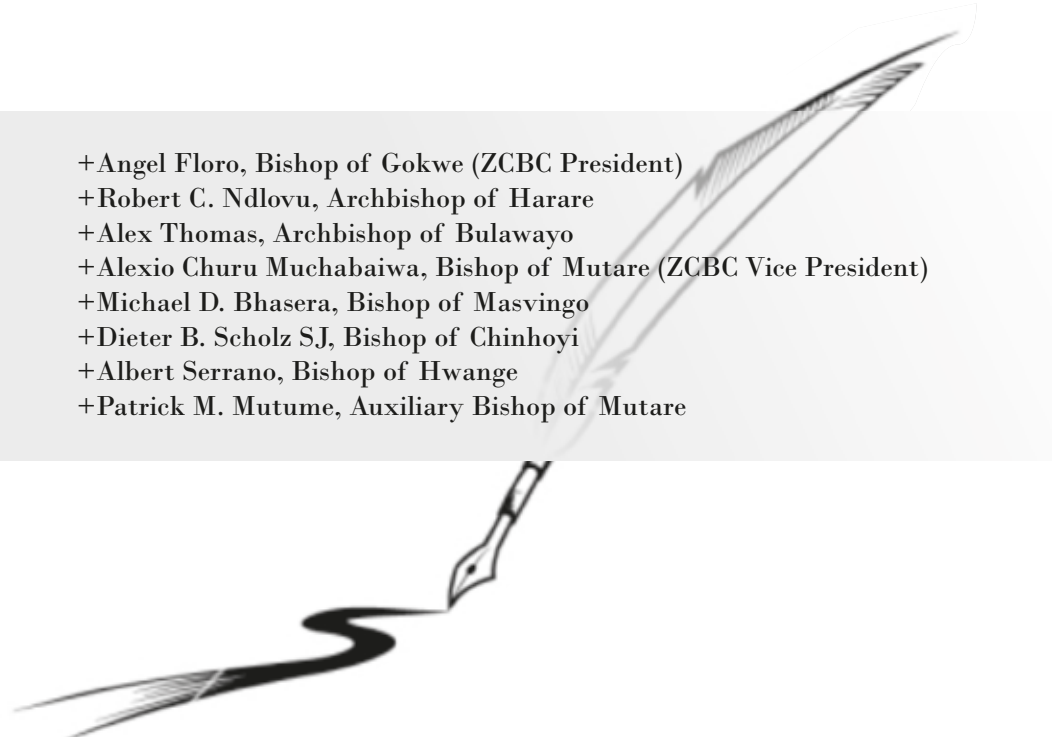
# **ZIMBABWE CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE**

## **Pastoral Letter**

*addressed to*

ZIMBABWEANS IN THE DIASPORA

19 June 2012



+Angel Floro, Bishop of Gokwe (ZCBC President)  
+Robert C. Ndlovu, Archbishop of Harare  
+Alex Thomas, Archbishop of Bulawayo  
+Alexio Churu Muchabaiwa, Bishop of Mutare (ZCBC Vice President)  
+Michael D. Bhasera, Bishop of Masvingo  
+Dieter B. Scholz SJ, Bishop of Chinhoyi  
+Albert Serrano, Bishop of Hwange  
+Patrick M. Mutume, Auxiliary Bishop of Mutare

## **1. Introduction**

We, the Catholic Bishops of Zimbabwe, primarily address this letter to Zimbabweans in the diaspora, but it also concerns Zimbabweans at home and people of good will everywhere. The story of the Zimbabwean diaspora is poorly known. This letter attempts to cast a little light upon an area of shadow and to give recognition and hope to those who have left our land.

### **1.0 Clarification of term**

The term 'diaspora' requires clarification. While it has biblical resonance, it is used today to refer to the dispersion of any people from their original homeland. Such a dispersion is not recent for people of Zimbabwe. During the colonial era, as a consequence of the struggle for freedom, our people were dispersed in various camps in neighbouring countries. After Independence in 1980, a trickle of people sought greener economic pastures within the region, other parts of Africa and overseas. However in the first decade of the new millennium this trickle became a flood as 'our country (was plunged) into an unprecedented abyss characterised by economic, social, and political woes and unimaginable forms of political intimidation and violence'

## **2. EXODUS**

### **2.0 Dilemma**

As the fabric of society weakened, and with no relief in sight, the hopes of many people faded. Efforts to break the political impasse were inconclusive. False dawns failed to deliver on hopes awakened. People lost trust in political leaders. The cry of despair was heard and continues to be heard: What can I do? How can I help my family? Whether to stay or to go became a painful dilemma that many a Zimbabwean breadwinner had to face. To stay for some meant risking destitution; to go involved a wrench with all one had known.

## **2.1 Departure**

Many educated people left and succeeded in starting a new life in distant lands where English is spoken as a first or second language, especially in the UK, US, Australia and the Middle-East. This 'brain-drain' caused a serious gap within the professions in Zimbabwe, one that makes economic and social renewal all the more challenging. The vast majority of Zimbabweans, however, migrated south and their experience is a central feature of this letter. While this number included professionals, an infinitely greater number were less well-educated, semi-skilled or unskilled; dispossessed and desperate; hungry and homeless. The majority were young men, but there were also many young women - some with children, and a number of unaccompanied minors, boys and girls under 18 years of age.

While not wishing to abandon their beloved country, these migrants felt abandoned by it. They left the cradle that nourished them. The population of Zimbabwe was decimated in the process. The outflow was acute during times of election violence, particularly between 2002-2003 and in 2008-2009. But it has not stopped. We stated in 2011 that 'the evolving trends in our country are worrying and, if not corrected, can lead to our loss of nationhood, the disintegration of our society and to the forming of degenerate militias with opposing loyalties'.<sup>2</sup> As long as these worrying trends remain, people will continue to leave our land.

## **2.2 Exclusion**

As Church leaders and as members of society, we acknowledge, with a sense of humility and shame, that so many of our citizens no longer felt welcomed at home, and had to take flight. This experience of being unwanted has been worsened by the overall failure of political discourse within Zimbabwe to focus with serious intent on the exodus of its people. The greatest asset of any country is its own people. Very few politicians have visited border areas, or crossed borders to witness at first hand the situation of their fellow Zimbabweans. It is not politically expedient to acknowledge the reality of the ongoing displacement of Zimbabwean people, especially since the Global Political Agreement was signed in

September 2008 and the Government of National Unity formed in February 2009. Ongoing displacement, at best, suggests political challenge; at worst, political ineptitude, division and failure. The vast majority of those who leave are seen as politically insignificant and expendable. Their only 'merit' is the remittances sent home to prop-up a severely depressed economy!

At times of national elections this exclusion is particularly acute. While the diplomatic corps and military personnel serving overseas are free to cast their votes, the nameless diaspora are not, as they are perceived as presenting a threat to the political status quo. For many in the diaspora, the perspective of Ben Sirach, advocating for the recovery of lost voices, will find an echo within them: 'But of others there is no memory; they have perished as though they had never existed; they have become as though they had never been born, they and their children after them. But these also were godly men, whose righteous deeds have not been forgotten'.

## **2.3 Embrace**

As bishops, we wish to affirm that those in the diaspora are Godly human beings, made in his image and likeness. They are not a number or a statistic on some foreign shore. They are not a stateless people. They belong to the state of Zimbabwe. They are our concern. We embrace them as one of us. They must not be forgotten. This letter is a testament to our desire to acknowledge their existence, their story, their pain, their resilience and their hope.

We acknowledge the struggles you face each day in coping with the loss of job, lack of proper shelter, loss of dear ones back at home, separation from extended family, unfamiliar social fabric and legal framework of your host country, skill mismatches etc. Indeed some of you are trapped in the diaspora due to legal and asylum issues, prohibitive costs of travel to and from family back home and so on. There has been breakdowns in marriages and family life. As believers we need to face all these challenges with faith and hope.

### **3. A PEOPLE IN EXILE**

#### **3.0 Rights of migrants**

'The migrant is a human person who possesses fundamental, inalienable rights that must be respected by everyone and in every circumstance. These noble words of Pope Benedict XV<sup>1</sup> acknowledge that each person possesses intrinsic rights which are personal and precious. The most fundamental right is the right to life. Jesus reminds us that he has come that we 'may have life and have it to the full' - not half-life, or quarter-life. Already denied the right to the fulness of life in the land of their birth, Zimbabwean migrants dared to hope that their rights as persons might be respected elsewhere.

Unfortunately, for the majority, this respect proved elusive. No 'red carpet' awaited them outside the borders of their land. The efforts of Church bodies, some government and NGO groups tempered matters in an alien situation. Yet, at various junctures of their outward experience, a culture of exploitation, opportunism and indifference confronted them. Four consistent features of this experience - crossing of borders, accessing shelter, legalising one's status and searching for work - have been observed in the southern diaspora and are noted below.

#### **3.1 Borders**

While the exit story of a minority included air or road passage through regular borders with proper documentation, the story of the majority who moved south has been very different. Christ warns that 'at the Last Judgement (he) will consider as directed to himself everything that has been done or denied to one of the least of these'.<sup>6</sup> What has been done, and is still being done, to a good number of the vulnerable who cross alien frontiers, is cruel indeed. Christ continues to suffer in the members of his body.<sup>7</sup> They have been attacked, beaten, raped and robbed while crossing frontiers. Below are the words of a nurse in the border town of Musina in June 2009 which give a hint of common experiences: 'Last night we learned of a large group of women and children who attempted to



swim across the crocodile-infested Limpopo River to reach South Africa, only to fall prey to local bandits known as 'gumaguma.' Five of the women who crossed were raped, and two babies were literally taken off their mothers' backs and thrown into the river to drown. No national leaders came to console these mothers who were raped. There were no state funerals for their children. These human beings were not seen as national heroes; they are part of a nameless mass.

As well as crossing the river, other groups passed through the vast expanse of the Kruger Park, walking over a number of days in groups of fifty to seventy in order to seek protection from wild animals. Not all escaped this experience unharmed!

### **3.2 Shelter**

Those who reach the other side safely find that access to shelter is very difficult. Temporary shelter provided by Churches and NGOs in border towns is inadequate to deal with the large numbers seeking it. Many migrants remain in border areas living in poor conditions in overcrowded townships, in rented accommodation or in dilapidated buildings. Those who succeed in reaching the 'bright lights' may find matters no better. For example, the Central Methodist Church in Johannesburg, a mecca for Zimbabwean migrants, at one stage accommodated up to two thousand people at night in unhygienic conditions on pews, stairs, and the hard church floor with as many more sleeping outside on cardboard boxes!

### **3.3 Legality**

Each state has a duty to its citizens to document foreign nationals within its boundaries. The documenting of Zimbabweans in South Africa has been a very demanding process, due to the huge numbers involved. At one stage, a window period (September to December 2010) was provided when relaxed conditions made it somewhat easy to apply for permits (work, study and business). This improved the situation for those who received these permits but others continued to remain undocumented. Workers on commercial farms benefit from being listed on corporate

work permits. Many more Zimbabweans have received 'Asylum-seeker Temporary Permits'. This is an expedient arrangement to deal with a humanitarian issue; the vast majority of Zimbabweans are economic migrants who do not qualify for refugee status. While it is the wish of the South African authorities to register Zimbabweans rather than deport them, deportation has taken place to add to the strained situation.

### **3.4 Work**

Because of their good knowledge of English and their capacity for hard-work, Zimbabweans are highly appreciated by employers. A good number progress to levels of middle-management on commercial farms and in businesses. Workers on smaller farms, domestic workers, labourers, etc. - especially those without valid documents - are open to exploitation, often receiving poor remuneration for heavy work and long hours. Many others languish with very little access to work; at best - a day's 'piece-work' here and there. As in any situation of uncertainty and exploitation, it is women and children who suffer most.

### **3.5 Xenophobia**

An added uncertainty experienced by Zimbabweans is the threat of xenophobia. In May 2008, xenophobic violence broke out in a township near Johannesburg and soon spread to other cities and provinces in South Africa leading to the deaths of 62 people. 670 more were injured and approximately 100,000 foreign nationals were displaced, including large numbers of Zimbabweans. The threat of xenophobia is real for Zimbabweans in certain communities. Tempering this threat, through promoting good community relations, etc., is an ongoing challenge.

## **4. REFLECTION**

### **4.0 Hard truth**

Reflection on the experience of Zimbabweans in the diaspora and their ongoing displacement will not be helped by tempered tones that deny

the reality. Christians must 'speak the truth in love'<sup>9</sup>. In this case the truth is hard and cold. The necessary, noble, and often heroic work of Churches and NGOs outside the borders of Zimbabwe in supporting, and advocating for Zimbabwean migrants is largely 'band-aid' - putting bandages on a festering sore without being able to treat the wound. The wound lies within the borders of Zimbabwe itself. The wound of the Zimbabwean political crisis has been painful for decades.

In our pastoral letter on 'National Healing and Reconciliation, 2009,' we, as a body of Bishops, wrote about the challenges and demands of healing and reconciliation in Zimbabwe. These challenges and demands remain. The task of healing and reconciliation is not helped by the ongoing culture of intimidation and abuse of human rights. Genuine engagement in a process of national healing and reconciliation must become real rather than notional. Without this engagement the festering sore will remain and Zimbabweans will continue to leave their country in significant numbers.

#### **4.1 Assessment by History**

A question must also be asked: when the history of Zimbabwe is being written in a future, reconciled society, how will its authors look back and view the phenomenon of a displaced people? Currently the diaspora experience is treated as little more than an embarrassing footnote to the dominant interpretation of history.

There should be an inclusive view of history based on principles that prioritise 'human dignity, the common good, option for the poor, human rights and responsibilities, participation, subsidiarity, solidarity, economic justice, stewardship of God's creation and the promotion of peace'. These ten basic principles, central to Catholic Social Teaching, also offer a perspective on citizenship, patriotism, heroism; statehood, sovereignty, governance, etc. This perspective honours the sacrifices made in the struggle for liberation by so many. But the ideological agenda is not the dominant discourse. A much wider agenda is offered which, if it had been accepted in recent times, would have prevented a major exodus

to the diaspora and the suffering of countless numbers. To embrace this higher agenda requires intellectual honesty, integrity of life and moral courage. It means recognising what we have said many times before, that 'our crisis is not only political and economic but first and foremost spiritual and moral'.

The flight of the diaspora cannot be treated as a footnote to recent historical experience. It is an effect of the core failure within Zimbabwe to move beyond a narrow ideological mindset to a more inclusive view of life. Regarding the writing of history, three inter-related points should be noted:

- the history of Zimbabwe will be incomplete without the diaspora story being told;
- this story should occupy a central chapter;
- it must be understood in relation to its ideological context.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

In conclusion what can we say directly to you who have left our land? We understand your plight. We know why you left. You are not to blame. While we wish you grace and blessing in your new land, we hope that one day you will consider coming home. Yet we cannot expect you to return to a land without welcome, opportunity and reconciliation. As we said before and say again, 'real genuine healing and reconciliation can only take place when the environment is open, free and democratic. This is 'currently not the case'. Sadly, this statement still remains true.

Yet we do not lose hope. As St. Paul says; "Rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us" (Romans.5; 3-5). Find consolation and strength in the Lord by reflecting on Scripture passages like Psalms 23 and 121. In your pain and emotional struggles find strength in each other especially in the Church. Encourage each other to find a home in the Church by praying together, sharing the Word of God, joining various associations and worshipping as a family away from home.

Be assured that there are people - within government, civil society and the Churches - not least ourselves, who are committed to the road of national healing and reconciliation, to the common good and to creating a better society for all people. Be patient with current efforts which require so much energy and take so much time. Know that you contribute to these efforts by your continued vigilance and advocacy in foreign lands. Know also that we can only overcome hatred with love, falsehood with truth, fear with courage. This is the gospel way. It leads ultimately to freedom, truth and the fullness of life. It is the only way we know and wish to follow. Journey with us as we journey in spirit with you.

# RESTORATION AND PEACE IN ZIMBABWE

## Following the July 2013 National Elections

- 
- +Angel Floro, Bishop of Gokwe (ZCBC President)
  - +Robert C. Ndlovu, Archbishop of Harare
  - +Alex Thomas, Archbishop of Bulawayo
  - +Alexio Churu Muchabaiwa, Bishop of Mutare (ZCBC Vice President)
  - +Michael D. Bhasera, Bishop of Masvingo
  - +Dieter B. Scholz SJ, Bishop of Chinhoyi
  - +Albert Serrano, Bishop of Hwange
  - +Xavier J. Munyongani, Bishop of Gweru
  - +Patrick M. Mutume, Auxiliary Bishop of Mutare

## Introduction

In our Pastoral Letter published in March 2013 before the 31 July 2013 national elections, we called upon all Christians and people of goodwill in Zimbabwe to commit themselves to “promoting peace in Zimbabwe and overcome the culture of intolerance, intimidation and political violence.” Soon after the election results were announced, we congratulated all Zimbabweans for conducting a generally and relatively peaceful poll.

We write this Pastoral Letter three months after the national elections were conducted, when the dust from those elections has settled down somewhat. From where we stand as shepherds in God's vineyard, we are compelled to observe that the elections have left Zimbabweans more polarized than they were before and during the years of the Inclusive Government (2009 – 2013). The political fault lines and their impact on all aspects of the lives of Zimbabweans are set not only to deepen, but also to stand in the way of progress and ultimately in the way of peace.

We note with apprehension that three months after the dust from the elections began to settle down, there are no visible prospects for improvement in the spheres of life in Zimbabwe that cry for restoration to give people hope for a better life. These spheres include:

1. Full re-engagement with the international community
2. Restoration of the national economy, particularly the manufacturing sector
3. Restoration of the public services sector which includes health, education, water, sanitation, transport and energy
4. Restoration of Zimbabwe's historical status as the bread basket of the Southern Africa region with guaranteed food security for her people

The need to create viable platforms to address effectively the areas outlined above for the benefit of our people and country cannot be overemphasized.

Our industrial sites carry the appearance of ghost towns because the once-vibrant manufacturing sector is now largely moribund. The dignity of our people has been severely eroded as they have become reduced to sellers of cheap goods and products at street corners in our cities in order to survive.

Daily water and power cuts, shortage of medicines, equipment and professional personnel in our hospitals, chaos and carnage on our roads, raw sewage flowing in the streets of our towns and cities – the list of what reduces us as a people, our dignity and our hope for a better life is long.

And yet, it need not be like this.

Zimbabwe is blessed with abundant natural resources and resilient, God-fearing and highly skilled people.

This abundance in resources, material and human, gives us encouragement and hope that Zimbabweans can transform this unsatisfactory situation and in its place create a better life for all Zimbabweans. What it takes to realize these aspirations of our people and country is political will at all levels of our society and institutions to work towards the achievement of the common good, political will to transcend differences in order for all Zimbabweans to work together as one family, all leading to sustainable peace in our nation.

## **Agenda for restoration and Sustainable Peace**

In the Discussion Document, The Zimbabwe We Want (2006), the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference (ZCBC), the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ) and the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) all spoke as one voice of the Church in Zimbabwe on, among other issues, the restoration of Zimbabwe's economy and wellbeing as follows:



“As a Church we commit ourselves to utilize our global Church network throughout the world, particularly those related to our development partners to lobby their governments and other institutions to support Zimbabwe in the reconstruction efforts through the cancellation of our international debt and making generous grants towards the reconstruction of our economy. This will only be possible if as Zimbabweans we can speak with one voice, hence this initiative by the Church to bring about reconciliation and unite our nation.” The Zimbabwe We Want (5.4.7, p.29)

This, we argued, would help build bridges with the international community and help in the reconstruction of our economy and the well being of our people.

We believe this call for Zimbabweans to speak with one voice as the first step towards the restoration of Zimbabwe is as true today as it was seven years ago when the Church in Zimbabwe made this call. Zimbabweans, and that includes the politicians and political parties among us, must transcend their differences and work together for the common good of our country.

Although the political experiment that was the inclusive government (2009 – 2013) has been criticised in some quarters, it would be hard to deny that some visible progress was made to improve the lot of our people, particularly the lot of the poor in our society who were making frequent and regular visits to neighbouring countries to buy basics for survival as shops in our country were empty. What made this improvement possible was the fact that Zimbabweans, including the political parties, worked together for the common good.

We believe that the shortcomings that attended this political experiment emanated from the fact that it was structured solely on political parties which began to compete for political advantage given the fact that the life of the inclusive government was understood from the beginning to be a temporary marriage of convenience foisted on the political parties by our

neighbours in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) following the disputed elections of 2008. That political experiment also demonstrated that the winner-take-all political arrangement will not benefit Zimbabwe and her people at this stage of our political development. Neither the Government, the Opposition nor any one of us alone can achieve the restoration that our country and people so sorely need.

In his message, *Blessed are the Peacemakers* (January, 2013), Pope Benedict XVI urged that we all become true peacemakers. “True peacemakers,” he said, “are those who love, defend and promote human life in all its dimensions, personal, communitarian and transcendent. Life in its fullness is the height of peace.” Pope Benedict XVI proceeds to outline what we believe is the message Zimbabwe needs most from this moment on:

“In order to emerge from the present financial and economic crisis – which has engendered ever greater inequalities – we need people, groups, and institutions which will promote life by fostering human creativity, in order to draw from the crisis itself an opportunity for discernment and for a new economic model.

The predominant model of recent decades called for seeking maximum profit and consumption, on the basis of an individualistic and selfish mindset, aimed at considering individuals solely in terms of their ability to meet the demands of competitiveness. Yet, from another standpoint, true and lasting success is attained through the gift of ourselves, our intellectual abilities and our entrepreneurial skills, since a 'liveable' or truly human economic development requires the principle of gratuitousness as an expression of fraternity and the logic of gift. Concretely, in economic activity, peacemakers are those who establish bonds of fairness with their colleagues, workers, clients and consumers. They engage in economic activity for the sake of the common good and they experience this commitment as something transcending self-interest, for the benefit of present and future generations. Thus they

work not only for themselves, but also to ensure for others a future and a dignified employment.” (Pope Benedict XVI, Blessed are the Peacemakers) Pope Benedict XVI calls for a “new economic model” in which individuals and institutions are inspired by “the principle of gratuitousness, of fraternity” to give “of themselves, their intellectual abilities and their entrepreneurial skills,” their “creativity,” to help their countries, communities to “emerge from the current financial and economic crisis.”

Jesus said: “I came that they may have life, and have life abundantly” (John 10:10). The Contemporary English Version calls it “life to the fullest.”

We in Zimbabwe can have “life to the fullest” if we heed the words of Pope Benedict XVI as inspired by the Apostle John and put in place “a new economic model” across all sectors of our economy, an economic model that is inclusive, that draws from the abundant pool of expertise that we are blessed with among our people and that transcends political and any other boundaries.

We have experts in all the areas of greatest need in our economy:

- Full re-engagement with the international community
- National economic transformation (land, agriculture, manufacturing, mining, tourism, etc)
- Social Services (health, water, sanitation, transport, energy, housing, education, food security, national reconciliation, etc)

We urge that task teams of experts, who, according to Pope Benedict XVI, will use their “human creativity,” be set up to address each of these areas. A charter to guide the appointment and working modalities of the task teams should be drawn up and agreed with, among others, provisions that the best qualified experts be invited to serve on these task teams irrespective of their political, religious or any other persuasion and that they remain apolitical/non-partisan.

This is the Agenda for Zimbabwe's restoration that we urge the Government, the Opposition and all of us as Zimbabweans to embrace. As

we stated above, neither the Government, the Opposition nor any one of us can, alone, achieve Zimbabwe's restoration and wellbeing of our people. This is the "mutual collaboration" that Pope John XXIII calls us to embrace in *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth, Encyclical on Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice and Liberty of 11 April 1963), in which each individual will make "a wholehearted contribution." We nevertheless present this only as a proposal cognisant of the fact that "*Pacem in Terris* did not intend to state that it is the task of the Church to give concrete pointers on subjects that, in their complexity, must be left to free discussion. On political, economic and social matters it is not for dogma to indicate the practical solutions, but rather for dialogue, listening, patience, respect for the other, sincerity and also willingness to rethink one's own opinion" (Pope Francis, ZENIT, Article 38285/October 2013).


It is appropriate and opportune that we make this call for a new economic model for Zimbabwe and Zimbabweans in the year that the Church has designated the Year of Faith because we believe that if we all pray to the Lord for conversion and belief in our hearts and observe the principles of fraternity and gratuitousness enjoined upon us by Pope Benedict XVI, the new model can work and the Lord will, as he promised, heal our land.

As we said at the beginning of this Pastoral Letter, we are writing three months after the national elections were conducted, when the dust from those elections has settled down somewhat but unfortunately new dust is rising. We pray that the season of Advent and Christmas, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ as one of us, may help us address all areas of our greatest need.

# WORK TOGETHER FOR THE COMMON GOOD

'Watchman, how much longer the night?'

1 August 2014



- +Michael D. Bhasera, Bishop of Masvingo(ZCBC President)
- +Robert C. Ndlovu, Archbishop of Harare(ZCBC Vice President)
- +Alex Thomas, Archbishop of Bulawayo
- +Alexio Churu Muchabaiwa, Bishop of Mutare
- +Angel Floro, Bishop of Gokwe
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- +Xavier J. Munyongani, Bishop of Gweru
- +Patrick M. Mutume, Auxiliary Bishop of Mutare

A year has passed since our national elections in July 2013 and it is time for us to reflect with you on where we are today. In our letter at the time of the elections, Restoration and Peace in Zimbabwe, we listed a number of areas we hoped to see addressed:

*· Re-igniting the national economy, especially in agriculture and manufacturing. Restoring public services (health, education, water, sanitation, transport, energy, etc.), Re-engaging fully with the international community. The insight still remains true that interdependence is a higher value than independence. Independence is an achievement. Interdependence is a choice only independent people can make.*

We have waited to see signs of these things and are still waiting, and we are prompted to ask with Isaiah, “Watchman, how much longer the night?” (21:11)

## **Progress**

Recently we went, as a Conference, to visit Pope Francis and he encouraged us to be hopeful and positive, “However dark things are,” he said, “goodness always re-emerges and spreads. Each day in our world, beauty is born anew; it rises and is transformed through the storms of history.”

“Without a vision, the people perish.” We are fond of quoting this saying from Proverbs (29:18) and we see that our country has a vision and has chosen the path of restoration. The Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZIMASSET) was launched by the government in October 2013 as a five year plan for providing growth in the economy, food security, social services and infrastructure for democracy and good governance. This relates well to the aspirations outlined in the document prepared by the Zimbabwe Heads of Christian Denominations, The Zimbabwe We Want, launched together with President Robert Mugabe at the Catholic University in Zimbabwe in 2006.

At the same time these aspirations require concrete policies and committed leadership if they are to become anything more than dreams. We have produced many policy documents since independence but few have been implemented. It is a good sign that this time ZIMASSET is receiving both local and international support. We also appreciate efforts to re-establish relations with the international financial institutions. We support these efforts and encourage those in leadership positions to really implement them.

## **A new Constitution**

Another sign of progress has been the drafting of a new constitution in 2013. No constitution is perfect but this one reinforces our hope that we are moving in the right direction. For example, in the Bill of Rights (Chapter 4), the rights to life and liberty are upheld and the “rights of arrested and detained persons” are to be respected. The document enshrines the “right to human dignity ... and personal security.” These are now part of our law and the Church recognises and values these commitments by the State. The Jewish and Christian heritage, which makes its contribution to the crafting of the modern State of Zimbabwe, upholds these values. They are expressions of the commands to: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind ... and love your neighbour as yourself. On these two hang all the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22:37–40). We look forward to the alignment of Zimbabwe's present laws to this new constitution.

## **Our Natural Resources**

When Pope John Paul II visited Zimbabwe in 1988, he remarked that we “have been blessed with this beautiful country, fertile and full of resources which, in the mind of the Creator, are meant to be used for the common good,” Zimbabwe is a rich country with huge reserves, for example, of diamonds and platinum, as well as more than 40 other types of minerals. If we go back to the Book of Genesis we see how the earth was given to men and women to use and care for and this part of the world was

given to us. They are for us, all of us. The Vatican Council spoke of resources and productivity being “for the service of man and indeed the whole man ... and every man.”

At the moment our resources are not going towards the service of our people as a whole and we encourage those responsible to improve in accountability and transparency, sharing information on contracts signed between the mining companies and the government so that everyone is in the picture. When families are resettled as a result of mining activities we urge that the human rights and dignity enshrined in our constitution be respected and great consideration given to those most vulnerable. In this context Pope Francis makes a compelling appeal, “I would like to ask all those who have positions of responsibility in economic, political and social life, and all men and women of goodwill: Let us be protectors of creation, protectors of God's plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment.”

## **A resilient and peaceful people**

There is recognizable resilience, hope and even joy among many Zimbabweans today and this gives us pause to reflect on how everyone can contribute to the common good. People understand that there are problems and are prepared to wait. They understand the words of St Paul: “patience brings perseverance, and perseverance brings hope, and this hope is not deceptive, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Romans 5: 2-5). People understand that Zimbabwe is in transition, a long transition, in which it is searching for its own identity. Prime Minister (as he then was) Robert Mugabe put it like this in 1980 shortly after independence:

The matrix of our historical contradictions did not vanish into thin air as of midnight, April 17, this year, when we pulled down the Union Jack and hoisted our multi-coloured national flag. ... What the reality of independence has not done, and has yet to do, is affect socio-economic relations so that they too can transform in favour of the majority of our people.



It has become obvious over the intervening years since 1980 that this transformation “in favour of the majority of our people” is not a simple matter. There was much generous idealism in the early years and real strides were made in providing education and health care for that majority. But then three things happened. The leadership model developed during the liberation war, which, by the nature of war, had to be military, was retained after the war and any dissent was seen as disloyalty. This discouraged the blossoming of the democracy won at independence. Secondly, traditional forms of leadership, dating back to pre-colonial times fitted well with this military style so that tradition and militarism blended into a command-style governance where “citizens are unable to effectively take part in public life and popular opinion cannot make a difference.” And, thirdly, while abhorring the colonial system that it replaced the new government in fact did little to change its methods. The habit of ruling without being accountable to the majority did not die on 17 April 1980.

## **The present crisis**

In making these observations we understand the reasons why the choices that were made were, in fact, made. As we noted above, we are in transition. However we believe that the time has now come to learn from our long experience dating back to 1890. Our country has never known contentment since that time. But now, as we reflect on the choices we have made – some good, some not so good – we have a wonderful opportunity to make a fresh start. We believe that everyone in the country wants this.

It will not be easy. We live in a broader context of which Pope Francis reminds us when he says:

The current crisis is not only economic and financial but is rooted in an ethical and anthropological crisis. Concern with the idols of power, profit, and money, rather than with the value of the human person has become a basic norm for functioning and a crucial criterion for organization.

We are part of this global culture of selfishness and it is our task, as witnesses of the gospel, to proclaim the “freedom from captivity” (Luke 4:18) that comes from struggling against the base forces that draw us to follow our selfish desires. We have to admit that levels of selfishness, and the desire to accumulate personal wealth by any means, exist among us and we note the absence of decisive action to halt corruption. Corruption will not end unless and until culprits are brought to book. Private companies, parastatals, government and non-government institutions have faltered or collapsed when some people creamed off the assets for their private use. The most worrying aspect of this is the erosion of conscience whereby the abnormal becomes normal and people quieten their consciences by saying, “everyone does it, so why not I?” Lying and deceit have become tools for survival and this has the knock-on effect of further impoverishing those on the margins of our society. Orders have been obeyed without asking whether they are good or evil. All this has happened because of not listening to conscience, the voice of God within. Without effective action to curb corruption and without freedom from the desire for more at all costs, the realization of the common good will continue to be a vague wish. A dominant theme of the book of Proverbs (14:29; 16:32) is self-discipline and that selfishness carries its own cost eventually.

## **People for others**

Jesus came to give his life for others (Mathew 20:28). His example resonates down the centuries as the only true way of building community. Any government, institution or church exists not for itself but for others. As soon as it loses this perspective and becomes inward looking it has lost its way. But if it pursues the common good it not only finds its way but will be honoured and trusted by the people. Our deteriorating services - water, public transport, energy and the other areas already mentioned - compromise the promotion of the common good and prevent, what Pope Francis calls, “the protection of people, showing loving concern for each and every person, especially children, the elderly, those in need, who are often the last we think about.”

The alternative is bleak. Energy, which could be used for building our nation, is wasted on competing for supremacy. And at the local level some are excluded from community initiatives, such as land allocation and humanitarian aid. Intolerance breeds tension and anxiety.

Let us be honest and courageous in reflecting on where we have come from, where we are now and where we are going. Martin Luther King wrote: "We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive. We bring it out into the open, where it can be seen and dealt with. Like a boil that can never be cured so long as it is covered up but must be opened with all its ugliness to the natural medicine of air and light, injustice must be exposed, with all the tension its exposure creates, to the light of human conscience and the air of national opinion before it can be cured."

## **The Role of the Church**

We plead with our Zimbabwean brothers and sisters: let the light of the gospel shine in our country! Let our society be seen in the mirror of the Church's social teaching, drawn from the gospel and panel beaten over decades and even centuries! It is not our job to judge anyone. Pope Francis, during the meeting mentioned earlier, said to us, "Christians find themselves on all sides of the conflict in Zimbabwe, and so I urge you to guide everyone with great tenderness towards unity and healing."

The Church wishes to promote dialogue and engagement in the issues that effect people in our country. We offer to provide space where people can connect with each other and discuss issues that contribute to the fulfillment of the national vision. And as a global church we are able to seek support from our sister churches and development institutions elsewhere. We know that the Universal Church feels for us and is willing to walk with us. If we open our hearts to each other we will find we all want the same thing for our country. "Let us not grow weary in doing good!" (Galatians 6:9)

The Church represents many people and most of them trust her. They feel she understands their desires. We come to know every home and every family. They long for a solution to our present dilemma. They pray for it constantly. And they know that in the long term God will help us once we have started to do the ground work ourselves. We call this hope. It is not a vague aspiration but a solid reliance on a God who long ago said, "If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chronicle 7:14).

## **A Final Word**

The Church is nonetheless the divinely constituted body of Christ among us on our pilgrim way. The Lord asks us, commands us, to contribute to the spiritual, social, economic, political and cultural life of Zimbabwe. We have no choice. We have a deep affection for our country and want to see it flourish and grow. We ask the intercession of Mary, the Mother of God, and all the great people who have been our ancestors in the faith so that this dream may come true. And we ask God's blessing on all who read this letter and on all our Zimbabwean brothers and sisters, here and abroad. Six questions for further reflection

- 1. What is our vision for Zimbabwe? How can we promote this vision together?*
- 2. How does corruption affect our faith, our families and our country?*
- 3. How will the Bill of Rights in the new constitution contribute to the common good?*
- 4. In what way would we like to see the management of natural resources done so as to promote fairness and respect of human dignity?*
- 5. How can we improve service delivery for the benefit of all?*
- 6. How can we deepen our understanding of the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church?*

# THE FERMENT OF THE GOSPEL

Published by ZCBC and the Conference of Major Religious Superiors (CMRS) to the faithful of the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe on the inauguration of the Year of Consecrated Life.

20 September 2014

+Michael D. Bhasera, Bishop of Masvingo (ZCBC President)  
+Robert C. Ndlovu, Archbishop of Harare(ZCBC Vice President)  
+Alex Thomas, Archbishop of Bulawayo  
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**W**ith great joy we, the Bishops and Major Religious Superiors of the Church in Zimbabwe, respond to Pope Francis' invitation to the whole Church to celebrate the gift the Lord has given us through the many women and men who have answered the call to consecrate their lives to the Church in communities of Sisters, Brothers and Priests in what became known as 'religious life'. In so doing He wants us to reflect on the role religious play and to explore how this role can be nourished and grow. In this letter we would like to reflect on the part religious have played and continue to play in our local church in Zimbabwe. Further we wish to explore with you the lights and shadows of the relationships of religious and our local Church and see whether there are ways in which we can more effectively work together. We give thanks to God for the great variety of gifts and works we find among Religious as we survey the many initiatives in our eight dioceses and recall the people who have laboured over the past hundred and thirty five years to establish God's reign in our midst.

Religious communities of Sisters, Brothers and Priests who came from foreign lands, as well as others founded within our own Church here in Zimbabwe, rejoice that their words and actions have received such a warm welcome from the people of this country. At the same time they are conscious that the way has not always been smooth. There have been disappointments and failures. In this short letter we, as Bishops and Superiors, want both to celebrate the fruit of God's grace working among us and to listen to the concerns that we feel the local Church is expressing to us.

## **Religious life in the Church**

The earliest 'religious' were Christians who withdrew to the Egyptian desert in the fourth century in protest against the corruption of the gospel they saw in the cities of the Roman Empire. Anthony and his companions devoted themselves to a life of prayer and abstinence and in so doing started a movement of women and men that would serve the Church in the east and the west up to the present.

Benedict drew up a Rule of life in the sixth century for those who followed the way of Anthony, and Benedictine monks, though vowed to 'stability' in their monasteries, responded to the needs of the Church in their time by becoming missionaries throughout Europe and beyond. The monk Frumentius went to Ethiopia in the fifth century. Another monk, Boniface who gave his name to our mission near Karoi, was another example of these courageous men. And much nearer to our own time, Abbot Pfanner led his monks in Marianhill to out from their monastery and become some of the first missionaries in South Africa and Zimbabwe.

In Europe, from the sixth to the twelfth century, Benedictine monks and nuns, as well as their offspring communities, literally held the faith, culture and education of Europe together in the face of repeated wars and pillage and crisis in the papacy. One monastery in Ireland was burned to the ground 26 times.

The Franciscans, Dominicans and Carmelites made their appearance in the thirteenth century largely as a result of the growth of towns and universities and their great contribution was in preaching and teaching. Their efforts, however, were not enough to avert another, and greater, crisis in the Church: the Reformation in the sixteenth century when the Christian world was shredded, leaving the Church torn by the major divisions that are still sadly evident among Christians. The Jesuits were founded in this time of crisis in the Church, and were part of efforts to steady the Church in Europe while joining the many other Religious Orders in devoting enormous energy to preaching the gospel in all the other continents on the planet. Though the missionary thrust of the Church waxed and waned over the following four hundred years the overall picture is one of multiple initiatives by numerous communities of men and women, many of whom work among us today.

And in the midst of this vast enterprise the contemplative life of Anthony was not forgotten; the Cistercians and the Carthusians among the men, the Poor Clares and Carmelites among the women. The Church's great traditional treasure of silence and contemplation is sustained today within the way of life of the more active orders in their own ways, but

especially in contemplative and even enclosed communities who devote themselves entirely to it. We give special thanks to God for the presence of such communities in our Church here in Zimbabwe.

## **Diocesan and Religious**

The most visible sign of the presence of the Church in the world is the Parish and, more specifically, the Parish Church. Anyone passing St Mary's Highfield, Harare, for example, will read the sign for the Church. It tells them 'here is a church', and in this case a Catholic Church. Every Church is cared for by a priest, usually a Diocesan, who will be a member of a long succession of "presbyters" going back to the time when the Lord took Peter aside and said, "Feed my sheep."

So, Diocesan Priests are today's representatives of the earliest pastors that were left in charge of local Churches founded in the cities of the Roman empire, some of whose names are preserved in the letters written to them by the apostles: Philippi, Thessalonica, Ephesus, Corinth and Rome. These priests represent the normal and oldest form of ministry in the Church. They give stability and permanence to the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12), the community the Lord founded on Peter, the rock.

If Peter represents the stable, permanent and secure Church with whom the Lord Jesus will be "until the end of time", Paul represents the adaptable, flexible and mobile Church that is ever pushing out the boundaries, "a light to the nations so that my salvation may reach the remotest parts of the earth" (Is 49:6). We must not make too much of this distinction. Peter also was on the move and Paul was wont to spend long periods in one place (Acts 18:11). But the contrast serves as a useful template for the two tasks of the Church; to stay and nourish and to move out to new frontiers.

## **Religious life in Zimbabwe.**

Nearly all the religious communities mentioned above, and many others not mentioned, are found in Zimbabwe today. The modern Catholic



missionary effort to preach the gospel in this country began in 1879 when eleven Jesuits, five brothers and six priests, arrived at Old Tati having travelled by ox-wagon at a speed of fifteen kilometres a day. Despite disease, misunderstandings, inadequate planning, deaths and withdrawals, they gradually managed to begin the work. The Dominican Sisters soon followed, and the missionaries from Marianhill, travelling great distances on foot or wagon, preaching the gospel wherever they went. Many communities of men and women joined them and others were founded here in Zimbabwe. The Catholic Directory reveals we now have 44 different Congregations of Religious Sisters and Brothers in Zimbabwe, responsible for a huge number of institutions and works that contribute greatly to the work of the Church and living of the gospel.

It is not necessary here to list the variety of work started by Religious. The Missions and Parishes, schools and hospitals are well known. And Religious are working with communities in development, Justice and Peace, responses to HIV & AIDS, communications, etc. With great joy in these great works, our concern is more to examine their place in the local Church and how we can work together better.

In his letter, *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis springs a surprise by blending together the two tasks: the pastoral task of looking after the sheep and the missionary task of setting out for new territories, into one. The nourishment of Christ's faithful in the Parish, he writes, will best be achieved, by each one responding to the "missionary option" of which he, Francis, dreams. Taking up the missionary option, he believes, "will transform everything so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today's world rather than for her self-preservation" (#27). This quotation mirrors almost exactly what he said as Cardinal Borgoglio on the eve of the papal election when each elector was invited to give their vision of where the Church needs to go. As Pope, he asks that we leave behind the attitude, "We have always done it this way", and explore the way in which the gospel should be preached in the new circumstances today. "I invite everyone to be bold and

creative,” he says, “in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelisation in their respective communities” (#33). As the Archbishop of a capital city in Latin America he knows all about “feeding my sheep.” But his experience and his love for the Gospel also prompts him to “go out” from the familiar and well-trodden paths and search for new ways. We find these words invigorating and exciting and desire to respond to them.

## **The future of our Church**

Can the Bishops and Religious in Zimbabwe continue to respond to Francis' call, and do so with greater energy and love and cooperation?

1. First, we would like to acknowledge with gratitude the spirit of cooperation which has marked our relationship as Diocesan Clergy and Religious in the Local Church. It is almost seventy years since the first Diocesan Priests were ordained. The gradual assumption by Diocesan Clergy of leadership roles in the church has moved smoothly and of the eight dioceses in the country four have diocesan bishops. While there have been some tensions where interests clashed we believe that on the whole Religious have worked well with their Bishops for the building up of the Local Church. Pope Francis himself recognised that tensions can exist especially when “religious decide to withdraw from one of their works due to a lack of manpower and the Bishop is left with a hot potato in his hand” (remarks made on 29 Nov 2013 and reported in *La Civiltà Cattolica*). Such things happen but on the whole we believe we have a good working relationship between the Bishops and Priests of the dioceses and the Religious and their leaders.

2. A problem may arise when “Bishops and Priests are not acquainted with the charisms and works of Religious,” the pope continued on the same occasion, “dialogue between the Bishop and Religious must be rescued so that Bishops do not view religious as useful instruments” but as partners. Religious believe rightly that they have something of their own to offer to the local Church and the continuing

dialogue the Pope refers to can identify what that “something” is. We have mentioned one area of possible tension above. Another concerns access to resources, an issue of great practical importance for the work of the Church and the future maintenance of her institutions. Diocesan clergy have always placed more emphasis on local support for the work of the Parishes and the sustenance of the Church's works and institutions. Often they lack the international connections that have enabled members of International Religious Congregations to source great resources from networks of benefactors in richer parts of the Church, and the same applies also to locally founded religious communities. There is an imbalance, both real and perceived, between some Religious Congregations and Diocesan Priests and Bishops, which can be the cause of tension and even resentment among us. All of us need to learn more effective ways of enabling local support for our works. But there is nothing here that greater and more open dialogue cannot solve.

3. One area where the interests of all of us, Bishops of Dioceses together with Religious Superiors, obviously coincide is in formation – the formation of young Religious as well as young Priests for the Dioceses. By 'formation' we mean education and grounding in the knowledge and understanding of the gospel to which we are all committed, and of the lives or 'charisms' through which we live that gospel. But we also mean those other skills and capacities that the Church needs in this country, whether of communication and counselling, organisation and administration. Religious have developed strong traditions in this area even if they do not always live them well, but the provision of good formation is a challenge for us all, Religious and Diocesans. Is there a way in which religious could contribute in this area for the common good of the local Church?

4. There are, for example, wonderful developments today in scripture studies and other areas of theology, in ecumenical approaches to the Eastern churches, in liturgy, Church design and decoration. There are riches and treasures out there from which we could all benefit.

5. Finally, it is striking how much space Pope Francis devotes in his letter *Evangelii Gaudium* to the subject of preaching: ten whole pages! He calls preaching “a dialogue between God and his people” (#137). It “cannot be a form of entertainment like those presented by the media, yet it does need to give life and meaning to the celebration” (#138). He explains what he means by dialogue here when he says, “The same Spirit who inspired the Gospels and who acts in the Church also inspires the preacher to hear the faith of God's people and to find the right way to preach at each Eucharist” (#139). Pope Francis is asking us to look hard at our preaching – not just our preaching from the pulpit but in our lives and works: “To hear the faith of God's people!” How do we do that? “The preacher has the wonderful but difficult task of joining loving hearts, the hearts of the Lord and his people” (#143). What are we doing here in our Church? Are we just giving our own ideas? Or are we joining the anxieties and hopes of the faithful with the life-giving message of the gospel? The former the Pope bluntly calls “boredom” and the latter “heartfelt fervour”. There could be room for mutual enlightenment here.

To put into practice our response to Pope Francis' call, and to begin a new period of cooperation and collaboration between the Bishops of our Dioceses and the Major Religious Superiors in Zimbabwe, we will be meeting together for prayer, reflection and discussion during the Year of Consecrated Life to reflect upon the Gospel that we love and the mission that we share as followers of Christ in this country, and for which we, together with all the faithful, have given our lives. We humbly ask all in our Parishes and Religious houses to pray for their Bishops and the leaders of Religious life in our Church, that we may respond together with generosity and courage to the wonderful challenges of Christ and the many opportunities that surround us on every side to build peace, justice and love among us all in this nation and in our world.


Our Church in Zimbabwe is vibrant, alive, full of fervour and generosity. And yet it is also a hungry Church, looking for education in the faith, in the liturgy and in ways of expressing a commitment to justice. We believe the Lord is calling all of us to engage ever more courageously and

imaginatively in the mission we share. The Religious Superiors who sign this letter on behalf of all the Religious in the country want to pledge our continued loyalty and cooperation with our Bishops and all the faithful of our Church. May the Lord bless us all and give us the wisdom and strength to fulfil our shared desire.

# WITH AN UNDIVIDED HEART

## PART I

A Pastoral Letter of ZCBC  
To all Priests, Religious and Seminarians  
Pentecost Sunday 24 May 2015



- +Michael D. Bhasera, Bishop of Masvingo (ZCBC President)
- +Robert C. Ndlovu, Archbishop of Harare (ZCBC Vice President)
- +Alex Thomas, Archbishop of Bulawayo
- +Alexio Churu Muchabaiwa, Bishop of Mutare
- +Angel Floro, Bishop of Gokwe
- +Dieter B. Scholz SJ, Bishop of Chinhoyi
- +Albert Serrano, Bishop of Hwange
- +Xavier J. Munyongani, Bishop of Gweru
- +Patrick M. Mutume, Auxiliary Bishop of Mutare

## Introduction:

**O**ften our pastoral letters have been addressed to all the Catholic faithful of Zimbabwe. On this occasion, we your Bishops, desire to turn in a particular way to our priests, religious and seminarians. We do so taking up the direct request of the Holy Father to us during our 'Ad limina' visit' in June 2014. Pope Francis said to us:

*"As shepherds of the flock...work closely to foster unity with your priests striving to eliminate every form of dissension and self-interest. I encourage you to continue to seek out vocations to the priesthood: men who once formed with the wide hearts of the shepherds and fathers will go out to find their people...Accompany your newly ordained...that they may live wholesome and upright lives. Exhort them to continue preaching and living...the Gospel values of truth and integrity...and in selfless service of their neighbour, in prophetic hope for justice in the land."*

Though the Holy Father mentions priests in particular, his words are equally appropriate for religious and seminarians. Each one of us who have answered the call of Jesus desires to reveal his tender love. We want to be sources of unity rather than self interest, to live lives of integrity and truth. We want to bring others to the experience of the joy of the Gospel, to a real encounter with Jesus, the real prophetic voice of hope.

This present letter is the first of a series of three addressed to you our priests, religious and seminarians. Each of these letters will be rooted in the teaching of Pope Francis in his Apostolic Exhortation 'Evangelii Gaudium,' and we will seek to highlight issues particular to those who are the principal agents of pastoral work. These letters seek to encourage all of us in a new outpouring of apostolic zeal, loyalty to our vocation and a spirit of generous service. Speaking to the Curia just before Christmas 2014 the Holy Father said.

*“Once I read that “priests (religious) are like airplanes, they only make news when they fall, but there are so many that are flying. Many criticize and few pray for them.”*

We wish to acknowledge with gratitude the goodness and self-sacrifice that can be found among many priests and religious. Therefore in mentioning some of the 'difficult issues' that we come across as pastoral workers, we do not fail firstly to give thanks for each of our priests, religious and seminarians who in different ways reveal the heart of Jesus, the good shepherd, to the people of our country. As you read and pray through these reflections let us not forget to pray for one another so that together we may grow in our vocation and be enthusiastic witnesses to others. As Pope Francis says: 'A person who is not convinced, enthusiastic, certain and in love, will convince nobody' (**Evangelii Gaudium n.266**).

## **Do you love me? (John 21: 15-20)**

During his apostolic journey to the Philippines in January 2015, Pope Francis spoke to the bishops, priests, religious and seminarians. He reflected on the Gospel passage from John mentioned above, in which Jesus says to Simon Peter: “Do you love me?” It is a passage we would do well to reflect on often. The Holy Father said:

*“These words remind us of something essential. All pastoral ministry is born of love! All consecrated life is a sign of Christ's reconciling love. Like Saint Therese, in the variety of our vocations, each of us is called, in some way, to be love in the heart of the Church.”*

He went on:

*“Ours is a ministry of reconciliation. We proclaim the Good News of God's infinite love, mercy and compassion. We proclaim the joy of the Gospel. For the Gospel is the promise of God's grace, which alone can bring wholeness and healing to our broken world. It can inspire the building of a truly just and redeemed social order.”*



These words of Pope Francis, the Gospel passage from John mentioned above and St Paul's teaching in 2Cor 5:14-20, in which the apostle reminds us of our ministry of reconciliation, all provide a fitting context for the reflections that we wish to share with you. If we are to genuinely witness to love in the heart of the Church and world, and if we are truly to work to create a 'just and redeemed social order' then we must seek to minister to all God's people with an undivided heart.

As 'ambassadors of Christ' our pastoral work aims at promoting an encounter with Jesus Christ (**Evangelii Gaudium n.3**). We desire to bring people into a living experience of Jesus who saves, heals and brings hope. Hence as Pope Francis said in the same homily in the Philippines:

*"The Gospel calls individual Christians to live lives of honesty, integrity and concern for the common good. But it also calls Christian communities to create "circles of integrity", networks of solidarity which can expand to embrace and transform society by their prophetic witness."*

If this is true then it is essential that we ask ourselves, in the spirit of *Africae Munus* where we are advised not to 'interfere in any way in the politics of the states' (n.22), we must ask the crucial question: 'What is the relationship between ourselves as people of faith and the society in which we live?' We do indeed have 'a mission of truth to accomplish', as Pope Benedict says (*Africae Munus* n.22). Faith does have a place in relation to the secular world of politics, as recent Popes have highlighted, but especially clear was the talk that Pope Benedict gave on his visit to the United Kingdom in 2010 where he spoke to Politicians, he said:

*'I would like to suggest that the world of reason and the world of faith – the world of secular rationality and the world of religious belief – need one another and should not be afraid to enter into profound and ongoing dialogue, for the good of civilisation.'*

Christians are thus not enemies to our political legislators, we are not problems to be solved, or silenced; rather we are partners, vital contributors to national debate.

## **The Church within the World:**

The Constitution of the Church in the Modern World of Vatican II (n.1) makes it clear from the very beginning, that to be a Christian is to be deeply concerned with the joys and sorrows, needs and aspirations of the men and women with whom we live. Our Gospel is one of incarnation, the good news become flesh in a given context. Faith, therefore, is not an isolated private practice; it takes root in the world around us and challenges the values that secular society often puts forward. As disciples of Jesus Christ the Church is rightly to be seen as the 'conscience of the nation', it has a fundamental ministry of upholding the inherent dignity and value of each human being. If we are shepherds after the heart of Christ then we look on all men and women, no matter who they are, with his eyes of compassion and mercy.

We are as Christians 'in' the world, but as Pope Francis warns us in *Evangelii Gaudium*, we can very easily become too immersed in the world and find ourselves drinking deep from secular philosophy which is counter to our Christian faith. While being concerned about the economic and political debates within our country, and the world at large, we need as bishops, priests and religious to guard against becoming too actively involved in associating our personal political views with a certain interpretation of the gospel, with a particular political party. It is for this reason that we cannot mix political responsibility, taking on of public office, with pastoral care, our first loyalty is to the Church and her teaching. The Code of Canon law is very clear on this point:

*“Clerics are forbidden to assume public office which entails participation in the exercise of civil power.” (Canon 285)*

*"Clerics are not to have an active role in political parties and in the direction of labour unions....(Canon 287)*

Why is this so? Because as ambassadors of Christ, as those who have a heart that is formed after the 'Good Shepherd', we are to work for the common good of all our people, something we stressed in our pastoral letter "Working Together for the Common Good" **(ZCBC August 2014)**.

As Jesus outlines in the teaching given in John 10, the sheep that belong to him 'listen to his voice', we must be clear that the voice of the shepherd that we present to people is a voice of unity, a voice that desires to bring people together as members of the one body of Christ. Of course we must stand by the poor, the disadvantaged, the unemployed, the voiceless and the homeless etc. Of course we will have our own particular political opinions, but we must guard against becoming partisan or else we will cease to be agents of real reconciliation, justice and peace. We could fall into the trap of becoming agents of a secular ideology

It was with this in mind that the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy wrote in 1982 that it was irreconcilable with the clerical state to get involved in politics and to seek public office. Indeed we have seen that on those occasions where bishops, religious or priests have sought public office without the necessary canonical dispensation they have been suspended from their priestly ministry. We do indeed have a mandate from Jesus to 'Go into the whole world' and as Pope Francis notes in *Evangelii Gaudium* (n176-258) 'All Christians, their pastors included, are called to show concern for the building of a better world.' But the guiding principle of all our pastoral or political activity is found in Matthew 25: 31-46; what we do to the very least of our brothers and sisters we do unto Christ.

As ambassadors of Christ, as those who seek to manifest the heart of the Good Shepherd, we know all too well that:

*'Changing structures without generating new convictions and attitudes will only ensure that those same structures will become, sooner or later, corrupt, oppressive and ineffectual.'*  
**(Evangelii Gaudium n.189)**

As bishops, priests, religious and seminarians, we are inspired and motivated in our pastoral ministry not by political favour or argument but by the teaching of Jesus, especially in the Beatitudes (Mt. 5:3-12). We hunger and thirst for 'righteousness' not political or economic advantage. As Christians we are of course members of a particular tribe, citizens of a particular country. We pay our taxes, participate in public life, respect law and order and protect the rights of those who are disadvantaged. Through our deep faith in Christ and the social teachings of the Catholic Church we respect the dignity of each person as a bearer of God's image and likeness. We realize that our faith informs our choices and we can educate others about respect and dignity. As bishops, priests, religious and seminarians we can and should enter dialogue with local leaders but always we maintain our independence and autonomy as representatives of Jesus Christ.

As bishops we clearly echo the sentiments of Pope Benedict: 'Without God man neither knows which way to go, nor even understands who he is' (***Caritas in Veritate* n.78**). It is our duty to bring faith into the public domain and as 'one of the spiritual lungs of humanity' (***Africae Munus* n.174**) we must engage in sincere and constructive dialogue with the State legislators. We can best serve our country by being agents, shepherds, who not only know 'the smell of the sheep' (***Evangelii Gaudium* n.24**) but who know and reflect the smell of the Shepherd. The prophet Jeremiah gave us a promise from God that he would never leave his people without shepherds: "I will give you shepherds after my own heart". (Jer 3:15). Further on the Lord through the prophet declared: "I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed" (Jer 23:4).

We are to be shepherds who reveal the heart of Jesus Christ, which is a heart of mercy, of reconciliation, peace and justice. We are agents of the Gospel of Joy and so must guard against those outside forces that might try to compromise our ministry and encourage us to become agents of a particular political party or politician. If we have heard the call of Jesus Christ to follow him and have committed ourselves to him through

priesthood and religious life then there can be no separation between the truth of the Gospel and the way we live our lives. The truth of the Gospel is not so much preached by the eloquence of our homilies, but in the witness of our lives lived with integrity, fidelity and holiness. We live with an undivided heart, because we live in and from the heart of Jesus Christ the Good shepherd. We are ambassadors of Christ not agents of any State. Thus daily we should pray with the words of Psalm 86 verse 11: 'Teach me your way O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart to revere your name. Find time to reflect on your own, perhaps in your deaneries and communities on the following questions:

### **Reflection Questions:**

Read Mark 1: 14-20. How did you hear the call to follow Jesus? Who, what inspired your vocation?

The encounter with Jesus changed the life of the early disciples. What gives energy to your faith commitment and how have you found ways to share your faith with others?

We cannot live in the world and be unconcerned with what is happening. How do you see the connection between faith and your life as a citizen of Zimbabwe? What does Mk 12:13-17 try to teach us on this?

# WITH AN UNDIVIDED HEART

## PART II

Pastoral Letter of ZCBC

To all Priests, Religious and Seminarians

16 August 2015, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin  
Mary



- +Michael D. Bhasera, Bishop of Masvingo (ZCBC President)
- +Robert C. Ndlovu, Archbishop of Harare (ZCBC Vice President)
- +Alex Thomas, Archbishop of Bulawayo
- +Alexio Churu Muchabaiwa, Bishop of Mutare
- +Angel Floro, Bishop of Gokwe
- +Dieter B. Scholz SJ, Bishop of Chinhoyi
- +Albert Serrano, Bishop of Hwange
- +Xavier J. Munyongani, Bishop of Gweru
- +Patrick M. Mutume, Auxiliary Bishop of Mutare

## Introduction:

In our previous letter we took up the challenge of Pope Francis at our 'Ad Limina Visit' last year to foster a spirit of unity among us as 'Spirit-filled evangelizers' (Evangelii Gaudium no. 262-268). We placed before you the model of Christ as the Good Shepherd whose heart was open to all people so as to announce the time of God's liberation and healing (Lk 4: 14-18). The prophet Ezekiel speaks clearly of the distinction between those 'good' shepherds who lead the people to green pastures and the false shepherds who only have their own agenda at heart (Ezk 34). We have freely chosen Christ and we want to be among the good shepherds, who are actively and enthusiastically involved in the work of evangelization. We desire to promote a renewed missionary zeal so that we can fulfil our task as 'missionary disciples of Jesus Christ'. (Evangelii Gaudium no. 127).

In order to do this we need to look into our hearts, into the temptations and difficulties that we as agents of the Gospel can too easily fall into. It was through the prophet Ezekiel that God promised:

*'I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them; I will remove their heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, so that they may follow my statutes and ordinances and obey them. (Ezk 11:19)*

We spoke last time of the danger that our concern for the political and economic situation of our country can lead us to become too involved in the issues of the State. We can become agents of the State rather than ambassadors of Christ. In this letter we would like to look at one more of the temptations which Pope Francis has brought to all our attention on many occasions. Jesus said: *'For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also'* (Lk 12:34). Have we a heart of stone or flesh?

## **A Church that is poor and for the poor:**

Three days after his election to the papacy, Pope Francis spoke to the International media gathered in Rome and said he looked forward to 'a Church that is poor and for the poor!' Many clapped, few stopped to reflect on what this would really mean. Clearly he was not indicating that he wanted a Church that was destitute or its priests, religious and seminarians to be so, every labourer deserves his wages. Jesus himself was not destitute, but he did live simply, he lived close to the poor and was devoid of luxury and greed. He said that: *'the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head'* (Lk 9:58). He sent the disciples out saying: *'Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money – not even an extra tunic (Lk 9: 1-5) 'eat what is set before you' (Lk 10:8). Hardest of all he taught that: 'If anyone wants to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up the cross daily and follow me' (Lk 9:23).*

Today sadly our first questions on being asked to go to a mission are: 'Is there network?' 'Have they WiFi so I can access the internet?' 'Is ZESA reliable?' Our real concern ought to be, are there people to be served? As Pope Francis mentioned in *Evangelii Gaudium*:

*'Today we are seeing in many pastoral workers, including consecrated men and women, an inordinate concern for personal freedom and relaxation, which leads them to see their work as a mere appendage to their life, as if it were not part of their very identity....the spiritual life comes to be identified with a few religious exercises which can offer a certain comfort but which do not encourage encounter with others,...one observes...a heightened individualism, a crisis of identity and a cooling of fervour'. (no. 78)*

He speaks of an 'idolatry of money' (no. 55) 'worldliness' (no. 93) and a spirit of competition and fighting within groups of priests and religious (no. 98-100), all of which undermines our apostolic zeal. The Code of Canon law is very clear when it says:



*“Clerics are to cultivate a simple style of life and are to avoid whatever has the semblance of vanity”. (Canon 282)*

Likewise in Vita Consecrata (1996) religious are reminded that their vow of poverty challenges the growth in consumerism which looks for more and more possessions. The vow of poverty is an ecological vow as it makes us 'aware of the scarcity of the world's resources', it seeks to look for 'the conservation of creation by reducing consumption' (nos. 89-90). It is why Pope Francis in calling the Year of Consecrated life invited religious to 'wake up the world' to a different way of living (Apostolic Letter to Consecrated Men and Women November 2014).

## **The Quality of our life – a witness to Gospel Values:**

All of us are being asked to live more simply and to reflect on the manner of our life the values of the Gospel. In a very subtle way, often without being conscious of it, we become immersed in a greater accumulation of material goods and look for greater financial rewards; leading us to create our own personal business projects. As a result the necessary energy and time needed for these business projects distract and deflect us from our pastoral focus and we easily become 'part-time' ministers of the Gospel. We fulfil the minimal requirements of us as priests and religious but no more. Speaking to the Priests, religious and seminarians in Naples in March 2015 the Holy Father said that: 'Consecrated people be they priests or men and women religious should never be business people'.

Once again the Code of Canon Law is clear:

*“Clerics are forbidden personally or through others to conduct business or trade either for their own benefit or that of others without the permission of legitimate authority. (Canon 286)*

We need as Pope Francis warns in 'Evangelii Gaudium' to be careful even concerning those legitimate fundraising projects for our communities and missions as these can detract from proclaiming the Gospel, we

become 'obsessed with programmes of self help', 'a business mentality whose principle beneficiary is not God's people' (no. 95). Again it would do well to heed the warning given in the Code of Canon Law:

*'Clerics or religious who practise trade or business against the prescriptions of the canons are to be punished in accord with the seriousness of the offences. (Canon 1392)*

Our vocation as shepherds who reveal the heart of Jesus means that we are available for the people of God. We also take care to administer the goods and property placed in our care with honesty and integrity. Whatever finances are placed under our stewardship we should manage them with great transparency as none of these belong to us personally and the commandment given to Moses from God could not be clearer: 'You shall not steal' (Ex. 20:15). Doing so is not only an infringement of the law of God, it constitutes a criminal act. We are stewards of the property, finances and goods entrusted to us, and we are not owners of them.

Ultimately, as priests, religious or seminarians we have not made a career choice. Our vocation is something we cannot take off or put aside in order to pursue another career, alternative or alongside. Listen to these striking words from the Holy Father in *Evangelii Gaudium*::

*My mission of being in the heart of the people is not just part of my life or a badge I can take off. Instead, it is something I cannot uproot from my being without destroying my very self. I am a mission on earth; that is the very reason why I am here in this world. (no. 273)*

It is impossible to simply take off our vocation. Can you imagine St John Vianney sell bananas rather than hearing confessions? Or Vincent de Paul choosing to run a store rather than seek out the poor and needy? Would any of the early missionaries to our country have rather invested in tobacco than people? Speaking to the Congregation for the Clergy in October 2014 Pope Francis likened our vocation to a 'treasure hidden in a

field' (Matt 13:44). He said 'It is truly a treasure that God places from the beginning in the hearts of some' and then goes on:

*'This treasure, which needs to be discovered and brought to light, is not meant to "enrich" just someone. The one called...is not the "master" of his vocation, but the administrator of a gift that God has entrusted to him for the good of all people, rather, of all men and women, including those who have distanced themselves from religious practice or do not profess faith in Christ.'*

More important, we never stop being disciples of Jesus Christ. As priests, religious and seminarians we have been given a real treasure and for this reason we cannot 'sell' our vocations short by becoming part-time in our ministry. We are missionary disciples and we need to be available and accountable to the mission entrusted to us.

## **A Spirituality of communion:**

To be a Christian is of necessity an experience in 'community, in 'communion'. Religious life and its emphasis on community reminds us that we do not journey to God alone. Community is a theological imperative, not a mere convenient way to staying together. Community models and mirrors the Holy Trinity who is a communion of persons. This same fraternity should be seen in the diocesan priesthood and in seminary life. The Holy Father says:

*'Priests are united in a sacramental brotherhood, therefore, the first form of evangelization is the witness of brotherhood and of communion among themselves and with their bishop. From such a communion can arise a powerful missionary zeal — which frees ordained ministers from the comfortable temptation of being over anxious about the opinion of others and of their own well being, than inspired by pastoral love — in order to proclaim the Gospel, to the remotest peripheries'.*

(Congregation of the Clergy 13 October 2014)

It is therefore a deep sadness when priests, religious and seminarians fail to witness to this genuine fraternity, this communion in Christ. We can too easily look upon others with suspicion, competition and even dislike. To live with an undivided heart means to learn how to transcend my own petty prejudices and dislikes.

Certainly we must guard against disunity among ourselves (Africae Munus no. 35). Ultimately the one thing that keeps us united is that we love the same Lord. It is this Lord who has called us and expects us, through our transparency of life and our accountability with funds and property, to reveal to others a model of good stewardship. The way we work and live together reveals whether we believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ as a reality and not just a philosophy.

Paul in his letter to the Ephesians reminds us to *'live a life worthy of our vocation'* (4:1-15) Here is a passage of scripture that we would do well to sit and pray through. We have been given a tremendous vocation, it is a vocation worth living and we need to daily choose to live it to the full. The shepherd, Jesus, teaches us by word and example, lays down his life for the sheep.

The secular world provides us with examples enough where corruption and the exploitation of people for financial gain is ever present. With joy let us take up the challenge to live our vocation with sacrifice as well as with honesty.

Let us seek to give people examples of good practice in terms of administration of goods and in personal respect we show one another. Let us be responsible in our pastoral work and bring the good news of Jesus through faithful catechesis empowering our laity wherever possible. Once again we offer to you some questions to aid your personal reflection or with others.

## **Reflection Questions:**

Read Lk 9:57-62. What strikes you as you read this passage? Where do you hear the challenge?


In Lk 12:13-34 Jesus teaches about greed and the appropriate trust we need in God. How realistic is Jesus' teaching? If, as Pope Francis says, the Church is poor and for the poor what would that mean practically in your life and situation?

From your personal experience in what 2 or 3 practical ways have you found support, encouragement and challenge from fellow priests and religious? How could we create a deep sense of 'communion' among us?

# WITH AN UNDIVIDED HEART

## PART III

A Pastoral Letter of ZCBC  
To all Priests, Religious and Seminarians  
Mission Sunday 18 October 2015



+Michael D. Bhasera, Bishop of Masvingo(ZCBC President)  
+Robert C. Ndlovu, Archbishop of Harare(ZCBC Vice President)  
+Alex Thomas, Archbishop of Bulawayo  
+Alexio Churu Muchabaiwa, Bishop of Mutare  
+Angel Floro, Bishop of Gokwe  
+Dieter B. Scholz SJ, Bishop of Chinhoyi  
+Albert Serrano, Bishop of Hwange  
+Xavier J. Munyongani, Bishop of Gweru  
+Patrick M. Mutume, Auxiliary Bishop of Mutare

**W**e come to the third and final letter addressed to you our priests, religious and seminarians. Responding to Pope Francis' address to us during our 'Ad Limina' last year we have desired through these letters to give a genuine sense of direction and support to all who have answered the call of Jesus to follow him in diocesan priesthood or religious life. We have wanted to encourage each one of us to be renewed in our task of evangelization, inviting us to live the Gospel with joy, by living it with integrity and by being loyal to the Church.

Highlighting, as we have in our previous letters, the need to guard against becoming over politically involved and of accepting public office; of pointing out the danger of becoming too attached to material things and looking towards sustaining ourselves and our families with businesses that take us away from our pastoral care; in raising our awareness that among us there should be a spirit of unity and financial transparency we are by no means failing to recognise the number of priests, religious and seminarians who give impressive witness to the values of the Gospel. But we would be failing our own particular task as shepherds if we neglected to look at some of the sensitive and tricky issues that beset us in our ministry today. How can we heal the wounds of others if we are not prepared to address our own wounds?

St Paul in his letter to the Romans gives us sound advice when he says:

*'Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds.'* (Rom. 12:2)

Likewise in Philipppians he appeals to us :

*'If there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from a selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourself...Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus' (2:1-5)*

The vocation that we have is indeed a vocation worth living to the full. It comes to us from Jesus himself and it is his mind that we seek daily to 'put on' as we draw close to him in prayer and reflection on the Word of God in scripture. If we are to be 'Spirit-filled evangelizers, then it is in our faithfulness to prayer that we will discover the real sense of who we are called to be in Christ. Pope Francis writes in *Evangelii Gaudium* no.259:

*'...without prayer all our activity risks being fruitless and our message empty. Jesus wants evangelizers who proclaim the good news not only with words, but above all by a life transfigured by God's presence.'*

Each day as we look into the mirror of God's Word, (*Africae Munus* no.151) as we read and ponder his truth, we are challenged to take the road of conversion. Because it *'is living and active' and 'shaper than any two-edged sword'* (Heb 4: 12) the Word of God causes us to look at how we are living according to the light of the good news and we are invited to be more like the good shepherd we seek to follow. Again Pope Francis puts it clearly:

*'In union with Jesus, we seek what he seeks and we love what he loves. In the end, what we are seeking is the glory of the Father, we live and act "for the praise of his glorious grace (Eph 1:6)'. (*Evangelii Gaudium* no. 267)*

## **A living theology:**

Because our Christian faith speaks so clearly of the incarnation we can never take for granted the beauty of the 'flesh' we inhabit as human beings. The Word chose freely to become flesh and to dwell among us (Jn 1:1-18), therefore, the incarnation can never be reduced to an historical event alone, it never ceases, it continues to this very day. The Word continues to become flesh in each of us and so our very human flesh is not an accident in history but rather a 'sacramental' through which the Trinity themselves still choose to make themselves incarnate. That the Trinity took the enormous risk to enter our history means that nothing can ever be the same again.



It was this deep truth that inspired St John Paul II to spend the first five years of his pontificate expounding the wonder of human flesh. He did this in a series of 129 talks given at the Wednesday Audience from November 1979 to September 1984 that have come to be known as the 'theology of the body'. St John Paul II taught that the human person is far more mysterious than we give credit. We are not simply biology, wonderful as that biology is; we are, as bearers of God's image and likeness, we are a living theology. Our bodies speak of God. To look at another human being is thus to gaze into the face of the living God. Pope Benedict put this in a striking manner in *Africae Munus* when he wrote:

*'Sacred Scripture testifies that the blood which Christ shed for us becomes, through Baptism, the principle and bond of a new fraternity. This is the very antithesis of division, tribalism, racism and ethnocentrisms (Gal 3:26 – 28).*

*The Eucharist is the force which brings together the scattered children of God and maintains them in communion, since in our veins there circulates the very blood of Christ'. No.42*

If you and I really believed that the '*very blood of Christ*' was circulating in our veins and that of others would that change the way we treat them? Would it challenge any of our patterns of behaviour and thinking?

St John Paul II expressed the same sentiment in a different way when on 20th of February 1980 in the course of his teaching on the theology of the body he declared:

*'The body and it alone is capable of making visible what is invisible, spiritual and divine. It was created to transfer into the visible reality of the world the mystery hidden since time immemorial in God and thus to be a sign of it'.*

Our humanity points to our dignity and our destiny. Hence human sexuality and sexual desire is not simply concerned with sexual activity, it

points rather to who we are, who God is, the meaning of love and ultimately the meaning of life (Catechism no.704). Our bodies speak of God; they reveal God's divine plan and purpose in the world. Jesus teaches us that the meaning of our life, the vocation inscribed in our humanity, is that we love as he loves (Jn 15:12). By creating us male and female God has put that vocation into our bodies and so our sexuality becomes in the words of St John Paul II a “fundamental fact” of human existence. One could say that our bodies, our humanity, take us to the very core of our mission on earth. As icons of the Trinitarian love, human beings are truly, love at the heart of the world, love made flesh. What we choose to do with our bodies and that of others has, therefore, deep significance.

## **Celibacy- a choice to love like God**

For this reason we have chosen to remind you of this important teaching contained in the theology of the body. The vocation to love as God loves and to incarnate the love of God in our daily choices, this is the root and foundation of our life of celibacy. In his Apostolic Exhortation 'Familiaris Consortio' St John Paul II takes us to the deep meaning of our celibate choice:

*'Creating the human race in his own image and continually keeping it in being, God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion. Love is therefore the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being.'* No.11

So if we ask the question: why do we exist? what is the point of our existence? The answer that sacred scripture and the teaching of the Church gives is that we are made by love in order to experience love and to give love to others. If we are made to love, if this is our vocation then the question follows, how best should I live out this vocation? St John Paul II writes:

*'Christian revelation recognises two specific ways of realising the vocation of the human person, in its entirety, to love: marriage and virginity or celibacy.'* N11

Celibacy and marriage are, therefore, two different ways of living the same vocation, to love as God loves. There is only one vocation; we choose which way to express this divine mystery.

*'Marriage and virginity or celibacy are two ways of expressing and living the one mystery of the covenant of God with his people. When marriage is not esteemed, neither can consecrated celibacy exist; when human sexuality is not regarded as a great value given by the Creator, the reconciliation of it for the sake of the kingdom of heaven loses its meaning..'*

The great mystery (Eph 1:9-10; 5:32) which marriage and celibacy reveal is that from the very *'beginning, before the foundation of the world'* (Eph 1:4), God had a deep desire for union with us. We are created for union and so St John Paul II wants us to be clear that in our very humanity is inscribed a 'spousal', meaning. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches: 'From the beginning, God envisaged the glory of the new creation in Christ' (CCCn280) which means that the incarnation was by no means an after thought in God's plan, it was the very means by which this union between the Trinity and humankind would be achieved. Ultimately then whether we are married or celibate all our actions come down to one important question: Do my choices, do my actions, truly image God's free, total, faithful, fruitful love or do they not? If my involvement as a married person or a celibate does not mirror God's love then it is a counterfeit, a lie. If as a celibate and a married person I am not, through my commitment to the vows I have made, witnessing and making incarnate God's love in the world, then I am living with a heart that is divided, I am leading people astray.

## **Living with a divided heart**

Why, you may ask, have we emphasized this theology. First, because we need to appreciate our celibate vocation as a call to life and a call to love, we live celibacy not because it is a rule imposed upon us, as an unfortunate requirement for us to follow our vocation, but because it is the way to express the divine vocation that we have been given, to love as God loves. Secondly, we are all aware that some have chosen not to live celibacy with honesty or integrity. Indeed some have redefined celibacy to mean, not getting married while being free to engage in sexual activity. Too often celibacy is approached in a very negative manner. We speak of what we cannot do: not getting married, not having children, not becoming sexually involved.

Celibacy is a choice to love as God loves and love is not merely about sexual expression. Sadly in our world today sexuality has been reduced to what we do with our bodies. Our Catholic understanding of sexual desires reveal that we are indeed created to relate and to love, but that does not necessarily mean we become sexually active. We can think of examples of priests and religious who are 'reluctant celibates'. Indeed if we are honest some have chosen never to live celibate lives. Even if the Church were to change its rule concerning celibacy for diocesan priests, we would still bring our sexual immaturity into marriage and the number of 'small houses' would remain ever increasing.

If our bodies reveal the vocation that God has given to us, if the very blood of Christ circulates within our veins can we honestly justify our sexual irresponsibility, our drinking to excess, and our abuse of others? We have compromised in this area of our humanity and some have made a conscious choice to live a double life and a life that results in a lack of integrity. It is a short distance from being romantically and sexually involved with one person to acting out with many. Pregnancies occur and we have no troubled conscience about terminating them in order to save our reputation. We spoil other people's children and then wonder why vocations to the priesthood and religious life are not considered credible.

We would like to urge each of us to take up again the document 'A Vocation Worth Celebrating' to ponder and reflect on the treasure we have in the vocation that we have received. Mistakes can happen but we must each be aware that we do not have the right to choose to live a mistake and then justify it with our own distorted excuses. Jesus warned that a household divided against itself will fall (Lk 11:17-23). You remember also that he teaches that it is from within, from our hearts that evil intentions emerge (Mark 7:17-23). If we harden our hearts and choose to live with a divided heart we leave the door of that heart open for the father of lies to enter and sow the seed of deception. Let us renew ourselves and take to heart the words of Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* no. 278:

*'Faith also means believing in God, believing that he truly loves us, that he is alive, that he is mysteriously capable of intervening, that he does not abandon us and that he brings good out of evil by the power of his creativity. It means believing that he marches triumphantly in history with those who "are called and chosen and faithful" (Rev. 17:14).'*

## **Conclusion**

As we come to the end of these three pastoral letters to you our priests, religious and seminarians we would remind you of the words of Pope Francis in the Philippines when he said that "All pastoral ministry is born of love. All consecrated life is a sign of Christ's reconciling love". We are called to be love in the heart of the Church and world. We hope that these reflections have helped to encourage you in your choice for Christ. Stay close to him. Take his words seriously when he says:

*'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls.'*  
**(Mt 11:28-30)**

Likewise take time to ponder on the words of Paul in Ephesians 6: 10-20 and make sure that each day you put on the 'whole' armour of Christ so that you can be his ambassadors in Zimbabwe today. None of us wants to live with a heart that is divided but all of us face the temptations to choose things that are not of God. The spiritual warfare is real, but we have the great source of power to defeat the evil one who wants to disrupt our ministry and weaken our resolve: the Blessed Sacrament, the sacrament of reconciliation, the scriptures, the rosary, etc. We have Mary as our mother who accompanies us on our journey in vocation. Call upon her; she will always take you to Jesus. Let us conclude with words from Evangelii Gaudium no. 279:

*'Let us keep marching forward: let us give him everything, allowing him to make our efforts bear fruit in his good time.'*

### **Questions for Reflection:**

What has struck you most in these three pastoral letters? What has given you encouragement and hope?

Which pieces of the armour of God do you need to find again in order to strengthen you in your vocation?

What are the areas of your life that you are being invited to reflect upon and change?

# **A CALL FOR PRACTICAL ACTION TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT AND PROMOTE FOOD SECURITY**

A Pastoral Letter of the Zimbabwe  
Catholic Bishops' Conference  
On the Current Food Security Crisis in Our  
Country:

15 November 2015.

*“For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was  
thirsty and you gave me drink” (Mt.25:35).*

- +Michael D. Bhasera, Bishop of Masvingo (ZCBC President)
- +Robert C. Ndlovu, Archbishop of Harare (ZCBC Vice President)
- +Alex Thomas, Archbishop of Bulawayo
- +Alexio Churu Muchabaiwa, Bishop of Mutare
- +Angel Floro, Bishop of Gokwe
- +Dieter B. Scholz SJ, Bishop of Chinhoyi
- +Albert Serrano, Bishop of Hwange
- +Xavier J. Munyongani, Bishop of Gweru
- +Patrick M. Mutume, Auxiliary Bishop of Mutare

## **1. Introduction**

We, your Shepherds, have reflected on Zimbabwe's 2015/2016 food security crisis caused by many factors including climate change, our disregard for the environment and policy deficiency. In the light of the Word of God and Christian Social Teaching, we provide some guidance, light and hope in these difficult times.

## **2. Poverty, hunger and food insecurity**

2.1. Approximately 1.5 million Zimbabweans (16% of rural households) may not be able to meet their food needs during the 2015/2016 hunger season.

2.2. Most of the rural households are finding it difficult to purchase food at the market, even if available.

2.3. The orphaned, elderly, unemployed, HIV infected and affected, female and child headed households and other vulnerable groups are getting poorer due to food scarcity.

## **3. Climate Change a reality**

3.1. In June 2015, Pope Francis issued an Encyclical Letter entitled LAUDATO SI': Praise Be to You, indicating that climate change is now a reality on which all need to act from our various levels — whether individual, communal, national, regional or global. Among some of the most important points highlighted in the Encyclical are that: Climate change is real and is getting worse; Human beings are a major contributor to climate change; Climate change disproportionately affects the poor; We can and must make things better; and Individuals can help, but politicians must take the lead.

3.2. Pope Francis writes that the environment, “our common home”, is in an ecological crisis because of “the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed



her” (Laudato Si no. 2). The earth is burdened and laid waste, groans in travail with sickness as evidenced in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. As Zimbabweans we should acknowledge our contribution to the degradation of our environment mainly through wanton cutting down of trees, veld fires, pollution, siltation of rivers and disregard for wetlands. New and old mines continue to pollute our air, water and soil as they fail to fulfill legislation on the disposal of residues, fumes, chemicals, etc., posing a health hazard for many. We are literally turning our beautiful country into a desert. Contrary to our ancient traditions of maintaining a healthy ecological balance, we have come to see ourselves as the lords and masters of the earth, entitled to plunder her at will (Laudato Si no. 2). We inherited a wholesome country from our forefathers, we have a similar obligation to future generations.

3.3. Climate change has led to multidimensional problems with serious social and economic implications. Zimbabwe for instance, has experienced climate change through extreme weather conditions events such as frequent droughts, erratic and too much rainfall. This has affected agriculture production where more than half of the country's population derive their livelihoods. Many fail to till their land, secure inputs and plant on time. Persistent poverty, hunger and food insecurity have therefore become common. We all need to make an effort to take care of nature and climate by avoiding veld fires, cutting down of trees, water and air pollution. “Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start” (Laudato Si no. 205).

## **4. Well Written Policies**

4.1. Zimbabwe has some of the best agriculture, and even economic policies on the continent that seek to address poverty, hunger and climate change.

4.2. The Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZimASSET) provides that Food Security and Nutrition

revolve around the country's food producing and processing capabilities. It is the ultimate goal of the ZimASSET in this regard to restore Zimbabwe's bread basket status producing food enough to sustain not only the country but the whole region of Southern Africa. The ZimASSET anticipated some of the goals of the newly adopted global Sustainable Development Goals.

4.3. The Zero Hunger Challenge Strategy brings together different stakeholders at the country level to contribute to eliminating food nutrition insecurity. It is anchored on 5 pillars which are:- Zero stunted children less than two years, 100% access to adequate food all year round, all food systems are sustainable, 100% increase in smallholder productivity and incomes and Zero loss or waste of food

4.4. The Zimbabwe Agriculture Investment Plan (ZAIP) is premised on the principles of the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) that are meant to enhance the agriculture sector through the facilitation of sustainable increase in production, productivity and competitiveness. It promises that if Government allocates at least 10% of its national budget to the Agricultural sector, this will contribute to sustainable annual agriculture growth rate of more than 6% per annum.

4.5. Climate Change Response Strategy is underpinned on six sub-sectors that cover water resources, agriculture, gender, youth and vulnerable groups, education and awareness, human settlement and governance. It aims to produce concrete mitigation and adaptation, actions integrated into long-term economic planning processes to support a low carbon, climate resilient development pathway. The strategy will ultimately feed into the national climate policy which aims to promote the mainstreaming of climate and climate change issues into national development plans.

4.6. Food and Nutrition Security Policy offers a framework for a cohesive multi-sectoral action programme with a shared vision and strategy for improved food and nutrition security in Zimbabwe. Among other commitments made by Government in this document, it devotes to ensuring a national integrated food and nutrition security information system that provides timely, reliable information on the food and nutrition security situation, effectiveness of programmes and informs decision-making.

## **5. Our Request**

5.1. As highlighted by Pope Francis, “It is a scandal that there is still hunger and malnutrition in the world. It is not just a question of responding to immediate emergencies, but of addressing together, in all areas, a problem that challenges our personal and social conscience, to achieve a just and lasting solution”.

### **Food**

5.2. More than 16% of Zimbabweans urgently need food assistance. Jesus said, “Give them something to eat yourselves” (Mt.14:16). And accordingly the early Christians “shared the proceeds among themselves according to what each one needed” (Acts 2:45).

5.3. We appeal to everyone to share what they have charitably and generously. We invite Parishes and Small Christian Communities to make concrete gestures/actions to alleviate the suffering of the hungry. We extend our appeal to our brothers and sisters, and all institutions of goodwill, in and outside Zimbabwe to assist. “Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise.” (Luke 3:10-11). Our faith is tested by how we treat the vulnerable members of our community. This too will be our ultimate test on judgment day: “For I was hungry and you gave me food” (Mt.25:35).

5.4. We would like to assure all those willing to assist through the Church that everything received will be channeled to the needy transparently, prioritizing the most vulnerable people, through our Diocesan, Parish and Caritas offices. We appeal to others involved in food assistance to uphold the principles of honesty and transparency in the sharing of food.

5.5. We are grateful that Government is taking measures to mitigate the adverse effects of hunger and climate change. We request the Government, traditional and political leaders to depoliticize the distribution of food and other humanitarian assistance. Political and structural transformations are needed for lasting change. Every effort to protect and improve our world entails profound changes in lifestyles,

models of production and consumption, and the established structures of power which today govern societies. An elected Government becomes a parent for all citizens regardless of their political affiliation. We were all created in the image of God who loved us first and created us in his own image (Genesis 1:27). There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for we are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28) everybody deserves life and dignity through access to food.

### **Timely provision of inputs and fair payment for farmers**

5.6. Most rural households rely on agriculture to secure their livelihoods. They spend more than half a year working on the land.

5.7. We appeal to the Government and all those who provide farmers with agricultural inputs to timely distribute them before the rainy season. We are also asking for impartiality in the distribution of the inputs.

5.8. The prices of each farm commodity should be communicated before the farmers make their crop choices for the season. The buying and payment processes should also be communicated in advance to avoid prejudice.

5.9. In situations of contract farming, farmers should be well educated on the contracts they will be signing. This should be supported by Government through a clear regulatory framework that protects smallholder farmers. All clauses of the contracts should be revealed and thoroughly discussed in a language understood by both the contractors and contracted. Hiding some of the contract clauses and revealing them to the farmers during the selling season contradicts what the bible teaches us: Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. (Ephesians 4:25)

## **Sincere and practical implementation of relevant policies**

5.10. Policy makers and implementers should move from rhetoric to practical action by financing and implementing existing policies and fulfill ratified regional and international covenants to protect the environment and improve food security. Good policies on paper are not useful if they are not transformed into reality. Policies become a reality through frank and open dialogue, political will, innovation and sufficient financing.

5.11. We urge Government to increase agriculture investment and spending in line with the 2003 CAADP Maputo Declaration, particularly targeting the smallholder farmers.

5.12. Extension Support needs to be enhanced so that the rural poor cope, adapt and manage climate risk in order to prevent hunger and poverty.

5.13. In line with ZIMASSET, we urge Government to invest more in improved irrigation and water harvesting systems to address the current water poverty. We further request the Government to develop and adopt appropriate and climate smart and ecological agriculture techniques.

## **6. Final Words**

6.1. We must not despair. If we all work for the common good, if we are in solidarity with one another and if everyone does their part to protect the environment and improve food security, there is hope. Let us pray that the Lord may touch our hearts so that we are ready to protect our environment, give and share what we have and implement the good policies we have. May the blessings of God be upon us during these difficult times.

