

# **MESSAGE FROM AMECEA BISHOPS**

## **RECONCILIATION THROUGH JUSTICE AND PEACE**

*"You are the Salt of the Earth...You are the Light of the World.." Matthew 5:13-14.*

### **1. Greetings**

To our dear Catholic Faithful and all people of good will. We, the Catholic Bishops of AMECEA Region (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Malawi, Kenya, Tanzania, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and the affiliated members of Djibouti and Somalia) greet you all in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Peace be with you!

Concerned with the situation in our region, namely, the Darfur Region and Southern Sudan, the conflict in Northern Uganda, the unprecedented crisis following the presidential and parliamentary elections of 2007 in Kenya, the recent tensions between Djibouti and Eritrea, the continuous crisis in Somalia, the political impasse in Malawi and the tensions existing between Eritrea and Ethiopia, we, the Bishops meeting in Lusaka for the 16<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly from 27<sup>th</sup> June to 7<sup>th</sup> July 2008, prayed together and discussed our present day circumstances in the region under the theme: "Reconciliation Through Justice and Peace", in view of offering pastoral guidance to God's people whom we are privileged to shepherd.

Although not in AMECEA Region, we are greatly concerned with the crisis in Zimbabwe. Our hearts go out to the people of Zimbabwe who are facing hard times. We remain united with them in our prayers.

### **2. Evangelisation**

We realize the challenges the Church in the AMECEA region is facing in its Evangelizing Mission. This is especially in bringing about reconciliation through Justice and Peace. The Church does not have all the means to solve conflicts and tensions. However, we believe that in the midst of violent contexts referred to above, the Church should continue to be prophetic, that is, an agent of

justice forgiveness and reconciliation. As a prophetic voice, the Church will be vigilant, outspoken, informed by gospel values and the Social Teaching of the Church. We challenge our theologians to develop a theology of Truth and Reconciliation that will enable the Church to address and foster reconciliation through Justice and Peace.

### **3. Reconciliation from the heart**

As shepherds, we believe reconciliation should be at the centre of what the Church does and should start from the heart of each person. At the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus set out his plan of action found in Luke 4: 18-19 which reads:

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach Good News to the poor. He 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."*

As Christians we are all called upon to announce the Good News of Christ and denounce injustice wherever we are.

### **4. Mechanisms for Monitoring and Evaluation of Church performance**

The Catholic Church in the AMECEA Region acknowledges the ever changing socio-economic and political world. We therefore call upon Catholic Institutions in AMECEA Region to develop workable strategies and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of our pastoral programmes.

We also call upon our Catholic Lay professionals laity to rise to the occasion and live their Christian identity and witness in society. We call upon them to provide competent analytical data in order to help the Church make informed and timely interventions.

## **5. Entrenchment of Poverty in Africa**

The gap between the rich and poor is ever increasing. There are several factors that lead to high poverty levels in the countries of AMECEA. While we acknowledge the external factors such as unfair trade pacts with Western and emerging Asian economies we also recognize local causes of this such as misplaced priorities, inequitable distribution of resources, bad governance, corruption and conflicts and scourge of HIV and AIDS.

We welcome external investments into the economies of our region but these investments must not disadvantage our people. Justice demands payment of just wages and good working conditions. Similarly, our governments in the region must demonstrate transparency and concern for the common good in their contract negotiations with both local and foreign investors.

## **6. Advocacy**

Having deliberated on the need to accompany our parliamentary representatives in AMECEA Region, we encourage our National Conferences, where this is not yet done, to establish Parliamentary Liaison Offices. These offices will be a means for permanent and constant dialogue between the Church and parliamentarians, and will reduce the representational gaps and let the Church contribute positively on Constitutional and Legislative issues.

In the same line, we commend efforts being made to seek for an Observer Status at the African Union. AMECEA will seek similar status within the relevant Regional Organizations in order to engage them at policy level and ensure that decisions made do not disadvantage the poor majority.

## **7. Communication for Reconciliation through Justice and Peace**

The communications media can truly be at the service of understanding among peoples and a means for promoting the unity of the human family. There is, therefore, the need to improve communication in the Church by ensuring that information with people in parishes and the Small Christian Communities.

To foster Reconciliation through Justice and Peace Catholic Media will promote messages of hope. We urge communicators in the region to collaborate and network, hold regular meetings, training, share information, radio and TV programmes.

Acknowledging that formation is essential for developing and laying a solid foundation for the Church's communications ministry, the Church in AMECEA shall ensure that it has communicators who are properly formed in Christian values and ethics and not only professionally trained in communication techniques and technology.

## **8. Family**

The church stands for integral relationships within the marriage and family. In order to achieve meaningful development, the family unit must be protected, strengthened and supported because it is the back bone of any nation.

The education of children, especially girls and empowerment of women in the Region still remains a great challenge. Nevertheless parents can and should do more to instill confidence and appropriate formation for the girl child at an early age.

## **9. New Generation of Leaders transformed by Gospel values**

We urge the Church Institutions to prioritize the formation of leaders at all levels of society who are transformed by gospel values and can lead by example in the pursuit of Justice and Peace in our region and in Africa as a whole. We are

happy to note that several universities have been established and others are been planned in the AMECEA Region. These universities should bear a Catholic identity in their activities. In order to achieve great impact, Catholic Universities in the AMECEA Region should create a network of collaboration.

## **10. Sacredness of Creation**

The environment is God's gift to humankind. All creation is sacred. While we are aware that some of the industrialised nations are responsible for most of the world environmental destruction, we have also realized that the local authorities are not doing enough to protect the environment. We deplore the degradation of the environment as this brings about adverse weather patterns. We, therefore, call upon all people in our region to work towards safeguarding our environment.

## **11. Ecumenical and Interfaith Approaches**

We realize that the area of Justice and Peace involves concerted efforts that include Interreligious dialogue. We appeal to all those who dialogue to always work towards reciprocal and conducive environments in order for peace to prosper. In this regard we need to link our efforts with organizations and individuals who are already making headway in this very important field like the All African Council of Churches (AACC) and various National Ecumenical Bodies and other Religious Bodies.

## **12. Positive Efforts**

We take note of and appreciate the efforts of some of our Governments that uphold the rule of law and principles of good governance. We further commend those governments that have resolved their conflicts through peaceful reconciliation.

## **13. Cooperating Partners**

We thank our Christians in our region who continuously support the local Church despite the difficulties that they experience. We also thank our cooperating partners for their generosity to our dioceses and institutions over the years. We appeal for continued collaboration and partnership in our social and pastoral programmes. Besides the material support we are drawn to fraternity that brings us together.

#### **14. AMECEA Golden Jubilee**

AMECEA members will be celebrating its Golden Jubilee in 2011. This celebration will coincide with the 17<sup>th</sup> AMECEA Plenary Assembly to be held at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) in Nairobi, Kenya from 27<sup>th</sup> June to 7<sup>th</sup> July 2011. We thank God for inspiring the Founding Fathers of AMECEA to create this illustrious association of solidarity and pastoral collaboration.

We entrust our mission to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In this Pauline Year which has just begun. We ask the Apostle to the Nations to accompany us as we implement our action plans on the theme "Reconciliation through Justice and Peace". May we find hope and encouragement in his own words:

*"All things are done according to God's plan and decision; and God chose us to be his own people in union with Christ because of his own purpose, based on what he had decided from the very beginning. Let us, then, who were the first to hope in Christ, praise God's glory" Ephesians 1:11-12.*

#### **15. Gratitude**

Finally, we thank the Zambia Episcopal Conference and people of Zambia for their hospitality and their contributions to make this plenary a success. We join them in praying for President Dr. Levy Patrick Mwanawasa SC. We were particularly privileged to be addressed by President Mwanawasa at the start of our deliberations.

May God bless the people of AMECEA, and may Reconciliation through Justice and Peace be realized and sustained.

Mary, our Lady of Africa intercede for us!

**+ Tarcisio Ziyaye**

**ARCHBISHOP OF BLANTYRE**

**AMECEA CHAIRMAN, on behalf of AMECEA Bishops,  
2008**

**DATE: 6<sup>th</sup> July**