

KENYA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS



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A CALL TO KEEP FAITH ALIVE AND TRUST IN GOD

“But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31).

PREAMBLE

We the Catholic Bishops in Kenya, meeting at *Donum Dei* Sisters Centre in Karen, Nairobi, convey our heartfelt greetings to all Kenyans in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As your shepherds, we thank God for the new **Misale Ya Kiroma** which we have launched today during the celebration of the Holy Mass at St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary. With this launch, we ask all members of the clergy, religious and lay faithful to officially start using the **Misale Ya Kiroma** on the First Sunday of Advent in the coming Liturgical Year. We take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all those who contributed to the preparation of this new liturgical book.

During our weeklong meeting, we have reflected deeply on the State of our Nation, particularly on the prevailing drought situation in the country, the Covid-19 pandemic, unrest in schools and the national political discourse, among others. We, therefore, wish to state the following:

1. The Drought Situation in The Country

The current drought situation affecting nearly all the counties in the arid and semi-arid regions of the country is a matter of great concern. It calls for urgent and decisive action from all of us.

As your shepherds, we appeal to all the faithful within the parishes and all people of good will to express solidarity with our affected brothers and sisters by donating food and giving other assistance for example facilitating transportation. Through our dioceses, ways and means should be found to make sure that such donations reach those affected by drought. No Kenyan should die of famine.

We note with concern that there has been very slow response to the drought situation. Consequently, we appeal to the Government to respond in a swift and coordinated manner to this situation by providing both short-term and long-term assistance and solutions to the affected populations, to lessen suffering and avert a humanitarian crisis.

It is unfortunate that 58 years after independence, we are unable to come up with permanent solutions to the perennial droughts that affect the country every few years. As a country, we must wean ourselves from obsession with politics and sensationalism at the expense of other important issues of national concern. It cannot be business as usual when Kenyans continue to starve and even die from droughts which can easily be managed through establishment of sound mitigation structures.

2. Our Commitment to Environmental Conservation

As Kenyans, we are blessed with a great Land endowed with diverse natural resources. As Pope Francis in his encyclical letter *Laudato Si* reminds us, these resources are all parts of God's blessings and our inheritance to pass to the future generations.

It is becoming clear that the frequent droughts that we are experiencing in many parts of our country are as a result of global climate change and environmental degradation. Here in Kenya, it seems our model of development has led to a culture of unsustainable degradation of our environment and depletion of our natural resources.

As the Catholic Church, we have been engaged in an environmental campaign to raise awareness among Kenyans on the need to conserve our environment. The campaign promotes the work of God through supporting initiatives that create a safe environment for every human person to enjoy. We are inviting all to plant as many trees as possible in order to conserve the environment. We also call on the Government to help the people access affordable alternative energy (green energy) in order to reduce the use of charcoal in the country.

We are pleased to note that the Government of Kenya, through the Ministry of Environment and Forestry has embarked on a similar campaign. As a Church we have joined this campaign in partnership with the Government.

We appeal to the County Governments, especially as they gather in their 7th Annual Devolution Conference, to seriously take up this campaign and partner with faith-based organizations and our dioceses for maximum positive impact. We also invite all Kenyans to embrace environmental conservation and take advantage of the current short rain season to plant trees. If we all act to conserve the environment, the current effects of climate change that we are witnessing today in the form of perennial droughts, floods, food insecurity, water-borne diseases and respiratory infections will be reduced to manageable levels.

3. Arson and Unrest in Schools

We are witnessing an escalation of arson and unrest in schools and other disruptive behaviour by students, resulting in injury and loss of property as well as learning time. The continued disruption of learning in our schools through student unrest is worrying and is a matter that should concern all of us.

Having analysed many of the issues related to unrest in our schools, we note that amongst the many identified possible causes of these unrests are the rising indiscipline caused by drug abuse and peer pressure coupled by other stresses exerted on learners by an over compressed and erratic academic calendar. Moreover, we note that the current over-congestion in the dormitories, classrooms and dining halls in schools which many times results in appalling conditions, has greatly constrained the learners.

We therefore advise as follows:

- (i) We appeal to the pupils and students not to destroy their schools but raise their grievances in a constructive manner. Let our children know that we love and care for them and that education is key to their future. On the same note we ask all the stakeholders to listen to the students and pupils and seek to address their challenges.
- (ii) We need to review ways of maintaining discipline in our schools through deliberate coordinated efforts of correction, mentorship, counselling and effective chaplaincy ministry. Specifically, the parents should be more involved in this process.
- (iii) The Boards of Management and the Principals as well as Heads of schools should be empowered and supported to deal with the extreme indiscipline cases in our schools.
- (iv) We all need to make a deliberate, conspicuous and effective effort to effectively eliminate access of alcohol and drugs into the schools.
- (v) Besides indiscipline, we need to address the issue of cultism and radicalization in schools as well as the challenges related to mental health.
- (vi) We call for the reinstatement of extra curriculum activities in schools.
- (vii) The Ministry of Education, the Teachers Service Commission and all stakeholders, including the churches who sponsor many schools should have regular consultative fora to address emerging issues.
- (viii) The role of the sponsors in schools should be re-affirmed and enhanced.

We reiterate that the role of the sponsor includes the instilling of good values and morals and enhancing a conducive learning environment in schools. This includes addressing the individual and common problems affecting our learners and our staff. The Catholic Church, therefore, will continue to embark on appropriate programmes of counselling and spiritual support. We believe this is critical for all institutions of learning.

4. Implementation of Competency Based Curriculum

As your shepherds we have been following with keen interest the process of implementation of the Competency Based Curriculum. While we acknowledge that the Competency Based Curriculum has some benefits for learners, parents, schools and other stakeholders, for it to be implemented successfully, it is necessary that:

- (i) The Government and other stakeholders should give more capacity and strategic support to the teachers and parents.
- (ii) More financial and logistical resources be allocated to all schools.
- (iii) Pupil-Teacher ratio be adequate for effective learning.
- (iv) Particular attention and greater capacity be given to Special Needs Schools by the Government.
- (v) Strategic sensitization be given to parents in order to understand their roles in the delivery of the Competence Based Curriculum.
- (vi) The Ministry of Education, the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development and the Teachers Service Commission closely collaborate and build synergy for quality assurance.

5. Our Position on Introduction of Comprehensive Sexual Education

Last year, the Senate rejected a Private Member's Bill dubbed 'The Reproductive Health Bill' sponsored by Hon. Susan Kihika, Senator, Nakuru County. At the time, the Bill had generated a lot of criticism and resistance from Kenyans. We are deeply concerned that a similar Bill has recently been introduced at the East African Legislative Assembly by Hon. Kennedy Mukulia Ayason dubbed 'Sexual

and Reproductive Health Bill'. In our view, this Bill that is before the East African Legislative Assembly is a re-introduction of the rejected 'Kihika Bill' at the regional level.

We note that this Bill had been presented before the East African Legislative Assembly and was rejected on 12th February 2021. This followed the numerous concerns raised by various stakeholders. Having studied the Bill, it is evident that the motive behind this Bill is to force the East African Community to sexualize our children and introduce them to the agenda of abortion, contraceptives, gender transition and reassignment, and homosexuality which go against our religious and cultural values as well as natural law.

Guided by Article 26 of the Constitution of Kenya 2010, we maintain that the Bill as presented is an attempt to engender an amorphous field of rights referred to as 'reproductive rights' which are contrary to the Right to Life as protected and guaranteed by the same Constitution. As the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops, we dissociate ourselves from this process and do not support the Bill whatsoever. We have already written to the East African Legislative Assembly raising our objection to the Bill. We call on the Government of Kenya not to endorse this Bill at the regional level considering that the Senate rejected it. We, therefore, urge the East African Legislative Assembly to reject this Bill *in toto*.

6. Political Campaigns and Peaceful Elections

We are concerned over heightened political activity in the country as we approach the 2022 General Elections. It is unfortunate that our leaders have abandoned delivery of services to the people and moved into full time campaigns well ahead of the legally stipulated campaign period.

Further to this, it is regrettable to note that based on the experience of the voter registration exercise the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission embarked on, we noticed some electoral malpractices. In some parts of the country, it was evident that some voters were transported to register in stations

away from their places of residence. These are early signs of rigging and manipulation of the forthcoming General Elections.

Moreover, according to the results of the voter registration exercise, voter apathy is rampant among Kenyans. This is a dangerous trend against the gains we as a nation have made in our struggle for a truly democratic society. We, therefore, urge all Kenyans who are of the age of 18 and above to exercise their democratic right by ensuring that they vote for leaders of their choice. Although the mass registration exercise has been closed we encourage Kenyans who have not registered to make an effort and register as voters in their local IEBC offices. We remind every Kenyan that not to vote is choosing to participate in the election of wrong leaders.

We are also concerned that despite the prevailing Covid-19 pandemic, leaders are drawing huge crowds to their rallies where the Ministry of Health protocols are completely ignored. We warn that we risk sliding back to a serious infection crisis if this recklessness is not contained.

We have repeatedly called for a peaceful electioneering process which culminates in just and peaceful elections. We remind leaders that if they continue to promote ethnic mobilization and balkanization, they risk exposing our country to grave danger. Leaders must therefore tone down their rhetoric and conduct themselves with civility and decorum.

7. The Legal Regime Governing Elections

We would like once again to reiterate our repeated call to Parliament to enact necessary reforms in our electoral laws, to ensure free, fair and credible elections in August 2022. Going into the next General Elections without these critical reforms is a recipe for trouble.

Furthermore, it is critical to fill with urgency, all vacant positions in the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission, particularly that of the Chief

Executive Officer. Parliament should also ensure that the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission is allocated all the necessary resources required to conduct civic education and manage a smooth electoral process. On its part, the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission must ensure that all the allocated resources are used in a prudent and accountable manner.

8. The Covid-19 situation

Since the lifting of some of the Covid-19 restrictions, including lifting of the night curfew, the country is gradually returning to normalcy. We, however, caution Kenyans that we are not yet out of the woods. Covid-19 is still very much with us and the risk of infection remains high. We, therefore, must continue to adhere to the Ministry of Health protocols on Covid-19 to avoid sliding back and losing all the gains we have collectively achieved in combating the spread of the virus. We however caution against unreasonable demands by the Government that may infringe on peoples' rights such as the requirement to produce vaccination certificate in order to be offered services. We also hope that very soon restrictions will be relaxed in places of worship.

We remind Kenyans that as we enter the electioneering period, there is need to exercise extra caution to reduce the risk of contracting Covid-19 from political gatherings. Everybody must take his/her personal safety seriously by wearing face masks and observing social distance when attending public events.

Conclusion

Dear Kenyans, despite the many challenges we are facing in our lives today, let us keep our faith and hope alive. Let us learn to trust God in everything and He will never abandon us. We invite you to continue praying for an end to the Covid-19 pandemic and the prevailing drought situation in our country. We pray for a peaceful electioneering period in the lead up to the 2022 General Elections.

Let us all be inspired to action by the words of the Holy Scriptures in 2 Chronicles 7:14 where the Word of God is directed to us saying: *“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and will heal their land”*.

We invoke the blessings of God upon all Kenyans and pray that God will see us through our tribulations and fill our hearts with hope and unwavering trust in Him. May Almighty God prepare us well and journey with us towards just and peaceful elections in the year 2022 and may plenty be found within our borders.

God bless you all; God bless Kenya.



Most Rev. Martin Kivuva Musonde
Chairman of KCCB/Mombasa

Thursday, 11th November 2021

PRESENT

1. Rt. Rev. Maurice Muhatia Makumba
2. Most Rev. Anthony Muheria
3. Most Rev. Philip Anyolo
4. Rt. Rev. Joseph Mairura Okemwa
5. Rt. Rev. Maurice Crowley
6. Rt. Rev. Alfred Rotich
7. Rt. Rev. Norman King'oo Wambua
8. Rt. Rev. Peter Kihara
9. Rt. Rev. David Kamau Ng'ang'a
10. Rt. Rev. Anthony Ileri Mukobo
11. Rt. Rev. Virgilio Pante
12. Rt. Rev. Salesius Mugambi
13. Rt. Rev. James Maria Wainaina
14. Rt. Rev. Paul Kariuki Njiru

DIOCESE

- Vice-Chairman/Nakuru
- Nyeri
- Kisumu/Archbishop Elect of Nairobi
- Kisii
- Kitale
- Kericho
- Machakos
- Marsabit
- Nairobi
- Isiolo Vicariate
- Maralal
- Meru
- Murang'a
- Embu

KENYA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

15. Rt. Rev. Dominic Kimengich - Eldoret/Apostolic Administrator of Lodwar
16. Rt. Rev. John Oballa Owaa - Ngong
17. Rt. Rev. Joseph Mbatia - Nyahururu
18. Rt. Rev. Joseph Alessandro - Garissa
19. Rt. Rev. Joseph Obanyi Sagwe - Kakamega/Apostolic Administrator of Bungoma
20. Rt. Rev. Joseph Mwongela - Kitui
21. Rt. Rev. Michael Odiwa - Homa Bay
22. Rt. Rev. Willybard Lagho - Malindi
23. Very Rev. Fr. Benjamin K. Maswili - Apostolic Administrator Military Ordinariate

PROCLAMATION

We the Catholic Bishops of Kenya, meeting in Dodoma, the African Centre in Kenya, solemnly convey our heartfelt greetings to all Kenyans at the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In your shepherds, we reaffirm for the new Mass in Kisumu which we have launched today during the celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the Holy Spirit Seminary. With this launch, we ask all members of the clergy, religious and lay faithful to enthusiastically start using the Mass in Kisumu as the first Sunday of Advent in the coming liturgical year. We take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all those who contributed in the preparation of this new liturgical book.

During our six long meetings, we have reflected deeply on the state of our Nation, particularly on the prevailing dire and difficult situation in the country, the Covid-19 pandemic, unrest in schools and the national political discourse, among others. We, therefore, wish to state the following: