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JUSTICE, PEACE AND RECONCILIATION:

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Justice, Peace and Reconciliation: Current Challenges and Opportunities for the Church in Zambia, Africa

Justice, Peace and Reconciliation: Current Challenges and Opportunities for the Church in Zambia

Chisanga, Jude Mulenga

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Introduction

Zambia, as a nation, strives to pay a careful attention to issues of justice, peace and reconciliation. It endeavours to ensure that the holistic needs of all its citizens are provided. In many communities in Zambia, every individual is regarded as belonging to one family.

Even though it is no doubt that the primary duty of the government is to take care of all the citizens by ensuring that a just society, where there is always peace and reconciliation is created, the Church does everything possible to making sure that it supplements the efforts of the government. This was even the spirit of the African Synod when it talked about the Church as a Sacrament of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in Africa.³⁰⁸ In most cases, the Church has agreed with the government on most of issues of Justice, Peace and reconciliation, and yet the same Church has also disagreed with the government on a few of such issues, but very important aspects of the lives of the people of Zambia. In this regard, the Church has played a prophetic role by speaking on behalf of the helpless citizens; the poor, widows, children, the aged, the sick, etc. In the same way, it is not only the Catholic Church which has been involved and still is involved in such noble activities, but all the existing three Church Mother Bodies have always worked together towards the promotion of national dialogue and reconciliation in Zambia.³⁰⁹ The names of the three Church Mother Bodies are: The Council of Churches in Zambia (CCZ), the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia (EFZ) and the Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops (ZCCB).

This article looks at how the Church has tried to play a prophetic role in the Zambian society regarding areas of justice, peace and reconciliation.³¹⁰ To make a clear exposition of how the Church has been involved in such issues, and seen such moves as its challenges and opportunities, the article firstly refers to some two late Roman Catholic Church' bishops who gave a good example of what it means to be prophets in the world and in Zambia and Africa in particular. The bishops being referred to here are Bishop Dennis de Jong, who used to be the ordinary of Ndola Diocese, on the Copperbelt Province of Zambia, and Bishop Paul Duffy, who used to be the bishop of Mongu Diocese, in the Western Province of Zambia. (Both bishops were very tall people, perhaps it was a symbol of being good hearted persons, who could easily reach out to the Will of God. They had accommodating hearts,

308 Cf. Synod of Bishops. *The Second Special Assembly for Africa, LINEAMENTA, The Church in Africa in service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2006, p. 33.

309 Cf. Media by the Council of Churches in Zambia. A Press Statement given to the Media by the Council of Churches in Zambia on National Dialogue and Reconciliation in Lusaka on 26th August 2018.

310 Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 2.

with lots of love for the people of God, and extended ways of thinking; they thought beyond the ordinary level). The article then goes on to show how the current leadership of the Church in Zambia (of the three Church Mother Bodies) has continued to be a voice for the voiceless in matters of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation. The article also highlights the efforts of some good willed civil and political leaders, who tirelessly work towards the creation of a just society in Zambia.

Justice refers to a just conduct; the quality of being right and fair; to treat everybody fairly; to show that one has a just opinion of something; that one realizes the value of something; to do somebody justice, we must admit that his or her intentions were good. When we, for instance, say that somebody did justice to, say, a dinner, we mean that he or she showed that by eating heartily as the food was good. To do oneself justice is to behave in a way that is worthy of one's abilities. And by a court of justice, we mean the law and its administration.

The word 'peace' is not used in plural. It means a state of freedom from conflict; for example to be at peace with one's neighbours. It also means freedom from civil disorder; to obey the laws and refrain from disorder and strife. It also means to be in a state of friendship or harmony. To reconcile is to make friends after you have quarrelled. It entails to settle, arrange (a quarrel, difference of opinion, etc.). It involves bringing into harmony with; cause to agree with; to overcome one's objections to something; to resign oneself to something or somebody.

A challenge is an invitation or call to play a game, run a race, have a fight, etc., to see who is better; stronger, etc. It could also be an order given by a sentry to stop and explain who one is: "Who goes there?" On the other hand, an opportunity is a favourable time or chance for doing something.

Need for discerners in Africa in general and in Zambia in particular

In this article, I use the method of *See, Judge and Act*, especially, because I am convinced that for justice, peace and reconciliation to be attained, we

need some bold discerners in Africa in general and the Zambian society in particular. This way, we shall answer the call to be prophets as invited us by the Scriptures to caution citizens to refrain from injustices, make peace and be reconciled to God as we read from the Prophet Hosea:

Hear the word of the LORD, O people of Israel, for the LORD has a grievance against the inhabitants of the land: There is no fidelity, no mercy, no knowledge of God in the land. False swearing, lying, murder, stealing and adultery! In their lawlessness, bloodshed follows bloodshed. Therefore the land mourns, and everything that dwells in it languishes: The beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and even the fish of the sea perish (*Hos 4:1-3*).

In fact, the stress on collegiality in the post-Vatican II Church has also called upon every Christian to a responsible *prophetic role* in living and proclaiming the faith. In his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa*, Pope John Paul II, had the following to say to the people of Africa:

I exhort all God's People in Africa to accept with open hearts the message of hope addressed to them by the Synodal Assembly. During their discussions, the Synodal Fathers, fully aware that they were expressing the expectations not only of African Catholics but also those of all the men and women of the Continent, squarely faced the many evils which oppress Africa today. The Fathers explored at length and in all its complexity what the Church is called to do in order to bring about the desired changes, but they did so with an attitude free from pessimism or despair. Despite the mainly negative picture which today characterizes numerous parts of Africa, and despite the sad situations being experienced in many countries, the Church has the duty to affirm vigorously that these difficulties can be overcome. She must strengthen in all Africans hope of genuine liberation. In the final analysis, this confidence is based on the Church's awareness of God's promise, which assures us that history is not closed in upon itself but is open to God's Kingdom. This is why there is no justification for despair or pessimism when we think about the future of both Africa and any other part of the world.³¹¹

As a result, each of us must get in touch with the Spirit of God working within us and help in the building of a just society in Africa in general and

311 John Paul II. *The Church in Africa, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Ecclesia in Africa of the Holy Father John Paul II*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2009, no. 14, p. 15.

Zambia in particular. The *African Synod* has also emphasized this point by calling upon the laity in particular, to a very active, participative, and prophetic role within the Church as a family:

The Synod has forcefully reemphasized and has manifested that the Church is the Family of God, in which there cannot be ethnic, linguistic or cultural divisions. Moving testimonies have shown us that, even in the darkest moments of human history, the Holy Spirit is at work and transforms hearts of the victims and persecutors so that they recognise each other as brothers. The reconciled Church is a powerful leaven of reconciliation in individual countries and in the whole African continent.³¹²

The Synod stresses formation for mission. It calls for deep faith (life in the Spirit). It actually talks a lot about Christian formation, namely that there is need for the people of God to develop convictions rather than habits, regarding issues of justice, peace and reconciliation. We may well know that formation is in this case for all of us who are agents of evangelization. This means that there is need for us to start linking *contemplation* and *action* (to see, judge and act) in order to prevent *shallow activism*. Social action needs some spiritual roots, and prayer must lead to mission. There is no doubt then that the people of God in Africa in general and Zambia in particular, need personal and communal discernment.

There is a great need for prophetic ministries today in Africa in general, which should question the fundamental values of society and unmask illusions. In this manner, we shall be committed to a new order, pointing beyond the conventional and accepted values of the day. This is one of the surest ways of participating in some activities of the Kingdom of God; the liberated zone of God's movement. The Kingdom of God is the standard by which every Christian disciple lives, and by that standard, we discern the signs of the times. A Christian believer is a 'non-status' person and remains outside *occupied* categories. We are called to be *discerners of events*, and of *liberation*, enabling individuals and communities to move towards freedom; the freedom of the children of God. This means that what we have been called to is to be more of guides than leaders, pointing beyond ourselves to the Kingdom of Glory.

312 Pope Benedict XVI. "Courage! Get on your feet, Continent of Africa," *Homily and Message of the Bishops of Africa to the People of God*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2009, p. 5.

We consequently need to grow and mature in the Spirit. God calls us to a mature, and responsible obedience, and this necessarily involves learning to know God and understand God's ways for us. Discernment is the meeting point between prayer and action and so helps us to integrate our prayer and our active life. We are called to labour actively with Jesus in the building of God's Kingdom.

Church facilitation of peace and reconciliation in Zambia

The Church in Zambia is non-partisan; it is neutral at all times. It sees its role as that of taking care of everybody by providing them with spiritual and bodily necessities. In fact, even though the Church is non-partisan in Zambia, it does not in any way look at politics as a something bad. However, it wishes that politicians may be honest and God fearing people as they are charged with the responsibility of taking care of the resources of the country and the people of God. It reminds the government of its primary responsibility of providing citizens with a fair life style. The Church even encourages its members to enter politics in the hope that such Christians could go and make a difference in the political arena. It is hoped that Christian politicians could exercise their leadership in a way which could reveal God's leadership style. The leadership style of God is one of service giving (servant leadership). Unfortunately, most of the times, what we notice in the majority of the politicians, and even civil servants, is leadership which instead wishes to be served.

Consequently, the Church in Zambia plays an important role in the provision of guidance to politicians so that they could be leading the nation according to God's will. God wishes that everybody created in the image and likeness of God may enjoy a decent life. Nonetheless, this could only be achieved if those who are involved see to it that there is peace and reconciliation among themselves. In that way, they could work towards the creation of a just society where every citizen could be provided with some human basic needs. This is the reason the Church in Zambia always takes a keen interest in providing some checks and balances to the government of the day in particular and politicians in general.

It was for the above reason that at one time in the recent history of Zambia, the Church saw the need to mediate the reconciliation of the two late presidents, Levy Patrick Mwanawasa and Michael Chilufya Sata. The process worked out very well, the two leaders agreed to make peace, just like what happened recently (2018) in Kenya between President Uhuru Kenyatta and the opposition leader Raila Odinga, who shook hands and decided to unite the nation. That time, President Michael Chilufya Sata was in the opposition party as its very popular opposition leader (Patriotic Front [PF]); he had not yet become the president of Zambia. President Patrick Levy Mwanawasa was the one who was in leadership. The Church managed to reconcile the two in the Cathedral of the Child Jesus in Lusaka Archdiocese.

RECONCILIATION, PEACE AND JUSTICE: A MANIFESTATION OF GOD'S LOVE

The late former bishop of Mongu Diocese, Paul Duffy, an Oblate, was an unwavering voice in his calls for justice, peace and reconciliation in Zambia, and Africa as a whole. He spoke for the poor, children, the aged, widows, disabled, orphans and the vulnerable in general. He fed the hungry, gave a drink to those who were thirsty, welcomed strangers, clothed the naked, cared for the sick and visited prisoners. He basically applied what is written in the Gospel of Matthew concerning the Last Social Judgement as follows:

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me (Mt 25:31-37).

BISHOP DUFFY: A VERY BOLD SHEPHERD

Bishop Duffy always felt that there was no need of the government to boast about its efforts to develop the country if they did not pay attention to the development of the individual lives of the people; he felt that such a thing was equal to a mockery of justice. He was always docile and attentive to the

cries of the vulnerable and always came to their aid himself. He followed Jesus' command to His disciples: "He said to them in reply, 'Give them some food yourselves'" (Mk 6:37).

Bishop Duffy strongly spoke against corruption, hatred, tribalism and nepotism, which are all common evils; diseases of the continent of Africa. In the same way, he protected the young men he used to send for formation in the National Major Seminary, each time they complained of some sort of injustices; for example when they felt that some lecturers seemed to have been awarding marks according to the region, tribe or diocese that one came from.

BISHOP DENNIS HAROLD DE JONG

Another bishop who spoke for the voiceless in Zambia was the late bishop of Ndola Diocese (one of the most densely populated areas of Zambia)³¹³, Dennis Harold de Jong. He took it upon himself to care for the weak, vulnerable and the desperate. A typical example of when he stood out firmly in order to uphold the rights of the poor was in the land dispute of Makenze shanty compound in the town of Ndola. On many occasions, the government had sought to remove the people from that compound and resettle them somewhere else in order to develop the land into something else. However, the late bishop Dennis de Jong always fought on their behalf, and so they remained settled on the land they were left by their ancestors.

Under Bishop De Jong, the Diocesan Peace and Justice Commission was very strong. This commission provided some expertise to people who were greatly in need but were not able, for example to pay for services of a lawyer. In this way, the late bishop played the prophetic role of the voice for the voiceless. Attached to this was the victim support wing, which used to summon and deal with those people who used to ill-treat, for example, their wives and children.

Apart from that, the late Bishop Dennis de Jong started and sustained a children's desk for the support of vulnerable children with some school

313 Cf. Cichecki, V. *The Zambia Catholic Director*. Ndola: Mission Press, 1996, p. 206.

fees, clothes, food and business ventures. He set up a very strong health department to help the sick in the diocese and beyond, by giving them advice and providing them with medicine and food stuffs. Home based care facilities were also set up, with a lot of volunteer men and women putting efforts together to help home based incurable sick people.³¹⁴ Things like cooking oil, rice, mealie meal, powdered milk, medicine and clothing were provided to the home bound sick people, children and the aged.

The late Bishop Dennis de Jong fought for the rights of the oppressed and other underprivileged individuals and groups of people. He even went on to establish a radio station called "Radio Icengelo," which simply means "Radio Light." This radio station disseminates uncensored news and information to the general public in Zambia. People who feature on it enjoy a lot of freedom of expression. The radio station was one of the biggest signs of his wish to speak for the underprivileged.

BISHOP CLEMENT MULENGA

Continuing the prophetic role exemplified by Bishops Duffy and de Jong, among the bishops who are still living, recently, the bishop of Kabwe in Zambia, Bishop Clement Mulenga, declared that if the poor are not taken care of, they could haunt us in our dreams. He thus urged for the need to make sure that leaders, both politicians and civil servants, take development to various parts of the country. He urged politicians to have a political will in order to be able to do a lot of good things for the people of God. He implored the government leaders, and politicians in general, to put their pledges into practice as he felt that they had already talked a lot without citizens seeing the fruits of their talking.³¹⁵ He lamented that despite its heavy financial borrowings, Zambia was slow in solving problems of poverty and other social ills in the country. Therefore, he argued that it was high time the government made it a priority to start improving the living conditions of Zambian workers instead of just concentrating on putting up new shopping malls.

314 Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 206.

315 Cf. Mulenga, C. *Homily of Bishop Clement Mulenga*, Kabwe Diocese, Zambia, on 8th September 2018, on the occasion of the Nativity of Our Lady.

According to Bishop Mulenga, everybody ought to be the instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor. In his view, the need to resolve structural causes of poverty cannot be delayed, not only for the pragmatic reason of its urgency for the good order of, but also because society needs to be cured of a sickness that is weakening and frustrating it, and which could only lead to some new forms of crises.³¹⁶

Contributions of civil and political leaders to peace and justice: Hon. Jonas Chanda

Some civil and political leaders are also actively and positively involved in the efforts towards peace and justice in Zambia. In this regard, a notable example is that of the Member of Parliament, Mr. Jonas Chanda. The story was reported by Mike Mubanga of MUVI Television. Hon Chanda was fighting for over 800 settlers who were almost being dispossessed of a piece of land (Kafubu Farm) which was believed to have been sold to a 'table eggs' production firm.³¹⁷ The Kafubu Farm settlers did not want to give up on the disputed 3,000 acres of land with Golden Lay Limited Company. The settlers fought to protect the former Kafubu Dairy Farm situated in Chichele ward of Bwana Mkubwa Constituency about 16 Kilometres from Ndola town Business Centre. A former General Manager called Ernest Mutambo was believed to have benefitted from the privatization of the land in December 1996, and later sold it at 10 Million Kwacha to Golden Lay Limited, a company which produces, supplies and distributes table eggs.³¹⁸

At an emotional meeting chaired by the area Member of Parliament called Jonas Chanda, settlers' chairperson, Abraham Manda, argued that it was not possible for Mr. Mutambo to have been given 3,000 acres of land by the government as a retirement package. Mr Manda even went to the extent of saying that it was better for him as a chairperson to die with others, rather than monopolizing himself. He accused the Ndola District offices of having done nothing (people shouted "corruption!" in the background).

316 Cf. *Ibid.*

317 Cf. Mubanga, M. *Muvi TV report*, Lusaka, Zambia. YouTube.com (accessed 6 July 2018).

318 Cf. *Ibid.*

Consequently, people had nowhere to run to for justice. He carried on to say that now God had given them a Member of Parliament in the name of Dr. Jonas Chanda who was fighting for them so that they could continue residing in their original homeland.³¹⁹

Mr. Abraham Manda went on to give a brief history of the land, namely that there used to be some cattle belonging to the Zambian government, and that the former General Manager was given some retirement benefits in the name of 300 acres. According to Mr. Manda, that was not possible since that time an acre costed 3,000 Zambian Kwacha, which would have amounted to 900 Million Zambian Kwacha, and according to him, no government worker had been given such a huge amount of money as a retirement package. As a result, Mr. Manda and other settlers were not ready to vacate the farm. Some women lamented that they government had been unable to address their plight. They said that even though the government proudly said that 75% of its voters were women, it was unfortunate that the same government had not given them justice.³²⁰

In response to the above complaints, Hon. Chanda told the people that he would involve the highest offices in the country, just to make sure that he helped his people out of their unfortunate situation. He called upon the people to make some copies of their papers; documents and give them to him. He promised to take them to the highest government authorities in Lusaka. He said he would bring the issues before the Minister for Lands, office of the Vice President, Commissioner for Lands, Land Tribunal and Ministry of Local Government.³²¹

In his intervention, Hon. Chanda sought to understand the root causes of the problem at hand. He then gave the people assurances which helped to quell their agitations and tensions. We read from the Letter to the Romans that:

Let every person be subordinate to the higher authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been established by God. Therefore,

319 Cf. *Ibid.*

320 Cf. *Ibid.*

321 Cf. *Ibid.*

whoever resists authority opposes what God has appointed, and those who oppose it will bring judgement upon themselves. For rulers are not a cause of fear to good conduct, but to evil. Do you wish to have no fear of authority? Then do what is good and you will receive approval from it, for it is a servant of God for your good. But if you do evil, be afraid, for it does not bear the sword without purpose; it is the servant of God to inflict wrath on the evildoer. Therefore, it is necessary to be subject not only because of the wrath but also because of conscience. This is why you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. Pay to all their dues, taxes to whom taxes are due, toll to whom toll is due, respect to whom respect is due, honour to whom honour is due (Rom 13:1-7).

The above quotation serves as a reminder for the relationship between the Church and the State. It talks about the law and its importance. It simply means that governments should be respected and obeyed because they are God ordained.

Brief evaluation of existing strategies for reconciliation and peace in Zambia

Zambia is one of the most peaceful nations in Africa. Despite its many tribes, the country is basically united. Zambia was declared a Christian nation some time back by the late former President Fredrick Chiluba. Therefore, the country hinges its social fabric on some Christian values, which has proven to be a great help in many ways.

Part of the reason for Zambia's sustained peace lies in the fact there is a good relationship between the government and the Church. The Church does not unnecessarily criticize the government; even when it does so, it addresses issues with respect and recognition of the importance of civil authorities to the citizens. Moreover, when the Church comes out to speak, it is because its leaders have spent time in prayer and reflection and is, subsequently, convinced that God has a prophetic message to the government and the people. In such situations, the government has always listened and taken into consideration the suggestions of the Church.

Conclusion

In this article, it is noted that Zambia as a nation tries hard to pay careful attention to issues of justice, peace and reconciliation. This is in an effort to ensure that all its citizens enjoy fully their basic rights. Indeed, the primary duty of any government is to care for all the citizens. On its part, the Church must do everything possible to supplement such efforts. In most cases in Zambia, the Church has agreed with the government on most of the issues concerning justice, peace and reconciliation. In many ways, the Zambian Church has played well its prophetic role.

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Book Review

- TITLE: THE WAY THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE: A CONFLUENCE OF ASIA, EUROPE, AND AFRICA IN JESUS OF NAZARETH
- AUTHOR: GERARD J. HUGHES, SJ, MICHAEL AMALADOSS, SJ, LAUENTI MAGESA, ET AL (EDITORS)
- Publisher: Jesuit Historical Institute in Africa, Nairobi, 2017, 194 pages
- Price: Ksh 1200.00

The global Church reality today demands a global conversation on common and major themes that identify the Christians as distinct faith community. It is on this account that global workshops and seminars bringing together theologians from different regions of the world to discuss themes related with ecclesiology, Christology, Trinity, eschatology and the like are on the increase. This book, *The Way the Truth and the Life*, is a product of a workshop of an international nature that was organized by the Jesuit Historical Institute in Africa (Nairobi) in 2016 in honour of Fr. Adolfo Nicol s SJ, the 30th Superior General of the Society of Jesus (2008-2016). The book is composed of five chapters. The first chapter is an introduction by Fr. Festo Mkenda, SJ. The second chapter is by Fr. Michael Amalados, SJ with its title, "I Am the Way." The third chapter is by Fr. Gerard J. Hughes, SJ on "Western Catholic Theology and Truth." The fourth chapter is by Laurenti Magesa on "Jesus, The Life Naming Jesus as 'Healer' in Africa." The final chapter is a conclusion by Diane B. Stinton.