

**PASTORAL STATEMENT FROM
THE ZAMBIA EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE
TO ALL CATHOLICS IN ZAMBIA
ON THE SECOND SPECIAL ASSEMBLY FOR AFRICA OF
THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS**

1. Dear Sisters and Brothers in the Lord, *"Grace to you and Peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"* [Galatians 1:3]. May that Peace which comes with Reconciliation and Justice, be with you all.

2. We write to you after the conclusion of the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops which took place in October this year, building on the experience of the First Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, which took place in 1994. It was indeed a new Pentecost for the Church in Africa. It was a grace-filled period for all of us to be with fellow Bishops from throughout Africa and outside Africa and with many laity, religious and clergy who served as experts, auditors and advisors. The presence of the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, in most of the sessions of the Synod, gave the Synod great authority, inspiration and encouragement.

3. We did indeed feel the grace that was prayed for, *"that Jesus might shine his glory on us in every aspect of our personal, familial and social lives"* as we considered the Synod theme of ***"The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace."***

4. One important grace we experienced was the acknowledgement of the sinfulness and shortcomings of Christian daughters and sons of Africa. Therefore we join the rest of the Church in Africa in calling for a conversion of our hearts and a living out of the Gospel values of reconciliation, justice and peace. We know that this is important as we strive to be what the Synod has exhorted us to be, namely ***"the salt of the earth and the light of the world."***

5. It was clear to all of us during our prayers and deliberations together that the Church in Africa has a lot for which to be proud of and grateful. Pope Benedict XVI expressed this beautifully on the opening day of the Synod when he spoke of Africa as *"an immense 'spiritual lung' for a humanity that appears to be in a crisis of faith and hope."*

6. Certainly there are many problems facing Africa but our potential is much greater, particularly the potential of *"extraordinary human wealth"*, cited by the Pope. As Church Family of God, we must cooperate with others in applying this potential to overcome our problems.

7. During the Synod, the Zambian delegates were happy to contribute to the deliberations by speaking of our experience with the *enormous gift of women, the formative influence of the church's social teaching, the difficulties faced by rural Zambia, and the importance of the laity in the day to day life of the Church*. Delegates from other parts of Africa spoke of the challenges faced by families, the problems of HIV and AIDS, the influence of climate change on our food security, the need for reconciliation in conflict areas, the challenges posed by the numerous political leaders who do not serve the people in an unselfish manner, the call for inter-religious dialogue, and many other burning issues.

8. *The Synod Message* which we are distributing now with this letter continues the inspiration and encouragement which came from the First Assembly in 1994. *The Message* picks up these topics that were discussed and demonstrates the guidance of the Holy Spirit that the Synod Event enjoyed.

9. We are sincerely grateful for your participation in the pre-Synod work of the past three years, working with the Guidelines (*Lineamenta*) and Agenda (*Instrumentum Laboris*), as well as your prayers during meetings, and now your eagerness to move forward with the implementation.

10. In this vein, as we eagerly wait for the Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation (Letter following the Synod), from the Holy Father, we must, in the meantime, start moving in the general direction of the orientations of the Synod Message and the Propositions.

Therefore:

11. We encourage all our parishes and Small Christian Communities to study these documents and use them as a resource for liturgy, prayer and action for reconciliation, justice and peace. We encourage homilies, lay apostolic movements, etc, focusing on such key issues as the Church's Social Teaching, Christian [Initial and On-going] Formation, prayers for reconciliation, special regard for and attention to women and the girl child, environmental concerns, youth, and Catholic Family Life promotion

12. We have designated the Office of the National Pastoral Coordinator, and its corresponding structures in the Dioceses, our implementation agency for the Synod. Through this Office, we will be generating materials, holding workshops and designing specific programmes of action to follow-up on this important event.

13. We strongly recommend that as soon as possible those responsible should make available to the faithful copies of *The Synod Message and the Propositions*. These are the main documents that will guide us in what we do and say about the Synod. They are in stock at the Paulines' Catholic Bookshop together with the Pope's homilies on the opening and closing of the Synod.

14. We shall pay special attention to the preparation and celebration of the wonderful gift of the *Sacrament of Reconciliation* particularly though not exclusively during the Holy Season of Lent. In this line we encourage creative and meaningful communal celebrations followed by private confessions.

15. We urge the clergy during this Year of the Priest to excel in imitating St John Maria Vianney by being ever so available to the faithful and creating an enabling environment for the Sacrament of Penance especially before the celebration of Holy Mass.

16. Awaiting the commemoration of the incarnation of Christ; a reconciliation between God and humanity that will bring Glory to God in the highest and Peace to His people on earth, we wish you a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year!

15th December 2009

Signed on behalf of ZEC:

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Rt. Rev. George C. Z. Lungu
Bishop of Chipata
ZEC - President