

Bishop Ignatius Chama, Diocese of Mpika, Zambia.

Most Holy Father, My brother Bishops and priests, Esteemed Religious and Lay participants,

RURAL ECONOMIC INJUSTICES CHALLENGES

My presentation is in line with articles 25, 28, 58, 140 of the *Instrumentum Laboris*.

So much attention has rightly been placed on the impact of the global economic crisis on the Continent of Africa and the need to promote an *economic reconciliation* with institutions and individuals that have caused great hardship and social injustice to our people.

But I want to emphasise here the local economic crisis that I and my people have undergone and continue to undergo in my rural diocese in northeastern Zambia. There is the crisis experienced when crops our local hardworking farmers have grown fail to reach markets or having reached a market but fail to get good and just prices. It is the crisis felt when foreign investors come in and supply their commercial supermarkets with crops imported from outside Zambia. It is the crisis caused by trade practices and regulations both domestic and international that mean subsidised goods brought in from Europe curtail fair competition with local goods.

In Zambia today, our rural areas also face the campaign to move toward a genetically engineered model of farming. This is something rightly criticised in the *Instrumentum Laboris* which states that “This campaign runs the risk of ruining small landholders, abolishing traditional methods of seeding and making farmers dependent on the production companies of GMO.” (#58)

These unfair dynamics are signs of the deeper *urban-rural split* that threatens overall integral and sustainable development in Zambia today. Our own Government tells us that while urban poverty has declined in recent years, rural poverty has significantly increased. We feel that this has been the consequence of a playing out of an economic model which puts profit before people, economic gain before ecological sanity.

Pope Benedict XVI has in his most recent letter, *Caritas in Veritate*, challenged us to revise our thinking about how a sustainable and socially just economy should operate. He considers the current economic crisis as “an opportunity for discernment, in which to shape a new vision for the future.” (#21)

But what can a Synod do about all this? I want simply to remind my brother Bishops that it was the 1994 Synod which heard a similar plea for economic justice from the President of the Zambia Episcopal Conference at the time, Archbishop Medardo

Mazombwe. He called upon the Synod to support the *Jubilee Campaign* to cancel the debts of the struggling African countries. The Church heeded the call and spoke for debt cancellation. Zambia received that cancellation and now has a better chance of an economy that can serve the people if only the rural poor will be put first.

Cancellation of the enormous debts of African poor countries was a significant step toward the *humanisation of the economic order*. We need some similar call for justice today, for example, in addressing issues of trade policies such as the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) between Africa and Europe and environmental concerns such as global warming. We also need some similar call by the church to make sure debt relief is used in transparent and accountable way as well as to advocate for transparent and accountable way of contracting loans by governments.

So I ask that our Assembly supports the calls for a more just economic order that protects the rights and future of our rural populations. Let our resolutions come out in favour of stronger and more coordinated advocacy for fair trade and respect for the environment. Servicing to reconciliation justice and peace will remain a talked about desire as long as the Church does not tackle in a practical way the root causes of injustices in our countries.

Thank you

+Ignatius Chama
BISHOP OF MPIKA, ZAMBIA

RURAL ECONOMIC INJUSTICES CHALLENGES

I want to emphasise here the local economic crisis that I and my people experience in our rural diocese in northeastern Zambia. This is the crisis when crops our local hardworking farmers have grown fail to reach markets or fail to get just prices. It is the crisis felt when foreign investors supply their commercial supermarkets with crops imported from outside Zambia. It is the crisis caused by trade practices both domestic and international that mean subsidised goods brought in from Europe curtail fair competition with local goods.

Moreover, in Zambia today our rural areas also face the campaign to move toward a genetically engineered model of farming, something rightly criticised in # 58 of the *Instrumentum Laboris*.

These unfair dynamics are signs of the deeper *urban-rural split* that threatens overall integral and sustainable development in Zambia today. Our own Government tells us that while urban poverty has declined in recent years, rural poverty has significantly increased.

But what can a Synod do about all this? I want simply to remind my brother Bishops that it was the 1994 Synod which heard a similar plea for economic justice in the call for the Synod to support the *Jubilee Campaign* to cancel the debts of struggling African countries. The Church heeded the call and spoke for debt cancellation, which became a significant step in Zambia and elsewhere toward the *humanisation of the economic order*. We need some similar call for justice today, for example, in addressing issues of trade policies such as the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) between Africa and Europe and environmental concerns such as global warming.

So I ask that our Assembly supports the calls for a more just economic order that protects the rights and future of our rural populations.

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