



HOMILY AT THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE NATIONAL DIALOGUE AND RECONCILIATION PROCESS

Held at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross on 18th January 2019

By Rt. Rev. George Cosmas Zumaire Lungu – Bishop of Chipata & ZCCB President

Your Excellency, former presidents, presidents of political parties, the traditional leaders, members of the Diplomatic Cord, distinguished country men and women, my brothers and sisters in Christ.

It is often said that **“we must always ASPIRE to INSPIRE before we EXPIRE.”** Indeed, we gather this morning to **firstly** celebrate our aspiration and desire for a better and more prosperous country, a Zambia that is peaceful, reconciled, united and focused on its developmental agenda. **Secondly**, we are here to inspire and remind ourselves that despite the many challenges we face as a nation, that dream for a better Zambia is possible. **Thirdly**, our prayer is that, working together, we shall endeavour to translate the national dialogue and reconciliation into concrete

resolutions that will enable us to avoid the path through which our much-cherished peace, unity and harmony as a country can expire and evaporate before our own eyes.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, today, as we gather in this holy place to finally and officially launch the long awaited but bitterly debated and even viciously attacked National Dialogue and Reconciliation process, it is right and fitting that we first of all avail ourselves a moment to listen to God speaking to us, in and through his word. It is his word that will shed light on what is expected of us in this whole process of National Dialogue and Reconciliation.

Indeed, if we have to succeed in achieving the goal of this ambitious program, we need to have one eye fixed on God and the other eye fixed on the realities of our Zambian situation. The one eye fixed on God will always provide us with the wisdom that originates from God. We need divine wisdom in order to fully understand and appreciate our situation that has necessitated this dialogue and to choose pathways that will lead us as a nation to **“a united, reconciled and peaceful Zambia where all citizens freely participate in governance within a thriving social and economic environment.”** This is our desired goal. The other eye fixed on the realities of our situation will be a source of information that will help us generate a national agenda reached through consensus and based on people’s experiences regardless of their social status, rich and poor, Bemba and Tonga, Nyanja and Lozi alike.

We in Zambia have in the past had occasions of a similar nature, where we got together to discuss issues affecting our people. But this particular National Dialogue and

Reconciliation process, I must confess, has generated reactions never experienced before. I will not attempt to speculate the reasons for this phenomenon. It suffices to simply emphasize the fact that reconciliation as were, is not an easy exercise to embrace and let alone accept. It is a very demanding project. And yet, the truth of the matter is that our God is a God of dialogue and reconciliation. He has revealed himself as a God who initiates and promotes dialogue and reconciliation between himself and his people.

In the light of today's first reading which states that **“whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come. And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ ...”** allow me to highlight three fundamental elements that are key to any serious and genuine process of dialogue and reconciliation:

- 1) **Readiness for Change:** If you are in Christ and live in a nation that calls itself Christian, it means that you are called to be a new creation; the old order has passed away, and a new reality has dawned in us. This new reality comes to birth at our baptism when we accept Jesus Christ in our lives and profess our belief in him who gives us the power to be the beloved sons and daughters of God. Therefore, this launch is merely a reminder of who we are before God and our neighbour. It is an invitation to make this change into reality, not only in our religious life but in all aspects of life, be it economically, socially and politically. In addition, when we embark on this road to dialogue and reconciliation, we should be prepared to

embrace change that will reflect the new creation of which we are. For example, are we prepared to make a change from a situation where some feel like they are second-class citizens because of unequal application of law to a situation where every single Zambian feels that he or she enjoys full rights as a citizen of this country? Are prepared to change from a political culture of insults and violence during the campaigns to a culture where respect for one another is highly valued and peaceful campaigns become the norm of doing politics? Are we prepared to transition from a culture that sees corruption as the only alternative to make things happen to a culture of persons who are allergic to this cancer but value honesty and integrity of life? We are here reminded that “the only thing evil needs to prevail is for good people to do nothing.” The Church is therefore inviting all well meaning Zambians to join in this journey and crusade that will put Zambia on a new trajectory.

- 2) **Embrace the spirit of humility:** If Jesus Christ was the means for our reconciliation with God, it means in him we find another very important element necessary for a genuine reconciliation - the disposition and spirit of humility. Here is a God who for our reconciliation came down to us as our fellow human being. **Humility is the movement of the powerful in search of the weakest, reaching out and allowing the conditions of the poor to touch the very centre of their being. It is a dethronement of the self and enthronement of the other; it is the shift of focus from me and I to focussing on the other; a transition from self-centred to other-centred way of life.** This is what we see reflected in

Jesus Christ our reconciliation. Unfortunately, society views humility as a sign of weakness and not a mark of greatness. And **because of this distorted understanding, we are ready to humiliate the other in order to exalt our ego; we are ready to protect our status at the expense of the weak and the poor. We are ready to even sacrifice innocent life in order to preserve that which we think is our own; Such an attitude is a recipe for conflict.** This launch today is a call for all the Zambian people to adopt the spirit of humility as we go about our dialogue in order to bring about a new reality of a united, reconciled and peaceful Zambia.

- 3) **Reconciliation presupposes dialogue or communication:** One of the most common reasons for division and conflict in many countries emanate from lack of dialogue. **Genuine dialogue demands openness of mind and heart; accepting to be vulnerable; to adopt a spirit that allows the possibility to lose in order to win;**

In conclusion, the passage from the Gospel of St. Matthew speaks of the cure of the man who was blind and mute which was the cause of all the abusive language and that led some to accuse Jesus as having the power of Beelzebul. Rather than appreciate the good work Jesus had done, the Pharisees used the same good work to discredit Jesus and say all sorts of things about him. As it was said before, **we the Church Mother Bodies have received the mandate from the Lord to reconcile individuals and communities, will stand and endure all that has been said about us and will continue to be said about**

us regarding this work of facilitating the National Dialogue and Reconciliation. However, faithful to our prophetic mission, **the project does not now bar us from helping people to see where injustice is, especially situations which demand condemnation and where necessary to appreciate.** We will not remain mute but in the name of Jesus be able to speak to those realities. We cannot afford to be divided as a nation and as church in this ministry which, by the way, is not limited to the three church mother bodies, but to all the anointed servants of the Lord. With this disposition, we will be able to add value to the process and we will help bring about genuine reconciliation that will produce desired results of lasting peace in this country. Let us remember, **“an army of well organised ants can conquer an elephant.”** Let us aim to unite and work together on this noble project. May God bless our Nation with Peace Unity and integral development.