

Solidarity Message at the end of Solidarity Visit to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Burundi

Amos 3:3 "Do two walk together, unless they have agreed to meet?"

Our Dear Brothers and Sisters of Burundi,
Peace of Christ be upon you

In recognition of our common call to serve God and our neighbor. We, the church leaders from different corners of Africa, we have come to express our solidarity with you in these trying times. We are alive to the fact that solutions to the prevailing challenges can be found among the people of Burundi, in line with the principle of subsidiarity. It is not our mission to dictate to you a way forward but we are here to listen, to see for ourselves and to hear what you have been going through. Regrettably, the current political instability has resulted in the loss of human life, injury and disruption of day to day life. To those who have lost their loved ones, you are in our prayers and thoughts. We appreciate that an injury to one, is an injury to all. We are connected as Christians and Africans. What destabilizes Burundi, makes Africa not to be at peace.

1. We begin by expressing our gratitude to the Catholic Bishops Conference of Burundi for availing this opportunity to host us during their meeting. In our observation, Burundi is a beautiful country with people whose hearts yearn for peace, political social and economic stability. It is out of this realization that we would like to express our communion during the times of your sadness and joy.
2. We appreciate and give our gratitude to the Government of Burundi for facilitating our entry process to the country. This has given us an opportunity to dialogue with the pastors and the people of Burundi on the continuation of the peace process and the importance of collaboration to maintain sustainable peace. Peace will surely benefit everyone in the country and the African continent at large.
3. We are aware of the pain that Burundi is currently going through. These tragic experiences that has resulted in political instability can be traced to April 2015. The pain and sadness we feel is further

deepened by the loss of life and properties and the sufferings that the people of Burundi have undergone and are still going through. At this point, we would like to acknowledge the good peace building efforts by many Burundians. We are also aware of the political discussions that are currently going on in Arusha and the efforts that have been done by the African Union. It is our view that all these efforts have indeed averted the escalation of violence in the country. We sincerely appreciate this. Above all, we have deep trust that the Almighty God has not abandoned the people of Burundi.

4. The Church in Africa is proud of its legacy of being non-partisan. It is out of this impartiality that the church has managed to advance the spirit of non-violence which has always generated stability and peace. On the contrary there is a need that after a conflict or instability mechanism are put in place to facilitate healing and reconciliation.
5. In recalling the words of the Holy Father, Pope Francis when he noted that “Do not be afraid.” We appreciate the strengthening of the peace building progress in this country. Brothers and sisters, be assured of our unwavering and accompanying support to you.

In line with the sustenance of peace that the people of Burundi have always valued, we **appeal to the Government of Burundi to:**

- a. Recognize that human life is sacred as it is created in the image of God. In this way, loss of life should be avoided at all cost.
- b. That the government should work to promote the common good of all Burundians and not just an elite minority.
- c. The government should ensure that an inclusive process is put in place in order to achieve sustainable peace.

To the Pastors/Bishops of Burundi, we say unto you:

- d. That it is part of your mission to only preach peace but to actively work towards the promotion of sustainable peace.
- e. In taking this into account, we appeal to the priests and bishops as agents of peace to be actively involved in promoting reconciliation and peace

- f. We appeal therefore, to **the people of Burundi**, to rise above their political divide and recognize that they are all Burundians who share a common destiny. It is within their power to advance the democratic institutions at their disposal.
 - g. We are aware of the peace initiatives by the African Union and its challenges. In this regard, we appeal **to African Union** to double their efforts in providing an all-inclusive and neutral platform for dialogue by all parties concerned.
6. In conclusion, as we have prayed together, we ask this wonderful nation to continue putting their trust in God's providence. We urge all the people of Burundi to remember that the solutions to the current tragic situation can be found through dialogue among yourselves with the assistance of the international community.

Galatians 3:28 "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus"

Thank you and God bless

1. Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM)
2. Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA)
3. South African Conference of Catholic Bishop (SACCB)

Date: 11th June 2016

Bujumbura, Burundi