



EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF MALAWI

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MALAWI CATHOLIC BISHOPS MEET THE POPE

The Episcopal Conference of Malawi comprising the eight dioceses subdivided in the two ecclesiastical provinces of the Archdiocese of Blantyre and the Archdiocese of Lilongwe was accorded the opportunity for a visit ad limina to the Holy Father and the tombs of St. Peter and St Paul in

Rome from Wednesday, 5th November, to Wednesday, 12th November, 2014.

Quinquennial visit ad limina apostolorum are visits done by Bishops every five years (quinquennial) to the successor of St. Peter, the Pope, and to the thresholds of the [tombs of the] Apostles (ad limina apostolorum) Peter and Paul. This is in accordance with a long standing tradition for centuries in the Catholic Church the norms of which were set by Pope Sixtus V in 1585 in the constitution Romanus Pontifex.

The highlights of the visit ad limina apostolorum were the following:

1. Celebrating the Holy Mass at the tomb of Saint Peter in the St. Peter's Basilica on 6th November, 2014

As per tradition in such occasions of ad limina apostolorum to visit the thresholds of the tombs of St. Peter and St. Paul, the Bishops celebrated Mass in one of the Chapels adjacent to the tomb of St. Peter, the first Pope. After Constantine's Edict of Milan (313 A.D.) Christians were allowed to construct places of worship. On the place of the crucifixion (67 a.C.) of St Peter, the Emperor Constantine, at the request of Pope St Sylvester I, built a basilica in 315-349. Construction of the present basilica, replacing the Old St. Peter's Basilica of the 4th century AD, began on 18 April 1506 and was completed on 18 November 1626. Tradition and strong historical evidence hold that Saint Peter's tomb is directly below the altar of the basilica. For this reason, many Popes have been buried at St. Peter's since the Early Christian period. St. Peter's Basilica has the largest interior of any Christian church in the world. It is regarded as one of the holiest Catholic sites.

It has been described as "holding a unique position in the Christian world" and as "the greatest of all churches of Christendom".

It is on this holy site and right overlooking the tomb of St. Peter that the Bishops of Malawi celebrated the Holy Mass from 8:00am to 8:45am during which they prayed for all Catholics in Malawi and their intentions.

2. Meeting with the Supreme Pontiff, His Holiness Pope Francis on 6th November, 2014

In their address to the Pope, the Bishops, among other things, expressed gratitude to God for the growth of the Catholic Church in Malawi and noted that the strength of the Church in Malawi lies in the tireless dedication and collaboration of ministers, Brothers, Sisters and above all the lay people, lay volunteers and catechists.

With regard to the wider environment in which the Church is working, the Bishops expressed satisfaction at their working relationship with the gov-

ernment and noted that amidst the social challenges Malawi experiences as one of the poorest countries in the world, the Church shares the aspirations of the people to remain a God-fearing nation and rise against external secularist tendencies and money-driven agendas.

Listening attentively to the genuine joys and griefs of the people of Malawi, the Bishops said that, through their preaching, pastoral letters and active involvement in the development of the country, they strive to foster the good of the nation and draw the attention of people towards what is compatible with Gospel values and the dignity of human beings.



His Holiness Pope Francis with Malawi Catholic Bishops during the Ad limina visit in November 2014

Turning to the challenges the Church is facing, the Bishops spoke of the hostile environment in which Catholics find themselves in certain parts of the world and the growth of the spread of HIV-AIDS within married couples in Malawi. The Bishops also noted with regret the creeping in of policies that are increasingly reflecting the secular interests of powerful governments and organisations outside Malawi especially on issues such as abortion and same sex unions.

In his address to the Bishops, the Pope deplored the general tendency to replace God and ethics with money and regretted the pressure subjected to poor countries like Malawi in order to obtain financial aid.

Turning to the issue of evangelisation, the Pope emphasized the need to have a good formation programme for the priests, Brothers, Sisters, catechists and the laity and above all the need to reach out to the people and to be missionaries first and foremost amongst one's own people.

Responding to a specific question to clarify the teaching of the Church on homosexual unions in the wake of the recent Synod on the Family, the Pope emphatically said that in this matter the doctrine of the Church will not and cannot change for it belongs to God. The Catechism of the Church has not changed and the doctrine has not changed. There is nonetheless the need to find pastoral responses to reach out to those living under these conditions. He faulted the media for interpreting the efforts of the Church to reach out to homosexual persons as signaling change in the doctrine of the Church and said that he had since instituted a committee to look into the media strategy of the Church so that what the Church says is reported correctly.

The Pope then circulated a prepared address to the Bishops in which he praised and thanked the Bishops for the effectiveness of their pastoral and administrative ministry and also bemoaned the poverty and low life expectancy in Malawi.

2014 WORLD AIDS DAY MESSAGE FROM THE CATHOLIC HEALTH COMMISSION OF THE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF MALAWI

THEME: GETTING TO ZERO

1.0 Preamble

Today in the liturgical calendar of the Catholic Church is the first Sunday of Advent. The Church begins a new Liturgical Year, a new journey of faith. The Advent season as we all know is the time when every Christian is to reflect on his or her spiritual life illuminated by the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, rediscovering the Christian journey and renewing the quality of our Christian life. The season, this year begins on 30th November and will take us through to Christmas, 25th December, 2014.

As the Church begins this new Liturgical season with hope, she joins the rest of the world in commemorating the World AIDS Day, which is celebrated on 1st December every year. The World AIDS Day is dedicated to raising the awareness of the AIDS pandemic, caused by the spread of the HIV infection. The global theme for World AIDS Day from 2011 – 2015, as selected by the World AIDS Campaign, is “Getting to Zero”. Backed by the United Nations, the “Getting to Zero” campaign focuses on the goals of: zero new infections, zero AIDS related deaths and zero discrimination. In order to achieve these goals, United Nations Member States, Malawi inclusive, pledge to meet the following targets by 2015:

- i. Reduce sexual transmission of HIV by 50%.
- ii. Reduce transmission of HIV among people who inject drugs by 50%.
- iii. Eliminate new infections among children and substantially reduce AIDS-related maternal deaths.
- iv. Reach 15 million people living with HIV with lifesaving antiretroviral treatment
- v. Reduce tuberculosis deaths in people living with HIV by 50%.
- vi. Close the global AIDS resource gap and reach annual global investment of US\$ 22–24 billion in low- and middle-income countries.
- vii. Eliminate gender inequalities and gender-based abuse and violence and increase the capacity of women and girls to protect themselves from HIV.
- viii. Eliminate stigma and discrimination against people living with and affected by HIV through promotion of laws and policies that ensure the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- ix. Eliminate HIV-related restrictions on entry, stay and residence.
- x. Eliminate parallel systems for HIV-related services to strengthen integration of the AIDS response in global health and development efforts.

The season of advent is indeed an opportunity to reflect on the HIV and AIDS epidemic with hope. It is a time when we look at the state of the epidemic, the challenges it still poses and what needs to be done with eyes of faith. As a Church, we reflect on “Getting to Zero” by following the footsteps of Jesus Christ who looked at his own suffering with hope and trust. It is an opportune time we reflect and renew our zeal, commitment, determination and level of efforts in responding to the HIV and AIDS epidemic and its various impacts on the society.

2.0 THE STATE OF THE HIV AND AIDS EPIDEMIC

Since the beginning of the HIV and AIDS epidemic, almost 75 million people have been infected with the HIV virus and about 36 million people have died of AIDS related deaths worldwide. At the end of 2012, there were about 35.3 million people living with HIV globally. The burden of the epidemic varies considerably between regions and countries. Sub-Saharan Africa remains the most severely affected, with nearly 1 in 20 adults living with HIV.

Malawi, being one of the Sub-Saharan countries, has not been spared. Since the first AIDS case was diagnosed in 1985, the HIV prevalence increased significantly and peaked around 16.4% in 1999 among persons aged 15 – 49 years. The prevalence has been declining steadily, reaching 10.6% in 2010 and estimated to be at 10.3% in 2013. It is estimated that about 1,100,000 people are living with HIV, 170,000 being children aged 0-14 years. In 2013, an estimated 48,000 people died of AIDS related illnesses and there are about 790,000 orphans aged between 0 – 17 years due to AIDS.

3.0 PROGRESS ON THE RESPONSE TO THE EPIDEMIC

The HIV and AIDS response in Malawi is guided by the revised HIV and AIDS policy. As a country, we have made remarkable progress in the response to the HIV epidemic. The HIV and AIDS programmes have grown in scale, effectiveness and impact such that positive results have been observed. For instance:

- i. New HIV infections among adults and children are declining. The rate of new HIV infections among adults declined significantly by more than 50% between 2001 and 2011. The number of new infections among children 0 – 14 years fell by more than 50% between 2009 and 2012. This is due to wider access to antiretroviral therapy and increase in services to eliminate mother to child transmission of HIV.

- ii. AIDS related deaths have declined. Since the increase in provision of antiretroviral therapy, the number of AIDS related deaths has been declining rapidly. The integration of HIV and Tuberculosis diagnosis

and treatment has also contributed to the decline of AIDS related mortality. As a result, fewer children are being orphaned because of AIDS.

- iii. The number of people receiving antiretroviral therapy has increased. As of 2013, 83% of eligible adults and children are receiving antiretroviral therapy compared to 63% in 2010. The total number of people living with HIV is rising as a result of more people being on ART and survival of those being infected is increasing. The life expectancy has also risen from 49 to 54.

The Catholic Church in Malawi has responded to the epidemic through; HIV prevention programs i.e. HIV Counseling and Testing and Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission; care and treatment programs i.e. Home Based Care, provision of antiretroviral therapy; support to orphans and vulnerable children through Community Based Care Centres and nutrition support programmes.

4.0 CHALLENGES

Despite the progress that Malawi has registered so far, there are still a number of challenges that we are still facing in the response to the epidemic.

- i. Sexual transmission remains the highest mode of transmission of HIV infection

The majority of adults living with HIV in the country acquired the virus through sexual transmission. 88% of all new HIV infections are through heterosexual intercourse. Reducing the number of new adult HIV infections therefore demands reductions in the sexual transmission. If we are to meet the 2011 Political Declaration of reducing sexual transmission of HIV by 50% between 2011 and 2015, there is need for improved efforts and scale up of HIV prevention interventions.

The Church is further challenged with the fact that HIV transmission within couples is an important source of new adult HIV infections. 80% of all new HIV infections are occurring in couples in stable relationships. These infections are due to multiple concurrent sexual partners. Traditionally it has been thought that if one is uninfected with HIV at the time of marriage, then they have avoided the infection altogether. However research shows that marriage is not enough to protect one from HIV, whether men or women. The church therefore has a big challenge in HIV prevention.

- ii. Women remain the most severely affected with the HIV epidemic

According to 2013 HIV estimates for Malawi, women make up over half of adults living with HIV aged 15 years and up. Women are not only biologically more susceptible to HIV than men, behavioral and social factors also increase their vulnerability.

- iii. Youths continue to be infected with the virus. Youths, who make up a large number of Malawi’s population, continue to be infected with HIV. Infection levels among young women are particularly higher. This is affecting the efforts in HIV prevention.

4.0 APPEALS BY THE CATHOLIC HEALTH COMMISSION

“Getting to Zero” is a responsibility of every Malawian. The churches and the Catholic Church in particular, play an important role in the efforts on “Getting to Zero” by 2015. There is need for programs that particularly target couples, including HIV counseling and testing and education for men and women about social norms and how they negatively impact men’s and women’s health. The Church reminds us all that Scriptures teach us that family, as instituted by God himself, aims at promoting life and not death (bring forth life Gen.1:28). Let couples therefore; be mindful of not being a source of death to each other and family life should in no way become a death trap for those who have embraced this noble God-given vocation. The call for mutual love and faithfulness to each other between couples is one of the cornerstones for family life (Eph. 5:31ff). It is only when couples truly love and are faithful to each other that the family will lead to ‘zero infections’ and zero AIDS related deaths.

For the youth, Jesus Christ as youth should be the role model; he grew up both in stature and in wisdom and God’s grace was with him (Lk 2:52). Let the youth embrace the gospel values so as to be inspired and guided with proper moral and ethical norms that will lead to “Getting to Zero”.

5.0 CONCLUSION

It is our Christian responsibility to halt the negative impact of the HIV and AIDS epidemic on the society. Let us imagine a society in which there are lesser numbers of orphans, more numbers of healthy households that are socio-economically self-reliant, medical facilities that are only dealing with other diseases than HIV and AIDS. It is our duty to make this dream happen and we, in this Advent season, can make this determination a reality.

3. Visiting the tomb of St. Paul in Saint Paul Basilica outside the Walls on 9th November, 2014

As per tradition in such occasions of ad limina apostolorum to visit the thresholds of the tombs of St. Peter and St. Paul, the Bishops visited the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls.

At the beginning of the 4th century, with the end of the persecutions and the promulgation of the Edicts of Tolerance in favour of Christianity, Emperor Constantine ordered the excavation of the cella memoriae, the place where Christians venerated the memory of Saint Paul the Apostle, beheaded under Nero around 65-67 A.D. Above his grave, located along the Ostiense Way, about two kilometres outside the Aurelian Walls surrounding Rome, Constantine built a Basilica which was consecrated by Pope Sylvester in 324. Paul's tomb is below a marble tombstone in the Basilica's crypt, at 1.37 metres (4.5 ft) below the altar. The tombstone bears the Latin inscription PAULO APOSTOLO MART ("to Paul the apostle and martyr").

In the fifth century under the Pontificate of Leo the Great, the Basilica became the home of a long series of medallions which would to this day depict all the popes throughout history. Contemporary work in the Basilica has uncovered the tomb of the Apostle, while other important and beneficial works are carried out, as in the past, thanks to the generosity of Christians from all over the world.

The Bishops from Malawi spent Sunday afternoon, 9th November, in this Basilica, in a prayerful pilgrimage to the Holy site of St. Paul.

4. Visiting and Holding Discussions with Dicasteries (departments) and Commissions of the Curia

The Roman Curia is the ensemble of the dicasteries (departments) and bodies that assist the Pope in the exercise of his supreme pastoral office for the good and in service of the Church throughout the world assisting in the maintenance of the unity of the Faith and the communion of the People of God. Amongst these dicasteries (departments) and bodies are the Secretariat of State, the various Congregations and Pontifical Councils and Commissions.

On the sidelines of their visit ad limina apostolorum the Bishops visited and held discussions with the following:

Thursday, 6 November:	16.00 – 17.00	Meeting with the Pontifical Council for the Family
Friday, 7 November:	10.00 – 11.00	Meeting with the Supreme Tribunal of the Segnatura Apostolica
Saturday, 8 November:	12.00-13.00	Meeting with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
Monday, 10 November:	10.30-11.30	Meeting with the Congregation for Catholic Education
	12.00-13.00	Meeting with the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue
	16.00-17.00	Meeting with the Pontifical Council of Justice and Peace
Tuesday, 11 November:	10.00-11.30	Meeting with the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples
	12.00-12.45	Meeting with the Secretariat of State
	16.00-17.00	Meeting with the Pontifical Council for Health Care

5. Visiting and Holding Discussions with Social Development Partners

Conscious of their role in the socio-development of the country, the Bishops took time off their busy schedule to meet some development partners based in Rome. In this regard, the Bishops had bilateral discussions with:

- the Committee for Charity Interventions in favour of the Third World of the Episcopal Conference of Italy (Friday, 7th Nov, 2014 from 16:00 to 17:00)
- Sisters of St. Peter Claver (Saturday, 8th Nov, 2014 from 16:00 to 17:00)

6. Holding Working Dinners

The Bishops had working dinners with

- Volunteers of the “Work of the Church” group Sunday, 9th November from 18:00
- The community of the Religious and priests from Malawi on various assignments in Rome (Tuesday, 11th Nov, 2014 from 19:00)

Fr. George Buleya

Secretary General – Episcopal Conference of Malawi

26th November, 2014

CADECOM Launches Food Security Project In Dedza

By Prince Henderson

Catholic Development Commission in Malawi (CADECOM), Dedza Diocese recently launched a three-year Integrated Food Security Project to be implemented in the area of Traditional Authority (T/A) Kaphuka in Dedza.

The project which is aimed at helping over 1000 vulnerable and poorest households is being funded by Trocaire to the tune of K300 Million.

Dedza CADECOM director, Patrick Namakhoma said major activities lined up in the project include promotion of food security and increasing household incomes among the targeted households.



“There shall be drilling of boreholes, establishment of irrigation schemes, beneficiary trainings, afforestation, seed and livestock distribution, energy saving technologies, agro forestry, post harvest management and village savings and loans,” said Namakhoma.

He added, “It is expected that after

3 years, the targeted households will have their poverty levels reduced through increased food security, increased incomes and knowledge on best agricultural practices and marketing. The interventions will mainly target female headed households, child headed households, households keeping orphans, the elderly and those infected with HIV and AIDs”.

Group Village head Zuze expressed gratitude to CADECOM for choosing his area to benefit from the project.

He said the project will help to reduce poverty levels in the area.

Zuze said the already existing structures will be used to select beneficiaries so that issues of bias are avoided.

'GUIDE THE YOUTH PROPERLY' BISHOP KANYAMA URGES PARENTS

By Fr. Steve Likhucha

Bishop Emmanuel Kanyama of Catholic Diocese of Dedza has urged parents, congregational superiors and the Clergy to guide the youth properly in life so as to help them to

In her remarks the Mother General for the Presentation Sisters, Sr. Marie Blandina Kamba, advised the newly professed nuns to be courageous and committed to their calling. She praised and called upon the Silver Jubilants, Srs. Agatha Chiwaya and Maria Tereza



answer rightly the call of God.

Bishop Kanyama said this during the silver jubilee of two Sisters and temporary vow celebrations of six novices of the Congregation of Presentation Sisters which took place at St. Martin de Porres-Dedza Parish in Dedza Diocese.

“You need to realize that like Samuel who guided Elli in the Bible, all of us as parents and leaders have got a huge responsibility of guiding properly these young ones so that they should be able to respond positively and rightly to the call of God.” Kanyama said.

He further urged the youth to be docile and have a spirit of listening to the elders so that they should be properly brought up into reliable Christians and citizens of the nation.

“There are some young people who are not ready to take up pieces of advice from the elders...they should be like Elli who listened to Samuel. The mentality of ‘old school is not good’ should not be tolerated because the greater the experience the more the wisdom hence you will have a bright future if you harbor now the docile spirit.” The Bishop pleaded.

Kapeta of Matiya and Mayaka Parishes respectively in Zomba Diocese, to continue shining to all people with their admirable lives.

Srs. Patricia Nkhoma, Martha Padyera, Nalesi Zagwa and Judith Chitala who professed temporarily come from Nsipe, Mua, Dedza and Ntcheu Parishes respectively in Dedza Diocese. The other two sisters Rebecca Kalombola and Elizabeth Matugwi are from St. Pius and Domasi Parishes of Blantyre and Zomba Dioceses respectively.



NOTICE

The **ECM Monthly Newsletter** is here to stay. Should you have any news story from your Diocese, Parish or Institutions and Religious groups, please do not hesitate to file with us by using the following email addresses; phenderson@ecmmw.org princehenderson@journalist.com

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CECOM hails Continental Workshop on Peace Building in Catholic Schools

By Prince Henderson

The National Education Secretary for Catholic Education Commission in Malawi (CECOM) of the Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM), Brother Pascal Mtuwana has hailed the just ended three-day Association of Catholic Educationists in Africa and Madagascar (ACEAM) workshop which was held in Johannesburg, South Africa from 23rd to 25th November 2014.

The conference which brought together participants drawn from Kenya, Zambia, Cameroon, Central Africa Republic, Lesotho, Swaziland, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Malawi and the hosts, South Africa was held under the theme "Building Peaceful Catholic Schools".

Speaking in an interview on his return from the conference, Bro Mtuwana who represented Malawi said the objective of the conference was to enable participants learn a new approach of settling conflicts in catholic schools so that catholic schools should become places of



peace and justice.

"The workshop therefore targeted three areas: peace building, conflict resolution and restorative justice. Participants were encouraged to use their own personal experiences and understanding of peace-building and restorative justice," he said.

Bro Mtuwana said facilitators of the workshop were Anne Baker, Janice Serland and John Mc Cormick from South Africa's Catholic Institute of Education (CIE).

"This highly competent team used an experiential approach in conflict management to engage participants in practical activities focusing on anger and restorative justice. Staff members from CIE comprising regional managers and national staff also took part in the workshop and shared a lot from their South African perspective," he said.

During the workshop members of ACEAM took time to share personal experiences of their work regarding the management of catholic institutions in their respective countries. Among other points of concern were issues of catholic identity of schools, relationship between church and state and resource mobilization.

According to Bro Mtuwana, one of the touching experiences was shared by Fr Giles Forteh from Cameroon who disclosed that corruption is a very grave problem in their country hence catholic schools are involved in an anti-corruption project to help sensitize youths on the evils of corruption.

The next assembly is scheduled to take place in Nairobi, Kenya in 2015.

CCJP Says Mining Laws Silent On Corporate Responsibility

By Prince Henderson

The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) has faulted the silence of mining company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives in the country's laws governing the industry.

CCJP national secretary, Chris



Chris Chisoni

Chisoni in his paper presentation to a three-day mining indaba in Lilongwe which was jointly organized by Actionaid, Norwegian Church Aid, Citizens for

Justice, Tilitonse Fund and Centre for Environmental Policy and Advocacy.

"Currently, there is no legal framework on corporate social responsibility. For example, you see on television a company donating two bags of beans to a community where it is doing some mining works. But after asking the beneficiaries, you will find that the communities never asked for beans and have their own development needs. We need proper guidelines on this," said Chisoni. He shares experiences from a civil society organization perspective.

Currently, Malawi's main piece of legislation that governs the mining sector is the Mines and Minerals Act of 1981, which is under review.

The Act is supported by the Petroleum Production and Exporting Act of 1983 and the Explosives Act of 1968. The industry is also regulated by the Mines and Minerals Policy of 2013 and the Environmental Management Policy of 2002.

"Access to potable water remains a challenge in places where most foreign mining companies are doing their mining activities. In some of these

areas, communities are as they were in the days of Adam and Eve," said Chisoni. He warned that without clear guidelines on CSR in the mining sector, Malawi is leaving to chance important components that could allow the country to develop socially and economically.

Chisoni said CCJP knows of communities where cement production is currently taking place but residents there travel some 100 kilometres to access the product at an exorbitant price.

"We know some companies here in Malawi who are involved in mining and that have even made communities poorer than before their mining activities. The issue is that the markets must be controlled by the government so that citizens benefit," said Chisoni.

Spokesperson in the Ministry of Natural Resources, Energy and Mining, Levy Undi, said as it is now, not many countries have guidelines on mining laws because mining laws in those countries already address issues on CCSR

Additional Information Sourced from the Nation News Paper, story written by Dumbani Mzare