



15<sup>th</sup> February 2008

*My dear family of God in Homa Bay*

**REF.: “CALL TO MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF OUR LIFE”**

I greet you as my brothers and sisters, reminding ourselves of the words spoken by Jesus Christ who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He says, “Those who listen to my words and keep them are my brothers, sisters and my mother” (Matthew 12:49-50). We know how fundamental it is to belong to a family, and to be told that our family is the family of God which includes all tribes, races, languages and nations.

This year we are celebrating the Lenten Season at a time when our country is experiencing very trying moments. The crisis which followed the elections has left all of us shattered, hurt, suffering and so many completely hopeless - having lost their dear ones, their bread-winners and all their possessions, over 1000 dead, 300,000 displaced. The meaning of that situation is seen in all the destruction of life, homes, families and means of living. The cruel reality of the situation and the unbelievable behaviour of some of our own brothers to their own brothers and sisters with rape, murder, burning of children and helpless *wazee* etc! Such a list of senseless and beastly actions have left us weeping, mourning with bitter hearts and little faith and hope in ourselves.

The very sad situation must guide us now to turn to God again:

*“Come back to me with all your heart, fasting, weeping, mourning. Let your hearts be broken, not your garments torn; turn to the Lord your God again, for he is all tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in graciousness, and ready to relent.” Joel 2:12-13*

The post-election violence must indeed make us turn to God, the God of Truth, Justice and Love. We are reminded by God's intervention who sent His own Son, Jesus Christ to bring us the Truth, Justice and the power of His love. Christ, in turn, ensured that His mission is continued to the end of all ages when He sent His chosen Apostles to all nations to make disciples, to baptize and to teach all that He taught (Matthew 28:19).

The Mother Church has a duty and responsibility to teach the truth that comes from Christ and which is aimed also at making all of us one family – those who listen and keep His word.

Some very unhappy misunderstandings have occurred during the Post Election violence because both inside and outside of the Church. The stand of the Catholic teaching in matters political is as follows:

*“It is of supreme importance, especially in the pluralistic society to work out a proper vision of the relationship between the political community and the Church and to distinguish clearly between the activities of Christians acting individually or collectively in their own name as citizens guided by the dictates of a Christian conscience and their own activity acting along their pastors in the name of the Church. The Church by reason of her role and competence is not identified with any political community or bound by ties to any political system. It is at once the sign and a safeguard of the transcendental dimension of a human person. The political community and the Church are autonomous and independent of each other in their own fields. Nevertheless both are devoted to the pastoral vocation of man though under different titles” (Church in the Modern World, Para. 76).* Personal prudent interpretation of every Ordinary, however, should be understood as individual view.

The wisdom of Christ avoided confusion by appointing and empowering Apostles only – not every disciple. He also taught the important division of roles in Society. *“Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's”* (Matthew 22:21). This teaching is very clear and spelt out by the Catholic Church in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council which explains its roles in the modern world.

Not only has the Church to accept the limit of its mission to preach the Gospel – to make known the spiritual values of Truth, Justice and Love that must motivate everyone, at all times, in all circumstances, but she is not to be expected to support any political party, even indirectly. Whenever this has happened in the past, it is to be understood as categorically wrong, for example, cases where mobs have tried to force Priests to repeat political slogans or say they support a political party!

After the event of post election, the family of God in Homa Bay has been very serious to look for Truth and Justice which are the foundations of peace, order and reconciliation. Truth is the foundation and the absolute priority. As a spiritual value the Church asks for clarity and explicit Truth and insists that the election results be absolutely transparent.

Equality of all to the provision of natural resources is yet another truth. This includes provision of: a descent standard of living, what is necessary and right for all the families – food, accommodation, education, health and just the simple things that enable Kenya to have good and happy families where all parents and children can enjoy a share in the blessings God has given our country, Kenya.

**Justice** – there is a deep appreciation natural to all human beings for Justice. It is the expression of the Truth about how we live as a family in one nation, Kenya. **Justice** is summed up in the Ten Commandments. The result of the past injustices has seen over half the population living below the poverty level and this has led to the “*rage*” of the poor and the underprivileged who are now aware of their rights more than ever.

The Church has many times expressed her deep concern about poverty but even more about its causes. Pope John Paul II often reminded us that this obligation calls for more than charity for the marginalized. He challenged us to do more, to go beyond charity and to examine who are those who are marginalized and why they are in that state. The Pope challenged us to change whatever it is that causes or tolerates marginalization in our country<sup>1</sup>.

At this very moment the situation of our displaced persons must have an urgent and appropriate solution and this is where the Church and the State must work together. Since the State has more economic, personnel and structural resources its role is more substantial than that of the Church, but the Church united with all who believe in Kenyans as one family will help as much as possible.

### ***Our Way-forward***

I am now urging you my dear family of God to pray and fast for change of heart. My passionate appeal to you now is to:

1. Let each one of us be his/her brother's keeper (Gen. 4:9-10)

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<sup>1</sup> Our Social Concerns, 42, 1. On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum, 28.2; 5.1

2. Sow the seed of love (John 15:9, 12)
3. Nourish the hope of one another in prayer – rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation (Rom. 12:12)
4. I urge my collaborators – Priests – to organize contribution in support of internally displaced persons (Acts 20:35)
  - (i) To organize penitential and reconciliation services for the Christians in their Parishes/Zones
  - (ii) To organize workshops and seminars for the youth in order to instill in them Christian moral values in response to the World Youth Day 2008 the (cf Acts. 1:8)
5. To instill the moral values in our lives, let us begin with **prayer** and **fasting**, in the spirit of Lent (Joel 2:12; Mark 9:29)

Finally, this letter is written with great concern not only for the present but also for the future. The Church can fully support the **Kofi Annan mediation efforts** in so far as they embody the spiritual principles Christ would want the Church to teach and promote that is Truth, Justice and Love.

At the level of the Commission it is a political and social exercise and we pray that guided by the Holy Spirit it embodies our collective need to *“turn to the Lord your God again” “full of tenderness and compassion” “Rich in graciousness”*. The Church prays that Kenyans will win, not a party. There will never be any real peace without Justice, Justice without Truth and the Truth that comes from God.

I end by assuring you of my paternal prayers and blessings during this graceful season of Lent. May Mary the Mother of God and our Mother pray for us.

Yours devotedly

☛ *Philip A S Anyolo*  
**BISHOP OF HOMA BAY DIOCESE**