



NATIONAL LAUNCH FOR 2017 LENTEN CAMPAIGN

PRAYER FOR PEACEFUL AND CREDIBLE ELECTIONS...LEADERS OF INTEGRITY

LAUNCH SPEECH

Your Excellences

Distinguished guests

Religious Leaders

Christians

Ladies and Gentlemen

The year 2017 is very special for Kenya. It is the election year. We want to go to the polls with the knowledge of what it entails to elect good leaders. It is particularly important because we have now experienced what a devolved system of government is and how we can improve it.

The past four years have been characterised by cries for more responsibility and accountability from those we have given positions of leadership. There have been a number of attempted impeachments, court cases for alleged misappropriation of funds, outright theft from the public coffers, and the list is long.

This is why the theme on responsible leadership is important. We have to be responsible citizens to vote for responsible leaders of integrity. It is instructive that we must now vote for leaders not because of their ethnicity or wealth, as has been the case in the past.

There must be a fundamental change in the way we elect our leaders. In this year's Lenten Campaign, we wish to impress upon all people of goodwill to elect leaders of integrity who uphold ethical values. We need responsible leaders who will deliver what they promise, who will be mindful of the people's wellbeing and act responsibly.

For us to achieve this, we should be guided by the social teachings of the Church. Even though the Church teaches us to avoid worshipping money, many are the people who will vote only for monetary gains. We should examine the intentions of those who have offered themselves for elections and vote with our conscience and not our stomachs. *(See Pope Francis, Evangelium Gaudium 56)*

Everyone should look upon his neighbour as “another self.” Laws cannot do away with all the fears, prejudices and selfishness, which destroy society. Such behaviour will end only through charity, which sees others as neighbours. Being a “neighbour” is especially urgent toward the disadvantaged. “As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me”(Matthew 25:40).

The commandment of love extends to those who think differently from us and even to our enemies. The liberation of the Gospel is incompatible with hatred for an enemy, even though we truly hate the evil he does. **Security** remains one of the challenges we experience as a country and it is the focus of the **First Week** of Lent. For us to be guaranteed of security, we must act responsibly and demand responsibility from our elected leaders. Security touches many areas in our lives. Are the unborn babies secure? Are our children secure from cultic organisations and drug cartels? Are our social media safe for our children? Do we have policies to protect minors and vulnerable adults? Do we have safe working environments? Are our businesses secure? Are our churches and places of prayer safe? Are communities safe from attackers of kinds? Will Kenyans be safe before, during and after voting in the August election? And the list is endless.

The focus in the **Second Week** will be on **Youth and Society**. One weakness in our society is that we do not do much for our youth. We must ask ourselves whether we have structures to help our youth in character formation, Christian maturity and meaningful entertainment. How are we dealing with youth unemployment and their access to good quality education, skills, mentorship and role modelling to ensure the Africa youth bulge does not become a curse? Have we protected our youth from fatalism, fundamentalism, pornography, drug and substance abuse and from negative dehumanizing cultures amongst our communities?

In the **Third Week**, we shall discuss **Environmental Conservation and Protection**. Today we are told cancer deaths are rising at an alarming rate. We pollute our rivers, and towns/cities, we use dangerous chemicals in our farms and greenhouses and we do not dispose our garbage appropriately. This has negatively affected our environment and health. Climate change has also affected the way we do things. We can decide as citizens of Kenya to use neighbourhoods to redeem our environment and health.

We shall discuss **Elections** in The **Fourth Week**. We want this election to be credible, peaceful and one that produces leaders of Integrity. It is important to know that we have to participate actively and exercise our right to vote. We cannot expect good leaders of integrity if we do not turn out to vote and vote wisely. And when the candidate of your choice loses, it is important for those seeking elective positions to accept the outcome of elections if they are credible, free and fair. They should look for legal and peaceful means

to settle grievances. Credible, free and fair elections are a product of citizens, the IEBC and government institutions who do their duty with faithfulness and integrity. We appreciate that the opposition's work is as important as the Government's.

They must keep the Government in check. We must understand that without a formidable opposition, our leaders may not be responsible. We should understand that elections are not about winning and getting a lot of money; rather it is a process to ensure the country develops in the right way. We also know that elections are not a matter of life and death. No Kenyan should die because of elections. The life and dignity of every Kenyan is why we vote. A credible election therefore means a peaceful election.

The issue of **Negative Ethnicity** will dominate the **Fifth Week**. Our ethnic groups are an inescapable reality. This should, however, not be a source of conflict. We must celebrate our diversity and look at how we can share with others our rich cultural inheritance. To this end, we must shun negative ethnicity where we demean other communities by our thinking that we are better. Negative ethnicity goes against the teachings of Christ. In Galatians 3:27, Paul reminds us that there is no more Jew or Greek, female or male, and slave and free.

We are all created in the image and likeness of God. For this reason, we must appreciate all people if we are going to be children of God. Let us pray and fast this Lent so that we can get responsible and leaders of integrity and that we become responsible citizens as well. I also exhort you to conduct yourselves peacefully before, during and after elections by avoiding any form of violence.

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