



## **THE LAUNCH OF 2017 NATIONAL LENTEN CAMPAIGN HOMILY**

Your Eminence,

Your Graces,

Your Lordships,

Your Excellency the President,

Honourable Leader (s) of Opposition,

Honourable Speakers, Honourable Senators,

Honourable MPs and Your Excellencies the Governors

Your Excellencies the Ambassadors,

My dear Clergy, Religious Men and Women,

The Religious Leaders of different Religions,

Dear Christians,

Men and Women of Good will and all People of God,

## **PEACE BE WITH YOU!**

### **LENTEN CAMPAIGN**

Today the Catholic Church in Kenya is launching her Lenten Campaign event under the theme "**Peaceful and Credible Elections...Leaders of Integrity**". This is an annual national event that brings together the Bishops, the Clergy, Religious men and women and the lay faithful from all over Kenya. We have all come here, together with our invited guests, not only to pray but to prepare ourselves to enter into the Lenten season which is also a time of repentance, of fasting and of sharing what we have with those who don't have in imitation of our Lord Jesus Christ who gave His life for us. By undertaking this spiritual journey we will be able to celebrate with great joy the greatest moment of our salvation history: The suffering, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is very significant that we are launching this year's Lenten campaign when our nation is gearing up for the general elections in August 2017. That is why the theme that we have chosen is "**Peaceful and credible elections with the expectation that Kenyans shall elect leaders of integrity.**"

## **MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS**

Another significant fact regarding this year's Lenten campaign is that we are launching it at the very place that the Holy Father Pope Francis celebrated his first Mass in Africa for the nation of Kenya. We will never forget those three days he was with us. We still cherish very much those words he told us; the uniqueness of our Country Kenya and how God has blessed our land with so many resources. He warned us about the evils of tribalism and how it can destroy our country if we are not able to rise above tribalism and build a very cohesive and integrated nation. Similarly we still remember his strong words on corruption and how if nothing is done urgently to stop this cancer it will kill the moral fibre of our nation.

Anybody with eyes can see how corruption and stealing of public resources is strangling any meaningful development in this country right from the counties to the national level. It is very sad to see the millions of Kenyans wallowing in abject poverty while some very few people are amassing wealth and enjoying themselves as if the poor doesn't exist. This is the sin of indifferentism that made the rich man in the Gospel go to hell while Lazarus was received in the bosom of Abraham. Pope Francis also wanted us to focus on the youth of this country and come up with programs that will give them hope and employment otherwise we shall continue experiencing the problem of radicalization and despair that is gripping our young generation.

## **LET US CHOOSE THE BEST**

May dear brothers and sisters, election time should be a time when the best comes out of us Kenyans as we utilize this God given opportunity to elect leaders who are going to take this country to greater heights of development and make Kenya a great nation. It is the time to listen to the various manifestos that our political parties have grafted, persuading us to elect them because they have the best policies that will transform our country. We shall then assess them and see from past experience whether they mean what they say or they lack that integrity which all credible leaders must have. Election time should be the time when we elect the best leaders to govern this country. Dear Kenyans, let us vote for leaders not because they come from our tribe but because they have the best ability and the best leadership qualities.

## **DANGEROUS TRENDS**

Unfortunately we have this terrible habit of placing our country on dangerous paths every time we approach elections. Many lives have been lost as our people are incited to fight one another on tribal or party affiliations.

Let us not forget that the whole world is watching us for in the past we have done terrible things to one another. We have become a case study on how to destroy one another as we descend into our tribal cocoons. The blood of all our brothers and sisters killed because of election violence cry to heaven like the blood of Abel the just. We read in the book of Genesis 4:10-12:”**The Lord then said: ‘What have you done! Listen: Your brother’s blood cries out tome from**

**the soil! Therefore you shall be banned from the soil that opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand".** Turn from your evil ways: Life is precious.

## **PEACEFUL KENYA**

The Kenya we want is that one where her people will shun violence when: **"They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; one nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again."** My dear brothers and sisters we have to work for such a Kenya where we have no militia, no warriors and no violent youths blocking roads and where no one tribe shall unleash violence upon the other. I see in this passage from Prophet Isaiah a clear call to disarm all the bandits who have guns and seem to operate with impunity. Our dear Leaders and political aspirants, may the hunt for votes during this Election Year not make you arm or tolerate such groups who are terrorising entire communities - including even the security forces themselves. Having such armed groups in any part of our Country unacceptable. Quick action must be taken to disarm them. At the same time, it is the duty of the government to provide security to every Kenyan especially those who are in remote and vulnerable areas.

## **LIFE IS PRECIOUS**

We must respect life! We are all made in the image of God and when we kill the other we are destroying a life and that image of God in that person. When St. Paul, before his conversion - when he saw the light - was going about destroying Christians and breathing murderous threats he heard the voice of Jesus: **Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? He said: "Who are you, sir?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:4-5).** Our Lord is teaching us clearly that anything evil done to any human being, it is done to Christ Himself as we also hear from Matthew 25:40 **"Amen I say to you, whatever you did to did for one of these least brothers (sisters) of mine, you did for me"**. Let us learn to do good to one another and shun those ways that inflict death, pain and misery to others.

## **DEEP REFLECTION**

This time of lent is a time for each of us, whether you are a leader or ordinary Kenyan, to reflect deeply about the direction our country is taking; is it that of prosperity and peace or that of the chaos and death as we witnessed in 2007-2008?

My dear brothers and sisters, the right road is the one given in the first reading of today; the road that takes us as a nation to the **house of the God of Jacob so that He may instruct us in his ways, and we may walk in his paths.** If we choose another way as done by those who are distributing guns and bullets to their followers; those who encourage throwing of stones; and those whose mouths belt

out hate speeches and words amounting to incitements – then we are courting a disaster that will destroy our country.

## **TIME OF CONVERSION**

Lent is the time when the priest marks us with ashes saying: **Repent and believe in the Good News: Make yourself a new heart and a new spirit.** Listen us listen to St. Paul as he speaks to us in the second reading. He is telling us that if we truly call ourselves Christians, the followers of Jesus Christ; then let us put on the new self, which is being renewed... in the image of the creator. **Here there is no Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all and in all**". Surely brothers and sisters, is there any other reality that we long for more than what St. Paul has described: No Maasai no Turkana, no Kikuyu, no Kalenjin, no Luo, no Kamba, no Miji Kenda, no Rendile, no Somali etc. but only Kenyans, children of God, living together as a family? Together we can free ourselves from being held hostage by our tribal leanings and learn to embrace each other as Kenyans and by seeing each other as people created in the image of God.

Living together as one people and one nation is possible if we live the kind of life that our Lord Jesus is presenting to us today. In the Gospel he is teaching us about the beatitudes. Through the beatitudes He maps the way that leads to conversion of heart and brings us true peace. As we know very well, we cannot give what we don't have. Unless we have peace in our hearts and are committed to peace and peaceful coexistence in this country we shall not have peace hence: **"Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be**

**called children of God.** Today let us make a commitment in this field where Pope Francis celebrated Holy Mass with us to work for peace and to ensure that we have peaceful and credible elections.

Similarly let us learn to forgive each other and seek for ways of reconciliation both at the individual and community level. St. Paul in the second letter that we have read wants us to forgive each other as Christ has forgiven us. In the history of this Country immediately after independence the founding Father Mzee Jomo Kenyatta emphasized the need for forgiveness. So that instead of dwelling on the past injustices, Kenyans would forge ahead and concentrate on nation building. Consequently, let us not allow ourselves be overtaken by feelings of hatred, revenge and retaliation since our Lord Jesus himself asked us to love our enemies and pray for them.

### **COMMITMENT TO ELECT LEADERS OF INTEGRITY**

Let us also commit ourselves to electing leaders of integrity; honest men and women who love this country, not tainted with corruption but honest leaders who have this country at heart.

Lord God may we elect men and women who:

- will be true shepherds after your heart, leaders who will use the natural and human resources with which you bless our country to serve us and improve our spiritual and material well being.
- will acknowledge each person's intrinsic value as a human being.



- will think less of themselves and their tribes but rather who are competent and concerned with the improvement of all citizens.
- will allow others to maintain their dignity.
- will use dialogue and not violence or chaos for campaigning for votes.  
will show affection to their opponents rather than hatred.
- will not use their citizens of this country especially the youth as human shields, but rather consider every citizen's life as equal as their own.
- will Practice self-respect.
- will treat other people's ideas with due consideration and respect different opinions.
- will be mindful of their words.

**GOD BLESS KENYA GOD BLESS OUR PEOPLE AND BLESS OUR LEADERS. WE ARE PROUD OF BEING KENYANS FOR WE HAVE NO OTHER HOME EXCEPT KENYA.**

**OUR LADY QUEEN OF PEACE PRAY FOR US.**