

COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS

CONTINENTAL COUNCIL OF MISSION IN JOHANNESBURG – SOUTH AFRICA 9th to 14th September, 2019

Minutes of Deliberations

DAY: 10th September, 2019

Fr. Jude Burgers, Provincial Superior of South Africa welcomed all the participants to South Africa and to Koinonia Centre where we had gathered for the Sub-Continental Assembly for Mission. Fr. Jude introduced to us Fr. Anthony Egan SJ, to lead us into reflections on economic- political situation of Africa.

Fr. Egan shared with the participants a number of points and handouts were given for reference reading. In a summery he said that Africa has changed a lot since the time when many countries of the continent got independence. He presented a simple picture on how the economies of the African countries are faring. It was noted that Nigeria is a leading economy of Africa now followed by South Africa and Egypt. In many countries democratic systems of governance is not working. Many African countries follow Hybrid System of government whereby they mix democratic and tyrannical trends.

For the rest reading: Refer to the notes (See pages 4 to 7 below)

In the afternoon of the first day, the participants formed two groups of discussions on social and political situations of our countries. It was enriching experience to share concrete situations of our realities where we are carrying our missionary activities. Separate minutes were prepared and sent to every participant to share also with the Confreres of the Circumscriptions where we come from.

DAY: 11th and 12th September

In the morning of the second day, Fr. Anthony Egan shared with us some inspiration on Evangelization and Mission Ad Gentes today. He emphasised several points about mission especially the changes that have occurred in the Church since the 2nd Vatican Council with Ad Gentes. He outlined the progress and challenges which the Church has gone through over the years. Many Religious Congregations did not have local missionaries in their institutes because all the attention was concentrated on the formation of the local Church. After the dawn of the 2nd Vatican Council, many Episcopal Conferences in Africa were formed and the local church started producing many diocesan priests.

Fr. Anthony Egan also shared with us the impact of the last African Synod on the Church of Africa. He presented some slides of the Exhortation of Pope John Paul II, Ecclesia in Africa. He highlighted some points on Church as Family of God, Church as a moment of domestic encounter between God and His people.

In the afternoon, the participants shared in the same groups about what has changed in the Church during post-synod times. Generally it was discovered that in some areas the church in Africa has grown and has made steady progress in many sectors like self-reliance and numerous vocations. It was also noted that in Africa some challenges have engulfed the church and to a certain extent, some local churches in Africa are stuck, like in South Sudan and Eritrea where there are a lot of social injustices and political oppression. Separate notes were prepared and given to all the participants.

We also shared some criteria on the formation of the Sub-Continental Council for Mission with some guidance from Fr. Arlindo Pinto, member of the General Secretariat of Mission in Rome. He put much emphasis on the following areas; leadership, communication, understanding of our mission *Ad gentes*, different ministries in the church, collaboration...etc.

On leadership, Fr. Arlindo said that the Provincial Superiors are important figures in making sure that activities are taking place in their provinces. Secretaries of mission should communicate more with the General Secretariat of Mission in Rome. As Comboni Missionaries, we need to understand our mission better, always giving priority to the areas that need much attention according to the needs of each Province. Priorities of Mission are different in our Provinces and each Secretary of Mission should have clear understanding of the areas of focus.

We started also sharing on some points prior to the formation of the Sub-Continental Council of Mission.

DAY: 13th September

In the morning, Fr. Arlindo continued presenting to us the concept of Sub Continental Council of Mission before it was put in place. The group voted unanimously to have three members in the Council and these should be only Secretaries of Mission in their Provinces. The composition should have one confrere from the three zones as follows:

- a. MALAWI/ZAMBIA /MOZAMBIQUE/SOUTH AFRICA (one member)
- b. KENYA/UGANDA/SOUTH SUDAN (one Member)
- c. EGYPT-SUDAN/ETHIOPIA/ERITREA (one member)

Among the three members of the council, one should be a coordinator and this should work with the Provincial Superior of APDESAM responsible for mission. In this case, Fr. Richard Kyankaaga of Egypt-Sudan Province is in-charge of mission.

It was decided that the council of mission should be in place for 3 years only. If one member of the three members of the Council has been transferred, the one who replaces him will take responsibility. The Council may choose one of the old members of the council to be a coordinator. The Council will be meeting once a year in the rotation of Provinces before the meeting of the Provincial of APDESAM. The council will be organising Mission Assembly once in two or three years. This will be decided by the APDESAM Provincials. The Provinces of Europe invite the Continental Coordinator of Mission to their meetings with one Brother from the continent. The APDESAM Provincial Superiors will decide their own modules on the Council independently of what is happening in Europe.

In the end, the Sub-Continental Council of Mission was formed by the participants. The following people were given the mandate:

Fr. James Kasitomu (MZ/MO/SA – Coordinator)

Fr. Jean Paul Bitia (KE/U/SS – Council Member)

Fr. Nyakundi Isaiah Sangwera (EG-SD/ET/ER – Council Member)

During the second part of the morning, we made evaluation of the Continental Assembly of Mission.

Fr. Ibercio Rojas from South Africa coordinated the proceedings of the Assembly on behalf of Fr. Richard Kyankaaga who did not manage to participate in the Assembly due to immigration problems. Fr. Arlindo Pinto concluded the meeting thanking all the participants who made it to the meeting. He gave a final prayer and blessings.

Fr. James Kasitomu, MCCJ

(Recording Secretary)

**CONTINENTAL COUNCIL OF MISSION
IN JOHANNESBURG – SOUTH AFRICA**

10th September, 2019

1. Engagement of the Church on Political Economy of Africa

Reality:

In South Sudan many Bishops support openly the government such that their Pastoral statements are generally weak and have no impact on the people. The JPIC is not well coordinated. In Eritrea there is no cordial relationship between the church and government. In Mozambique there is a well organised commission of JPIC and the voice of the church is strong. The Church in Ethiopia is 0.5% and until recently it was not recognised as a juridical entity. Nevertheless, the church enjoys a good reputation in the society. In South Africa, the church was influential until 1994 but afterwards doesn't have much efficacy.

Proposals

- a. The Church should strongly denounce social-economic injustice that results from poor political systems that favour the elites of the society. The example of DRC Church on the post-election results that strongly condemned the manoeuvres of the government that imposed a leader who was not voted by the people is highly commended.
- b. The Church should stand for the people in every situation without fear even if when there are political intimidation and threats. The Church should not be afraid but condemn any exploitation with strong voice and not compromise its stand like in South Africa, Malawi, Kenya and Uganda on land issues and xenophobic attacks.
- c. The Episcopal Conferences should get united and not to have partialities as it is happening in many countries of Africa. It seems a number of Bishops are divided; some are pro government and others side with the opposition.

2. Influence of China on African Continent

Reality

China is helping many African countries in the areas of infrastructure improvement but it has been found out that Africa is losing a lot of resources like oil to China. China brings its prisoners to work in the construction industries whereby local people do not have opportunities to get employment. China doesn't respect human rights of the local people such that it is often seen siding with the tyrannical governments that oppress the local people.

Proposals

- a. China presents a threat to Africa in terms of religious freedom and politico-economic stability. The outcome might not be felt today but in the long run like 30 years from now.

There is a plan which the Comboni Missionaries through Justice and Peace Commissions should present to the local Episcopal Conferences.

- b. There is a need to consolidate strong justice and peace commissions in all dioceses to orient the local government leaders about the threat of China on Africa. The messages should follow different steps up to the level of SECAM and African Union. The leaders of different governments should be aware of the menacing results of China-Africa relationship.

3. A Government System that can help Africa flourish economically

- a. No system of government is perfect and can miraculously transform the economy of Africa. Each political system has faults and Africa has followed different political systems that have not produced desired results because they are alien to the realities of the countries of the continent.
- b. There is a need to have a system of government where the majority of the people concerned have consensus and a voice of influence on their own lives. This should promote principles of subsidiarity and solidarity.

EVANGELIZATION AD GENTES IN OUR PARTICULAR SITUATIONS

11th September, 2019

Evangelization is the heart of the Church where dialogue between God and people takes place through the efforts of the Pastoral Agents who are both Religious and Diocesan Clergy. Evangelization is not an optional activity in the Church and has been there since the time immemorial. The trends of evangelization differ from one particular Church to another. Below are the reflections of different realities of the places where the Comboni Missionaries are working in Africa:

A. Uganda:

The Church in Uganda is strong and has a solid base of evangelization which has produced a sizeable number of Missionaries who are working both in Uganda and outside. There is a general feeling that Uganda needs more local missionaries to work in the remote dioceses of Karamoja region; Moroto and Kotido Dioceses. The Diocese of Masaka has a good number of Priests both diocesan and religious. These could have been deployed in the dioceses where there are more needs of priests. The Conference of Bishops is strong although it has been noted that the Bishops have partialities whereby they compromise their stand on genuine evangelization.

B. Egypt – Khartoum

It is a big territory which is full of Islamic domination such that the Catholic Church doesn't have much influence on the lives of the people. The Catholics who are in the area still need a lot of catechesis on the doctrine of the Church as they understand little on their role. In Khartoum there are fewer vocations than El Obeid where the Church looks a bit organised. Many of the Parishes in Khartoum have one priest in each. The Church in Egypt – Sudan is

doing well in the area of education. There are numerous registrations every year at the beginning of the academic year.

C. Kenya

The Catholic Church in Kenya is very strong and well organised as far as evangelization is concerned. It is a church that has made a remarkable progress in the area of self-reliance especially in urban dioceses like Nairobi, Nakuru and Mombasa. The rural parishes are still making their way to reach self-reliance status. Lodwar is one of the dioceses that are growing slowly though with a lot of challenges. This diocese is poor and has just completed 50 years of foundation. The Missionaries who were there before used to give handouts to people but now it has a Kenyan Bishop who is trying to sensitize the them to build a self-reliant church. Efforts are there which the local bishop has put in place to help the people understand their role. Government reform with the introduction of counties helped a lot such that people have started collaborating with the state and some development initiatives are now visible in the area. The church is involved in the initiatives to help the people solve the problems of land.

D. Malawi/Zambia

The Catholic Church in Malawi and Zambia is traditional and well identified based on the solid roots of strong evangelization. There is peace since the independence of both countries in 1964. There are some areas in Zambia that still need first evangelization but in Malawi the Church is sufficiently evangelized and this is visible with the growing numbers of local clergy and religious brothers and bothers. The Church lacks rallies behind on self-reliance projects. The voice of their bishops is no longer strong as things were in the last 25 years.

Things that have changed since the last Synod of Africa

1. In Uganda there are many refugees who have affected the work of evangelization and the Church has to find solutions to help the situation. The Catholic Church is trying it`s best to find some practical measures in order to help the refugees from DRC, Burundi, South Sudanetc. New Dioceses have been erected and many parishes have been started symbolising the growth of the local church. Many Christians have a big say on issues of the church as such it shows that the laity can participate in decision making of the church. The church has a tremendous progress on self-reliance; for example, Uganda owns Centenary Bank in Kampala.
2. In Egypt – Khartoum the church is in big crisis of identity because problems are more numerous now that the way things were during the time of the first African Synod. The division of Sudan and South Sudan has brought a lot of confusion among the people as far as church organization is concerned. The two countries have a single Episcopal Conference and this compromises the position of the church in front of the countries` politics.

3. In Kenya the Church has made a lot of progress in evangelization since the last synod of Africa. In the last 20 years the Church in Kenya has become of age and its leadership is more responsible. There are many priests who are working outside of Kenya as a response to the needs of the Universal Church. In the areas of self-reliance, the church has made steady slides of progress.
4. In Malawi/Zambia the Church has improved overwhelmingly in the recent years. The two countries have started Catholic Universities which are promoting tertiary education. In both countries majority of the Countries of the bishops are local including indigenous religious. The church has witnessed tremendous growth of Christians which have caused the erection of new dioceses and parishes. Many small Christians are flourishing in Malawi /Zambia Province.
5. The African Synod brought huge impact on the church of South Africa, Ethiopia and Mozambique as many pastoral initiatives were consolidated and encouraged to flourish.
6. In Eritrea and South Sudan, people were not well oriented on the themes of African Synod. The African Munus was used much in formation by the Comboni Missionaries but it didn't reach the local people outside. In the diocese of Malakal in South Sudan, people organised their church with the help of the catechists and formed small Christian communities. There are many challenges today than they were in the past in the areas of reconciliation, control of violence and achievement of peace.