



"If you want to walk quickly, walk alone
If you want to walk far, walk together".

Joseph Kallanchira, SVD
AFRAM ZONAL COORDINATOR

afam@svdcuria.org

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AFRAM MATTERS – 5

Dear Fathers: Provincial, Regional and Mission Superiors,

"Africa is beautiful" – these are the exciting words of Pope Francis during his first Wednesday audience on December 3, 2015, upon his return to the Vatican City, after his historic visit to the African continent. He made his maiden visit to Africa from November 25 to 30, bringing a message of peace and hope to three countries, and through them to the entire African continent.

The "Francis-effect" is already visible in Kenya, Uganda and the Central African Republic, the three countries he visited in that order: there is already a serious public attempt to curb graft and corruption and highly placed persons are being brought under the scrutiny of justice, especially here in Kenya, from where I write these lines.

The message of hope, human dignity, peace and reconciliation he announced with the force of his personal courage and simplicity, seems to have been well received, reading the media accounts presented soon after the visit. The consecrated persons that we are have also been challenged by the Holy Father to live authentic lives of missionary discipleship of the Lord, lived in prayer and discernment.

There were also other things happening in the recent weeks and months within our continent, which could be of interest to us as Divine Word Missionaries:

An Appeal for Peace

The Standing Committee of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) held its bi-annual meeting from November 16-20, 2015 at the SECAM Secretariat in Accra, Ghana. In the ensuing communique, the bishops having strongly condemned the recent terrorist attacks, made a strong plea for peace, in these terms:

“We unite ourselves with all those who are working for peace and reconciliation in troubled areas of Africa and the world, especially in Burundi, South Sudan, Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Nigeria, Kenya, Libya, and some other North African countries. We appeal in the name of God to all parties involved in the conflicts in these areas to lay down their arms and embrace the path of dialogue and peace for the sake of posterity. We also enjoin the governments and all concerned competent authorities to create the conducive environment for the restoration of peace in these locations”.

CANAA and CEPACS

The SECAM bishops added: “We note with approval the emergence and progress of the Catholic News Agency of Africa (CANAA) and appreciate the sacrifice of those who have kept it going. In this information age it is of utmost importance that the story of the pastoral initiatives and challenges of the Church in Africa be told in an authentic and respectful manner. CANAA with its base in Nairobi, Kenya represents a major step forward in achieving this objective. As the Holy Father, Pope Francis admonished the Standing Committee of SECAM during the committee's last *ad limina* visit to the Vatican, SECAM must help the Church in Africa to tell her own story from the African perspective. The Pan-African Episcopal Committee for Social Communications (CEPACS), which gave birth to CANAA, is well positioned to carry out this important function. In the light of this, we call on all media organizations, professionals and individuals of goodwill to support and patronize the services of CANAA as a means of enhancing the evangelizing mission of the Church in Africa”.

SECAM and the African Union

“We applaud the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between SECAM and the African Union on August 19, 2015 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, The formalization of the collaboration between these two continental bodies is a milestone which will truly enrich African history and the mission of the Church in Africa. It will enhance the realization of the vision of the AU in coordinating development through the collaboration of informed and motivated Africans themselves. The intention of SECAM to contribute her quota along with others to the enhancement of peace, with the African Union is borne out of a genuine desire to participate in the work of realizing the authentic African Renaissance driven by respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law. We believe that this is not only desirable and possible but by the grace of God, achievable as well”.

A Call to Reconciliation

“To all the Countries of Africa and its islands as we continue in this continental year of Reconciliation from July 29, 2015 to July 29, 2016 we say in the words of St. Paul, “It is as though God was urging you through us and in the name of Christ: we appeal to you to be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20). Coinciding as it does with the Jubilee Year of Mercy from December 8, 2015 - November 20, 2016, let us all be truly reconciled with one another and through these means be reconciled with God our

Merciful Father. It is only by this means shall we find God's mercy borne of harmonious co-existence and development”.

SECAM was founded in Kampala, Uganda in July 1969 during a visit to that country by Blessed Pope Paul VI. It was a resolve of the bishops of Africa to build a continental structure in order to bring about the African vision and contribution to the Universal Church. It is a Pan-African body for organic pastoral solidarity among the Catholic Bishops in Africa and Madagascar. It endeavors to promote collaboration and joint activities and foster communion among the Episcopal Conferences of Africa in their evangelizing mission and the promotion of integral human development.

Catholic Peacebuilding Network (CPN)

If you were looking for places to train one or two of our confreres of your province/region/mission in matters dealing with peace and reconciliation, please know and note that a number of Catholic universities associated with the CPN have undergraduate and/or graduate programmes in peace studies and related fields. Many of these programmes offer generous financial aid and some provide full scholarships for tuition and room and board. These programmes can contribute in important ways to developing the capacity of the Catholic community to enhance its peacebuilding capacity.

One such Institute is the Hekima Institute of Peace Studies and International Relations, run by the Jesuits in Nairobi. Hekima University College offers the M.A. degree in Peace Studies and International Relations and accredited certificate courses in conflict analysis, transitional justice, human rights and good governance, peacebuilding, conflict resolution and reconciliation, Catholic Social Teaching, refugee, migration and peacebuilding, leadership and management, among others. This Institute is affiliated to The Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) which is founded on centuries of Jesuit educational tradition. Apply for courses online or write to: Admissions: Hekima Institute of Peace Studies and International Relations, P.O. Box 21215-00505, Nairobi-Kenya.

I may add here that the Tangaza University College, owned by the member religious congregations including the SVD, offers Masters programmes in fields as diversified as education, counseling psychology, social ministry, pastoral theology, religious formation and African studies - all in four semesters. Tangaza is on its way to becoming a full-fledged Catholic University in its own right; and it is in this College that our CFC students attend theology classes.

SDGs - a New Vision, a New Dream!

The world has just adopted a set of goals, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), at the United Nations in New York that will define development discourse for the next 15 years (2015 - 30). I thought you may be interested to have those 17 targets of the

SDGs under your fingers – after all, the national governments in the 18 countries of SVD-AFRAM may be speaking of them from now on. And we are informed, too. Like the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) of the last 15 years, what do these 17 targets mean for the people whom we serve in our PRMS? :

1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere
2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
4. Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning
5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
6. Ensure access to water and sanitation for all
7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
8. Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all
9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
10. Reduce inequality within and among countries
11. Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources
15. Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss
16. Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies and
17. Revitalize global partnerships.

Some SVD News

It was the turn of the Madagascar Region to wind up a series of jubilee celebrations in the recent past within the AFRAM Zone: After the Golden Jubilee celebrations of ANG in June, on October 18th of this year, the confreres of the MAD Region concluded the celebrations of the 25th year of SVD-presence in that island nation. Father Superior General was among the dignitaries who concelebrated Mass on that Mission Sunday at the Divine Word Parish church in Antananarivo.

The first team of three SVDs (Joseph Mazur, Joseph Addai and Louis Awoudja) has arrived in Liberia on November 9th, 2015, accompanied by the GHA Provincial Superior George Angmor. The Bishop of the Cape Palmas diocese welcomed them

very warmly and the people of the Zwedru City parish which is entrusted to our care were very happy to receive finally a team of religious missionary priests in their midst. Language learning is ministry, and they are aware of it, they said, as they begin to involve themselves in pastoral care, education and working with refugees and internally displaced persons.

The next AFRAM Zonal Assembly will take place from February 17 to 23, 2016, in Nairobi, Kenya. Preparations are in the offing for a fruitful assembly. The treasurers of all our PRMs also will hold their meeting at the same venue on the same dates. Father General and the Treasurer General Stephan Gerdes are expected to participate in those triennial events of the Zone.

To conclude, let me request you to please include my e-mail ID to the contact list of addresses to which you send regularly your PRM newsletter. From some PRMs I get them regularly, but others would like to include me, too, kindly on their list. Thank you. In a similar vein, let me encourage you to use any useful information from this bulletin to keep our confreres updated on matters of interest happening within our Zone. After all, communication is a way of life for us SVDs!

With the assurance of my humble prayer and every best wish for a fruitful Advent season and a joy-filled Christmas time in your province/region/mission, let me sign off for now.

As always in the Divine Word,

Joseph Kallanchira, SVD
AFRAM ZC

