



CONFERENCE EPISCOPALE DU RWANDA

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PRESS RELEASE AT THE END OF THE ORDINARY SESSION OF THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF RWANDA, HELD IN KIGALI FROM 7 TO 10 MAY 2019

1. From 7 to 10 May 2019, Bishops members of the “Conference Episcopale du Rwanda” (CEPR) held their regular session of the second quarter of 2019 at the headquarters of the CEPR, in Kigali. His Lordship Philippe RUKAMBA, Bishop of Butare and President of CEPR chaired this session.

Official opening of the session

2. In his opening address, Bishop Philippe RUKAMBA first greeted the Apostolic Nuncio in Rwanda and his fellow bishops and thanked them for their participation in this session. He then presented them with the agenda for this session. He noted that it would cover many different but complementary topics, as they all aimed to help everyone to fulfil their mission.
3. On this agenda, the first thing to do was to discuss the preparations for the International Eucharistic Congress and the installation of priestly staff in the major seminaries and inter-diocesan services. It was also about debating the quality of education in major seminaries, secondary schools and catechists, in order to ensure that, supported by the Gospel, the Church's contribution to the education remains an indispensable aid for the country.
4. Among the other topics discussed, there was the manifestation of the Church's commitment to solving the problems of the Rwandan family, including the problem of a large number of prisoners, diseases such as hepatitis C raging in many people, the increasing number of early pregnancies, heavy new laws and legislated without deep reflection, as well as the problem of unity and reconciliation of Rwandans.
5. The Catholic Church is concerned about the smooth running of pastoral care in prisons and wide collaboration with the prison authorities. It also focuses its attention on recalling the laity to their duties as witnesses of Christ. It highlights the culture of dialogue and mutual consultation. It is also concerned with the perfection of CEPR's 2019-2014 pastoral program, which will be implemented since September 2019. All these elements go hand in hand with the sharing of essential information on the progress of the Church's mission in the whole world and in all dioceses of Rwanda.
6. His Excellency Msgr. Andrzej JÓZWOWICZ, Apostolic Nuncio to Rwanda, welcomed CEPR's habit of inviting him to all quarterly sessions. He praised the will of the Rwandan Government and the Holy See. He asked the bishops to explain to their faithful of all categories and in

particular to the young people and to put into practice the content of the post-synodal apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis entitled “Christus vivit”, published on March 25, 2019, following the synod of Rome, which examined the vocation and mission of young people.

7. Before sharing news from their dioceses, the Bishops exchanged views on how their message to the faithful during the 25th commemoration of the genocide against the Tutsi in 1994 was differently received, and after which they reaffirmed their commitment to remain at the service of unity and reconciliation among Rwandans.

Preparations

8. The Bishops wished that the Eucharistic Congress be held at the level of parishes and dioceses before its organization at the national level. They hoped that the International Eucharistic Congress could be held in Rwanda, if possible, in 2028.
9. The bishops expressed their will to contribute to the establishment of an effective pastoral in our region during the general assembly of ACEAC (Association of Episcopal Conferences of Central Africa made up of the DRC, Burundi and Rwanda), which will be held in Kinshasa from June 24 to 26, 2019. In addition, four bishops will represent the CEPR in the meeting of the SCEAM (Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar) and the celebration of its Golden Jubilee which will take place in Kampala from 21 to 28 July, 2019.

Quality education

10. Bishops are worried about the quality of education. At the Major Seminary of Rutongo, they consider that it is imperative to review language learning to help its laureates to enter the cycle of philosophy with confidence. They therefore recommend that each diocese or neighbouring dioceses together pay particular attention to the preparation of candidates for entry, while they are still considering the possibility of adding a second year to this preparatory cycle. Bishops approved the deliberation guide governing the repetition of a seminarian at Rutongo Major Seminary. It is the responsibility of the management of this seminary to ensure its implementation.
11. Still on the subject of the quality of education, the bishops also followed the presentation of the results of the study on the problem of early pregnancies in schools and related recommendations issued by the symposium organized by the National Secretariat for Catholic Education (SNEC) from 30 to 31 January 2019. They noted that the extreme poverty of children, the society that is gradually losing its standards, technology that does not protect children from abusers and school programs since the fourth year can create a gap in the education, reasoning and behaviour of children and thus undermine the quality of education. They agreed to continue to discuss this issue with a view to jointly exploring strategies to address this alarming situation in order to save children from this scourge and thus ensure a brighter future for the country.

Continuing formation of the laity

12. The laity constantly ask to be trained in the fulfilment of the mission they voluntarily provide within the Church. The bishops asked the priests to continue to support lay formation programs of all kinds. It is very important that everyone understands our faith. They also urged the laity to participate in the formation of their brothers and sisters in Christ. It will be necessary to choose

themes and to prepare didactic material but in the meantime each one must be careful not to bury the talent received but on the contrary to have the courage to make it produce the harvest which testifies of God even among the miscreants.

Dialogue.

13. The Bishops received in audience the Rwandan Minister of Justice, Johnston BUSINGYE with the Deputy Commissioner General of the Correctional Service of Rwanda (RCS), DCGP Chantal Ujeneza and the Head of the Correctional Division at RCS, CP Jean Bosco Kabanda. The minister told them about the functioning of the Rwanda Prison Service and its ongoing revolutions, during which prisoners use their detention time as an opportunity to acquire new knowledge and skills. The Minister strongly expressed his desire to work hand in hand with the Catholic Church to help inmates serve their sentences once they have been truly corrected, thus being ready to unite with others in the development and construction of the country. The bishops praised the achievements of the Rwanda Correctional Service and in turn spoke about the activities that the Church carries out in prisons as part of its mission. These include the teaching of catechesis, the counselling of prisoners according to the problems presented, the healing of the heart, the help of the prisoners to meet their families and those for whom they inflicted trouble to come to terms with them, the assistance to the poor and the sick,... The bishops complained that even though the Church fulfils this mission in the prisons, it has not obtained an official authorization related thereto. They asked the minister to help the Church obtain the formal written authorization to continue its mission in the prisons. The Bishops and the Minister agreed to extend their collaboration to other programs that prepare inmates for their social and family reintegration after a real correction.
14. The bishops also attended the meeting of the Ministry of Health on hepatitis C prevention held at Serena Hotel in Kigali on May 9, 2019. In this meeting, the Interreligious Council of Rwanda promised its contribution by raising awareness of their staff in health centres and / or hospitals during community work and donating money so that even the poor can be cared for, in order to prevent this disease from spreading and ravaging throughout the country.
15. During their session, the bishops received Mr Ernest Karasira, Deputy Commissioner of the Rwanda Revenue Authority (RRA), in charge of regional and decentralized taxes. This host explained to them at length the provisions of the law n ° 75/2018 of the 07/09/2018, determining the sources of income and the inheritance of the decentralized entities. The bishops asked him many questions about certain provisions which they consider contrary to the canon law. By way of example, they showed him that the design of a non-taxable dwelling house for a natural person differs from that of a diocese composed of several parishes or a religious congregation composed of several communities, some being in different dioceses and others outside the country. However, they still thanked him and agreed that, as far as possible, they would continue to discuss it with those who prepared this law in order to better understand it in a common way without taking into account whoever will execute it.

Five-year strategic plan

- 16.** This pastoral program is based on three pillars: the pastoral care of the faithful, the strengthening of the capacities of particular categories and the promotion of structures and services in charge of pastoral care. Related questions and suggestions were taken into account. The proposed amendments have been implemented. It remains the submission of the document to each bishop for an individual examination before its approval.

Conclusion

- 17.** Given the importance of the consultation workshop for the promotion of unity and reconciliation among Rwandans prepared by the Episcopal Commission for Justice and Peace, the bishops decided to hold a special session on August 8, 2019. During this session, they will be exposed to the state of the preparations and will make proposals for the necessary modifications.
- 18.** Before closing this session, the bishops stressed that some subjects needed in-depth studies. Accordingly, they decided to postpone them to their regular third quarter session, to be held from September 3 to 6, 2019.

The session ended with a prayer at 1 pm.

Done at Kigali on May 10, 2019.

Father Martin NIZIGIYIMANA

Secretary General of Conférence Episcopale du Rwanda

✠ Philippe RUKAMBA

Bishop of Butare and

President of Conférence Episcopale du Rwanda