



'THUS FAR THE LORD HAS BROUGHT US'(1 Samuel 7:12)

ISSUED BY:

**THE COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN ZAMBIA (CCZ),
THE EVANGELICAL FELLOWSHIP IN ZAMBIA (EFZ), AND
THE ZAMBIA EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE (ZEC)**

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“You will declare this fiftieth year sacred and proclaim the liberation of all the inhabitants of the land. This is to be a jubilee for you ...” (Leviticus 25: 10)

1. INTRODUCTION

The three Christian Church mother bodies, namely, the Council of Churches in Zambia (CCZ), the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia (EFZ), and the Zambia Episcopal Conference (ZEC), joyfully greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This year marks fifty years since that joyful occasion of gaining our national independence on 24th October 1964. As we celebrate this golden jubilee, it is also an opportune time to realize that we have come thus far as a nation through God's providence (1 Samuel 7:12). As such, our greatest gratitude goes to God the Almighty who has kept us together, for the Lord has been with us (Psalm. 46:12) in peace and unity. We further pray that the Lord in his mercy continues to stay with us (Luke 24:29). As we look forward to the next fifty years, we are inspired by the Word of the Lord who declares: “For I know the plans I have for you, ... plans for peace and not disaster, reserving a future full of hope for you” (Jeremiah 29: 11).

In the past fifty years of independence, we have had our own share of joys and sorrows, hopes and anxieties as well as successes and failures. The Jubilee year therefore provides an opportunity for us to critically reflect on how as a country, we have performed in fulfilling the true aspirations of our gallant freedom fighters. As we have stated before, the gaining of political independence was not an end in itself. Rather, it was the beginning of a long and difficult road towards nation building and integral development. Over the years, the Church has been consistent in providing moral and spiritual guidance to the nation. We have always called for unity, dedication, hard work and moral integrity from each and every citizen if indeed the noble dream of making Zambia a land of joy, unity and prosperity would ever become a reality.

Like for the people in the Old Testament, the Jubilee year is essentially a time of renewal, restoration, forgiveness and offering of new possibilities as liberated sons and daughters of God (Leviticus 25). This does not only oblige us to take stock of ourselves, celebrate our achievements and build on them but to also learn from our mistakes in order to build a better future for our country.

2. A MESSAGE OF GRATITUDE TO OUR FOUNDING FATHERS AND MOTHERS

On this occasion of national importance, we convey our sincere gratitude to our founding fathers and mothers including those still with us today as well as those whom the Lord has called, for their valuable contribution to what we are as Zambia today. They selflessly gave up everything in the struggle for our independence so that our country and generations to come would no longer live in servitude. We hope our contemporary society and its leaders shall emulate their spirit of sacrifice, patriotism and commitment to the common good. It is also our sincere hope that our country will do everything possible to ensure that our national heroes enjoy a dignified life which they fully deserve. We are therefore saddened that we sometimes get reports of some of our freedom fighters living in squalor and destitution. This should be a source of shame to the nation and society whose enjoyment of life and freedoms today was secured by the sacrifices of the same freedom fighters. It is indeed our obligation to take care of our founding parents in their twilight year. We hereby appeal to the government to take stock of these gallant men and women and ensure that their livelihood is uplifted. We should therefore respond to the following pertinent questions:

- a) In what ways can the government visibly appreciate, honour and support the genuine freedom fighters and senior citizens of our beloved country?
- b) How can our communities support these people?

c) How can we ensure that what they fought for is treasured and fully achieved in our day?

3. THANKING GOD FOR HIS MANY BLESSINGS UPON US

"Let the nations shout and sing for joy, since you dispense true justice to the world; you dispense strict justice to the peoples, on earth you rule the nations. Let the nations praise you, O God, let all the nations praise you!" **(Psalms 67:4-5)**

Notwithstanding the many difficulties we have experienced in the past fifty years, both as individuals and as a nation, we have many reasons to rejoice and celebrate in the context of our Golden Jubilee. We should certainly thank God for the many blessings He has showered upon our beloved nation. These special blessings listed below should provide us with hope and inspiration for our future:

3.1 Peace Upon Our Land

We are mindful of the fact that peace is not only the absence of war but a complete spiritual, economical, political and social harmony among people. But we also note with gratitude that the absence of war and extreme civil strife in our country has provided great opportunity for economic growth and social development. This has not been the case in many countries in Africa and the world at large. Even when we have had a number of trying moments in the country with potential to lead to our disintegration, we have always emerged as a united society and forged forward as one nation. We pray that this resilience remains within us and that every individual and groups of our society will work towards and guard our peace jealously. As such, every Zambian should be an instrument of peace building in our nation. In this, we should be inspired by the Scriptures that declare that: "Happy are the peacemakers; they shall be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9). As a God fearing and peace loving people, we need to reject any form of violence that will rob our neighbour of the much valued peace. This includes political violence which often occurs during elections and gender based violence. Above all, we should remember that the best way to maintain peace is to promote social and economic justice in our nation as well as a culture of genuine dialogue and reconciliation.

3.2 Religious freedom and Unity

Zambia remains not only an oasis of peace but of religious freedom as well. People of different faiths in Zambia are allowed to freely practice their faith and to co-exist in relative harmony with members of other faiths. In fact, our national laws guarantee the right to freedom of worship. We are aware of the fact that wars and social strife in some parts of our world today are as a result of religious intolerance and extremism. In addition, the spirit of ecumenism that has existed and harnessed among people of different denominations and faiths has forged among us the unity of purpose but at the same time allowing the diversity of beliefs and religious practices. We also thank God that here in Zambia, the State and the Church have over the years partnered in the work of development and especially the provision of social services such as education, health and social welfare. Despite some occasional differences in perception on issues of governance, we can be proud that every government has by and large allowed the Church to do its work of evangelization. On the other hand, the Church has worked in mutual collaboration with the state to serve the people of Zambia. We urge both the Church and government to continue working together in order to promote a greater sense of national unity and harmony among our people. Indeed, we must work hard to translate our national motto of "One Zambia – One Nation," into reality and avoid any divisive elements such as tribalism, nepotism, regionalism and religious intolerance that may spoil the progress we have made in fostering unity among Zambians.

3.3 Tribal and Ethnic Integration

Ever since Zambia attained its independence, the slogan - 'One Zambia One Nation' - was consistently articulated and inculcated by our founding fathers and mothers. This was translated in specific policy actions like tribal balancing and the posting of civil servants to serve in any part of the country, regardless of where they ethnically originated. This has led to inter-tribal marriages and genuine integration of the Zambian society even with such a big diversity of tribes. Consequently, Zambians today see each other as brothers and sisters regardless of where they come from. In addition, we have Zambians settling for life in any part of the country where they have established new homes, friends and relatives. Not only that, ethnic integration has also greatly contributed to the spirit of harmony and peaceful coexistence among Zambians. We pray that we all work towards preserving and strengthening this unity. Indeed, different political opinions and affiliations should never be allowed to disintegrate our society.

3.4 Relatively Stable Political Environment

We acknowledge the fact that our politics, especially multiparty politics are far from being mature. Even after fifty years, we still have considerable intolerance towards each other on

grounds of political affiliation and divergent political opinions. This intolerance is being observed both within political parties and across party lines. In spite of all this, we still remain a relatively stable multiparty democracy. Since independence, we have had smooth and peaceful political transitions. This has been our enviable trade mark as a country given how politics have divided societies in other parts of the continent and the world at large. We appeal for a renewed sense of responsibility and moral integrity among our brothers and sisters who are in active politics. They all need to work hard to promote a civil political culture that respects political diversity. It is our sincere hope and prayer that Zambia shall remain a beacon of hope and a source of inspiration for other countries who are struggling to inculcate a culture of true democracy.

3.5 Commitment to the Liberation of Our Neighbors

It was a firm belief of our founding fathers and mothers that Zambia would not be truly liberated unless all its neighbours were also liberated. In fact, it so happened that Zambia attained its independence in October 1964 and well ahead of most of other countries in the region. In a spirit of true solidarity and commitment to the love of neighbour, Zambia invested time and resources in supporting the liberation struggles in the region and the rest of Africa. It was thus a key member of the Front Line States that was established to spearhead the liberation struggle for and in those countries which were still being colonised. As a result, the economy of the country was put under great pressure and many Zambians lost their lives from reprisals by colonial regimes in the process. This was a price worth paying as today Africa rejoices in the fact that the continent has been freed from colonial rule. Apart from that, Zambia has also been a true home for many refugees and a place of solace as well as a safe haven for people fleeing from civil wars and conflicts in their troubled countries. Even today, the Word of God continues to challenge us to love, welcome and live in harmony with other nationals who seek asylum or decide to build a home in Zambia. Thus we read in Exodus 22:21, *“Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner. Remember, you yourselves were once foreigners in the land of Egypt.”*

3.6 Improvement in Safeguarding Human Rights and Promotion of the Dignity of our People

The attainment of independence in 1964 has over the years seen evolvement and growth in the liberties of Zambians. The country has moved from the colonial legacy of racism and deprivation to an era where every person is treated with dignity. Even when the pace of the evolvement of people's liberties could have been faster and sometimes we have seen regression, today we see more freedoms enjoyed by Zambians with greater space for political and economic participation for both men and women. We have also seen a robust growth of pluralism in political organisations, civil society, faith based organisations, the media and increased

participation of women and youth.

Certainly, there is still more that should be done in developing and sustaining the enabling institutions and legal frameworks that would promote good governance and ensure that there is both greater transparency and accountability. This should indeed be the focus of our current leaders in both the ruling party and those in opposition.

We also note that there are still unacceptable high levels of poverty in Zambia and disproportionate development biased towards urban areas while rural areas have persistently been neglected. This is a moral injustice that should be immediately addressed. For us, celebrating a Golden Jubilee means that time has come to restore equality among the children of God. Thus, the Jubilee is also a time to restructure our political, social, economic and cultural systems and structures and put in place ones that will promote social and economic justice as well as the common good and integral development for all Zambians.

3.7 Increased Investment in the Social Sector

Coming from an era of colonial subjugation and segregation, opportunities for indigenous Zambians were very limited. There was a huge imbalance in access to opportunities and social services such as education, health and social welfare between the occupiers and the indigenous Zambians. We acknowledge with gratitude the strides made in investing in education, health, infrastructure and other social services. The Church is very proud to have contributed to the social sector development through its programmes. The welfare policies especially in the First Republic entailed easy access to education and health, improvement in the wellbeing of the people and linking the country with major means of communication. As we have said before, the best way to develop a country is by investing in its people who are the greatest resource. We therefore urge the government to put more efforts in ensuring that people have easy access to quality education and health services.

3.8 Notable Economic Gains

In the fifty years of independence, Zambia has by and large seen economic growth and increased participation in economic activities by the Zambian population. The average Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which was at 3.79% in the 1960s and declined to as low as 0.37 by

the 90s shot to about 7.02% between 2010 and 2013 . Despite some periodic negative trends in the mining industry, the sector still makes a great contribution to our economy. On the other hand, the agricultural sector has been driven by subsistence and small scale farmers guaranteeing job creation and the country's food security. The tourism sector has equally been growing with more participation of local people in tourism related services and businesses. This has been very encouraging. The challenge though still remains for Zambia to put in place better redistributive policies so that the majority poor and the most vulnerable in our society are not left to be mere spectators in the current economic activities. In other words, the country's economic boom would only be meaningful if it significantly reduces poverty among the people of Zambia and allows the active participation of the majority citizenry. Unfortunately, what we see being achieved is the ever widening gap between the rich and the poor and marginalization of rural areas in terms of infrastructure development and economic activities. Therefore, we call upon our leaders to hear the cry of the poor and listen to the wise counsel of the Lord who declares: “ *I have seen the miserable state of my people in Egypt. I have heard their appeal to be free of their slave-drivers. Yes, I am well aware of their sufferings. I mean to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians and bring them up out of that land to a land rich and broad, a land where milk and honey flow ...*” (Exodus 3: 7-8).

3.9 Endowment in Natural Resources

We thank God for blessing our country with such a variety and abundance of natural resources. Our country is blessed with so many minerals, arable land with rich soils, huge expanses of water in lakes and rivers, forests, good rains, wild animals and many natural wonders including the mighty Victoria Falls. What more could we have asked for? These resources are God given and a special blessing meant to sustain and support the livelihood of the current and future generations. However, God's endowment of these resources imposes obligations on us of justice, equity and good stewardship. Natural resources are given to all as equal partners. Since these God given resources are a common good with a universal destination, all citizens must have easy access to them and government must ensure that they are used for the benefit of not only a few privileged ones but for the entire nation with particular attention made to address the plight of the poor and most vulnerable in the country. This is especially so in the context of current huge global interest in and the greedy appetite of the multinational companies to exploit the natural resources of poor countries. To this end, we insist that good legal frameworks, a more robust tax regime and rigorous monitoring are required to protect the interest of local communities in the exploitation of natural resources by these multinational companies. Furthermore, the exploitation of natural resources today must not be overwhelmed by greed to the extent that issues of sustainability are overlooked. Natural resources are finite and we should always be mindful that future generations will need them too. The current generation therefore has a duty to exercise good stewardship of natural resources.

3.10 Capacity to Rise to the Occasion in Dealing with Experiences that Threaten the Integrity of Our Society.

The fifty years of independence has not been without occasional turbulences driven by both political and economic factors. There were several economic reforms, the introduction of One Party State; the economic decline from mid-seventies to eighties, the attempt to introduce Scientific Socialism in schools in 1979, return to multiparty politics in 1991, and the harsh economic reforms of the post 1991 period associated with the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP). During all these phases, Zambians have dialogued, debated and expressed their divergent views and preferred positions. But at the end of the day, we have remained one as a nation. We pray that this spirit of tolerance and acceptance of divergent views will continue as this is what will build our nation and enable it rise to even greater heights. Again, we should ask ourselves the following questions:

- a) What are the notable blessings from God that we enjoy as a country?
- b) How can we thank God and maintain these blessings?
- c) What should we do as a country to become a greater and more developed country?
- d) What role has the Church played in the development of our nation and what should it do in the future?

4. CHALLENGES FACED BY OUR NATION IN THE PAST, NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

"So stand your ground, with truth buckled round your waist, and integrity for a breastplate, wearing for shoes on your feet the eagerness to spread the gospel of peace and always carrying the shield of faith so that you can use it to put out the burning arrows of the evil one" (Ephesians 6: 14-16).

4.1 Nationalization of Industries

Whereas some benefits were derived from the creation of state enterprises in that the greater part of the productive sector became locally owned, the unbridled and wholesome nationalization of major industries had its downside. The gross involvement of the State in major industries brought inefficiency in the industries and consequently made them uncompetitive and loss making. Proceeds from the industries were diverted to consumption and nonproductive

sectors to such an extent that industries got drained of the needed capital to reinvest. This clearly had an impact on the economy of the country in that the low productivity in our industries could not generate sufficient income for our economy. This factor, compounded by the decline in copper prices, further pushed the country into excessive borrowing from international financial institutions until the country was caught up in an unsustainable debt.

4.2 International Debt

The debt burden of more than 7 billion dollars left an indelible mark on the economy of Zambia and peoples' livelihoods whose effects are still being felt today. This should be a lesson for the leaders of today and it frightens and saddens us to see how the country has once again slowly degenerated into unguarded practice of debt contracting. Already, indications are that the country has again accumulated an external debt stock of about 3.2 billion dollars as of 2013 from the levels of 971.77 million dollars in 2006 after debt forgiveness . This should be a lesson for the leaders of today. We are in fact seriously concerned and saddened to see how our country is once again slowly degenerating into unguarded practice of debt contraction. Whilst borrowing is not bad in itself and can propel the country in its drive to develop the national infrastructure, we remain deeply concerned about the lack of transparency in the manner of contracting the said debt and management of funds as well as the repayment of loans. We therefore fully support the calls for stronger oversight on debt contraction by the legislature so that Zambia does not reverse the gains of debt forgiveness and slip back into another debt trap. As we stated in our joint Jubilee 2000 Pastoral letter, we once again call for responsibility, transparency, accountability and prudence for the sake of the future generations.

4.3 The Introduction of the One Party State

Another dark era in the history of the last fifty years of our country was the decision to outlaw multi-party politics in preference for a one party state. People's liberties were excessively curtailed and the only political party reigning as the ruling party interfered with all spheres of people's lives. This was clearly a time of oppression and repressions and never again should Zambia go back to a one party rule. The one party system retarded or even stagnated the development of democratic institutions. Further, its accompanying socialist economic orientation led to the mismanagement of the economy leaning mainly towards consumption at the expense of investment and production. Those who expressed dissent with the one party rule and its practices were ruthlessly dealt with by the state and the only political party of the time. Much as we have problems with our multi-party politics today, we should congratulate ourselves as a country for returning to a plural political and economic system in 1991. A plural political and economic system opened up opportunities for citizen participation and greater leadership

accountability. All of us should take individual and collective responsibility in ensuring that Zambia's multiparty democracy succeeds. Indeed, the greatest challenge we face today is to develop democratic institutions and systems and credible leaders who are genuine democrats not only by name but indeed.

4.4 Economic Decline of the Mid Seventies and Eighties and the Harsh Economic Policies of the Post 1990 Era

Zambia got its independence in 1964 as a very prosperous country with the GDP comparable to the best performing economies in the world. The GDP per capita then was 0.68. We acknowledge and appreciate the massive investment in the social sectors by government soon after independence given the high level of deprivation the Zambian people went through during colonial times. However, the extreme and unsustainable welfare policies of the time compounded by low copper prices in the seventies had a big toll on the economy and consequently the welfare of the people. The GDP Per Capita declined to – 1.7 in the 1970s and further slumped to -2.13 in the 1990s. The poor performing economy entailed big shortage of foreign currency and big shortage of essential commodities which had to be imported from outside the country. Even amidst these economic challenges, lack of prudence in economic decisions and policies continued to worsen the social and economic situation in the country. Public subsidies on non-essential commodities continued and so did imprudent government expenditure.

When Zambia reverted to plural political and economic system in 1991, the country embarked on harsh economic reforms through the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) prescribed by international financial institutions (World Bank and IMF). The austerity measures of economic reforms diminished government social sector spending resulting in great suffering among the weak and poor who could not afford the so called cost sharing in public services like health and education. Further, the burden of economic reforms seemed to disproportionately fall on those who were already weak and poor. Sadly, poverty, social marginalization and widening gap between the rich and poor continues to be the norm in Zambia today. This is despite the fact that GDP Per Capita is said to have improved to 2.46%.

Thus in 1993, the Catholic Bishops of Zambia issued a Pastoral Letter entitled 'Hear the Cry of the Poor' in which they strongly urged government to be considerate to the plight of the poor and weak even when it continued to implement economic reforms. The position of the Bishops was that the fundamental norm of judging the success of an economy is the extent to which such an economy serves the people, especially those who are less privileged. To those who are in charge of managing our economy today, we hereby submit the same passionate appeal. Yes,

the government should not only celebrate on positive macro-economic indicators but must also ensure that those indicators are translated into visible uplifting of the living standards of the majority poor in our nation.

4.5 Failure to Entrench a Culture of Democracy

After enduring the one party era for twenty seven years, Zambians decided to return to multiparty democracy in 1991. The aspirations of Zambians at that time were to reclaim their political, economic and social freedoms taken away during the one party system. Inherent in this aspiration was the restoration of the freedoms of association, speech, conscience and participation among others. We should give ourselves credit as Zambians for being able to hold peaceful periodic elections even when they are occasionally encumbered by procedural and behavioral disagreements. The good thing is that we have dealt with such disagreements with great civility.

The down side of our post 1991 political landscape however has been our failure to embrace genuine democracy rooted in democratic conviction and culture. How else would one explain the chronic intolerance in our politics? Despite the fact that among the fundamental values of democracy are respect for divergent views and freedom of association, leaders in government often display the one party and dictatorial tendencies. Thus, what we see in Zambia today is that people become instant enemies once they join opposing political parties or espouse different views on political matters. This level of intolerance has sometimes escalated into political violence when elections are held. This should be a source of shame for a country like Zambia which professes to be a democratic country. When elections are held, a political party or candidates are elected. Since only one party or candidate can win an election contested at a time, there will always be losers and winners and anybody who goes in an election should expect either of the two outcomes. Losers must be magnanimous enough to accept election results while winners should also express humility and work to unite the nation. Respect for the election outcomes by stakeholders, of course, also depends on the integrity of the electoral process that produces such results. This aspect still seems to be a key challenge in our elections. We call upon our political leaders to shed off the one party state hangover and wake up to the reality that Zambia is now a multiparty democracy with commitment to political pluralism. Apart from that, we call for further electoral reforms that will guarantee the credibility, transparency and accountability of our future elections. Again we bemoan the fact that in the past fifty years we have lamentably failed to enact unto ourselves a new people driven constitution.

4.6 Leadership, Integrity and Good Governance

As Prophet Micah taught: *"What is good has been explained to you, man: this is what Yahweh asks of you: only this, to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God"* (Micah 6:8). Indeed, integrity entails consistence between what one says and what one does. Our politics today are fraught with lying, deception, falsehood, corruption, tribalism, regionalism and many other vices just to mention but a few. These are almost becoming the acceptable norms. The majority of Zambians today have been alienated from participation in governance because institutions of governance have been hijacked and corrupted by men and women with little regard for ethics and moral values. On the other hand, Good Governance entails commitment to the promotion of the common good in the management of public affairs and resources. But in Zambia today, the majority have no access to decent livelihoods. Rural areas are the most hit with very little access to basic services. Politics in Zambia today has become a means of social ascent and access to wealth to the exclusion of the majority. That is why struggle for political power in our country has become a cut-throat contest. We need men and women of integrity in the leadership of our country and its institutions and those who are committed to the genuine spirit of servant leadership.

4.7. The Barotseland Agreement of 1964

One other issue that our nation has struggled to resolve and comprehensively put to rest in the past fifty years is that of the Barotseland Agreement of 1964.

Our position as Christian Church Mother Bodies has not been to apportion blame on any party but to appeal to all: the Government, the people of Western Province, the Barotse Royal Establishment and the organised activist groups to come together and find a lasting solution to the delicate situation in Western Province. It is our belief that none of the parties involved cherishes needless acts of violence or an environment where people live in fear and uncertainty. We therefore continue to call on all stakeholders to demonstrate their commitment to peace by refraining from violence, intimidation or use of force as a means of achieving their objectives. Violence and intimidation produces no winners in resolving problems. It just hardens the hearts of the victims to equally defend their position by the same means and in the end a vicious circle of hatred, violence and intimidation is perpetrated. We strongly feel that all parties to this matter must embrace the spirit of dialogue as a way of dealing with the related issues.

Whilst we recognize the duty of Government to maintain law and order and to protect life and property, this duty should however be exercised with due diligence.

It is our humble view that at the bottom of the mentioned matter is a perception – real or imagined - that the Province is marginalized in matters of development. We therefore call on Government to not only continue bringing about meaningful development to the Western Province but also manage perceptions that the area has been sidelined when it comes to matters of development. Again, while we acknowledge the continued efforts by Government to bring about development in Western Province, clearly much more still needs to be done.

In view of and on top of the above mentioned key challenges we have faced as a country, we must ponder on the following questions:

- a) What are the key challenges we have faced and continue to face as a country?
- b) What is the root cause of these problems and challenges?
- c) What can we do at both a personal and communal level to address and provide answers to the named challenges?

5. DEFINING OUR FUTURE WITH FAITH AND HOPE

“Finally, grow strong in the Lord, with the strength of his power. Put God's armour on so as to be able to resist the devil's tactics” (Ephesians 6:10).

5.1 The Change We Need

In acknowledging and celebrating Zambia's Golden Jubilee, many people have voiced out the need for the country to take stoke of its past and use this moment to chart a better future for the country. This is indeed a legitimate demand which calls for everyone's participation. It is a call for recommitment to the rebuilding of Zambia's nationhood. It is a call for a genuine new culture of loyalty to the country and the common good. We must rekindle the spirit of nation building that has been lost through the growing spirit of individualism and materialism. The spirit of *'One Zambia - One Nation'*

must be recalled and actively lived through our policies, programmes and practices. We can indeed only succeed if we do live and act together as a nation. The pre-conditions for this much desired change are as follows

5.1.1 Healing and Reconciliation

As the Church has always taught, reconciliation is the restoration of broken relationships, the renewed walking together of those who have been separated from each other by conflict and injustice. Reconciliation also has to do with creating an atmosphere of trust that makes our living together possible and secure. And for us, we strongly believe that reconciliation is above all the work of God who has reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ.

In our attempt to read the signs of our time, we are mindful of the fact that some experiences of the past may have hurt a lot of people, causing the spirit of mistrust and lack of faith in each other and our institutions. Well founded as such feelings may be, we need to make a resolve to move forward in unity and harmony as a country. We need to embark on a journey of healing through genuine forgiveness and reconciliation. The current divisions and ill feelings towards each other will only draw us many years backward and in the end, we shall all be losers. Each one of us must examine their conscience and identify the role they have played in tearing our country apart and stifling our journey towards national prosperity. We therefore call upon all Christians, people of other faiths and people of good will to recommit themselves to the noble project of building a better Zambia anchored on Christian values of love, truth, unity, hospitality, responsibility, social justice, compassion and solidarity.

5.1.2 Love for One Another

If there is anything that has held us together as a country so far, our love for each other and respect for God's commandments, do stand out. We have truly been faithful to one of the most important commandments of God, that is, to *'Love your neighbor as you love yourself'* (Mk12:31). Zambia is a multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multi-tribal, multi-religious and multi-cultural country. Our source of pride is how we manage to live together in harmony and peace despite this diversity. This achievement should not be taken for granted knowing how it has caused divisions and conflict in many other countries. We therefore condemn those who use our God given diversity for political or social expedience. Zambia is a well-integrated country; we inter marry and settle in any part of the country regardless of where we originate from. This is our strength and this is how it should be. We thank our founding parents who set this agenda of national integration.

5.1.3 Honesty and Integrity

If we have to build a country of trust, we should be people of great honesty both at personal level and in the institutions we operate. We are told in the book of Psalms, *'let integrity and uprightness sway'* (Ps 25:51). We cannot build a country of trust if we do not live the value of honesty. This includes being truthful and sincere to each other and the public. Those entrusted with stewardship of public goods like power, institutions and resources should exercise their responsibility with transparency and commitment to the common good. We are therefore saddened by the increasing reports of corruption and abuse of public office. This scourge that seems to be getting rooted must be seriously fought and rooted out. There will be no progress for Zambia if public finances which are supposed to be invested in poverty reduction and other areas of development are siphoned by selfish individuals for their personal use. We demand to see a genuine and stronger resolve by government in fighting corruption and abuse of public office. People who steal public funds must be prosecuted and punished for their crimes. We also want to see the strengthening of and autonomy of oversight institutions such as the Anti Corruption Commission (ACC), the Human Rights Commission (HRC), the Judiciary and the Legislature. The public has lost confidence in most of our oversight institutions because of evident interference in their work mainly by the executive. It is a mockery of the fight against corruption to see public officers and politicians being pursued for alleged corrupt practices only when they have fallen out of favour with the powers that be. This only legitimizes the public perception that the acclaimed fight against corruption in Zambia is just a weapon used to fight political opponents. It is our sincere hope and prayer that as we embark on our journey toward the centenary celebration of our political independence, we shall see a radical change in the modus operandi of managing the affairs of our beloved nation.

5.1.4 Solidarity with the Weak and Marginalized

As mentioned earlier, there are many people in Zambia, especially in rural areas, who have never experienced the fruits of independence. For them, this jubilee is meaningless. Their brothers and sisters who have assumed political and economic power from the colonial masters have treated them just as bad as colonialists did; they have been neglected, alienated, exploited and oppressed even by the post-independence regimes. When will their situation change for the better for such communities and persons to feel truly independent? On top of that, there is still a great and unjust social and economic development divide in Zambia today especially between urban and rural areas. That is why we continue to have this high concentration of people in urban areas, in particular, the youth who are seeking better livelihood opportunities. We demand to see genuine commitment by our government to rural development.

5.1.5 Hard work

For Zambia to be guaranteed prosperity and development, there must be a spirit of hard work among us. We have to unequivocally embrace and follow to the letter St Pauls' instructions: *'If one does not want to work, he/she should not eat'* (1 Thessalonians 3:10). Our country will never progress if its people are lazy.

Every citizenry must in one way or another identify how they are personally contributing to national development and economic growth. Handouts from government and donors must be restricted to the most vulnerable. Like stated earlier, God has endowed Zambia with immense natural resources coupled with a peaceful climate for people's development to thrive. The country has no cause to be poor or dependent on donors. Indeed, national prosperity is guaranteed but only if there is a culture of hard work in our work places and in all our daily economic activities. Of course, it is also important for government to create right conditions in terms of policies for the fruits of hard work to be possible. Not only that, government must create an enabling environment that will ensure job creation for our youthful populace.

5.1.6 Leadership of Integrity

In many of our recent Pastoral Letters, we have bemoaned the diminishing level of integrity in some of our leaders. It is very difficult for an ordinary person today to understand what some of our leaders stand for or the principles that drive them. Our leaders easily say one thing today and say and act the complete opposite the next day without any qualm of conscience. They can easily hop from one political party to another because their political association is not driven by any ideological beliefs or principles. Clearly political association in Zambia is dominated by the principle of 'eating' and survival. We therefore demand to see leadership attitudes changing to be driven more by service to the people of Zambia. Politics of the belly will continue to alienate the majority of Zambians and perpetrate political patronage which in the long run undermines meritocracy and performance. At the same time, we extend a special appeal to all Christians who are in public offices to lead by good examples and profess their faith by being visible witnesses of servant leadership marked with moral integrity.

5.1.7 Civil Politics and Law Enforcement

As a country, we must strive to promote and practice civil politics which recognizes the rights of others to associate, organize and communicate. This is an inherent duty for those who want to enjoy the same rights. Civic groupings especially political parties must invest a lot of time in educating their followers on these human rights principles. Law enforcement agencies must also do the same as their actions in maintaining law and order during political programmes have fallen far below minimum standards. We therefore demand to see a more professional Police Service whose duty and actions are based on professional judgment and observant of the law and peoples' liberties. We should shed the perpetual habit where law enforcement bodies are used as tools to fight adversaries by those in power. Law enforcement bodies must serve all citizens fairly, equitably and with professional honour.

5.1.8 Addressing the Important Issue of the Need for a New Constitution

If there is any national matter that keeps on tearing the nation, it is that of the failure to address the demand by the public for a new and people driven Constitution. Since the return to multiparty politics in 1991, the constitutional issue has been controversial. The processes attempted so far to undertake constitutional reforms have only resulted in government wasting colossal amounts of money. At the centre of it has always been lack of genuine political will and the unwillingness by the Executive to facilitate a constitution making process that is popular and time bound. Parochial interests have always come into play and people have persistently refused to accept constitution making processes that are clearly prone to manipulation.

We thus use this opportunity of celebrating the Golden Jubilee of our independence to call upon government to unblock the constitution making process that has stalled for a longtime now by releasing the final draft of the constitution to the public and guaranteeing a clear and inclusive road map that will lead to the conclusion of the constitution making process through a national referendum and in a timely manner. At the same time, we urge all Zambians never to give up but to continue demanding for a better constitution and to actively participate in processes that will ensure that this noble dream is soon realized.

5.2 The Challenge to All

"Be at peace among yourselves. And this is what we ask you to do, brethren: warn the idlers, give courage to those who are apprehensive, care for the weak and be patient with everyone. Make sure that people do not try to take revenge; you must all think of what is best for each other and for the community. Be happy at all times; pray constantly; and for all things give

thanks to God, because this is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5: 14-18).

5.2.1 Government and the Ruling Party

We strongly believe that it is important for people to understand that when a Political Party is elected to form government, it ceases to be a club that serves its members only and excludes everybody else. It is given the mandate to serve all including those who did not vote for it or continue to belong to opposition political parties. Government is in fact there to promote equitable development and liberties. In addition, an elected government must also guard against continued politicking throughout their term of office. Once elected, a government must get down to work; serving the people and reconciling the nation from the wounds of the electoral process. It must also be emphasized that an elected political party does not possess all the wisdom needed for governance. All Zambians across the political spectrum must be called to duty in a genuinely inclusive governance arrangement. In other words, we call on the government and the ruling party to be a humble and listening government that rules not by decrees but more in a consultative manner.

5.2.2 Institutions of Governance

The Constitution of Zambia is wisely crafted to provide for independent arms of government and other institutions of government. Sadly, there has been a tendency of weakening the effectiveness of these institutions by the Executive so that the Executive undergoes limited subjection to accountability. The capacity of the Legislature and Judiciary in Zambia to offer effective checks and balances over the Executive has come under serious question from the members of the public. This has led to doubt and loss of confidence in these institutions. Serious reforms are needed to restore the autonomy and effectiveness of these institutions. As Church, we cannot see how this is possible without serious Constitutional reforms. Again, we demand that the government from henceforth demonstrates that much needed political will that will ensure that Zambia enacts a new people driven constitution that will guarantee the autonomy of separate arms of government.

5.2.3 Political Parties

We should congratulate ourselves for returning to multiparty democracy in 1991. We believe that this was not just an euphoria of the time but a genuine desire by Zambians to give themselves a political system that broadened the space for political participation. Thus, Zambians should be free to belong to any political party of their choice or even form a new one. Association to a political party must not be criminalized as long as such a political party is legally constituted under the Zambian laws. We are thus saddened by the acrimony that exists between our political parties and many times even within. This has given birth to an ugly phenomenon of political violence in Zambia. We call upon political leaders to educate their members on the value of civil and peaceful politics. Today many decent and well-meaning Zambians refrain from joining political parties because the quality of our parties and nature of politics are at their lowest ebb. Party cadres have given politics a very bad name and it should be the duty of political actors to rid politics of this negative image. Zambia needs strong issue-based political parties which would give citizens a genuine space for political participation.

5.2.4 Civil Society Organisations

Another gain that came with political reforms in 1991 is the opening up of space for Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). Since 1991, a lot of CSOs, Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) have come into play to compliment the government's development agenda and service to the people. It is impossible to imagine Zambia without the noble input of these non-state actors. Their space must be protected and we deplore tendencies by government to stifle CSOs participation by enacting disempowering legislations. We support the current dialogue between CSOs and government to review the controversial NGO Act which we agree was enacted in bad faith.

We also call on CSOs to commit themselves to genuine service of the people and good stewardship. We acknowledge that governance practices and stewardship of financial resources has been a challenge for many CSOs. Financial resources are being raised in the name of the poor and under privileged and yet such people still get neglected even where such resources are raised. This is inhuman and we urge CSOs to be beacons of accountability even to the beneficiaries in whose name resources are raised.

5.2.5 The Youth

We recognize the big population of youth in our country, their vibrancy and contribution to national development. We are however alive to the fact that Zambia is sitting on a youth time

bomb. Many youth in our country are seeking livelihood opportunities but such opportunities seem to be eluding them. High schools and institutions of higher learning are churning out youth but the country does not have a clear solution for the future of most of our youths. Our public colleges and universities can hardly cope with the demand for tertiary education while the job market is equally failing to absorb the youths that come from institutions of learning. The consequence is that the country is experiencing an epidemic of unemployed youth. One just has to look on our streets, markets and everywhere else and the reality of idle youth sticks in ones' face. We have heard promises of youth empowerment from subsequent regimes but no tangible results are visible. To the contrary, political parties seem to be comfortable having this large pool of idle youth whom they can conveniently hire for violence and other illicit political programmes. This is indeed a shame! How long will our youth remain with the tag of future leaders? We call upon government to seriously consider accelerated job creation for the youth for them to settle in life. As for the youth, we call upon them to demand their space; demand for better and refuse to be used as mere tools of violence by politicians. All the youth in this country should shun political violence and choose to work hard and contributing positively to national development. Your future is now!

5.2.6 Traditional Leaders

Traditional structures and systems are a constitutive part of Zambian life. If well harnessed, they can be very effective channels of development. They provide identity and meaning to the majority of Zambians as custodians of culture, traditions and identity. In this jubilee year, we call for the resolution of boundaries of chiefdoms where there are disputes. We also appeal to the Executive to leave traditional matters that can be better handled by established traditional structures. We also call upon our traditional leaders to be a uniting force for their people. They should be a focal point for everyone regardless of their political affiliations.

We worry at the level at which some of our traditional leaders subscribe to partisan politics. This has in most cases only helped to undermine their dignity and divide communities in their chiefdoms. We urge them to stand strong and refuse to be used in partisan political battles.

We also caution the role of chiefs in their custodianship of land and other natural resources. For what we know, Chiefs do not own land and natural resources as personal assets but preside over them in trust for their people. But we are seeing more and more of chiefs putting their interest first before their people. Chiefs are getting wealthier while their subjects continue to wallow in poverty. We demand to see more regulatory control on traditional authorities on their management of natural resources in order to prevent abuse and ensure that the common good is the cornerstone of their actions and decisions.

5.2.7 Churches and Faith Based Organisations

We applaud the consistency of the Church and Faith Based Organisations in developmental issues. Churches are involved in provision of health, educational services and vocational training. They are also involved in a myriad of pro-poor community services. The Church is diakonia (serve) with a strong social concern. It is commissioned to bring to reality God's Love and to witness God's Commandment of love of neighbour.' The Church should never cease in its work of promoting the dignity of God's people. This may not only be restricted to service provision but also to interrogate conditions under which the people of God are governed. This aspect is not outside the Church's mandate and mission. It is an unavoidable prophetic calling to the Church. After all, the Church must endeavor to always emulate our Lord Jesus Christ who declared his manifesto in these prophetic words: "The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favour" (Luke 4: 18). Thus, the Church should remain vigilant to its prophetic mission of being 'the conscience of society.' It should endeavor to promote social justice and the common good through evangelization.

The Church also has the duty to witness its prophetic message if its call to justice is to be credible. The Church has to examine its own practices and lifestyle. We are therefore saddened by the increasing reports of men who profess to be servants of God engaging in vices that contradict or offend God's teachings. The Church must examine its rank and file and root out those whose motive is to tarnish its name and the image of God.

For our faithful, God calls each one of you to be the salt and light of society. We encourage the faithful to be fully engaged and participate in public life including politics. But this is on the firm condition that we commit ourselves to live our faith in whatever positions and situations we are involved. Our society will only change for the better if Christians see themselves as true ambassadors of Christ; true agents of positive change in society by bringing Godly values in public life and especially in our politics. It breaks our hearts as your shepherds to see our professed Christians compromised when put in positions of public service. This is giving Christianity a bad name and does not help the Church in its mission of evangelization.

5.2.8 The Media

We recognize the important role of free and independent Media in any society. This can be attested to in the Zambian context. The media has been consistently part of Zambia's political, economic and social evolution since independence. The media is rightly called the fourth estate of governance with a noble mandate to inform, entertain and educate the people.

We note with gratitude the media space that opened up in our country with the return of Zambia to plural politics. We have seen an upsurge of both print and electronic media. This has enabled the country to have an informed population and provided a platform for diverse discourse on various national issues. It is impossible to imagine what our country would be without any form of Mass media. We thus plead for unfettered space for media operations in our country. The usual trend of trying to gag the media through restrictive and draconian legislations as well as harassment of media personnel belongs to the primitive and colonial past. Zambia should have a paradigm shift in the way it perceives media bodies, not as enemies of the people and the State but as a vital resource for human interaction.

On the other hand, media tools and other forms of mass communication can be a source of harm to any nation if not responsibly handled. Media bodies and journalists should espouse strict ethics in their endeavor to educate and inform the nation. This unfortunately is still a great challenge for the Zambian media. We have seen polarization of the media compartmentalized in partisan reporting at the expense of truth. In some cases, people's dignity has unjustly been injured through irresponsible and incorrect reporting. We call upon media bodies, public or private, to espouse a sense of duty to ethics and professionalism. The media wields unassailable power but it has a duty to respect and uphold people's liberties and dignity in dispensing its noble duty.

Lastly, we here wish to underline the fact that the public media occupies a special place in the media industry. Theirs is the mission to serve the general public by informing it in an accurate, balanced, fair, honest and professional manner.

Here are some questions for us to reflect upon:

- a) What should we do to make Zambia a better place and a better country?
- b) What characteristics should mark Zambian citizens?
- c) How can the Church help to drive the country forward?
- d) What key things will guarantee inclusive and people centered development in our country?

6. CONCLUSION

The Lord has indeed not abandoned us in the past fifty years of our independence. We therefore remain grateful to God for the many blessings he has showered upon our nation, especially that of peace, unity in diversity and ethnic integration. We really have come a long way.

In this long journey, we have shared our joys and sorrows together as a people. The word of God spoken through prophet Isaiah resounds in our minds as we celebrate our Golden Jubilee and as we look to the future with hope and gladness: 'Do not be afraid, for I am with you' (Isaiah 43:5). We continue to ask the Lord God in his mercy to stay with us. But we must all take responsibility for the future of our country.

As Christian Church Mother Bodies, we insist that celebrating a Golden Jubilee means that time has come to renew the nation and restore equality among the children of God. It is also a moment of grace that should offer new possibilities especially to the poor and oppressed. A Jubilee is further a season of leveling the political, economic and gender playing field. Not only that, it is an opportune time to comprehensively rectify systems that promote injustices. Finally, this Jubilee is a time to restructure our political, social, economic and cultural systems and structures and put in place ones that will promote social justice, the common good and integral development for all Zambians.

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Signed by:

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