



AMECEA

Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa

Mobile: +254 783 189 081
Email: secgeneral@amecea.org
amecea@amecea.org
Website: <http://www.amecea.org>

Secretariat
Gitanga Road
P.O. Box 21191
00505 Nairobi, Kenya

5th Anniversary of *Laudato Si*

"Everything is Connected: Slow Down the Pace"

Scripture Readings

Isaiah 24:4-6

Rom 8:18-25

Dear Brothers and Sisters;

It has been 5 years since the release of the Papal encyclical *Laudato Si*, a great treasure inviting us to care for our common home and to listen to the cry of the Earth and of the Poor. Pope Francis called on the entire human race to rise and act; to rescue our mother earth who is deeply wounded. The wounds of the mother earth are not anything different from those of our Lord Jesus Christ during His passion, and like His executioners we have turned a blind eye to her pain. Day after day we pound this wounded body without any mercy. The cry of the earth and the poor is deafening to the ears, let us all slow down the pace and wipe the tears; we are the ones who must do it. Isaiah speaks about what happens when we destroy the Earth:

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"The earth is mourning, pining away, the pick of earth's people are withering away. The earth is defiled by the feet of its inhabitants, for they have transgressed the laws, violated the decree, broken the everlasting covenant. That is why the curse has consumed the earth and its inhabitants pay the penalty, that is why the inhabitants of the earth have been burnt up and few people are left". Isaiah 24:4-6

Pope Francis in the encyclical echoes this text: *"This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life"* (LS 2). The wounds inflicted on the earth are reflected on the suffering that humanity must bear, this burden is borne more by the poorest and the most vulnerable of our society. It is not how little or how great we have contributed to the climate change; the reality is that we have all contributed to it and so we all need each other in fighting this war.

We are all connected and attack on one is attack on the entire creation. This can be seen in the recent and current catastrophic events around our African continent, the surging water levels, the

increased spell of drought in some regions, the locust invasion in Eastern Africa, the floods, landslides, and the Covid-19 pandemic. All these calamities have claimed lives and led to poor living conditions for most of our people on the continent. There is not one of us who is not affected by what is happening, the entire creation is messed up and the Pope has clearly stated that *"An awareness of the gravity of today's cultural and ecological crisis must be translated into new habits."* (LS 206).

It is only by cultivating sound virtues that will people be able to make a selfless ecological commitment. (LS 211). There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions given that "the external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast." For this reason, the ecological crisis is also a summon to profound interior conversion. Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience (LS 217). The Catholic Church in Africa must therefore rise strongly to reclaim our already wounded mother through prayer, education, advocacy, initiating of various environmental programs and making the understanding and implementation of the *Laudato Si* a priority from the grassroots level. Let us therefore support our Church leaders in the

campaign for renewable energy and against excessive exploitation of the natural resources.

The prayer service theme on “Everything is connected” is a reminder of how each and every component of the earth is vital, therefore, a harmonious co-existence and respect for creation ensures a healthy and dependable ecosystem without exceeding its carrying capacity. We therefore must be reconciled with creation and this is possible through examination of our lives and acknowledges the ways in which we have harmed God’s creation through our actions and our failure to act. We need to experience an ecological conversion or change of heart (LS 218). Social problems must be addressed by community networks and not simply by the sum of individual good deeds (LS 219). This conversion calls for several attitudes which together foster a spirit of generous care, full of tenderness. It entails gratitude and gratuitousness, a recognition that the world is God’s loving gift, and that we are called quietly to imitate his generosity in self-sacrifice and good works (LS 220). It also entails a loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures but joined in a splendid universal communion.

As believers, we do not look at the world from without but from within, conscious of the bonds with which the Father has linked us to all

beings. By developing our individual, God-given capacities, an ecological conversion can inspire us to greater creativity and enthusiasm in resolving the world's problems and in offering ourselves to God "as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable (LS 220). The AMECEA Integral Human Development department has launched campaign programs, on Climate Justice, and Promotion of Dignity of the Human Person during her meetings.

The encyclical addresses Environmental degradation due to rise in Extractive Industry and other economic activities that lead to destruction of forests, very common in most of AMECEA countries. Currently the People of Kenya and Tanzania are experiencing floods that have caused havoc to the people and properties and environment. Kenya, Uganda, Malawi and Zambia have experienced episodes of flooding over various parts of the Countries. Kenya witnessed unusually high and extended rainfall in a season that usually experience short moderate intensity rainfall. Mudslides, flooding were experienced in different parts of the Country, Zambia too experienced a lot of flooding in the Northern part of the Country. There is accelerated climate change phenomenon, leading to the populations to be vulnerable to natural disasters such as drought and related food insecurity.

The effects of climate change both on sudden-onset disasters and slow-onset environmental degradation have become frequent contributing factors to complex migration and displacement scenarios. Our most outstanding and contemporary global policy and the Church concern for Mother Earth climate change is fast becoming an incessant cadaver for dissection in almost every international conferences, media and pulpit deliberation. AMECEA as a regional body is taking the matter so serious to address the challenges in every forum of the Bishop's meetings.

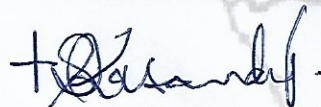
Natural Catastrophes caused by flood, and extended dry Span leading to Death of People and Animals. Violent weather pattern have generally disrupted agricultural activities, leading to animals dying and some plant species to extinction thus exposing people to the wrath of malnutrition and plunging them into untold agony and misery.

As the chairman of AMECEA I call upon my brother bishops, priests, religious men and women, the laity and all people of good will in Africa to celebrate this anniversary of *Laudato Si* by joining the Holy Father in responding to the ecological crisis: "The cry of the Mother Earth and the Cry of the Poor". Let us take bold climate actions by caring for creation, a gift from our loving God. With Pope Francis in *Laudato Si* we should always ask ourselves "What kind of world do we want to

leave for our children who are growing up and those who will come after us.”

We pray for divine intervention for climate action and in a special way for the victims of climate change, and more urgently we pray for our brothers and sisters here in Africa and around the world who are sick due to the coronavirus. For those who have died may perpetual light shine upon them, may their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed through the mercy of God Rest in Peace, Amen.

Message by: **Rt. Rev. Charles KASONDE**



Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Solwezi
Chairman for AMECEA