


COMMISSION EPISCOPALE JUSTICE ET PAIX RWANDA

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MESSAGE FROM THE EPISCOPAL COMMISSION FOR *JUSTICE AND PEACE* OF RWANDA REGARDING #KWIBUKA31

“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Eph 4, 2-3).

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

We greet you and invite you all to come together in the act of commemoration for the 31st time of the innocent lives lost in the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda in April 1994. It has been 31 years since this tragedy occurred in our country, claiming over a million lives and causing immense destruction. This year’s commemoration coincides with the period of Lent, reminding us of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ, our Savior. It is a time for us Christians to reflect on the cross of Christ, from which we derive our salvation. We first wish to stand in solidarity with the Rwandan community in remembrance, especially with the survivors of the Genocide against the Tutsi in April 1994, saying to them: *“be strong.”*

In remembering the horrors that marked our history, we also look back to marvel at the strength of Rwandans in rebuilding their families and reconstructing the nation on the path of unity, reconciliation, and resilience. It is a painful history, but it should leave us with a profound lesson that those who unite to build should not lose hope. The Catholic Church in Rwanda, through its institutions, especially the Commission *Justice and Peace*, has consistently contributed to and will continue to contribute to the journey of unity, reconciliation and lasting peace. The *Justice and Peace* Commission accompanies those who are committed to seeking forgiveness. It continues to urge those who participated in the genocide against the Tutsi in April 1994 to seek forgiveness, while also encouraging survivors to grant forgiveness so that the Rwandan community can continue to rebuild slowly but surely. Forgiveness is a necessary balm to heal from the harshness of history, enabling us to look forward to a future where our descendants can thrive in a nation free from division.

The word of God tells us, *“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace”* (Eph. 4, 2-3). That one spirit can help us build, making what we build endure, and allowing us to live in peace. When people come together, no evil can infiltrate and divide them. After these 31 years, Rwandans in general and faithful in particular should reflect through the lens of unity. In his prayer, Jesus prayed for all who would believe in him to be one, desiring that they reach a deep unity: *“that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.”* (John 17, 21-23).

This year, the Church is celebrating the Jubilee of 2025 years of the Incarnation, since Jesus became man and revealed God the Father to us; and the Jubilee of 125 years since the Gospel reached Rwanda. It is a wonderful time to rejoice in what the Lord has done for us here in Rwanda. But it is also a moment for us to reject anything contrary to the Gospel of love that could pull us back into the darkness of hatred, violence and murder. Therefore, we continue to encourage the faithful and all people of goodwill to shed the heart of malice and instead strive for peace and calm with the aim of unity and resilience. In particular, the youth of Rwanda should firmly establish their values that help them cultivate a spirit of humanity. The culture of valuing goodness, pursuing truth, and developing integrity is what will empower the young to be beneficial in the country. The youth should also reject attitudes of hatred, violence, betrayal, and the negative ideologies that fuel genocide and murder. When one commits to being a slave to such attitudes at a young age, it leads to missing the purpose of life.

During this time of remembrance and prayer for those who lost their lives in the genocide against the Tutsi in April 1994, we hope that Christians will take inspiration from the heroic people who stood up for those targeted during the genocide, some of whom even sacrificed their own lives. These are the guardians of the bond of brotherhood. They demonstrated that brotherhood and a heart of compassion endure even in times of hardship. These heroic individuals already shine as a light into our hearts and serve as role models for us.



It is also beneficial for the culture of selflessness and the culture of peace to be integrated into the school curriculum so that the young grow up with values of peace, integrity and selflessness. Another aspect that concerns us as Rwandans is to understand that we are all brothers, that we share much, and that we are connected by a bond that transcends all that could divide us. The bond of Rwandan identity is very strong. It is a covenant that allows us to rise above all our differences.

Dear brothers and sisters,

As we conclude this message, we once again ensure our heartfelt solidarity to the survivors of the genocide against the Tutsi in 1994, asking all faithful to assist those suffering from trauma and other social issues. Let us continue to support one another, and may true Christianity continue to foster genuine brotherhood among us.

We entrust you to the Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Kibeho.

+Anaclet MWUMVANEZA

Bishop of Nyundo Diocese and

Chairperson of Episcopal Commission *Justice and Peace*
Rwanda

