



SYMPOSIUM OF EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES OF AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR

**PUBLIC PRESENTATION OF THE KAMPALA DOCUMENT
21ST JANUARY 2021**

FIRST PAPER

1. Preamble

The Kampala Document (KD) emerged as part of activities marking the Golden Jubilee celebration of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM, July 1969-July 2019). It took a year to put the Document together (2018-2019). And the process involved all sectors of the Church-Family of God in Africa and the Islands through the participation of regional Episcopal Conferences, the Secretariat, Comiteol and other SECAM collaborators within and outside Africa. This presentation outlines the theme, addressees, aim, content and major exhortations of the Document.

2. Theme of the Document

The theme of the Document is a combination of two statements from John's gospel: **"that they may know Christ"** and **"have life in abundance"** (Jn 10:10; 17:3), which basically sum up the nature and purpose of the mission of Jesus Christ. After centuries of contact with the gospel message, numerous people in Africa and Madagascar are still in need of authentic knowledge of Christ that leads to faithful discipleship and possession of fullness of life. Therefore, the different parts of the Document seek to shed light on how both individuals and groups or communities may strive to know Christ more deeply and follow him more closely in order to experience "fullness of life", and be equipped to contribute to the building of a new Africa centred on God (KD nos. 1, 5).¹

3. Addressees of the Document

The Document is principally addressed to all members of the Church-Family of God in Africa and the surrounding Islands (Bishops, Priests, Deacons, Religious Men and Women and the Lay Faithful). But it also includes other sons and daughters of African and Madagascan extraction, as well as people of good-will everywhere in the world.

4. Aim of the Document

The major objective of the Document is derived from its theme, namely, a call to know Christ more deeply and follow him more closely, so as "to receive from him the fullness of life that he brought to humanity" (cf. Jn 10:10; 17:3). To know Christ involves being conversant with the gospel and its message. And profound knowledge of Christ results in true conversion of heart or a change from going against God's direction to one resolutely

¹ All number references in this submission henceforth refer to the Kampala Document, unless otherwise indicated.

and unwaveringly set towards God (no. 116); it "manifests itself in witnessing" (no. 69). In this connection, the Document is also aimed at making "the gospel known and loved in Africa", which paves the way for personal encounter with Jesus Christ (no. 129). For this reason, "the personal possession of the Bible by the clergy, consecrated persons and the lay faithful" is clearly encouraged; so also "a methodical and rigorous reading of the word of God, which protects Christian communities from fundamentalist, idolatrous, mythical, esoteric, and incapacitating readings" (no. 62). Reading guides to the word of God "that are in conformity with the teaching of the Church" are also recommended (no. 144).

The Document further provides "guidelines to be followed by the people of God in Africa and beyond" (no. 4); guidelines which are necessary for an evangelizing mission that is based on the example of Jesus Christ and supports the building of "a new Africa centred on God" (no. 1). "The envisaged new Africa is one where the baptized, aware that their identity and vocation are intimately linked to the person of Jesus Christ, become like the leaven of the kingdom that the Church takes and buries in the dough of African society (cf. Mt 13:33)". Renewed by the Holy Spirit in the love of the Father, they will be for Africa "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" (Mt 5:13-14; KD no. 133). To this end, the Document serves as a pastoral instrument for intensified missionary commitment on the part of all agents of evangelization in Africa and the Islands (no. 10) both as individuals and as groups.

It is apparent that contemporary Africa "is struggling and groaning in pains for total liberation". As part of its response to this situation, the Document highlights the determination of the Church-Family of God in Africa "to accompany the hopes and anxieties of a people" (no. 22) and orientate them towards Jesus Christ, the true liberator of humankind. To this end, the Church-Family of God invites all her members to beseech God to raise within the "continent, good Samaritans to heal hearts and bodies bruised by all forms of violence, to satisfy those thirsty for peace and justice, and to feed the hungry with bread and the word of God" (no. 54).

5. Content of the Document

The Kampala Document is divided into four parts; the first invites the addressees "to recognize that Jesus came among us in Africa". This requires recalling the different contexts in which his gospel was proclaimed and received: the impact of the gospel message on Africans (especially after the establishment of SECAM at Kampala); thanking God for all his blessings from then till now; and commitment to be renewed for more proactive missionary engagement throughout the continent (no. 6).

The second part urges us to recall that "those who received" Jesus and his gospel, were given "power to become children of God" (Jn 1:12). As God's children, it is indispensable for us to seek to know Jesus Christ, strive for an enduring encounter with him and learn to live in him, with him, and like him. Doing this will enable us to follow him more faithfully; to build the Church-Family of God; and "work concertedly and collaboratively for a new and renewed Africa" (no. 10; cf. no. 7).

The third part invites us to reflect on the call to "repent and believe in the gospel" (Mk 1:15) and to work for the transformation of the society, beginning from where each person is located. In this regard, there is an analysis of the socio-cultural, political, economic, ethical and ecological challenges confronting the continent today. Drawing strength from the gospel of the crucified and risen Christ, we are not to be ashamed of Jesus who invites all people to profound change of heart and mind-set. We are also to take into account new pastoral challenges; be open to sound formation for new methods of proclaiming the gospel and commit ourselves to a spirituality of action, necessary for building the Church-Family of God as a sign of the visible presence of God's kingdom or reign in Africa (no. 8).

Part four concludes the Document "with some reflections on the new methods of mission in view of a new Africa, rooted in the Good News of God whereby God's sons and daughters are more than ever missionaries"; not only to themselves but also to all other "nations in the spirit of *Ad Gentes*" (no. 9).

6. Major Exhortations of the Document

The Document exhorts members of the Church-Family of God in Africa and the Islands (without exception), other sons and daughters of Africa and Madagascar, and people of good-will everywhere to devote time "to study the life of Jesus in the gospels" (no. 140), to know him more deeply and follow him more closely, so as "to receive from him the fullness of life that he brought to humanity" (cf. Jn 10:10; 17:3). To this end, each addressee is required to seek or deepen a personal encounter with Christ; welcome, and "receive the *Logos*, the Word of God", adhere to him as a person rather than an idea, and be committed to him (nos. 65, 68, 124). This will enable one to draw from him the strength and zeal necessary for evangelizing mission, rooted in his example, and that support the building of "a new Africa centred on God" (nos. 1, 62-63).

We Christians are equally entreated to be signs of the presence of God and friends of Christ who has chosen us (cf. Jn 15:14-16) "for a noble mission" everywhere we find ourselves (no. 184). We are to live our Christian life or vocation without reducing its meaning "to the materialistic satisfaction of human desires"; and "to avoid the danger of promoting a Christianity, which focuses on the salvation of souls without the body" or one "that is a recipe for fleeing from the Cross in search of miracles and quick solutions to human problems" (no. 129), and guard "against spiritualities of deliverance and prosperity", which advocate a Christianity devoid of the mystery of the Cross, and anchored "on success and miraculous solutions to the problems of life" (no. 158).

Christian politicians, rulers, public officials, employees and employers, women and men actors in the economic and agricultural sectors, commerce, domestic and informal domains are passionately implored to put an end to "a dichotomy between faith and politics, the kingdom of God and the transformation of the earth, salvation of souls and terrestrial life, contemplation and action" (no. 155). In this connection, all members of the Church-Family of God in Africa, Madagascar and the Islands are urged "to continue resisting all vices, and remain faithful to the gospel even to the total giving up of their life;

to resist temptations and practices which promote faith without works, injustice, selfish political actions, looting of the national wealth, the worship of political personalities, dishonesty, social resignation and quick enrichment by illegal, magical and fake religious means" (no. 155).

Christians and all men and women of goodwill in leadership positions in African countries, who are committed to the common good of their people, honest and just, and not easily disheartened, are encouraged to find in the gospels and the social doctrine of the Church the principles of servant-leadership, patriotism and good governance, of which Africa stands in need; they are also to follow Christian principles and propose them to others in daily life and in politics (no. 208); and to model their vocation on that of Julius Nyerere, Servant of God, who was a good "Christian politician during his tenure as President of his country, Tanzania" (nos. 210-211). Christians who desire to govern or to be administrators of public affairs or exercise State power or activists in political parties, as well as concerned citizens who opt to stand for the promotion of the rule of law and the development of their countries, are urged "to acquire a basic training in these matters" (no. 209). All Christians are not only exhorted to be "men and women of conviction who ground their ideals and political practices on ethical, spiritual and gospel values" but "to distinguish themselves by their quality of life and by being witnesses in their own homes and working places, so as to be counted among the good and honest leaders of social groups, families, in the neighbourhoods of villages and towns, associations and movements" (nos. 210-211).

Leaders of government on the continent are further called upon to evolve "policies that would empower people to recognize the surpassing value of the family and take concrete initiatives for its re-construction". On her part, the Church-Family of God in Africa is to assist "the youth discover the values and the importance of marriage"; accompany "young couples in the first year of their matrimonial life; and strengthen matrimonial and family spirituality (no. 199).

Media practitioners are invited to use the media "to spread the truth" and not falsehood, to propose the beautiful, and not the ugly (no. 212). Similarly, particular Churches are exhorted "to be more present in the media in order to make the media, not only a tool for spreading the gospel", but also one for the formation of African peoples in truth and reconciliation, and for the promotion of justice and peace (no. 213).

All the people of Africa and the Islands are earnestly entreated to care intensely for the Earth, "the home of the human family" (no. 101); to instantly stop the careless attitude towards nature by clearing the filth in our homes or quarters, in our neighbourhood, and ending the noise pollution night and day, all practices which do not encourage a climate of peace, silence, meditation and rest necessary for the equilibrium of our organisms and our relationship with the surrounding world (no. 102).

Since illiteracy contributes to the marginalization of a person, there is a call for integral human education to be made accessible to everyone in Africa so that all will be equipped "to assume their responsibility individually and collectively in matters pertaining to

psychological, affective, moral and spiritual maturity and in matters of employment and social integration" (no. 112; cf. no. 113). Everything possible should be done to ensure that "every child of school going age is in school. It is simply a question of justice for each child". And education consists in helping people "to become more human, so that they might 'be' more, not simply so that they might 'have' more" (nos. 200-201).

In the spirit of co-responsibility, the clergy are urged "to treat the laity with respect and as mature adults. They are invested by their baptismal commitment with the right to become God's collaborators in reconciling the world to God" (no. 147).

7. Conclusion

After the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of SECAM, a new chapter is opened for the Church-Family of God in Africa. Therefore, we Christians on the continent, especially, need to "gird our loins for the mission" entrusted to us by the Father, through the Son and the Holy Spirit (no. 219). We pray that the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, Our Lady of life and hope and the Queen of Africa, and Saint Joseph, may intercede for us. May they also accompany us on the mission and obtain for us renewed zeal, so that we may become effective evangelizers and true witnesses of the gospel to our people and everywhere in the world. Amen (no. 219).