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Zimbabwe's Bishops Reach Out to Their Emigrants

Aim to Keep in Touch With Those Who Have Left Troubled Nation

HARARE, Zimbabwe, JULY 3, 2012 (Zenit.org).- The Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference has written a letter to those Zimbabweans who have left the country. Dated June 19 the letter is titled "Zimbabweans in the Diaspora."

"This letter attempts to cast a little light upon an area of shadow and to give recognition and hope to those who have left our land," the introduction explains.

The letter explained that already in colonial times people left for other countries. Then, after independence in 1980 others left looking for better economic conditions. Subsequently, in the first decade of this millennium "this trickle became a flood as 'our country (was plunged) into an unprecedented abyss characterised by economic, social, and political woes and unimaginable forms of political intimidation and violence."

"To stay for some meant risking destitution; to go involved a wrench with all one had known," the bishops acknowledged.

"As Church leaders and as members of society, we acknowledge, with a sense of humility and shame, that so many of our citizens no longer felt welcomed at home, and had to take flight," the pastoral letter continued.

The letter expressed disappointment at the failure of the country's leaders to deal with the phenomenon of migration. "Ongoing displacement, at best, suggests political challenge; at worst, political ineptitude, division and failure," the letter accused.

The letter stated that the bishops remember and embrace those who were obliged to leave Zimbabwe. "This letter is a testament to our desire to acknowledge their existence, their story, their pain, their resilience and their hope," they said.

Many Zimbabwean migrants have not had their rights as persons respected in their new places of residence, the letter noted. Many of them encountered exploitation, opportunism and indifference.

“What has been done, and is still being done, to a good number of the vulnerable who cross alien frontiers, is cruel indeed,” the letter declared. “Christ continues to suffer in the members of his body.”

Many of those crossing frontiers have been attacked, raped or robbed, the letter added.

“Christians must ‘speak the truth in love,’ the letter noted. “In this case the truth is hard and cold.”

The bishops called for a renewed effort of national healing and reconciliation, warning that without this Zimbabweans will continue to leave the country in significant numbers.

“In your pain and emotional struggles find strength in each other especially in the Church,” the letter urged.

“Be assured that there are people - within government, civil society and the Churches - not least ourselves, who are committed to the road of national healing and reconciliation, to the common good and to creating a better society for all people,” the letter concluded.

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