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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A PASTORAL STATEMENT ON THE CURRENT SITUATION IN OUR NATION

*A Call to Prayer, Dialogue, Justice, Forgiveness and Reconciliation for Peace and
Unity in Zambia*

*"If your brother sins, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you
have won over your brother."*

(Mt 18:15)

To the Catholic Community of the Diocese of Chipata, and to All People of Good Will

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, and all People of Good Will,

1. Introduction

Recent events in our beloved country, Zambia, have caused many citizens to experience deep concern, anxiety and uncertainty about the direction in which our nation is moving. As Christians, and particularly as members of the Catholic Church, we cannot remain indifferent when fundamental values upon which a peaceful and democratic society depends appear to be under serious strain. These values include respect for human dignity, the rule of law, access to justice, freedom of expression, responsible political participation, accountability, and respect for the legitimate rights of every citizen, including those who belong to the political opposition.

Our concern is rooted first of all in our faith. Sacred Scripture teaches that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen 1:26-27). We therefore cannot regard any person

merely as a political supporter, opponent, statistic or instrument of power. Each person possesses a dignity that comes from God and cannot legitimately be taken away by another human being.

Pope Leo XIV has recently reminded the Church in his Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* that “human dignity does not depend on a person’s abilities, wealth or position in life” (no. 51). He further teaches that human rights are grounded in this dignity and are therefore universal and inalienable (nos. 54–55). This truth must guide the way we treat one another as Zambians, especially when political differences are deep.

2. A Matter of Justice and Conscience

One event that has particularly troubled many Zambians was the closure of court premises on 24 August 2026, which coincided with the final day of the constitutional period for challenging the presidential election results.

The Judiciary cited security concerns, while the authorities subsequently described the measures as security-related and denied that the President had ordered the courts to be closed. Nevertheless, the coincidence of the closure with the final day for filing an election challenge has understandably raised profound questions in the minds of many citizens concerning access to justice and the protection of constitutional rights.

It is important that we speak carefully and responsibly. We do not claim to know the motives of every institution or individual involved. But when circumstances give rise to serious questions concerning justice and constitutional rights, those questions deserve to be heard and addressed through lawful, peaceful and transparent means.

As the Prophet Amos reminds us: “*Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream*” (Amos 5:24).

This is not merely a political matter. It is a matter of conscience; it is a matter of justice; and, ultimately, it is a matter of the kind of nation we wish to leave to our children. As the wisdom of Scripture reminds us: “*Righteousness exalts a nation*” (Prov 14:34).

3. The Prophetic Responsibility of the Church

The Church does not exist to take sides between political parties. Neither should she become an instrument of opposition politics. But neither can the Church remain silent when the dignity of the human person, the common good, justice, peace and the rule of law are seriously threatened.

The prophetic mission of the Church is not exercised by attacking one political party while defending another. It is exercised by speaking the truth to everyone—government and opposition alike—and by reminding those entrusted with public authority that political power is a responsibility exercised for the service of the people.

Scripture says: “*Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy*” (Prov 31:9).

The Church must therefore be able to say, respectfully but firmly:

No government is above the Constitution.

No political party is above the common good.

No citizen should be denied justice because of his or her political affiliation.

No opposition party should place itself above the law.

No political disagreement should become an excuse for hatred, intimidation or violence.

Our concern must therefore not be simply who wins or loses politically. Our concern must be whether Zambia remains a country in which justice can be sought, grievances can be heard, differences can be expressed peacefully, and power can be exercised and transferred without fear, violence or intimidation.

"Blessed are the peacemakers," our Lord teaches, "for they will be called children of God" (Mt 5:9).

4. The Need for Prayerful and Prophetic Discernment

I believe that the present situation calls the Catholic Church in Zambia to continued prayerful discernment concerning the prophetic responsibility entrusted to us by the Gospel.

I do not raise this matter out of a desire for confrontation with the Government, nor do I wish to turn the Church into a political organisation. Rather, I raise it because we have a Chewa proverb which states: "Chete sapha nyama koma suyo-suyo." (Silence does not kill game but noise making). Silence at a moment when people are experiencing fear, uncertainty or possible injustice can itself become a moral question.

The Church cannot preach reconciliation while refusing to address the wounds that make reconciliation necessary. We cannot preach justice if we are afraid to speak about injustice. We cannot preach peace if we remain silent when the conditions necessary for peace are being weakened. And we cannot speak convincingly about human dignity if we do not defend the dignity and rights of every person, regardless of political affiliation.

At the same time, our witness must be truthful, charitable and free from partisan hatred. St Paul urges us to *"speak the truth in love"* (Eph 4:15). Truth without love can become an instrument of division; love without truth can become an excuse for avoiding difficult questions. We need both truth and charity.

5. A Possible Meeting with the President and Representatives of Government

In this spirit, I believe that a respectful conversation with the President and appropriate representatives of Government could be a constructive step.

Its purpose would not be to embarrass the President or the Government. It would not be a confrontation, nor a media event. Rather, it would be an honest and respectful conversation about matters of grave national concern.

We would seek to place before the President, in a spirit of respect and Christian responsibility, the concerns that many citizens are carrying in their hearts. We would ask difficult but necessary questions concerning justice, the rule of law, political tolerance, the treatment of opposition figures, the independence and accessibility of institutions of justice, and the preservation of Zambia's democratic tradition.

At the same time, we would listen. Listening is essential if reconciliation is to be genuine. We should also be prepared to acknowledge where the Government has legitimate concerns. The objective should therefore be neither accusation nor capitulation. It should be truth in charity, justice with mercy, and dialogue in the service of peace.

As the Letter of James reminds us: "*Let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger*" (Jas 1:19).

Pope Leo XIV has likewise emphasized that authentic progress requires "an intelligence willing to listen and a will that seeks what unites rather than what separates" (*Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 15). This is precisely the spirit in which we should seek dialogue.

6. An Invitation to a Preparatory Meeting

For this reason, I invite men and women of faith, Church leaders, traditional leaders, professionals, elders, young people, academics, civil society actors and other concerned citizens to come together and reflect on how we can contribute to peace, justice and reconciliation in our country.

Following prayerful discernment and appropriate consultation, I believe it would be worthwhile to explore the possibility of an informal, private and non-media meeting with the President and appropriate representatives of Government.

In order to preserve the non-partisan character of this initial initiative, I propose that the delegation be composed principally of religious and civic representatives, so that the effort may be clearly understood as a sincere moral and civic appeal rather than a party-political undertaking.

As Christians, we believe that Zambia belongs to all her people and, ultimately, to God. "*The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it*" (Ps 24:1). It is therefore in His Name, and trusting not in our own strength but in His providence, that I am prepared to take this small step.

7. The Way Forward: Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Zambia must not allow present political tensions to become a permanent wound in the body of the nation. We have seen in other countries how political grievances, when left unresolved, can eventually become hatred, violence and even civil conflict. We must not allow Zambia to travel that road.

The Christian answer cannot be revenge. It must be forgiveness.

But Christian forgiveness does not mean ignoring legitimate grievances, overlooking possible injustice, or abandoning the search for truth. Forgiveness requires truth. Reconciliation requires justice. Peace requires healing. And healing requires that genuine wounds and grievances be acknowledged and addressed.

Our national conversation therefore needs to move beyond the question of who won and who lost an election. We must ask a deeper question: **What kind of Zambia do we want to build after the election?**

A Zambia in which political power is used for service rather than domination?

A Zambia in which every citizen can seek justice without fear?

A Zambia in which disagreement does not make enemies of brothers and sisters?

A Zambia in which the dignity of every person is protected because every person is created and loved by God?

"If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all" (Rom 12:18).

Peace is not weakness. It requires courage, truth, justice, restraint and a willingness to seek the good of the whole nation.

8. A Final Appeal to the Catholic Community and People of Good Will

I therefore appeal to all people of good will: Let us not allow fear to silence our conscience. Let us not allow political affiliation to determine whether we defend justice. Let us not allow anger to become hatred. Let us not allow our legitimate differences to destroy the unity of our nation.

Above all, let us remember that Zambia does not belong to any one political party, whether in government or in opposition. **Zambia belongs to all her people and, ultimately, to God.**

Political parties come and go; the nation remains. Our responsibility is to hand on to the next generation a Zambia in which human dignity, justice, peace and the rule of law are respected.

Let us therefore heed the words of the Prophet Micah: *"What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"* (Mic 6:8).

9. An Invitation to Prayer

I invite the Catholic faithful, and all who share this concern for our nation, to join me especially in prayer through the Holy Rosary, asking Mary, our Mother and Queen of Peace, to intercede for Zambia.

Let us pray for our President and all those entrusted with public authority; for those in the political opposition; for the Judiciary; for the security services; for those who have been arrested or detained; for families affected by political conflict; and for ourselves, that we may act without hatred, revenge or partisan interest, but with courage, wisdom and love.

Let us also pray for the grace to listen to one another.

May the Holy Spirit give us wisdom.

May God soften every hardened heart.

May He grant our leaders wisdom, our citizens courage, and our nation peace.

May truth lead us to justice, justice lead us to forgiveness, forgiveness lead us to reconciliation, and reconciliation lead us to lasting peace.

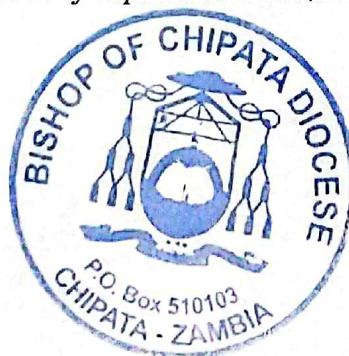
May Our Lady, Queen of Peace, intercede for Zambia and protect our beloved nation from hatred, violence and division.

God bless Mother Zambia.

Given at St. Anne's Cathedral, Chipata, on the 15th of September 2026, the Memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows.



Bishop George Cosmas Zumaire Lungu
Bishop of Chipata Diocese



Reference: Pope Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas: Encyclical Letter on Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence*, 15th May 2026, nos. 15, 51, 54–55.