

- d) We commit ourselves to listen attentively to the command of Christ so as to go and attend to his flock.
- e) We ask ourselves what is the work missionaries are doing today and what issues occupy their missionary priorities.
- f) It is a time to rekindle the principle of subsidiarity.
- g) We recommit ourselves to core values of the Gospel as emphasized by Christ Jesus and get in touch with the aspirations of the first missionaries to respond the human reality.
- h) We appeal to the local church to foster vocations and form the agents of evangelisation for both the local church and for missionary life.

The Missionaries of Africa and all other missionaries that work in Zambia, we **appreciate** the people from every tribe, social strata and religion that welcomed us. Hospitality of Zambians is remarkable. We have lived our vocation, responded to the call of God and shared the Gospel among these people. Thanks to traditional, civil and political leaders in Zambia who afforded us human-social and political climate which has been essential part of our missionary work. *“Akamana ukupoma: ni pa mabwe!”* Jesus’ approach was to send the disciples to people. One factor was essential; that the disciples would be accepted and received by the people; disciples in turn would live among them, share with them the message of the Lord peacefully. If there has been any moment of tension or ungratefulness to the people of this land; the civil, traditional or church leaders, my sincere apologies.

Missionaries of all times are at the service of God among the people to whom the spirit leads them. This is possible in **respect and collaboration** with Bishops. A spirit of partnership with a local church marked by unity among various congregations makes our vocation meaningful and a sign of witness to the kingdom of God in Zambia. *“Twende pamo: te mwenso”* also, *“Umucinshi wa nseba: kwimina pamo”*. We respect the charism of different congregations and missionary societies in Zambia. The Bishops have their own policies and priorities for their particular dioceses. The people of God live an experience that asks us to act under the inspiration of the Gospel of Christ. In spite of all, we need to cultivate a spirit of a common orientation in our pastoral work and have a common drive in our evangelization enterprise. We are not NGOs or Multinational Corporations in which competition and difference in approach matter. *“Akanwa kamo: takomfwa nshama ukupya”*, plus *“Icilola umo: e caba ubufi”!*

We need to **listen to Christ** so as to attend to His flock. This demands deeper spirit of prayer and discernment, it urges us to be attentive to the reality in which we live, it calls us to be compassionate and exemplary in our lives. The Church is neither a theatre for comedians, a College Debate Club nor a museum for spiritual artefacts. The Church, understood as God’s people on a journey to salvation, needs to be strengthened with hope and create a just world marked by prosperity and a common concern that bears the fruits of the Holy Spirit. The message of Jesus the Christ is an invitation to transform the society; to be light to the nations, salt of the earth, and *‘piripiri’* in the soup. Christian mission is to comfort the discomfited and discomfite the comforted. A missionary, indeed any Christian of today, must be a bridge-builder and has to break any wall that divides people, let it be social, political, economic or gender. In Christ we are “Children of God”. Missionaries in Zambia need to rebrand themselves so as to respond to the situations that are contrary to the Gospel values such as corruption, tribalism, poverty, depletion of natural resources, neglect of the rural people in regard to better education and health facilities, and indeed other basic human rights.

The life of the first missionaries records **ambassadors of peace, healing and development**. The time at which the missionaries arrived in Zambia, the Ngoni warriors, Bemba warriors, the

Mambwe and other neighbouring tribes were at their best. The missionaries negotiated for peace, arrested the situation and defended the weak. They did a lot to alleviate some ailments of people. They started some education and sparked-off development in Zambia. Zambia society came to be known and appreciated in other areas overseas. Bishop Joseph Dupont Motomoto for a time became a senior chief of the Lubemba so as to prevent anarchy among the Bemba people after the death of their Chief Mwamba until the contentious issues were rectified amicably. Therefore, negotiating for peace, intervening in social-cultural issues or participation in political matters needs to be part of evangelization. How are the missionaries of today responding to the new versions of war, corruption, oppression, corruption, social conflicts, deprivation, slavery, sickness and evil in Zambia?

Zambia after 125 years of Catholicity has reached a mature age given the present epoch. Theologians argue that the Church is not a democracy but rather a communion. Fine! This communion is warranted by the **“Principle of Subsidiarity”** as emphasized by the Second Vatican Council. The Church dreamt of shared responsibility in the life of the Church so that faith can grow & services are available to the people of God. Church Leaders, the consecrated people and the laity have to lay their hands on the affairs of the Church according to their responsibilities and capabilities. A platform needs to be created on which each member of the church has to own a stake and be responsible for the Church; so as to be a “we” affair than a “they” mentality. Such is a rebirth of creative imagination, more freedom of reflection and action and responsible leadership of listening to one another guided by reason and the spirit of Christ. *“Uwaleeta pa nsaka: tonaula”*, truly *“Cinci wa babili: te cinci uli eka”*. The church leadership needs to trust, encourage and consult the laity. Women and youths need to stand-out as great energies for Church life. The church is a family of the people of God.

The Zambia Church needs to reconsider **promotion of vocation** for the dioceses and missionary orders and congregations. *“Mwana wa mupe: tafa nsala”*, validly *“Akaboko: kakonka akabiye”*. There seems to be less vocation promotion ministry for our various dioceses. Each diocese needs to have an active office in this regard; to explain to the faithful especially the youth, the need and the process for the vocation to religious and priesthood. The task of reviving the Church missionary-spirit and re-evangelizations needs new energies of well formed, trained and good-willed people. *“Umunwe umo: tausala nda”*. We observe crisis in religious and priestly vocations in Zambia. The root-cause could be partly the recruitment and formation



policies. We need bigger numbers in which we can choose a few committed young people to take-up the vocation to religious and priestly ministry. We can count on the providence of God but God counts on our imagination informed by reason and faith in Him. *“Lesa ayafwa: abaiyafwa”*, conversely, *“Muuba ukulila: ni pa mafito”*.

The above personal reflection is my petition to God for missionaries and for Zambia. God bless our mission, bless our people, bless our leaders and bless Zambia. May Christ guide us anew to tread the missionary path for the Gospel of Christ in Zambia! When we celebrate the Eucharist today, may the words of Jesus, “Do this in memory of me...”, be alive to us through the missionaries’ history so that we can make it our own story for today.

Venerato Deus Babaine, M.Afr, Lua-Luo, Kasama, Zambia. Sunday, 07 August 2016