



# NATIONAL CATHOLIC SECRETARIAT

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### COMMUNIQUE ISSUED BY THE GHANA CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE AT THE END OF ITS ANNUAL PLENARY ASSEMBLY HELD IN SUNYANI IN THE BONO REGION OF GHANA NOVEMBER 6 – 18, 2023

*1.0 Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age (Matthew 28:19-20).*

#### **2.0 Preamble**

2.1 We, the members of the Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference, have held our annual Plenary Assembly at the Catholic Diocesan Pastoral and Social Centre in Sunyani in the Bono Region of Ghana from November 6 to 18, 2023 under the theme: "*Fostering the growth of the Catholic Church in Ghana through Collaborative Ministry*". Our theme was inspired by the decline in the percentage of the Catholic population since the year 2000 as well as the Synod on Synodality (2021-2024).

#### **3.0 Congratulations to the Sunyani Diocese and Bishop Gyamfi**

3.1 We congratulate our brother Most Rev. Matthew Kwasi Gyamfi, the priests, consecrated men and women and the entire faithful of the Catholic Diocese of Sunyani on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee Anniversary of the creation of the diocese. We also congratulate in a special way Bishop Gyamfi as he marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his episcopacy.

3.2 We thank God for the growth of the faith and the infrastructure development in the diocese and pray for the Bishop and his collaborators as they exercise their shepherding roles over the people entrusted to their care. We also encourage the faithful to continue their invaluable support to ensure the building of the Kingdom of God through collaborative ministry.

#### **4.0 Acknowledgement and Commendation**

4.1 At the start of our Plenary Assembly, we had a four-day spiritual retreat directed by Very Rev. Fr. Alfons Amanor, SVD, to whom we owe a debt of gratitude for his rich input. We interacted with Mr. Kwame Pianim, a renowned economist and wish to thank him for his input.

4.2 In the course of our Plenary Assembly, we visited and interacted with the Bono Regional Minister, Hon. Justina Owusu-Banahene, members of the Regional Security Council and some staff of the Regional Coordinating Council as well as the Sunyani Traditional Council, where we commiserated with the Traditional Council on the return of its President, Nana Bosoma Asor Nkrawiri II, to his Maker, and prayed for the peaceful repose of his soul.

4.3 We visited the Bui Power Authority to acquaint ourselves with the Hydropower Plant and wish to applaud the all-Ghanaian engineers for successfully managing the Plant after their Chinese counterparts handed it over to them. We wish to thank Mr. Maxwell Wumbilla Salifu, Director of Estates, and the rest of the staff we interacted with for their kind reception. We also visited, celebrated Holy Masses and interacted with the People of God in many parishes of the diocese.

4.4 Our Plenary was also graced by the presence of the Apostolic Nuncio to Ghana, His Excellency, Most Rev. Henryk Mieczyslaw Jagodzinski.

4.5 From our interactions and deliberations, we wish to share with you the following reflections:

### **5.0 Theme for the Plenary**

5.1 The results of the 2021 national population census suggest that the Catholic population in Ghana as at 2021 was only 10.1%, a decline of almost 3% since the 2010 census. This decline in the Catholic population calls for a deep reflection on the part of all of us: the lay faithful, consecrated men and women, priests and bishops.

### **5.2 Fostering the Growth of the Catholic Church**

5.3 Having reflected on the theme and the possible contributing factors, we have made the following resolutions among others:

- a. To intensify primary evangelization through missionary outreach programmes
- b. To embark on an intense and enhanced catechesis where the priests and religious take active part in catechism classes and through recruitment, formation and supervision of catechists
- c. To establish church communities in towns, suburbs and villages without Catholic presence to bring the Church closer to the faithful, some of whom travel long distances for Mass and other church activities
- d. To revive the concept of Small/Basic Christian Communities
- e. To intensify chaplaincy ministry for Catholic schools, non-Catholic schools and other institutions. Pastors of parishes within whose territories such schools/institutions are located should see them as prioritized “outstations” which need weekly pastoral care
- f. To train and engage more lay faithful, including the youth, in various areas of pastoral ministry
- g. To ensure a purposeful and proper use of traditional and social media tools for the work of evangelization. We commit to invest more into the work of communications in our national office, dioceses, parishes and institutions
- h. To develop and implement short, medium and long term Diocesan Pastoral Plans for evangelization in the various jurisdictions
- i. To set up a Research and Evaluation Department at the National Catholic Secretariat and replicate the same office in all archdioceses and dioceses to collect and monitor our own data on membership and other variables in the Church.

## **6.0 A Call for Collaborative Ministry**

6.1 Pope Francis, in his Apostolic Exhortation: *Evangelii Gaudium*, addressed the importance of collaborative approach to effective and sustained evangelization. In this apostolic exhortation, the Holy Father states:

*In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Mt 28:19). All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love (EG#120).*

6.2 It is in this spirit that the ongoing Synod on Synodality invites all Christians to be missionary disciples. We, therefore, call on all priests, as leaders of the church communities, to consciously promote the spirit of collaboration.

## **7.0 ISSUES OF NATIONAL CONCERN**

7.1 The challenge facing people of faith in Ghana is a split between faith and action. This observation is evidenced by the fact that while people of faith make up over 90% of the population in Ghana, their expected positive impact on public life in Ghana is very weak.

## **8.0 Persistent Challenges**

8.1 In previous communiques, we catalogued a number of challenges that confront us as a nation. The numerous challenges persist. These challenges include: high cost of living, high inflation, youth unemployment, “institutionalized” bribery and corruption, abuses in procurement practices, weak and ineffective institutions of governance, lack of patriotism, deplorable roads, carnage on our roads, poverty, galamsey, abandoned and unfinished government projects, the culture of impunity, examination malpractices, violence, intimidation, attack on media men and women, human trafficking and abductions. These challenges, in addition to the current global crisis, have contributed to our current socio-economic situation.

## **9.0 The State of the Economy**

9.1 We acknowledge the current global economic crisis, which has affected the growth of the economy of our country. We also appreciate the effort that government has made so far to handle the impact of the crisis on Ghanaians. It is however true that, we as a country have not been able to manage our economy well. This has contributed to the current economic woes in which we find ourselves. We have had to resort again to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The current economic hardships are becoming unbearable for Ghanaians. We call on government to take urgent steps to stabilize the economy to bring relief to many Ghanaians who have to bear with the current difficulties.

9.2 For growth and sustainability, we also call on government to use the right approach in implementing policies, reduce its size, minimize waste, promote the common good, review and remove all of the abuses related to benefits in Article 71 of the Constitution of Ghana.

9.3 In line with the theme of our Plenary Assembly, we call on all Ghanaians to commit themselves to issues of national concern in the spirit of co-responsibility. In this light, we encourage citizens to bear their fair share of sacrifice for the sake of the next generation.

### **10.0 Decentralization**

10.1 As we have indicated in our previous communiqués, decentralization, which seeks to promote effective Local Governance System, is the way to bring governance and its benefits to the people and improve the participation of citizens in the governance process. It enhances democracy at the grassroots, inclusiveness and accountability. Sadly, the decentralization has become a mirage.

10.2 We therefore urge the government, civil society organizations, faith-based organizations, chiefs, opinion leaders and the good people of Ghana to revisit the election of the Metropolitan/Municipal/District Chief Executives (MMDCEs). This will make the MMDCEs accountable to the people at the grassroots. It will also promote participation, transparency, accountability and development in the districts. The members of the community will take their destiny into their own hands. The myriads of developmental challenges confronting communities including galamsey, deforestation, environmental degradation, flooding, dissipation of public resources among others could be better addressed through efficient decentralization system.

### **11.0 Destruction of the Environment through Illegal Mining (Galamsey)**

11.1 We are still disturbed by the worsening environmental destruction, pollution of water bodies, and increased reports of babies born with deformities and kidney diseases resulting from ingesting and inhaling heavy metals in galamsey areas

11.2 We are also concerned about the introduction of the Environmental Protection (Mining in Forest Reserves) Regulations, 2022, LI 2462, which seemingly allow mining, even in globally significant biodiversity areas. We urge the government to take a critical look at this LI 2462, and as a matter of urgency, either amend or repeal it, in order to forestall the alarming trend of ecological destruction in the country.

### **12.0 Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill of 2021**

12.1 We wish to thank Parliament for the work done so far on the bill, particularly the commitment of the Speaker, Rt. Hon. Alban S.K. Bagbin to ensure the successful passing of the bill. We urge that they expedite action on the passage, and we call on the President to assent to the Bill as soon as it is passed by Parliament.

### **13.0 2024 Elections and “Politics of Religion”**

13.1 We observe with growing concern attempts to introduce and inflame religious passion in political discourse and activities. Ghana as a nation is a secular state recognizing the right of all persons to practise any religion and to freely form or belong to any political party of their choice, irrespective of their religious affiliation. We, however, urge all Ghanaians to respect this prescription of our Constitution and avoid any attempt to engage in a “politics of religion”. In this light, we advise all Ghanaians to put Ghana first in their political campaigns so as to preserve the peace and unity of our motherland.

## **14.0 Dam Spillage**

14.1 We sympathise with the victims of the recent Akosombo Dam spillage in the lower Volta river basin. We commend the government, religious bodies, various organizations, companies and individuals for their intervention so far to relieve the victims of their plight. We further urge all to continue to support the victims.

14.2 We are aware that without the spillage, the dam could have been damaged, which would have affected many more people and settlements. However, we hope that the Volta River Authority (VRA) and other authorities will learn more valuable lessons from the experience, for better management of the spillage in the future. We also appeal to Ghanaians to be law abiding and stop building in the buffer or restricted areas of water bodies.

## **15.0 Conflicts and Military Brutalities in the Country**

15.1 We regret the recent happenings in Nkwanta in the Oti Region and Bawku in the Upper East Region, that led to the death of some citizens, with several persons wounded and properties destroyed. We call on all parties involved in the ongoing conflicts to smoke the peace pipe and work towards reconciliation and peace.

15.2 We denounce the recent military brutalities in Garu and its environs in the Upper East Region and wish to call on the military to ensure that their approach to restore security and peace has a more professional touch and not the use of brutal force in the course of their work.

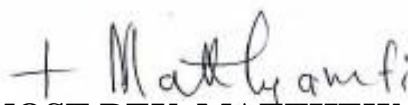
15.3 Let us all pray for peace in these conflict areas in Ghana. We also pray for peace in the Sahel Region as well as in Israel, Palestine, Ukraine, Russia and other conflict areas in the world.

## **16.0 Conclusion**

16.1 In conclusion, we wish to state that to foster the growth of the church through collaborative ministry and the development of our country, we need the help of God and call on all Ghanaians to pray. We therefore join our voices to that of St. Paul in his exhortation to the Corinthians and say: *What is Apollos, after all, and what is Paul? Ministers through whom you became believers, just as the Lord assigned each one. I planted, Apollos watered but God caused the growth. Therefore, neither the one who plants, nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who causes the growth* (1 Cor. 3:5-7).

*May Christ the King of the universe and of peace continue to intercede for us!*

*Issued on Friday, November 17, 2023  
in the Christ the King Cathedral Church  
in the Catholic Diocese of Sunyani*

  
**MOST REV. MATTHEW KWASI GYAMFI**  
CATHOLIC BISHOP OF SUNYANI & PRESIDENT,  
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