EASTER MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH AND THE NATION

ALL SAINTS’ CATHEDRAL DIOCESE, NAIROBI

THEME:

Matthew 5: 9 Blessed are the peace makers for they shall be called the children of God.

Preamble

Fellow Christians,

As we enter the Easter season, I greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God’s love which is demonstrated in Easter story is unending and powerful, it’s about sacrifice, forgiveness, compassion and healing. The love of Christ as demonstrated during the Easter season includes even washing the feet of those deemed to be undeserving as Jesus Christ did to his disciple Peter whom he had predicted would deny him alongside Judas who betrayed him. Let us look at each other from an eye of love. Let us endear the values of love and respect in our interpersonal relations with each other. We need to act responsibly.

In this Easter Season, we thank God for His grace and favour upon our church and beloved country. Easter season is a reminder of the tension that was witnessed in Jerusalem when Jesus was crucified. The disciples were insecure and fearful for their lives. There was a huge population gathered in the City of Jerusalem and the religious leaders feared for possibility of chaos breaking out. The potential for chaos and fears that the disciples of Jesus had over that period is reminiscent of the situation in Kenya today. Kenya is a youthful nation where 80 per cent of the population is under 35 years. The Country is currently facing a potentially divisive electioneering period of which we have already seen cases of violence and political incitements based on ethnic identities. Further as a country we have an ongoing drought and famine. The cancer of corruption continues to eat away the moral fibre of the nation thus denying many citizens their rights to access basic government services in health, education and other sectors. In this Easter season, we would like to highlight some key challenges that we need to ponder about as a Church and Nation;
1. **Electioneering Season**

Kenyans will go to the polls on the 8th of August 2017 and The Anglican Church is concerned that violence or the threat of violence especially in the rural areas during this electioneering period will negatively affect agricultural productivity which is vital for food production for our nation. We note with grave concern the tendency of politicians to bribe the youth through cash or cheap alcohol and use them to attack their opponent’s supporters. We therefore urge the youth of Kenya to play their rightful role in this democratic process by voting in leaders who have their interests at heart and not politicians who are out to misuse them for violence by giving cash or alcohol. We further call on the youth to exercise restraint and interrogate the manifestoes and agendas of political leaders so that the electioneering period becomes a process through which the young people of this country stake their claim to responsible leadership of Kenya for a better future for all citizens.

Currently, the political leaders are drumming up support ahead of the party primaries this month. We have already witnessed political incitements and violence in some parts of the country. The negative political mobilization witnessed across the country is polarizing as it is based on “name calling, insults and violence”. As a Church, we feel that the rising political temperature is not good for the nation. It creates fear among the populace and prevents citizens from their productive engagements which is critical for our economic growth. We therefore, urge all the institutions that are constitutionally mandated to serve Kenyans during the electoral period to play their role well to ensure that the rule of law prevails for a prosperous and peaceful Kenya.

We urge politicians across the Country to exercise restraint and conduct themselves in a peaceful and responsible manner.

2. **IEBC and Preparations for Elections in August 2017**

As we head into the elections, as a Church we are concerned about the preparedness of the IEBC. As the body constitutionally mandated to manage the electoral process in Kenya, we urge IEBC to exhibit transparency, credibility and accountability in the process of managing the forthcoming elections. IEBC and other bodies constitutionally mandated to contribute to a sound electoral process and should ensure that the election and electioneering process is transparent, just, fair and peaceful. We further urge that the IEBC enforces the Code of Conduct signed between them and the aspirants.
3. **Signing of Peace Covenants**
   Given the painful memories of 2007/2008, we as the Church strongly believe that the forthcoming elections should be an opportunity for Kenyans to choose their leaders and not to plunge the country into violence. As the Church we urge all leaders vying for the Presidency and all other elective positions to commit themselves to peace and sign "Peace Covenants" to maintain peace before, during and after the elections.

4. **Food and Hunger situation**
   On the 10th of February, the Head of State declared the on-going drought a National Disaster. The drought has so far affected over 3 million Kenyans who are still in dire need of food, water and medicine. As a Church we are concerned at the lack of a long-term drought reduction strategy by the Government. We note that drought and famine are increasingly recurring almost perennially in Kenya and urge the National and County Governments to put in place long-term measures that will increase citizens' resilience to shortage of rain. We ask the National and County Governments to work with communities in developing alternative livelihood mechanisms that will enhance their coping capacities and reduce their reliance on rain-fed agriculture. The Anglican Church commits to work with National and County Governments and all other stakeholders in addressing long-term food security challenges of all Kenyans across the 47 Counties.

5. **Insecurity and Police operations**
   The Anglican Church has noted with great concern the rising levels of insecurity in many parts of Kenya and particularly in Transmara, Baringo, Laikipia and Samburu Counties. We have also noted the little regard that citizens have for human life in some of these incidences where people have been ambushed and killed. This is an alarming situation and we urge Kenyans to restrain themselves and avoid taking the law into their own hands. We have further noted with grave concern the response by the Government in starting security operations in most parts of Northern Kenya. It is our opinion as the Church that security operations are counter-productive; violence begets violence and not the desired peace. We urge the citizens of the affected Counties, the National and County Governments to provide a forum through which the drivers of violence among these communities can be addressed. We as the Church are ready to play our role as peacemakers across Kenya and we urge all the stakeholders to explore long-term peacebuilding possibilities as an alternative to security operations which will only contribute to loss of human lives and property.
6. **Message of Hope and Peace During this Easter Season**

The Easter season is a time for hope and peace. As we enter this festive season we share with you the Good News that Easter brings. While the Son of God gave his life for a world that was going through political challenges like ours today, His resurrection brought hope to the vulnerable, peace to the insecure, and life to the dying.

Our message this season is that even though we live in a polarised world we can do better, we can stand for that which is right and uphold integrity at a time such as this. Our Easter message to Kenyans and the Church is to ask that we do three things; first, let us build trust amongst ourselves so that we can live as neighbours in spite of the rising political temperatures. Secondly, let us hold the integrity of our institutions, especially those responsible for managing the electoral process such as the IEBC. Finally, we ask Kenyans to uphold the dignity of our nation and vote peacefully for a cohesive nation beyond the elections.

We wish you a blessed Easter and peaceful electioneering period.

God bless you all and God bless Kenya.

Signed on this 14th April 2017 at All Saints Cathedral.

The Most Rev. Dr. Jackson Ole Sapit

**ARCHBISHOP OF KENYA, BISHOP OF ALL SAINTS’ CATHEDRAL DIOCESE & BISHOP IN-ORDINARY TO THE KENYA DEFENCE FORCES**