

The Genuine voice of the people is the voice of God.

Pastoral Letter of His Grace Paolino Lukudu Loro on the process of the forth coming political Elections 2010

Introduction

May the mercy and love of God be manifested to you in this Lenten season.

Lent is the time of the year in which God invites us to a sincere renewal of our lives in line with the Gospel. It is an invitation to realize our need of God. On Ash Wednesday, we started a pilgrimage to be marked by the practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving which are a way to prepare us for the journey.

In this Lenten season God offers us once more the opportunity to restore our relationship with Him. God wants us to repent from the many sins we have committed against him and ourselves, especially in Southern Sudan: tribes against tribes, killings, abductions, robbery, corruption and so forth.

We must atone for these sins by prayers and good deeds. Like the Prodigal Son (Lk 15:11-32), the Sudanese people should arise and in humility approach the Merciful God for pardon. Ahead of us, there are still many opportunities and this is the time to restore our relationship with God and others.

In his 2010 Lenten message, the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, exhorts the people of God to focus their understanding and praxis of justice with that of God.

It is more than a happy incidence that as the Church prepares itself to celebrate the Paschal mysteries of the Lord, our country prepares itself for elections.

The first democratic election in 24 years will be held soon after Easter. It is a starting meter for political transformation in our

country and the Church has the moral obligation to guide this important process.

For the last five years we have followed the implementation of the CPA with its upheavals and setbacks. We still need to be patient and hopeful that the remaining CPA milestones will be peacefully implemented in view of the referendum which will determine the political status of the whole Sudan.

Despite the political differences, ethnic clashes and insecurity we experienced, we noted with gratitude the smooth and peaceful registration process which is a sign that the election itself could be peaceful. I urge the Sudanese masses and God fearing people to work to maintain peace during the campaign and election period to give the Sudanese people a chance to exercise their democratic rights.

Campaign period

We have now entered a crucial and critical phase in the electoral process. It is the campaign period which began from February 13 and ending on April 9, 2010. This is a crucial and critical period for both voters and candidates alike. For candidates, it is important because they are going to present themselves to their people in their various constituencies, the geographical areas which the candidates come from. It is a time for interaction with people at the grassroots. During this time, candidates will present their programmes of action for development, vision and mission, goal, objectives and party manifest. Candidates will also try to convince voters about their suitability for the leadership positions they are aspiring for. For voters, it is an opportunity to see their would-be leaders and to discern their suitability, scrutinize their developmental programmes, goals, objectives, vision and mission. Most often, campaign periods are misunderstood due to but not limited to the following uncharitable activities:

- The use of campaign periods to manipulate, deceive, misguide and confuse voters is not moral.
- This period is meant for presentation of programmes of action

- The use of violent and unacceptable language is an attitude which defeats the purpose of election campaign itself.
- Seizing the opportunity for election campaign to capitalize on the poverty and ignorance of voters by intentionally showering them with short-lived gifts and offering them empty promises in order to influence their decisions. This is the same as bribing voters. In the process voters will be forced to make uninformed choices. This is dangerous for the future of Southern Sudan in particular and for the Sudan in general.
- Engaging in character assassination as a means of discrediting a rival.
- Inciting violence against supporters of rivals within the same constituency is unacceptable as this would cause unnecessary blood-shed
- The use of armed groups to intimidate voters so that they can vote for people not of their own choice.
- Physical elimination of prominent political rivals known as political assassination.

It is the responsibility and duty of security organs and the Southern Sudan High Election Committee (SSHEC) to make sure voters and candidates are not harassed. The freedom of expression, assembly and association should be preserved to ensure a free, fair and peaceful election.

Dear candidates, I call upon you to be responsible in your self presentation. You must be guided by your conscience and God. Campaign is not all about winning the support of voters but a realistic and sincere advocacy of real situation which calls for change.

Elections

For more than sixty percent of the present population in Southern Sudan, this is going to be the first election ever in their lives. Therefore, this is a very important and future determining political exercise and actual manifestation of the political and democratic transformation the country is undergoing.

I strongly urge those who have registered and are eligible voters to make sure they vote, because your vote is your voice and your choice.” “The genuine voice of the people is the voice of God”. It is as well your contribution to the common good of the people of this Country.

Indeed your voting will also be an example to the young people who are not voters in this election because of age limitation, but who are possibly going to be of voting age during the referendum.

Exhortation

I want to emphasize the importance of the virtues of honesty and integrity in this political process. Nobody should accept money in order to create insecurity during the campaign and the elections.

Bribery is corruption and it is evil. It is the selling of one’s own constitutional, human, political rights and personality. Bribery takes many forms: Money, promises made to influence conduct and buying of favor. The negative implication of bribery or buying voters is voting for wrong people in Office. This will jeopardize the referendum and the peace itself.

Manipulation is another evil which both the voters and candidates must avoid so that we have fair and credible elections. Manipulation takes many forms: exploitation of the voters’ ignorance, poverty, tribal affiliation and their trust. Be reminded that in these processes, God sees, witnesses and judges your intentions and actions.

It took the Sudanese people more than two decades to achieve peace. Voting for wrong people, especially at this crucial time in the history of our Country, is to undermine the prize paid for the peace.

Make sure you elect people who are committed to the implementation of the CPA. Our experiences to date show that there are still very important benchmarks to be implemented like North/South border demarcation, Abyei referendum, popular consultations in Southern Kordofan and Southern Blue Nile, discussion on post referendum scenarios and other related issues.

The time frame between April 2010 and January 2011 is very short, hence the need to elect people who are committed to implement the CPA to the letter.

Election results

Election results can either be winning or losing. For those who will win, they must recognize that they are God's choice for this particular period. Be prudent and be ready to serve the people and respond to their needs. And for those who will lose, they must equally accept that their time and opportunity to serve in that area is still ahead and that God has reserved them for other different services. The spirit of acceptance will ensure peaceful transition with full focus on preparations for the referendum.

A call to Prayer

On October 31 2009, I launched a Marian Prayer in all the parishes of the Archdiocese of Juba for the purpose of preparing people for the elections and the coming referendum. I strongly encourage Christians and people of good will to seriously resort to prayer for the upcoming political events in our history as a country.

Lent is a favorable occasion to come together in prayer and recognize our need of God. Let us ask from the Lord Justice and wisdom for the leaders God will choose to lead our nation.

Let the people choose and in doing so, reveal the will of God for the Sudan."Vox populi, vox Dei".

+ Paolino Lukudu Loro
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