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RESTORING ORDER AMID CHAOS



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Editor's desk

Dear Reader,

We present to you the September edition of the Catholic Church News. September is the month in which we venerate the Word of God contained in the Bible.

This devotion is in honour of St Jerome, who famously translated the Bible into Latin — a version known as the Vulgate (meaning “popular edition”) — making the Scriptures more accessible to ordinary people.

St Jerome, whose feast day falls on 30 September, continues to inspire the Church to read, meditate on, and live by the Word of God as the living truth that gives life.

Yet it is important to remember that the Word of God is not limited to the Bible.

The very first lines of Scripture reveal the power of God's creative Word, as He declares, “Let there be...” — and creation comes into being. God's Word existed long before Scripture was written.

Throughout salvation history, He has spoken through creation, through the prophets, and through the preaching of the apostles — all expressions of His living Word. Most profoundly, Scripture reveals that Jesus Christ Himself is the Word made flesh (John 1:1–18; Rev 19:13).

Thus, the Word of God is broader than the Bible, yet in September we venerate that portion of it which, under divine inspiration, was written for our guidance and salvation. Dedicating this month to celebrating and meditating on the Word of God echoes the words of St Jerome: “Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.”

Knowledge of Christ, however, is not limited to knowing the text but to living a life that conforms to what one reads in it.

Zimbabwe is predominantly a Christian country, yet the main story in this edition of the Catholic Church News — on the regularisation and sanitisation of dysfunctional settlements — exposes alarming levels of corruption and disregard, not only for local government by-laws but also for the dignity of the human person.

Many people, mostly the poor, are being exploited by being settled on wetlands and sewer purification sites in the name of profit or political expediency.

It appears that politics often takes precedence over the common good, which is most unfortunate for a nation that calls itself Christian.

The Catholic Bishops of the Global South have also written a letter to the United Nations expressing



concern about what they described as “a potential lack of ambition to secure the 1.5 °C threshold.” This edition includes an article on that prophetic appeal.

The prelates affirmed that the Church “will continue to raise [its] voice alongside science, civil society and the most vulnerable — with truth, courage and consistency — until justice is done.”

Their message serves as a timely reminder to world leaders, especially those of the Global North, who remain

the major contributors to pollution and environmental degradation, to allow their policies to be guided by the light of God's Word. Many of these countries once identified themselves as Christian, yet their growing secularism reflects how shallowly the Word of God has taken root in their hearts.

Human beings, entrusted by God with the care of creation, have instead exploited and destroyed it at an alarming rate — a clear sign of our collective failure to heed the Word of the Creator.

This edition also features the meeting of Catholic education secretaries, representatives of Catholic universities, and members of the ZCBC Education Commission. Their discussions revealed weaknesses in administration and accountability — and even instances of corruption — within some Catholic schools.

It is our sincere hope that all who call themselves Christian will strive to live lives illuminated by the Word of God, so that they may truly become “the salt of the earth and the light of the world.” (Matthew 5:13–14)

On a positive note, the Diocese of Masvingo has opened a clothing factory that will not only generate income for the diocese but also provide sustainable livelihoods for local residents. The same diocese has also launched ongoing faith-formation initiatives through the Neocatechumenal Way.

Sadly, the Diocese of Masvingo also lost one of its relatively young priests, Fr Cephass Manyanye. May his soul rest in eternal peace. We carry a story on this sad news in this issue.

Meanwhile, the Archdiocese of Harare celebrated its patronal feast of St Peter Claver for the first time as a diocese — a joyful milestone we also highlight in this edition.

Enjoy your read, and may the Word of God be a lamp to our feet and a light for our path.

Fr Johnston Mlambo

Restoring Order Amid Chaos: Zimbabwe's Journey to Regularising Informal Settlements

By Fr. Johnston Mlambo



A gated community in one of the upmarket suburbs in Harare, built on visible wetland

Zimbabwe's cities are growing rapidly, but not always in harmony with sound planning, environmental protection, or public health.

Across the country, unplanned and illegal settlements have sprouted on wetlands, servitudes, and state land—posing grave threats to the environment, water sources, and the very vision of smart and sustainable cities.

What began as a desperate search for shelter has spiralled into a complex urban crisis requiring urgent, coordinated action.

It was against this background that the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe (CCJPZ) convened a stakeholder engagement meeting bringing together local authorities, the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works, the ministry of Housing and Social Amenities, Harare Residents Association, the Church and civil society to discuss the Government-led regularisation protocol and action plan for dysfunctional settlements.

The meeting – held on 23 September 2025 at Africa Synod House in Harare – sought to build consensus on how to restore order, promote

sustainable urban development, and uphold the dignity of people living in informal settlements.

In his opening remarks, the Secretary General of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference (ZCBC), Fr Tryvis Moyo, captured the Church's concern for the growing number of families living in conditions that "fall far short of the standards of human decency."

He said the Church recognised the complexity of the situation but remained ready to complement government efforts through its vast network of parishes, schools, and social service agencies.

"Our commitment to addressing dysfunctional settlements directly aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 11, which seeks to ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services," said Fr Moyo.

He reminded delegates that access to secure housing is not only a social need but a moral and developmental imperative.

"By providing stable living environments, we empower families to invest in education, health, and livelihoods—breaking the cycle of poverty,"

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he said.

The Ministry of Local Government and Public Works, represented by Town Planning Officer Mary Hlatshwayo, presented the government's six-phase plan for regularisation: assessment and mapping; policy and legal framework; community engagement; infrastructure and services provision; land tenure and titling; and enforcement, monitoring, and compliance.

She explained that the regularisation drive was born out of rapid urbanisation and housing shortages that forced many people to occupy land informally.

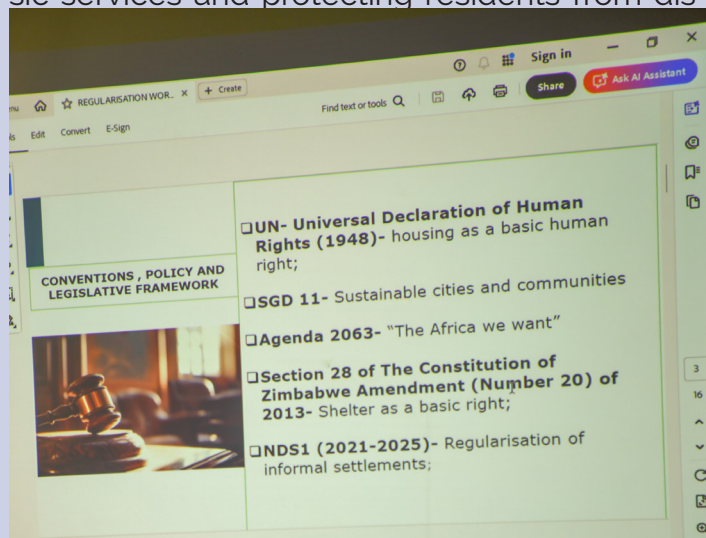
As rural-to-urban migration intensified, many low-income families unable to access formal housing turned to illegal allocations by land barons and unregistered cooperatives.

"Many of these settlements emerged without approved layouts or infrastructure, and they contravene planning standards," Hlatywayo noted.

"The result has been urban sprawl, the loss of wetlands and ecosystems, and increased health risks due to lack of water, sewer, and waste management services."

She added that weak governance systems and limited planning capacity in local authorities had worsened the situation. "It is difficult to enforce development control without adequate manpower and equipment," she said.

The government's response, she explained, has been to integrate illegal settlements into the formal planning system, ensuring access to basic services and protecting residents from dis-



A slide from the presentation by the Ministry of Local Government

“Settlements to be considered for regularisation should have approved layout plans and designs.”

placement while enforcing planning laws.

The approach, dubbed the “Whole of Government” model, draws on coordination across ministries and agencies, guided by the Regional Town and Country Planning Act and aligned with key policy frameworks such as Vision 2030, the National Development Strategy (NDS1), and the Human Settlement Policy.

The Ministry's pilot projects in Epworth provided valuable lessons. In some areas, such as Zinyengere, houses had been built on wetlands, road reserves, or school sites, making it difficult to apply standard planning principles.

Compromises had to be made to preserve as many homes as possible, even if that meant adjusting road widths or stand sizes.

Hlatshwayo admitted that balancing humane considerations with planning regulations was not easy. “Regularisation is not merely a technical exercise; it is a humanitarian intervention that seeks to protect lives and restore order,” she concluded.

Mr Pardon Gatora, Deputy Director of Urban Housing in the Ministry of Housing and Social Amenities, took delegates through the legal and policy frameworks underpinning the process.

He reminded participants that housing is enshrined as a basic human right under both international law and the Constitution of Zimbabwe.

“The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares housing a basic human right,” he said. “Section 28 of our Constitution recognises the right to shelter, while Section 74 guarantees freedom from arbitrary evictions.”

Gatora explained that previous approaches—such as Operation Murambatsvina in 2005—had proven ineffective.

“As Zimbabwe, we are urbanising. There is no urbanising country that does not suffer from informal settlements. The issue is the magnitude and what we are doing about it.”

He highlighted two complementary approaches within the Zimbabwe National Human Settle-



Dr. B Manobo facilitates discussions

“Access to secure housing is a vital component of poverty reduction.”

ments Policy (2020)—regularisation and sanitisation.

Regularisation deals with illegal occupation—where settlers have no legal claim to the land—while sanitisation focuses on dysfunctional settlements that have legal papers but lack basic services.

Gitora also outlined the Presidential Title Deeds Programme, launched in 2023 to provide security of tenure to residents in Epworth, Cowdray Park, Southlea Park, Gimboki South, and Chitungwiza.

The programme, he said, mobilises both public and private sectors through the Kwangu/Ngakwami Presidential Title Deed Programme Trust.

“The programme is not for free,” he stressed. “It follows the user-pay principle, ensuring cost recovery and sustainability.”

He also warned that not every settlement can be regularised—wetlands, school sites, and other public amenities must remain protected.

“Not every land occupied will be regularised—wetlands and land reserved for schools will not be regularised. Social amenities must be maintained, and relocation land must be identified.”

However, as Dr Shingirayi Mashamba, Chief Director of Spatial Planning in the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works, cautioned, the very word “regularisation” has been hijacked by opportunists.

“Land barons are abusing the term ‘regularisation’ to extort money from the poor,” he said. “They manipulate meetings, take photos with

ministry officials, and mislead communities into believing their illegal schemes are being approved.”

He lamented that the time gap between policy announcement and implementation had created a vacuum exploited by politicians and land barons.

“We are seeing new ‘leaders of regularisation’ emerging—mostly aspiring MPs and councillors—who promise people that their illegal settlements will soon be approved,” he said.

Mashamba emphasised that uncontrolled settlement expansion undermines national food security by encroaching on agricultural land.

“We are dealing with a system in a country where Zimbabwe has a limited land size. If we are to remain food-secure and regain our status as the food basket, we must protect agricultural land,” he said.

He also called for stricter development control to prevent new invasions driven by the expectation of future regularisation.

“We cannot allow the process meant to correct past mistakes to become an incentive for new lawlessness,” he said.

From the City of Harare, Senior Town Planner Mrs Elizabeth Mutemachani outlined how regularisation works on the ground.

Applicants must pay a nominal inspection fee and meet specific requirements—approved layout plans, surveyed diagrams, road and sewer designs, and proof of ownership.

Environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands, school sites, and servitudes are excluded from regularisation.

“People in such areas will need relocation, and that is one of our biggest challenges,” she explained.

Mutemachani also noted that Section 74 of the Constitution, which forbids arbitrary evictions, complicates enforcement.

“By the time court orders are obtained, people will have already built permanent structures,” she said.

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She highlighted the success of the Kuwadzana Phase 3 parallel development project, which has achieved compliance and enabled beneficiaries to apply for title deeds.

However, in many other areas, politics, corruption, and resource shortages continue to stall progress.

Representing residents, Mr Precious Shumba, Director of the Harare Residents Trust, gave a sobering account of how politics and corruption have entrenched informal settlements.

He argued that the policy of "parallel development," while well-intentioned, was hijacked by partisan actors who used it to secure votes.

"The process of regularisation has become politicised," he said. "Land barons and councillors have turned people's desperation for housing into a source of profit and political capital."

He cited examples in Chitungwiza and Budiriro, where politically connected individuals allocated land illegally, often in exchange for money or support.

"When demolitions are ordered, politics intervenes, and the poor become victims," he said.

Shumba stressed that the issue of informal settlements cannot be separated from corruption in local authorities. "Without addressing the moral rot, regularisation will only legitimise ille-

gality," he warned.

Despite the daunting challenges, the meeting ended with a shared conviction that regularisation is not optional but essential for Zimbabwe's urban future.

The process, if implemented with integrity and transparency, could transform chaos into order and despair into dignity.

Dr Mashamba summed it up succinctly: "We just need to organise our communities. We need champions in those communities. Together we can. If we combine our efforts, we should be able to have much better settlements than at present. It can be done."

Fr Moyo concluded with a pastoral reflection, reminding participants that the Church's role is not limited to advocacy but extends to active partnership in nation-building.

"Our collective task is to ensure that urban growth does not trample on human dignity or God's creation. Through regularisation, we can transform chaos into community, and despair into dignity," he said.

"Without addressing the moral rot, regularisation will only legitimise illegality."



A settlement on a wetland in Highfields, Harare



Bridging the digital divide: how catholic schools are adapting to Zimbabwe's education 5.0

By SOCCOM Reporter

Harare- For more than four decades, Zimbabwe's education system has been celebrated across Africa for its strong literacy rates and commitment to access for all. Yet as the nation moves into a new era of technological advancement and innovation-driven learning, the question now confronting educators — including the Catholic Church — is how to bridge the widening digital divide.

It was against this backdrop that the Education Commission of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference (ZCBC) convened its annual meeting on 11 September 2025 at the Africa Synod House in Harare.

The gathering brought together education secretaries from the eight dioceses, representatives from Catholic universities, and heads of tertiary institutions to review the state of Catholic education and explore how it could adapt to the national framework of

Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 policy, introduced in 2019, marked a significant shift from traditional learning models toward innovation, research, and industrialisation.

It challenges universities and schools alike to train learners who can "think, create, and produce," rather than merely absorb information.

For Catholic educators, this transformation calls for deeper reflection.

"We need to align our structures and our processes with modern requirements," one participant noted, "so that our institutions are not left behind while others advance with interactive boards, STEM and Education 5.0 innovations."

This sentiment captured the mood of the meeting: a desire to embrace progress while preserving the moral and spiritual foundations of Catholic education.

Participants agreed that Catholic education must not chase technology for its own sake but rather integrate it as a tool for service.

Education 5.0's emphasis on innovation aligns with the Church's mission of integral human development — empowering learners to apply faith and knowledge for the common good.

During discussions, it was brought to the attention of the meeting that Catholic schools need to introduce interactive smart boards, which would help bridge the shortage of science teachers by allowing lessons to be shared across multiple institutions.

"This technology can help ensure that even rural schools benefit from quality instruction," said one education secretary, noting how virtual science lessons could be streamed between schools using shared digital platforms.

Beyond smart boards, participants highlighted the need for teacher retraining in ICT and STEM

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fields, ensuring that Catholic educators are equipped to teach with modern tools.

The proposal was not only about adopting gadgets but about reimagining pedagogy — creating interactive classrooms that encourage critical thinking, collaboration, and innovation.

Representatives from Catholic universities, including the Catholic University of Zimbabwe (CUZ) and Arrupe Jesuit University, emphasised that higher learning institutions must take a leading role in driving innovation.

They reported that Catholic universities are already aligning with Education 5.0 through research and community projects addressing social needs such as renewable energy, food security, and digital learning.

"The role of universities in Catholic education is to be centres of thought, faith, and transformation," one participant reflected.

"We need to produce not only innovators but ethical innovators — people who create with conscience."

The discussion also revealed that collaboration between universities and diocesan education offices remains limited.

Participants urged the Commission to strengthen these links, creating pathways for mentorship, research partnerships, and teacher development across all Catholic institutions.

While enthusiasm for innovation was strong, the meeting acknowledged the many obstacles facing Catholic schools, especially in rural areas.

Poor infrastructure, unreliable electricity, and lack of internet connectivity continue to hinder progress.

Some participants raised concerns that while Education 5.0's goals are noble, they risk widening inequality between well-resourced urban schools and underfunded rural ones. "Technology must not become a new form of exclusion," one delegate warned.

"If our schools in remote areas cannot connect, then we have left the majority behind."

Others highlighted the need for stronger partnerships with the Government and private sector to mobilise resources for ICT infrastructure.

The Commission also noted the importance of investing in capacity building for school leaders, enabling them to plan and manage digital

transformation effectively.

Throughout the meeting, participants insisted that Catholic education's identity must remain grounded in faith, even as it embraces innovation.

"Technology must never replace the teacher's role in forming character," one education secretary remarked.

"The danger of a purely technical education is that it produces competence without conscience."

This perspective reflects a broader theological vision — that education should not only equip minds but also touch hearts.

By combining modern learning tools with pastoral care, Catholic schools can shape responsible digital citizens who use knowledge ethically.

As the meeting concluded, the mood was one of cautious optimism.

Participants recognised that while challenges are real, so too are the opportunities.

The proposed ZCBC Education Strategic Plan (2026–2027) will include specific targets for integrating ICT, developing e-learning resources, and promoting collaboration among dioceses and universities.

"Education remains one of the Church's most powerful ministries," one participant reflected.

"We are called not just to teach, but to inspire — to form witnesses of hope in an age of change."

Through innovation anchored in values, Catholic schools in Zimbabwe are charting a path that unites technology with theology, science with spirituality, and progress with purpose.

In this convergence lies the promise of a new kind of education — one that truly bridges the digital divide while keeping faith at its heart.



Mrs Kaseke from the Archdiocese of Bulawayo makes her presentation.



Priests carry the coffin of Fr. Cephass Manyanye

Scores gather to mourn Fr. Manyanye: remembered him as a man of unshaken faith

By Itai Muzondo

Masvingo- Scores of people recently gathered at Gokomere Mission in the Catholic Diocese of Masvingo to mourn the passing of Rev. Fr Cephass Manyanye.

Ordained into priesthood in 2017, Rev Fr. Manyanye's last post of service was St Barbra Bangala Mission in Renco before he moved to the Bishop's House in February 2025 so that he gets medical attention.

Fr Manyanye died on September 10 after battling with liver cancer.

Known for his unwavering faith, gentle demeanor, and tireless commitment to service, he shepherded thousands through baptisms, weddings, funerals, and music; which was known to be one of his great passions.

"The man we gather to celebrate his life today, Fr Cephass Manyanye, is a Priest who had unwavering faith, remaining steadfast even in the face of death brought by illness," Bishop Mupandasekwa said.

"Despite his physical suffering, he embodied hope and resilience, demonstrating that deep

faith can provide comfort and courage during life's most challenging moments," added Bishop Mupandasekwa.

Revisiting the time he accompanied his now late colleague for treatment in India, Rev. Fr Farai Masere said regardless of receiving sad news about his medical progress, he pledged to continue the Lord's work and also declared that 'only God determines destiny'.

"Fr Manyanye had unbelievable faith. Faith that could not be shaken even in the face

of death. He never moved an inch from what he believed and even made more time to minister the word of God," said Fr. Farai Masere.

Being Parish Priest to his hometown, St Barbra Bangala Mission Chairperson, Mr Muzemba said his wish in their last conversations was to expand outreach efforts as well as upgrading the grotto, commitments he says they will be fulfilled.

The Catholic Diocese of Masvingo now faces the future without their beloved shepherd—but with a legacy of faith that will carry them forward.

Church threads new hope as Queen of Peace clothing factory opens doors

By Itai Muzondo



Bishop Mupandasekwa offically opens Queen of Peace factory

Masvingo- In a move that blends faith, skill-building and economic opportunity, the Catholic Diocese of Masvingo recently celebrated the official launch of Queen of Peace Clothing Factory, a sewing enterprise created to generate income for the diocese and provide sustainable livelihoods for local residents.

The light-filled production hall — refurbished with new machines and supplies — hummed with excitement as staff demonstrated garments and handcrafted products that will form the first product line.

Officially opening the facility, Catholic Diocese of Masvingo Bishop, Raymond Mupandasekwa asked the church to guard the project jealously in hope that it will also be useful to future generations.

"Through this project, we seek to promote sustainable practices and to provide job opportunities. We are committed to fostering self-sufficiency and supporting local families through innovative programs.

"I hereby urge you to guard this project jealously as it will not be useful to us alone but generations and generations to come," Bishop Mupandasekwa said.

Gokomere Mission Priest in Charge, Rev. Fr. Samson Mutsvangwa, highlighted that the project was about "stewardship of our gifts..."

"We wanted to create something that honors

our members' talents, supports families in need and builds a lasting source of income for the church community," he added.

Locals also welcomed the development saying it will help create jobs.

"For the first time in years I can picture a solution for unemployed youths, in and outside the church," said Mary Mupanedemo.

"This isn't just sewing — it's dignity, routine and hope," she further said.

Products produced by Queen of Peace Clothing Factory will include a range of school uniforms that includes but not limited to shirts, tracksuits, hats, skirts, trousers and also brand-ed wear for businesses.

The church also took opportunity to invite volunteers, small-business mentors and retailers interested in accessing Queen of Peace Clothing Factory products to get in touch through the church office.



His Lordship blesses the factory

NEWS FROM THE REGION

Southern Africa's Bishops call for a more listening and compassionate Church at IMBISA's golden jubilee

By SOCCOM Reporter

The Inter-Regional Meeting of Bishops of Southern Africa (IMBISA) marked its Golden Jubilee and 14th Plenary Assembly in Manzini, Eswatini, with a renewed call for a Church that listens, heals, and walks with its people — especially the youth, the poor, and those on the margins of society.

Held under the theme “A Synodal Journey, Nourished by Compassion and Flourishing in Faith as Pilgrims of Hope,” the gathering brought together bishops from Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, São Tomé and Príncipe, South Africa, Eswatini, and Zimbabwe.

The plenary, described as one of the most representative in IMBISA's history, combined reflection on fifty years of pastoral collaboration with dialogue on how synodality, justice, peace, and ecological stewardship can renew the mission of the Church in the region.

In his welcome address, the host prelate, Bishop José Luis Ponce de León of Manzini, situated the assembly in Eswatini's rich IMBISA history and expressed gratitude for the cooperation between the Church and the State in areas such as education, health, and peacebuilding.

He emphasised that the synodal process is not an event but “a way of being Church that listens to the Holy Spirit and to the people.” For the first time, lay representatives from Manzini Diocese joined bishops in the sessions — a gesture, he said, “that shows synodality in practice.”

“This plenary,” the Bishop noted, “comes at a time when our world is wounded — by poverty, conflict, and moral fatigue. Yet, through listening and dialogue, we can rediscover hope.”

The President of IMBISA, in his opening remarks, said the Jubilee year is both a celebration and an examination of conscience for the Church in Southern Africa.

“This milestone,” he reflected, “invites us to look back with gratitude, live the present with passion, and embrace the future with hope.” Drawing from the plenary theme, he called synodality “the heart of mission in the third millennium — a way of being Church where no one walks alone.”

He also urged bishops to strengthen cooperation between IMBISA's commissions and to empower the laity, especially the youth, to participate fully in evangelisation and leadership.

Representing the Holy See, the Apostolic Nuncio to the region conveyed a message of solidarity and encouragement. The Holy Father expressed deep gratitude for IMBISA's “invaluable service to the Christian communities of Southern Africa over the past fifty years,” praying that the bishops' journey “be constantly nourished by the merciful heart of the Lord” as they work for the good of both Church and society.

Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo, President of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), also addressed the plenary, urging the bishops to let compassion be the defining mark of their mission. “The Church,” he said, “must be known not by power or privilege, but by her ability to touch the wounds of humanity with mercy and hope.”

He encouraged IMBISA to remain “a voice of conscience in societies where corruption, conflict, and exclusion continue to wound the poor.”

Conference reports revealed a shared concern for poverty, migration, climate change, and governance failures that continue to affect families across the region.

The SACBC highlighted the need for the Church to be a credible moral voice against corruption and xenophobia while promoting social cohesion and pastoral care for migrants.

The ZCBC reported ongoing work in peacebuilding, safeguarding, and youth formation, while lamenting the socio-economic hardships that drive young people into drug abuse and despair.

The Lesotho Catholic Bishops' Conference (LCBC) underscored the role of Catholic schools and lay movements in faith formation and ecological awareness, calling on families to “reclaim their vocation as the first schools of love and faith.”

In plenary discussions, bishops acknowledged that synodality must move beyond consultation

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to concrete pastoral transformation. They committed to:

- Strengthen pastoral councils and safeguarding structures in every diocese;
- Expand youth engagement programmes through social and digital media;
- Deepen collaboration with Justice and Peace Commissions in addressing corruption and inequality; and
- Promote ecological conversion in line with *Laudato Si'* and *Laudate Deum*.

The assembly also endorsed IMBISA's contin-

ued outreach to regional political bodies such as SADC, promoting dialogue rooted in Gospel values.

As the plenary closed, delegates attended a thanksgiving Mass celebrating fifty years of IMBISA's mission. The tone was one of gratitude and recommitment — gratitude for what has been achieved, and resolve to carry the synodal journey forward.

As one bishop summarised in the final session: "The next fifty years will depend on how we listen — to the Holy Spirit, to one another, and to the cries of our people."

ZAMBIA: Clerics' ongoing formation focuses on stress management and parish administration

By Fr. Arthur Ntembula



Lusaka- Diocesan priests in Lusaka gathered on September 17, 2025, at the Marian Shrine for an ongoing formation program focused on the practical challenges of modern ministry.

The ongoing formation, organized by the local association of priests, addressed key topics including stress management, parish administration, and the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage.

A total of 36 diocesan priests attended the program.

The first session, facilitated by Fr. Leonard Namuvumba, focused on stress management, with a particular emphasis on the issue of burn-out.

Fr. Namuvumba stressed the importance of priests taking care of both their physical and spiritual well-being. "Burnout and fatigue are a reality for every priest," he noted, highlighting the need for vigilance against chronic stress, which can negatively impact pastoral work.

He encouraged priests to take "time out to re-

plenish" whenever they feel fatigued and outlined common causes of stress and practical ways to overcome them in their ministry.

The second session was led by Fr. Solomon Tembo, who delved into the intricacies of parish administration and the Sacrament of Marriage.

Fr. Tembo highlighted the importance of adhering to canonical provisions to ensure that marriages are celebrated in accordance with Church law and that parishes are managed effectively.

The session also covered a range of pastoral and practical issues related to the sacrament, sparking a wide-ranging discussion among the participating priests.

The formation was moderated by Fr. Evaristo Chuya, who also serves as president of the local association of priests.

The program was designed to provide priests with essential tools and knowledge to navigate the demands of their ministry in order to better serve their communities where they do apostolate.



Catholic bishops congratulate Malawi's president-elect, Professor Arthur Peter Mutharika

By Luke Bisani

The Malawi Conference of Catholic Bishops (MCCB) has congratulated Professor Arthur Peter Mutharika on his election as the seventh president of the Republic of Malawi.

In a statement signed by the MCCB President and released on Thursday, September 25, Rt. Rev. Martin Anwel Mtumbuka extends the conference's heartfelt congratulations to Professor Mutharika for his victory in the general elections held on September 16, 2025.

"On behalf of the Malawi Conference of Catholic Bishops and on my own behalf, I wish to convey our sincere congratulations to the President-elect of the Republic of Malawi, Professor Arthur Peter Mutharika, on his resounding victory," the statement reads.

The MCCB also commended the outgoing President, Dr. Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera, for prioritizing the interests of Malawi by graciously conceding defeat and congratulating the Pres-

ident-elect.

The statement further clarified that the Catholic Church in Malawi is not affiliated with any political party; therefore, the congratulatory message should be seen as a commitment to serving the Malawian people.

The Bishops in Malawi have called for prayers for Professor Mutharika, asking that he may serve the country with diligence and commitment.

On September 16, 2025, Malawians across the country queued to cast their votes, resulting in Mutharika being elected as the seventh president of Malawi. In 2020, voters had ousted Mutharika, citing issues of nepotism and tribalism within his administration.

However, Chakwera's five-year rule has been characterized as even worse, with Malawi facing serious economic challenges, fuel shortages, and a lack of essential medicines, among other problems.

IMBISA at 50: building forward with strength and self-reflection

By SOCCOM Reporter



picture courtesy of IMBISA

As the Inter-Regional Meeting of Bishops of Southern Africa (IMBISA) celebrates its Golden Jubilee and 14th Plenary Assembly, the organisation presents a portrait of steady growth, responsible stewardship, and renewed pastoral energy. From 2022 to 2025 IMBISA maintained a vibrant rhythm of meetings, advocacy, and formation, anchored in the spirit of communion, participation, and mission.

Financially and pastorally, IMBISA remains sound and relevant. Its balance sheet is healthy, donor confidence strong, and projects diverse—ranging from pastoral formation and psycho-spiritual support to justice, peace, and safeguarding. Yet, alongside these successes are recurring challenges that call for deeper ownership and regional solidarity.

IMBISA's activity during the triennium reflects impressive reach and innovation. Between 2022 and 2025, the Secretariat convened 11 in-person regional meetings, 21 virtual sessions, and five election-observation missions. Using the Conversation in the Spirit method, these encounters have modelled genuine synodality, enabling bishops, priests, and lay leaders to discern together.

A renewed youth ministry inspired by Christus Vivit tackled issues such as drug abuse, mental health, and unemployment while affirming the family as the seedbed of faith. IMBISA youth also represented the region at World Youth Day 2023 in Lisbon, strengthening continental solidarity.

Across the region, the Commission for Justice and Peace and safeguarding networks have remained a credible moral voice on corruption, migration, and ecological destruction. Continuous training has reinforced the Church's zero-tolerance stance on abuse and promoted integrity in ministry.

Institutionally, IMBISA registered as a Private Voluntary Organisation (PVO) in Zimbabwe, undertook major renovations of IMBISA House—including solar and borehole upgrades—and implemented staff development and team-building initiatives.

Its communications arm flourished, with over 600 articles posted online, a 32 percent rise in social-media engagement, and broader regional visibility through digital platforms.

Financially, the Secretariat reports consistent stability. Annual income from bishops' levies (USD 60 000–70 000), donor grants, and proper-

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ty rentals covered staff, operations, and regional programmes. As of August 2025, assets totalled USD 722 000 against liabilities of USD 164 000, confirming prudent management and transparent reporting.

Despite its vitality, IMBISA faces persistent gaps that could hinder future growth.

Participation across member conferences remains uneven. Countries such as South Africa, Angola, and Zimbabwe contribute actively, while smaller conferences show limited involvement. This weakens regional ownership and demands targeted outreach and support.

Financially, IMBISA still depends heavily on external donors. Bishops' levies—unchanged for over 15 years—cover only a small fraction of costs, and some conferences have delayed remittances, causing short-term cash-flow strains and salary arrears at the Secretariat. The need for sustainable local funding is urgent.

Engagement with regional bodies such as SADC remains minimal. A structured relationship could amplify the Church's advocacy on governance, migration, and climate justice.

The Secretariat also reports misuse of IMBISA's name and logo by some diocesan offices seeking funds, a practice that risks eroding credibility. Clearer brand-protection measures and com-

munication protocols are essential.

Finally, the Secretariat continues to work under administrative pressure, with a lean staff juggling numerous donor projects. Broader digital participation in meetings also lags, highlighting the need for training and accountability across conferences.

At fifty, IMBISA stands as a credible, financially stable, and pastorally dynamic institution—an authentic sign of regional ecclesial communion. Its greatest strengths lie in effective coordination, transparent stewardship, and a renewed missionary vision shaped by synodality.

Yet the next chapter must deepen ownership, inclusivity, and sustainability. Member conferences are called to move from passive participation to shared responsibility, ensuring IMBISA becomes less donor-driven and more self-propelled.

As the jubilee celebrations in Eswatini close, IMBISA's story remains one of faith and perseverance. The coming years will test its ability to turn solidarity into strategy, vision into action, and celebration into commitment—so that, fifty years from now, Southern Africa's bishops may look back on an organisation not only sustained by donors, but sustained by its own unity of purpose in service to the People of God.



“Go, and be mercy”: Bishop Mupandasekwa’s prophetic jubilee challenge to IMBISA

By Albert Munyanyi

Manzini, Eswatini — At the golden jubilee of IMBISA in Eswatini, the voice of Bishop Raymond Mupandasekwa of Masvingo rose from the pulpit with prophetic intensity. His message was no mere ceremonial tribute but a clarion call. As the Inter-Regional Meeting of Bishops in Southern Africa marked fifty years, he insisted that this jubilee was not about nostalgia but urgency — a charge to confront silence, reclaim courage, and live out mercy.

For Bishop Raymond Mupandasekwa of Masvingo, this was no occasion for polite applause or nostalgic speeches. His reflection was less a gentle tribute and more a sword of truth, piercing to the bone. It cut to the bone of the Church’s past, exposed the wounds of the present, and insisted on mercy as the medicine for the future.

With a voice at once pastoral and piercing, the bishop retraced IMBISA’s 50-year journey — from its courageous birth amid oppression in 1975 to its present-day crossroads — and issued a challenge that reverberated through the sanctuary: “Go, and be mercy. Be compassion.”

Returning to the Spirit of 1975

The choice to celebrate in Eswatini, Bishop Mupandasekwa reminded the congregation, was no accident. “We sought to return where it all started,” he explained, “to rediscover the spirit of our founding fathers, men who, in a time of racial discrimination and cries for freedom, dared to unite and add their voices to the oppressed.”

Those first bishops, he said, were not timid administrators but prophetic shepherds. Like the apostles at Pentecost, they were stirred by the Spirit to speak boldly in defense of the poor and marginalized. They understood that political freedom, though urgent, was never an end in itself but a means toward “universal fraternity and social peace.”

The bishop paused, then added with emphasis: “This jubilee is not simply a marker of time passed but a celebration of the God who has guided IMBISA through trial and triumph. It is the joy of believing — and the joy of recommitting ourselves to serve Him and His people.”

The Incomplete Freedom

When he turned from memory to the moment,



Bishop Mupandasekwa spoke with a graver urgency. Freedom, he said, has been achieved, but its fruits remain elusive for many. Poverty stalks the land. Corruption gnaws at the common good. And inequality scars every city.

Quoting Nelson Mandela, he reminded the assembly: “Our freedom can never be complete unless the basic needs of our people are met.”

“But those needs remain unmet,” he thundered, his voice echoing against the decorated tents. “Lazarus still lies at the gates — not in the parable, but in the streets of our cities, emaciated and ignored.”

“Some of our leaders are blind,” he declared, “blind to the destitution of our people, blind to Lazarus lying skin and bones, unable to access even what is reserved for the house dogs.”

This blindness, he cautioned, is more than individual failure. It is systemic. “It is the blindness of a society that normalizes injustice. A society that gives birth to indifference. A society that watches Lazarus starve while the rich man feasts.”

The Call to Courage

Here, the bishop turned the mirror on IMBISA itself. With unusual frankness, he admitted a painful truth: “IMBISA has at times been silent in trying moments. And that silence, uncomfortable as it is to say, must be confessed.”

He warned that silence in the face of suffering is complicity. The Church cannot remain a passive observer. “The inter-regional meeting must evolve,” he urged, “into a conference that takes up greater responsibility for what is happening in the region and among its members.”

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His tone rose, his words charged with urgency: "We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. There is no time for apathy or complacency. This is the time for vigorous and positive action."

The tent grew hushed as he leaned forward, voice steady: "The jubilee must be the moment IMBISA shakes off timidity and takes its place as a fearless voice for reconciliation, for peace, for justice."

Faith Under Fire in Delgado

To drive his point home, Bishop Mupandasekwa recalled a recent conversation with Bishop António Juliasse of Pemba, Mozambique, whose diocese lies at the epicenter of the Islamist insurgency in Cabo Delgado.

"Just this week," he recounted, "Bishop António was on the phone, pleading with his religious sisters to flee their convent because their area was under attack."

The silence in the tent was palpable. "This," the Bishop said gravely, "is faith on trial. How do we journey with our brothers and sisters under siege? What manual do we have? Only the lives of faith-filled witnesses who endured suffering with love, patience, and gentleness."

The Young and the Future of the Church

Shifting from warzones to pews, the bishop turned his attention to another pressing crisis: the exodus of young people from the Church. "How," he asked with pastoral urgency, "can we bring our young people back to faith?"

He suggested that the starting point is not teaching but listening. "Just as the risen Christ asked Mary Magdalene, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' so too must we ask our young people: 'Why are you distancing yourself from the Church?'"

But he offered a sobering answer: perhaps the youth no longer see in their elders a faith worth following. "Perhaps they do not see in us a faith worth living for. A faith worth dying for."

He invoked Pope Francis quoting Léon Bloy: "The only real tragedy is not to become a saint." Then he turned to the bishops, priests, and faithful before him: "If our faith is to win back the youth, it must be lived as holiness — visible, credible, compelling holiness."

Lazarus at the Gate

Preaching on the Gospel of Lazarus and the rich man, Bishop Mupandasekwa's words cut like a prophet's. "The rich man feasted daily, dressed in

fine clothes, while Lazarus lay at his gate, starving. Even the dogs showed more compassion than the rich man."

Then he asked the piercing question: "As the people of God, to which camp do we belong? With the victims — or with the aggressors? There is no neutrality."

He reminded the faithful that Lazarus's story has no happy ending. "Lazarus dies. He dies without justice. He dies without dignity. And the rich man? He dies obese, blind, unmoved."

"Our mission at IMBISA," he insisted, "is to build a society where there are no Lazaruses. A society where no one starves to death. A society where no one dies ignored at the gate of indifference."

The Story of John: A Lesson in Mercy

Finally, the bishop ended with a story. His voice softened, but the lesson carried weight.

He told of a young seminarian sent to a neighboring country to serve in a cathedral during his pastoral year. There, he encountered an old man in ragged clothes who came daily, sat at the back, ate popcorn, and drank wine in full view of others. Scandalized, the seminarian tried to rebuke and expel him.

Frustrated, he turned to the cathedral administrator for help. But the administrator smiled gently and explained the truth: the man's name was John, a former sacristan, catechist, and extraordinary minister of the Eucharist who had faithfully served the same cathedral for years. A decade earlier, John had been struck in a hit-and-run accident that left him disabled and psychologically scarred.

"When you see him eating popcorn," the administrator told the seminarian, "remember that he is reliving the moment he once received Holy Communion. When you see him drinking wine, know that he is recalling the cup of salvation he once shared at Mass."

The seminarian, humbled and moved to tears, approached John before his ordination and asked: "Do you have any word of advice for me?" John, struggling to speak, whispered just one word: "Mercy."

With deep emotion, Bishop Mupandasekwa concluded: "This is our prayer as IMBISA. That we may be witnesses to the Gospel of Christ by lives that are mercy-driven, lives directed by compassion."

Safeguarding integrity: Catholic schools step up financial accountability

by Fr Johnston Mlambo



Participants engage in a group discussion.

When the Education Commission of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference (ZCBC) met in Harare on 11 September 2025, one theme underpinned all its discussions — the need to strengthen integrity and accountability within Catholic education.

The meeting, which brought together diocesan education secretaries, representatives from Catholic universities, and heads of tertiary institutions, went beyond curriculum review and policy alignment to confront an uncomfortable question: Are Catholic schools living up to the same ethical standards they teach?

Participants acknowledged that good governance is not merely an administrative duty but a moral obligation flowing from the Church's mission. Reports presented from dioceses revealed administrative weaknesses in schools and offices — especially where financial roles are poorly defined, controls are uneven, or documentation is incomplete.

It was observed that trust, while central to Catholic leadership, must be matched by competence. "We cannot assume that goodwill alone guarantees accountability," one participant said. "We need systems that are transparent, consistent, and fair."

The meeting heard that in some cases, schools were not being audited regularly, while previous audits had exposed maladministration. One par-

ticipant, speaking off record, described how in at least one instance a school appeared to have "manufactured" an audit to satisfy oversight expectations — a reminder that audit systems themselves can be manipulated when supervision is weak. Such experiences, participants agreed, highlight the urgent need for stronger verification and independent oversight to ensure that audits serve their true purpose.

The Commission noted that where audits are routine, misconduct rarely festers; where audits are delayed or absent, confusion often grows. Participants emphasised that the goal is not punishment but prevention — creating systems that detect and correct errors early.

One diocesan education secretary stressed that regular audits, accurate documentation, and clear separation of financial duties were essential for maintaining trust. Another added that "safeguarding finance is as important as safeguarding children," a remark that captured the moral weight of the discussion.

It was agreed that dioceses should take proactive steps to standardise accounting procedures, train responsible authorities, and establish transparent reporting channels between schools and education offices.

In illustrating how governance weaknesses can extend beyond school walls, one participant referred to the Basic Education Assistance Mod-

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Fr Bukuta makes his presentation

ule (BEAM) — not as a central issue, but as an example of how ethical lapses sometimes reach even the selection of beneficiaries. Cases were cited where parents who claimed they could not afford a US\$20 school fee were later seen paying US\$150 for optional trips, suggesting that verification processes had failed.

This, participants agreed, is part of the same moral challenge: when systems lack oversight, integrity becomes negotiable. Whether in selecting students or managing school funds, accountability must be consistent and principled.

The Commission's discussions did not dwell on blame but looked toward systemic renewal. Delegates called for practical reforms, including:

- Regular and independent audits of all Catholic schools and diocesan education offices.
- Clear delineation of financial roles to prevent concentration of authority.
- Training for heads, priests, and bursars in budgeting, procurement, and reporting.
- Use of simple, auditable templates across dioceses for consistency.
- Greater oversight and peer review between dioceses to promote best practice.

Such steps, they said, would strengthen integrity while reducing pressure on school leaders who often juggle multiple roles.

Representatives from Catholic universities expressed willingness to assist dioceses through short courses in administration and finance, integrating ethical decision-making with technical competence. This partnership approach, they said, could help ensure that responsibility is

supported, not feared.

Education secretaries from several dioceses echoed the need for professionalisation, arguing that Catholic education's credibility depends on its ability to model the transparency it preaches. "The people expect the Church to be the example of honesty, not the reflection of the world's corruption," one participant observed.

Throughout the meeting, speakers linked financial integrity with the Church's wider safeguarding mission. Just as the Church protects children and vulnerable persons, it must also protect its material resources with prudence and justice. "Both forms of safeguarding," one delegate noted, "serve the same end — to ensure that what is entrusted to us serves life, not self-interest."

This holistic understanding of safeguarding — covering ethics, finance, and pastoral care — marked a significant step in unifying the Church's accountability culture.

Rather than introducing a new framework, the Commission's reflection formed part of an ongoing review of the ZCBC Strategic Plan (2023–2027). The aim was to check how diocesan education offices and institutions are conforming to the plan's goals of integral evangelisation, ethical leadership, and service.

By tightening administrative procedures and enhancing transparency, Catholic schools and universities contribute to that vision — turning faith into practical governance. Accountability, participants concluded, is not a separate policy objective but an expression of mission.

As the meeting concluded, the tone was one of sober hope. Delegates recognised that renewal requires courage but also grace. Systems alone do not make institutions honest — people do. But systems can make honesty easier to live.

"Catholic education cannot form honest citizens if it tolerates dishonesty within," one participant remarked. The statement hung in the room, as both challenge and commitment.

Through stronger audits, clearer roles, and a shared moral compass, Catholic schools aim to rebuild trust with parents, learners, and the nation. In doing so, they remind Zimbabwe that integrity is not just good management — it is evangelisation by example.

NEWS IN PICTURES



Faith, policy, and the future of learning: rethinking Catholic education in Zimbabwe

By Fr Johnston Mlambo



There are few social institutions as revealing of a nation's soul as its schools. In Zimbabwe, education has long been more than a public service; it has been a moral project that once embodied the promise of independence itself. Yet, as the policy language of Education 5.0 and industrial innovation reshapes the national imagination, the Church faces a deeper question: what becomes of education when formation is replaced by functionality?

The first generation of post-independence leaders viewed education as liberation. Schools multiplied, literacy soared, and the Church—already an experienced educator—stood at the centre of this expansion. Four decades later, the conversation has shifted from access to output. The state's Curriculum Framework (2015–2022) and Education 5.0 now call for learning that drives technological advancement and industrial productivity.

The pursuit of relevance, however, carries a hidden cost. Relevance without conscience can produce what one educationist aptly described as “clever devils.” Innovation must therefore serve inspiration; knowledge must never outgrow wisdom.

Catholic pedagogy has never been utilitarian. It is grounded in a theology of the human

person—seeking to form intellect, virtue, and community together. The Church's role is not to compete with the state's education policy but to complete it: to ensure that the pursuit of knowledge remains anchored in the pursuit of life.

Where Education 5.0 urges innovation and industrialisation, Catholic education adds the moral dimension—conscience, solidarity, and service. A school that produces engineers without empathy or scientists without integrity cannot claim to serve the common good.

The health of Catholic education, therefore, depends not only on infrastructure or policy alignment but on moral credibility. Systems may deliver results, but integrity sustains trust. When procedures are weak or accountability unclear, the Church's educational witness is diminished.

Catholic social teaching insists that justice begins in ordinary administration. To account honestly for resources, to treat each child and employee fairly, is itself an act of evangelisation. As stewards of the Gospel, Catholic educators must embody the transparency they wish to see in society. Safeguarding resources, in this sense, becomes another way of safeguarding souls.

The conversation about educational reform often turns to technology—smart boards, digital records, and online learning. These are valuable



A discussion on policy implementation

tools, but technology is not morally neutral; it must be baptised by purpose. The Church must ensure that gadgets do not outgrow guidance, and that screens do not replace human encounter. In Catholic schools, digital progress should deepen community rather than dilute it.

Even state-supported programmes such as the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) remind us that injustice can take subtle forms. When families who can afford modest fees still benefit from subsidies while the poorest remain excluded, the problem is not merely administrative—it is moral. Education policy, like catechesis, demands conversion of heart.

For Catholic educators, this means demonstrating fairness not only in teaching but in management, ensuring that every decision reflects the Church's preferential option for the poor.

The reflections emerging from recent Church consultations point toward a shared conviction: Catholic education must grow not only in enrolment but in integrity. The challenge is not to imitate the efficiency of the world but to imagine a civilisation of love through disciplined, value-driven learning.

If schools become factories of results, they may win admiration but lose their soul. If they unite intellect and integrity—forming honest citizens before successful professionals—they will serve both Gospel and nation.

Catholic education in Zimbabwe thus stands at a crossroads between imitation and imagination. The future will depend on whether it can remain faithful to its deepest vocation: to form men and women whose knowledge is illumined by conscience, whose competence is tempered by compassion, and whose education becomes an act of faith in the God who is Truth itself.

The task ahead is not only to teach children how to think but what to live for. In every transparent ledger, every safeguarded child, and every teacher who models integrity, the Church proclaims that education is still its most enduring act of evangelisation—an education not merely for survival, but for salvation.



Participants offer thoughtful observations

Neo catechumenal way: a journey of continuous learning, renewal

By Maxine F. Kundishora

Masvingo- In the fast-paced world we live in today, continuous learning has become essential for personal growth, and this principle extends to spiritual development as well.

For Catholics, the process of catechism serves as the foundational teaching of the faith, typically undertaken in childhood or early adolescence.

However, as with any discipline, the journey of learning does not stop there.

Understanding the teachings of the Church in a deeper, more personal way is an ongoing task for every believer—one that continues throughout their entire life through the neo catechumenal way.

Facilitated for by Bishop Raymond Mupandasekwa, the Catholic Diocese of Masvingo had an opportunity to learn the neo catechumenal way.

A visiting Priest, Rev. Fr Angel Miguel capacitated locals on teachings to be passed on to more Catholics with the goal of helping those who have already been baptized but have lapsed in their faith, to deepen their commitment to Christ.

"The word of God, never grows old. Even as a priest, each time it is proclaimed, it works in my life and I have witnessed the power of the neo catechumenal way, a program of re-evangelization to the people to return to the gospel," Fr Miguel said.

"We enlightened people to let the Gospel seep into their everyday routines, through baptism and the sacrament of confession, inviting people to repent of their sins and experience true conversion," he added.

Fr Miguel also explained that the program reached those who never truly encountered Christ,

helping them to step again onto the path of discipleship, to see Christianity not as a Sunday obligation but as a way of life and to let the word of God shape their days, learning what it means to be loved.

Historically, the neo catechumenal way began in Madrid of Spain, in 1964 when two missionaries chose to live among the poor to understand their way of life.

Eventually, the Holy Spirit began to work in them as they started sharing the Word, which inspired the Bishop of Madrid to adopt this evangelism into parishes.

The practice has since grown to more than 136 countries worldwide.

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Whither Zimbabwe! The untouchable empire of 'land barons'

By Fr. Johnston Mlambo



These terms, once technical, became instruments of manipulation. Groups formed, often aligned with political parties, claiming to represent the homeless. Some were genuine. Many were not.

Within these groups emerged the new elite of the poor — men and women who discovered that control of land was control of people.

With the blessing of powerful patrons, they parceled out state and council land, collecting cash and loyalty in equal measure.

A civic leader recently observed that what was meant to empower citizens "became the politicisation of urban planning processes."

The so-called Parallel Development Policy — which allowed settlers to build before services were provided — was quickly hijacked. Land could now be sold first and planned later.

That loophole birthed a class of untouchables.

The land baron thrives where desperation meets politics.

Each election season, the script is the same.

Politicians speak the language of compassion: "Let the people have land!" Settlers are encouraged to occupy open spaces, wetlands, even sewer paddocks — assured that "regularisation will follow."

After the ballots are counted and power secured, the same politicians discover their moral compass.

They denounce the land barons they dined with, promise arrests that never come, and blame councils for "failing to act."

Meanwhile, the victims — ordinary families —



They call them land barons.

A polite term for men and women who steal in broad daylight, hiding their greed beneath the language of housing rights and political loyalty. They are Zimbabwe's open secret — known by name, protected by power, and, perhaps, feared by all.

For years now, the government has promised to "deal decisively" with land barons. Presidential speeches, ministerial warnings, and press statements have thundered against them.

Yet, like mist at dawn, they evaporate at the sound of justice — only to re-emerge richer, louder, and more entrenched.

And so the question refuses to die: how can a nation once renowned for its disciplined police and formidable intelligence services fail to catch men who operate in plain sight?

To understand the land baron, one must return to the turn of the millennium — to the fast-track land reform era, when order gave way to occupation and politics replaced planning.

What began as a movement to correct historical injustice morphed into a culture of entitlement and impunity.

As land reform spread, a new vocabulary entered the national psyche: "offer letter," "cooperative," "allocation," "regularisation."

"The state that sees everything now pretends to see nothing."



An irregular settlement built on a wetland in Budiriro

“Land baronism is not a crime of poverty; it is a crime of privilege.”

live on dangerous ground, paying monthly instalments to ghosts who carry fake stamps and counterfeit permits.

When cholera strikes or floods destroy homes, the barons are nowhere to be found.

Zimbabwe's tragedy is that land baronism is not a crime of poverty; it is a crime of privilege.

Land barons do not operate alone.

They exist within a web that stretches from the streets to the corridors of power.

They forge documents in council offices, influence planners, and grease the palms of inspectors.

They have allies among councillors, MPs, and even civil servants tasked with stopping them.

One concerned citizen reported that, in one Harare suburb, only about twenty people were placed on a piece of land—not as genuine settlers but as sentinels to “secure” the ground.

When the land barons later presented papers to council, they produced long lists of hundreds of supposed beneficiaries, arguing that the area required regularisation.

Once approval was granted, the fictitious names became a ticket for large-scale sales.

The handful who had built served only as evidence that the land was “occupied”; the real business began after the ink dried.

Investigations reveal that even in affluent north-

ern suburbs, the practice persists under a new name: “infill development.”

Wetlands are swallowed by gated communities — the new face of land baronism, polished and legalised.

These barons do not carry machetes; they carry title deeds.

How has a nation with one of Africa's most vigilant security systems lost control of its own land? The answer lies not in ignorance, but in complicity.

The long-awaited Commission of Inquiry on Urban Land Corruption, led by Justice Tendai Uchena, reportedly exposed deep collusion among officials, politicians, and cooperatives.

Yet, years later, its findings remain sealed within the walls of the authorities' offices.

If corruption thrives in darkness, then secrecy is its oxygen.

The longer that report remains buried, the louder the suspicion grows that the state itself has become the landlord of lawlessness.

The victims of this grand deceit are everywhere:

- Parents who sell all they have for a plot that vanishes in paperwork.
- Children who cross flooded streams to reach distant schools because their “new suburb” has no bridge.
- Pensioners who die of stress after discovering their stands were double-sold.

These are not collateral damages; they are casualties of a system that has traded conscience for convenience.

The barons are not hunted because they are



Buildings in one of Harare's affluent northern suburbs stand on a wetland



Irregular and unplanned settlements threaten wetlands, ultimately endangering the environment and climate.

useful.

They mobilise voters, control settlements, and deliver crowds.

To the cynical, they are tools of political survival.

To the powerless, they are the gatekeepers of a dream — a roof over one's head.

Land baronism is a symptom of something deeper — the corrosion of accountability.

Zimbabwe has become systematically corrupt not because its people are inherently dishonest, but because corruption has been normalised.

A pastor once remarked, "Sin that is not punished becomes policy."

In today's Zimbabwe, theft that is not prosecuted becomes governance.

When citizens see criminals rewarded with contracts, when politicians sermonise about morality from podiums built on plunder, when a whole government apparatus fears to confront a few individuals — the social contract dies quietly.

There is still hope, but it will not come from yet another taskforce or press conference.

It will come from truth — from unmasking the cartels and releasing the Uchena Report to the public.

It will come from communities that refuse to buy stolen land, from journalists who keep telling the story, and from a Church that chooses to speak when silence has become complicity.

In the Scriptures, the prophet Elijah confronted King Ahab for stealing Naboth's vineyard.

"Thus says the Lord: Have you killed and also taken possession?" (1 Kings 21:19). That same prophetic voice is needed now — to declare that the vineyard belongs to God, not to barons in party regalia.

A nation that cannot control its land cannot claim to control its destiny. The question before us is not who the land barons are — we already know.

The question is whether Zimbabwe still has the courage to confront them.

Until justice pierces the armour of politics, until the law serves truth rather than power, and until power ceases to protect its own, the dream of smart cities and decent housing will remain a cruel illusion.

For now, the land barons remain — kings without crowns, emperors of impunity.

And the nation, once famed for order and intelligence, stands watching — knowing everything, and doing nothing.

"Until justice pierces the armour of politics, the dream of smart cities will remain an illusion."



Urban development, marked by tar and cement, continues to replace and destroy wetlands.



Archdiocese of Harare celebrates patron saint Peter Claver for the first time

By Tricia P. Mlambo

Harare- Across the Catholic world, dioceses, parishes, and religious institutions are placed under the protection of Patron Saints — holy men and women chosen as spiritual guardians, intercessors, and role models for the faithful.

The practice dates back to the early centuries of the Church, when Christian communities began dedicating their churches to saints whose virtues and life missions reflected their own spiritual aspirations.

Patron Saints are not only venerated as heavenly protectors but also serve as constant reminders of how faith can be lived out in action and service.

In this spirit, the Archdiocese of Harare gathered at Immaculate Conception and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish on Saturday, 13 September 2025, to celebrate the feast of its Patron Saint, St. Peter Claver, for the first time as a diocese.

The day was marked by talks, prayer, and the celebration of Holy Mass — all centered on reflecting upon the saint's enduring legacy of compassion and justice.

The festivities began with presentations highlighting the life and mission of St. Peter Claver, a 17th-century Jesuit priest remembered for dedicating over forty years to ministering to enslaved

Africans arriving in South America.

His life of service and advocacy for the dignity of the oppressed has made him a symbol of solidarity with the marginalized.

Opening the program, Fr. Matiyenga traced the history of Harare's Cathedral and the missionary work of Archbishop Ashton Chichester SJ, who championed vocations among black Catholics.

He explained how Archbishop Chichester found inspiration in Peter Claver's example, leading to the founding of the Little Children of Our Blessed Lady (LCBL) Sisters and the Chishawasha Seminary.

"Peter Claver had a heart for black people, un-



Fr Matiyenga addresses the audience

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Fr Themba gives his presentation

derstanding them and showing them everlasting love," Fr. Matiyenga said, linking the saint's mission to the Church's own local history.

The second presentation, delivered by Fr. Temba, connected St. Peter Claver's legacy with the Church's Jubilee Year of Hope.

He recounted how Claver, initially hesitant, found courage to embrace his calling through the encouragement of St. Alphonsus Rodriguez.

"Peter Claver became the slave of slaves," Fr. Themba said, urging parishioners to confront modern forms of slavery — such as drug abuse, exploitation, and social alienation.

"Our faith must give others hope, especially those who have lost it," he added.

The day's highlight was the celebration of Holy Mass, led by Right Reverend Fr. Muguti, with a homily delivered by Fr. Daka SJ.

Describing Peter Claver as "a prophet of dignity," Fr. Daka reflected on how the saint restored humanity to enslaved Africans in an age that de-



United in faith, congregants follow the sacred proceedings



The faithful follow Mass proceedings keenly

nied their worth.

He also acknowledged the Jesuits' own historical entanglement with slavery, emphasizing that true repentance is expressed through loving action.

"We must speak with our hands before we speak with our lips," he said, quoting St. Francis of Assisi and challenging the faithful to identify "today's slaves among us."

In closing remarks, Dr. Uzhenyu, Vice Chairperson of the Pastoral Council, thanked all who made the celebration possible, particularly the Southwest Deanery for hosting.

"It is never easy to start something new, but the celebrations went smoothly," he said, expressing hope that future commemorations would attract even greater participation.

Bringing the day to an end, Fr. Muguti offered words of gratitude and encouragement, urging the community to emulate the compassion, justice, and unwavering hope embodied by St. Peter Claver.

The historic celebration marked not only a spiritual milestone for the Archdiocese of Harare but also a renewed commitment to live out its patron's mission — to love, serve, and restore dignity to all God's people.



A priest reads the gospel



The Cry of the South: Churches Confront the United Nations on Climate Justice

By Fr. Johnston Mlambo

Ten days before the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, the Catholic bishops of the Global South delivered a powerful moral appeal to the world's most influential leaders.

Representing the Catholic Episcopal Conferences of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean, in their letter – addressed to UN Secretary-General Mr António Guterres, UNGA President Ms Annalena Baerbock, and UNFCCC Executive Secretary Mr Simon Stiell – called for nothing less than a “profound ecological conversion” and a “new moral contract for humanity.”

Rooted in Pope Francis's *Laudato Si'*, and in Pope Leo XIV's recent exhortation “to live an integral ecology with justice,” the bishops warned that global warming had reached 1.55 °C in 2024, describing it not as a technical challenge but as “an existential issue of justice, dignity and care for our common home.”

That figure refers to how much the Earth's average surface temperature has risen since the late 1800s, before large-scale industrialisation.

Scientists measure this warming by comparing long-term global temperature records from both land and ocean with that pre-industrial baseline.

The 1.5 °C limit—enshrined in the 2015 Paris Agreement—is widely recognised as the upper boundary of warming that humanity can safely tolerate.

Beyond this point, climate change triggers a cascade of irreversible impacts: rising seas, crippling droughts, deadly heatwaves, and collapsing ecosystems, all of which weigh most heavily on poorer nations least responsible for global emissions –especially those the bishops represent.

In their 10 September 2025 letter, the bishops welcomed the UN Secretary-General's acknowledgment that “climate change is a factor of insecurity ... increasing poverty ... and anger,” and his call for countries to submit new national climate plans aligned with the 1.5 °C limit.

Yet they voiced deep concern over what they called a “potential lack of ambition to secure the 1.5 °C threshold.”

“The Church will not remain silent. We will continue to raise our voice alongside science, civil society and the most vulnerable, with truth, courage and consistency, until justice is done,” they declared.

They denounced “false solutions such as ‘green

capitalism,' technocracy, the commodification of nature and extractivism, which perpetuate exploitation and injustice."

Instead, they urged that rich nations pay their ecological debt through fair and non-indebting climate finance, and that States "never abandon" the 1.5 °C goal.

This UN appeal built on the July 2025 Global South bishops' statement for COP30, which affirmed that "without climate justice there is no peace; without ecological conversion there is no future."

They insisted that "the cry of the Earth is also the cry of the poor" and pledged to keep "raising [the Church's] prophetic voice against ecological and social injustices."

That document also introduced a practical agenda:

- Zero deforestation by 2030;
- Debt-free, direct climate finance;
- An end to new fossil-fuel infrastructure; and
- Protection of indigenous peoples and vulnerable communities

"We will defend the most vulnerable in every decision about climate and nature," they vowed, urging world leaders to "put the common good above profit."

When nearly 100 countries gathered in New York on 24 September 2025 for the UN Climate Summit, the tone matched the bishops' urgency, if not their depth.

"The science demands action. The law commands it. The economics compel it. And people are calling for it," Secretary-General Guterres proclaimed in his opening statement

For the first time, China and Nigeria announced economy-wide emissions-reduction targets, while other nations unveiled renewable-energy goals, methane-control strategies and plans to phase out fossil fuels

According to the Chair's Summary, 125 Parties representing 79 percent of global emissions had now submitted or announced new 2035 targets.

Leaders recognised progress in renewable energy and the rise of a low-carbon economy, but admitted that the transition was "still not happening fast enough to keep 1.5 °C within reach."

They emphasised a "just transition" and the need to "significantly increase the flow of finance to developing countries."

In substance, many of the Churches' concerns resonated in the official proceedings:

- The bishops' call for equitable finance was mirrored in leaders' support for the "Baku-to-Belém Roadmap" to mobilise USD 1.3 trillion annually by 2035
- Their insistence on justice and solidarity appeared in the Solutions Dialogues theme that "equity and justice must be at the heart of climate action."

Yet, crucially, their demand for structural transformation and an end to new fossil-fuel expansion found no binding commitment.

While world leaders agreed that "a decade of delivery, implementation and acceleration must begin in Belém," the Summit's roadmap remained policy-driven, not moral-driven.

As the Secretary-General later conceded, "It is not enough ... we need far greater ambition to keep the 1.5-degree limit within reach."

Despite the gaps, the Churches' interventions reframed climate diplomacy in moral language.

Their repeated insistence that "without ecological conversion there is no future" now echoes in civil-society campaigns and among developing-country negotiators preparing for COP30 in Belém, Brazil (10–21 November 2025).

Whether their prophetic tone will translate into structural reform remains to be seen.

But in a world still divided between polluters and the polluted, the bishops' voice from the Global South stands as conscience to power: a reminder that climate change is not just a battle of carbon numbers—but a test of justice, soli-



Silveira Mission appeals for help towards hospital renovation, expansion

By Cecilia Dzvairo



Masvingo- Silveira Mission Hospital is appealing for funds for the renovation and expansion of Silveira Mission Hospital which is the primary healthcare provider for Bikita District in Masvingo.

The hospital is seeking to raise Twenty Thousand United States Dollars (US\$20 000) towards the expansion and renovation which they hope will reduce overcrowding and improve meeting-patient demand.

Catholic Diocese of Masvingo Health Coordinator, Sr. Florence Tengerayi said the hospital buildings have also aged while most beds are now broken leaving the hospital in need of assistance.

"A grave crisis now threatens our ability to fulfil this sacred duty. Our buildings have aged and in dire need of renovations. Most of our beds have been broken leaving the hospitals with few beds not enough for admitted clients.

"It is heartbreaking to witness patients already weakened by illness, lying on broken hospital

beds with thin, worn-out mattresses and no pillows for support," wrote Sr Tengerayi in a letter of appeal.

"Our maternity ward, built for 20, now delivers over 1,800 babies annually, and is in need of expansion. We manage complex diseases like HIV/TB in overcrowded conditions, unable to provide the isolated care that is clinically required for drug-resistant strains.

"This is a battle we are fighting with one hand tied behind our backs," she added.

Meanwhile, Silveira Mission Hospital has been a beacon of light and healing for over 250,000 people in the Bikita District.

For decades, this institution has embodied the churches' commitment to providing quality, compassionate, and affordable healthcare, a mission the Catholic Health Commission holds as sacred.

Contact person for donations is Sr. Florence Tengerayi who is reachable on +263 789 673904

Archdiocese of Harare celebrates jubilee for catechists: a testament to faith, service, and the future of catechesis

By Cheu Pswarayi



Participants follow proceedings

Harare- The Catholic University of Zimbabwe came alive from 27 to 28 September 2025 as more than 1,000 catechists from across the Archdiocese of Harare gathered to celebrate their Jubilee—joining the global Catholic Church in honouring the vocation of catechists.

What had initially been planned for 800 participants grew into a vibrant, spirit-filled celebration, reflecting the enduring commitment of men and women who dedicate their lives to nurturing the faith in parishes, schools, and communities.

In his remarks, Archdiocese of Harare Pastoral Director, Fr. Matienga, emphasised that the Jubilee was anchored in the theme of hope, reminding participants that catechists are indispensable to the mission of evangelisation.

"Today is a special day because it is a Jubilee for catechists—those who have generously helped nurture the faith we now cherish," he said.

"Catechists play a vital role in helping people understand and live their Christian faith."

He encouraged catechists to adopt a holistic and synodal approach to their ministry—one that responds to the real needs of the faithful while walking together as a community of believers.

Committee member Mrs. Kembo described the

Jubilee as both a celebration and a renewal of mission, saying it offered a time to reflect, appreciate one's calling, and prepare for the future of catechesis in Zimbabwe and beyond.

The atmosphere throughout the weekend was marked by joy, fellowship, and renewal.

Catechists shared testimonies, exchanged experiences, and drew spiritual strength for the journey ahead.

Among the moving stories was that of Sr. Remedya from Sacred Heart Cathedral, who began sharing her faith as a five-year-old with her traditionalist grandfather and continues to serve with zeal well into her 80s.

Mrs. Kehle, honoured for 45 years of service, reflected on her lifelong ministry as "a mission to keep hoping, keep trusting, and keep inspiring."

In his homily, the Vicar General of Harare, Very Rev. Fr. Kennedy Muguti, highlighted that the vocation of a catechist is transformative by nature.

"Davidzo yemucatechist kubatsira vanhu kuti vagone kugamuchira huvepo hwaMwari, hounza shanduko. It's transformative in its nature," he said, underlining the catechist's role in bringing about lasting conversion.

Other speakers, including Fr. Bingare, Fr. Mgcini Moyo, and Fr. Gotami, enriched the gathering

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with teachings on evangelisation and discipleship. Fr. Moyo outlined the stages of evangelisation—witness, proclamation, and maturity in faith—while identifying six signs of a mature Christian: knowledge of faith, liturgical formation, moral integrity, prayerfulness, community life, and missionary consciousness.

Fr. Gotami, reflecting on the parable of the prodigal son, reminded catechists that God's mercy lies at the heart of their ministry, calling them to be visible signs of forgiveness and reconciliation.

The Jubilee also featured long-service awards, honouring men and women who have dedicated decades to teaching the faith.

These awards were not mere tokens of recognition but symbols of gratitude for the faithful witness that sustains the Church's mission.

Beyond celebration, the event also provided space for forward-looking reflection.

In an interview with SOCCOM, Fr. Matsika, Spiritual Director for Catechists, outlined the future of catechesis in the Archdiocese.

He revealed that decentralisation of formation programmes is already underway, with successful workshops held in Chitungwiza, Waterfalls, Mhondoro, St. Canisius Marlborough, and Our Lady of the Wayside Mt Pleasant, among others.

"We go where we are invited," he said. "Our only challenge remains financial, particularly transport costs, as we do not yet have a service vehicle. Human resources, thank God, are sufficient."

Fr. Matsika expressed optimism about the growing participation of young people in cat-

echetical ministry.

"At the Jubilee and in recent workshops, we saw more young adults and even youths stepping forward. This gives us hope that the future is bright," he said, urging parishes to foster mentorship systems where experienced catechists accompany younger ones.

"If we keep saying they are the Church of tomorrow, they will wait passively. They must be accepted as the Church of today."

On the use of technology, Fr. Matsika acknowledged both its opportunities and challenges.

While digital platforms like WhatsApp are useful for sharing resources and coordination, he cautioned that "technology should never replace personal witness. Digital catechesis must complement, not substitute, the encounter between catechist and catechumen."

He concluded with a message of encouragement:

"By virtue of baptism, we are all called to teach the faith. Do your part wherever you are and do not be afraid, for the owner of the vineyard assures us: 'I am with you always' (Mt 28:20). Even when resources are scarce, remember you are doing the Lord's work, and He remains with you always."

As the Church journeys forward in the Universal Jubilee Year, the Archdiocese of Harare stands grateful for its catechists—men and women who embody hope, carry the mission of Christ, and keep alive the flame of faith in every corner of the Church.



Catechists enjoy their meal



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