

# CATHOLIC CHURCH NEWS

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**“We are not expecting perfection, but an improvement,”**

- **Archdiocese of Bulawayo unveils 2026 pastoral resolutions**
- **Faith and fortitude: a miracle amidst the flood**
- **High Court orders government to publish Uchena commission reports**
- **Pope Leo XIV continues Vatican II catechesis**



## *More than the expression of ideas*

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## From the editor's desk

### Dear Reader

January proved to be a particularly busy month, with much passing across this desk. I therefore wish to apologise for bringing you the January edition of your Catholic Church News later than expected. I trust, however, that you will find the wait worthwhile as we introduce a refreshed structure intended to enrich your reading and deepen our shared journey of faith.

One of the new features in this edition is Catechesis Corner, a regular column designed to explain the teachings of the Church in simple and clear language. Our hope is that it will help us to grow not only in knowledge of our faith, but also in a deeper appreciation of its richness, beauty and relevance to daily life.

We have also introduced Parliament Watch, a section that follows developments in the nation's legislative process and highlights Bills under consideration. In keeping with the Church's concern for the common good, this feature seeks to help you, dear reader, remain informed and engaged with the social and civic realities that shape our country. As we begin the new year, the Church in Zimbabwe continues to focus on the implementation of the Synod on Synodality, as guided by last year's Plenary Assembly. Encouraging signs of this journey are already visible. The Diocese of Gokwe recently held an intensive and well-received workshop on financial administration and pastoral planning, strengthening its commitment to transparency, co-responsibility and shared mission.

In the same spirit, the Archdiocese of Bulawayo brought together the Combined Adult Associations for a Synodal Day of Prayer at Our Lady of Fatima — a powerful reminder that synodality begins with prayer, listening and walking together. This edition carries stories that reflect these encouraging developments.

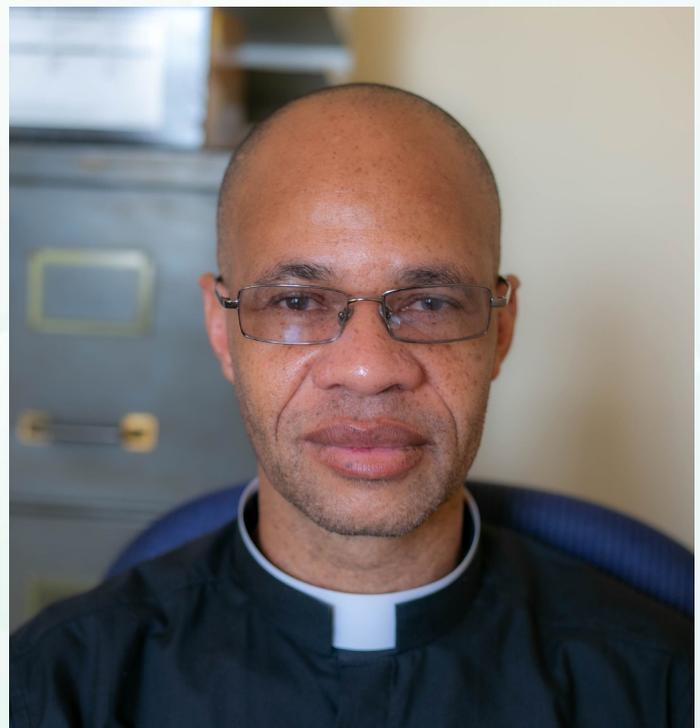
Synodality calls for the full participation of all the faithful — laity, religious and ordained — each contributing their gifts in a spirit of mutual respect and shared responsibility. It

also reminds us of the growing need for ministers to serve God's people. In this regard, the Archdiocese of Harare and the Diocese of Gokwe recently celebrated diaconate ordinations, together ordaining four transitional deacons — a hopeful sign of the Church's continued growth and service.

This edition also carries a moving account of faith and providence, as two altar servers from the Diocese of Masvingo narrowly escaped a flooded river — a reminder of both the risks faced in daily life and the protection of God's guiding hand.

As we step into this new year, may these stories encourage us to see the Church not simply as an institution, but as a living family of faith — praying together, discerning together and serving together. The journey of synodality invites each one of us to renew our commitment to the Gospel, to take responsibility for the life of the Church, and to be witnesses of hope in our communities.

May this edition inspire you to walk more consciously with the Lord and with one another, so that, together, we may build a Church that listens, serves and reflects the love of Christ in our nation and in our world.



**Fr. Johnston Z. Mlambo**

**Editor**



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## “Not Perfection, but improvement”: Gokwe diocese implements synodal vision



*Learning by doing: Participants engage in a group exercise to draw up a budget, which was later presented to the wider group.*

**By Fr. Johnston Mlambo**

As the Church moves from reflection to action following the three-year Synod on Synodality (2021–2024), dioceses across Africa are beginning to translate the synodal experience into concrete pastoral and administrative renewal. This implementation phase has gained further direction from the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), which in Kigali launched a 12-point pastoral roadmap to guide the mission of the Church on the continent from 2025 to 2050.

The roadmap identifies key pillars for the future of the African Church, including evangelisation, formation of missionary disciples, care for creation, youth engagement, justice and peace, digital mission, liturgical life, and the promotion of a self-reliant Church. In addressing the challenge of financial sustainability, the African bishops acknowledged that financial insecurity is often linked to poor planning, weak structures, and inadequate

training in Church administration — even as they affirmed that Africa is rich in potential.

It is within this continental vision and the spirit of synodal implementation that the Diocese of Gokwe recently held a three-day workshop, from 22 to 24 January 2026, focusing on financial recording and reporting as well as pastoral planning.

The workshop brought together chairpersons and treasurers from all 24 parishes, together with deans, the pastoral director, and the vicar general.

Of particular significance was the presence of the Bishop of Gokwe, Rt. Rev. Eusebius Nyathi, who attended all the sessions.

His presence not only underscored the importance of the workshop but also demonstrated the synodal spirit in action, walking together, listening together, and discerning together as a diocesan family.

The training aimed to equip parish leaders with basic accounting skills to ensure uniformity and accountability in financial reporting to the diocese. With many parishes having

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**Bishop Eusebius Nyathi follows the proceedings attentively.**

elected new leadership at the end of 2025, the workshop also served to familiarise the new office bearers with their responsibilities. On the pastoral front, the Diocese is in the process of developing a new pastoral plan following the expiry of the previous one in 2025. Initial questionnaires had been circulated to parishes to gather input from the faithful. However, after a presentation by the National Pastoral Coordinator, Fr. Mgcini Moyo, on the synodal methodology for pastoral planning, the Diocese resolved to begin the process afresh, starting with the systematic listening of the People of God. Speaking to SOCCOM, Bishop Nyathi expressed hope that the workshop would lay the foundation for a meaningful and realistic pastoral plan rooted in the lived experience of the faithful.

### **Leadership Rooted in Mission**

In his homily during the closing Mass on 24 January, Bishop Nyathi encouraged the newly elected leaders to remain steadfast in their service, even when their commitment is misunderstood or criticised. Reflecting on Mark 3:13–19, where Jesus' relatives thought He had lost His mind, the Bishop noted that

dedication to the work of God can sometimes attract misunderstanding.

*"Dzimwe nguva mubasa ratinoita tichiitira Mwari, nyangwe kuzvipira kwatinoita vamwe vanozotitorawo semapenzi... Asi ibasa raMwari, kuitira Mwari. Dzimwe nguva nevanhu vatisingatarisire ndoo zvavachazofunga nekutaura."*

He encouraged leaders not to expect constant praise.

*"Hapasi pose patichanzi, excellent magona, pamwe tichashorwa asi kana tichiziva kuti tiri kuitira Mwari, ngatisarasai mwoyo."*

Drawing from the first reading (2 Samuel 1:1–27), the Bishop presented King David's mourning for Saul as a model of Christian leadership rooted in love, even in the face of hostility.

*"Nesuwo vatungamiri tinosangana dzimwe nguva nekushoropodzwa, kutukwa nekuvengwa asi ngatiitei basa redu nerudo... Tisadzorera chakaipa nechakaipa, asi nezvakanaka."*

"As leaders, we may face criticism, rejection, or even hostility. But we must continue to serve with love. We must never allow negative experiences to stop us from loving or

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**Participants pose for a group photograph after the Day 2 Mass.**

from doing good. We should not repay evil with evil, but respond with goodness, because that is what God asks of us."

### **Synodality as co-responsibility**

In his concluding remarks, Bishop Nyathi emphasised collaboration, co-responsibility, and participation by all.

*"Sangano harisi rana nhingi nana nhingi... Sangano ndera Kristo, Sangano nderedu tose nekuti isusu tiri nhengo dzemuviri waKristo."*

He noted that when something goes wrong in the Church, it affects the whole community, since all are members of the one Body of Christ.

At the same time, this shared responsibility calls the faithful to take ownership of the Church's mission and to participate actively in shaping its pastoral direction.

*"Kana imwe nhengo ichirwadziwa tose tinorwadziwa... Ndosaka tagara pasi tichironga pamwechete tichiedza kuburitsa pastoral plan yedu tose."*

This approach, he explained, ensures that the pastoral plan will truly belong to the whole diocesan community, since it will be the fruit of listening, participation, and working together.

Transparency, he added, is essential for building trust and unity.

*"Zvakanaka tikashanda pamwe chete tese*

*tichiziva zvatiri kuita... kuti suspicion dzipere."*

He urged that financial reports be shared not only with the diocesan office but also with parish communities, Small Christian Communities, and Mass centres so that the faithful understand how their contributions are used.

Above all, he clarified the spirit guiding the initiative:

*"Hatisi kutarisira perfection asi tinotarisa improvement."*

### **Testimonials from the participants**

The impact of the workshop was also evident in the reflections of participants, who expressed appreciation for its practical and pastoral value.

Mr Vote Jena from Uganda Martyrs Parish said:

*"Uganda parish... Iworkshop le ngifunde ukuthi icebo lobelusi limele likhangele indimi zonke ikakhulu abakhuluma ulimi lwesiNdebele... sifunde okujulileyo kakhulu."*

Sazini Sibanda Malipa from St Jacob Mass Centre added:

*"Iworkshop ibihlelekile kakhulu isincede kakhulu ngolwazi ebesisilela kulo... sifunde ngokuhlela ngemali lokuyiphila iPastoral plan."*

For Mrs Muvekereri from Mwoyo Musande Parish, the workshop clarified the direction of

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*Mr Remigio Zambuko gives feedback on the questionnaires submitted for pastoral planning.*

the diocese:

*"Kana ndadzokera ndichasvika ndichiunganidza vatenderi vedu vose... toita workshop yemazuva maviri maringe nezvema financial recording."*

Mr Remigio Zambuko of Christ the King Parish highlighted the deeper pastoral insight gained: *"Takadzidza kuti chekutanga kuziva kuti tiri vana ani uye chinangwa chedu ndecheyi... Nda-kaona kuti vatungamiri vakazvigamuchira zvikuru."*

Mrs Maguchwa, chairperson of Mufudzi Wakanaka Parish, reflected on leadership formation:

*"Workshop yataita yativhura jere... hutungamiriri hunoda rudo nemwoyo murefu... uye tinofanira kushanda nevamwe."*

### **Synodality in action**

The workshop, which brought together representatives from all parishes and encouraged active participation, concluded with a shared sense of commitment and renewed energy for service.

From an observer's perspective, it was evident that the Diocese of Gokwe is embracing synodality not only as a concept, but as a way of life. Rooted in the vision of the Synod on Syno-

dality and the SECAM roadmap for the African Church, the diocese is taking practical steps towards better planning, greater accountability, and deeper participation of all the faithful.

If the spirit of the workshop is sustained, many believe that the Diocese of Gokwe is entering a new phase—one marked not by perfection, but by steady and hopeful improvement.



*Fr Mugara makes a point during the session.*

# Combined adult associations gather for synodal day of prayer at Our Lady of Fatima



*Participants present their offertory during Mass*

**By Birthwell Sibanda**

On 24 January 2026, the grounds of Our Lady of Fatima Parish in the Archdiocese of Bulawayo came alive with prayer, reflection and fellowship as members of the Combined Adult Associations gathered for a Day of Prayer under the theme, "One faith, many voices, one path." The gathering reflected the Church's synodal spirit of walking together, listening to one another, and discerning God's will as one community of faith.

Participants began arriving early in the morning, bringing with them a sense of anticipation and joy. The presence of various lay groups highlighted the richness of the Church's diversity, united by a common purpose of prayer and communion.

The programme opened with the Holy Rosary, led by different associations including the Catholic Youth Association of the Archdiocese (CYAA), the Legion of Mary, the Catholic Women's League (CWL), St Joseph's Association and the Sodality of Our Lady. Each group expressed its distinctive spiritual charism, yet their voices blended in a unified act of devotion, underscoring the message that unity in the Church embraces and sanctifies diversity. After the rosary, the faithful entered into a period of Eucharistic Adoration led by Deacon

Franklin. In the quiet presence of the Blessed Sacrament, participants were invited to renew their faith, entrust their burdens to the Lord and deepen their personal encounter with Christ. The hour of adoration served as the spiritual foundation for the day's activities. The late morning session featured a presentation on teamwork by Dr Maphosa, who challenged participants to reflect on the importance of collaboration within Church structures. Emphasising shared responsibility, mutual respect and active participation, the talk echoed the synodal call to co-responsibility among all the faithful.

Following a shared "bring and share" lunch that strengthened bonds of fellowship, the afternoon programme focused on formation and dialogue. Archbishop Alex Thomas led a reflection on the Holy Mass, inviting participants to rediscover the Eucharist as the source and summit of Christian life. An interactive question-and-answer session followed, providing a platform for open expression, clarification and deeper understanding. The day reached its spiritual climax with the celebration of Holy Mass, presided over by Archbishop Thomas. Gathered around the altar, participants experienced the fullness of ecclesial communion, where prayer, dialogue and fraternity found their ultimate

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meaning in the Eucharistic sacrifice.

In her closing remarks, the Chairperson of the Combined Adult Associations, Mrs A. Nare, expressed gratitude to the Archbishop, facilitators, organisers and all participants whose commitment ensured the success of the event.

More than a scheduled programme, the Day of Prayer became a lived expression of the Church's synodal journey. It affirmed that while members come from different associations and backgrounds, they remain united in one faith, enriched by many voices, and committed to walking together on a shared path of discipleship.

## Faith and fortitude: a miracle amidst the flood



By SOCCOM Reporter

Floods have left many communities devastated, and Masvingo was not spared from the recent flooding disasters that swept across Zimbabwe.

In some unfortunate circumstances, besides the loss of wealth in the form of livestock and destruction of crops in rural communities, lives were also lost.

In the small roadside town of Ngundu, the echoes of faith resonated louder during these trying times after two young altar servers at St Xavier Ngundu Mission, Privilege and Tinomudaishe, found themselves trapped by a flash flood while crossing a river on their way home from school.

Transforming the serene river into a raging

torrent, the boys sought refuge by climbing a tree. The once peaceful landscape became a chaotic scene, with debris swirling around them. As the floodwaters rose, so did their prayers: "Please, God, help us!"

After about four hours, there was a miraculous turn of events as a sudden calm fell over the river. It was as if the storm had paused to witness the boys' plight.

Acknowledging God's hand in the harrowing experience, their parish held a thanksgiving Mass.

"Dear brothers and sisters, these young boys are altar servers at our parish. While travelling from school, they were trapped midway as the river they were crossing suddenly flooded due to rains that had poured upstream.

"They sought refuge in a tree and survived the traumatic experience. We thank God for saving them. We have held a thanksgiving Mass for them today. Let us thank the Lord. A family almost lost their loved ones," wrote Parish Priest Rev. Fr Makamure on a church WhatsApp platform.

Reactions from parishioners and followers on the same WhatsApp group were nothing short of praise and gratitude to God. One follower wrote, "Tinovatenda Mwari nekuvanunura." Another responded, "Mwari ngaarumbidzwe zvechokwadi." Yet another, seeing only the hand of God in the experience, wrote, "Vana ava vakaona Mwari, Mwari ngaarumbidzwe."

Privilege and Tinomudaishe have since returned to their duties as altar servers, now with a deeper understanding of their faith and the strength and protection it offers.

## ZCBC and CUZ sign MoU on psycho-spiritual therapy and counselling training



*Fr. Tryvis Moyo, Secretary General of the ZCBC, and Prof. Ben Nyambo, the Vice Chancellor of CUZ, sign the MoU at the Africa Synod House in Harare.*

**By SOCCOM Reporter**

**A**t a time when Zimbabwe is facing rising levels of psychological distress, substance abuse, family breakdown and unresolved trauma, the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference (ZCBC) and the Catholic University of Zimbabwe (CUZ) have entered into a formal partnership aimed at strengthening healing and support within communities.

The two institutions signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on 29 January 2026 at the Africa Synod House in Harare, committing themselves to the training of teachers in Psycho-Spiritual Therapy and Counselling. The initiative seeks to strengthen safeguarding, holistic formation and mental health support within schools and communities, where many of the country's social and emotional challenges are increasingly evident.

The MoU was signed on behalf of the ZCBC by its Secretary General, Fr. Tryvis Moyo,

while Prof. Ben Nyambo, Vice-Chancellor of the Catholic University of Zimbabwe, signed on behalf of the university.

In his welcoming remarks, Fr. Moyo underscored the importance of collaboration among Church institutions, noting that the agreement marked a significant step toward visible and structured cooperation.

"A few days ago we were talking about collaborative ministry," he said. "We work with many organisations, and one of the questions I posed was: Where is the Catholic University in all this? These are two entities that belong to the Conference but have not been collaborating in a visible manner."

Fr. Moyo said the signing of the MoU signalled "better things to come," not only between the Education and Safeguarding Commission and CUZ, but also with other commissions of the Conference.

This point was also emphasised by Sr. Anna T. Nyadombo, National Coordinator of the Education Commission, who highlighted that the agreement provides for the sharing of exper-

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*Sr Anna T. Nyadombo, the National Coordinator of the Education Commission of the ZCBC, watches as Br Tamuka Mahwihwi, the Administrator at the ZCBC Secretariat, signs the MoU as a witness.*

tise and resources.

"The Catholic University can invite us to assist in areas where they may not have expertise and we do," she said. "Likewise, we can invite the Catholic University to come and team up with us so that we truly collaborate." Fr. Moyo further noted that the initiative would go a long way in promoting safeguarding in Catholic schools, especially at a time when children and young people are increasingly exposed to emotional, social and psychological pressures.

"Safeguarding is something the Conference takes very seriously," he said. "It is one thing to speak about safe environments, and another to create them. Teachers are key in creating spaces where children can grow into who they are meant to be."

He expressed hope that the programme would eventually be extended beyond teachers to include staff and students at the Catholic University itself, thereby promoting safe and healthy environments across Church institutions.

Addressing the gathering, Prof. Nyambo described the partnership as timely and responsive to the evolving demands placed on educators in a society facing complex social and emotional challenges.

"This partnership comes at a very critical time in the life of our nation and our ed-

ucation system," he said. "Teachers today are not only expected to impart academic knowledge, but also to serve as mentors, role models, counsellors and guardians of the holistic wellbeing of learners."

He added that the Psycho-Spiritual Therapy and Counselling training equips teachers with the skills and values needed to nurture learners intellectually, emotionally, morally and spiritually.

This observation was echoed by Sr. Theresa, who stressed that the programme responds to the holistic needs of both educators and learners.

"In the Education Commission we have a project where we are promoting safe schools," she said. "When we promote safe schools, we are also concerned about the emotional and social challenges faced by teachers. We discovered that this course offered at the Catholic University of Zimbabwe is well suited to address those needs."

Sr. Nyadombo outlined the core pillars of the MoU, beginning with a shared commitment to collaboration.

"One key component is that both institutions are working together with a positive mindset," she said.

She added that the partnership is rooted in a common faith-based mission.

"Since we are both faith-based institutions,

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*ZCBC and CUZ delegations pose for a group photo after the MoU signing ceremony*

our common goal is to heal the whole person," she said.

The programme coordinator, Mr. Antony Madongorere, explained that the Psycho-Spiritual Therapy and Counselling programme was mandated by the ZCBC and is being implemented by CUZ as part of the Church's healing ministry.

He noted that the programme is housed within the Faculty of Theology, Ethics, Religious Studies and Philosophy and has two main components: training and community service. "We train candidates in psycho-spiritual counselling and prepare them to reach out to communities through a holistic healing approach," he said.

CUZ also runs a Psycho-Spiritual Social Support Centre, which offers free counselling and therapy services to the public. Mr. Madongorere said the long-term goal is to establish similar centres in every diocese.

"We currently have one group of graduates who will be completing their studies soon, and these are the people we hope will staff psycho-spiritual centres across the dioceses," he said.

The Archdiocese of Harare will serve as a pilot site for the rollout of the diocesan psycho-spiritual centres.

Mr. Madongorere explained that the programme was developed in response to widespread and unresolved trauma affecting Zim-

babwean communities, including the effects of economic hardship, social instability and personal loss.

"We acknowledge that many people have gone through various traumas," he said. "When these remain unresolved, they can develop into intergenerational trauma. The thrust of this programme is to assist in healing psychological, spiritual, emotional and social wounds through structured intervention."

The MoU therefore represents more than an institutional agreement. It marks a significant step in strengthening the Church's response to the growing mental health and social challenges facing Zimbabwe, through collaboration between pastoral structures and academic institutions, with a shared focus on safeguarding, healing and the formation of the whole person.



# Archdiocese of Bulawayo unveils 2026 pastoral resolutions focused on synodality and renewal



**Most Rev. Archbishop Alex Thomas, the archbishop of Bulawayo Archdiocese**

**By SOCCOM Reporter**

The Archdiocese of Bulawayo has begun the year 2026 with a clear pastoral direction following the release of a document outlining the archdiocesan Pastoral Resolutions. The guidelines, issued by Most Rev. Archbishop Alex Thomas on 1 January 2026, set out practical priorities aimed at strengthening Christian life at personal, family and parish levels.

Structured around three key areas of daily Christian living, the resolutions seek to deepen faith, promote reconciliation and foster a synodal culture of shared responsibility across the Archdiocese. The pastoral programme is guided by the motto: "One Faith, Many Voices, One Path."

At the personal level, the Archbishop calls the faithful to active participation in Small Christian Communities (SCCs) and parish life

together with their families. The resolutions emphasise prompt repentance and regular prayer and reflection, making reconciliation a daily priority, and taking greater care of mental health. Catholics are also encouraged to promote teamwork in their ministries and practise responsible use of social media.

The family-level resolutions focus on strengthening the domestic Church through forgiveness, reconciliation and shared responsibility. Families are encouraged to model their life on the Holy Family, choose a patron saint, and establish daily family prayer and faith-sharing moments. The document also highlights the importance of quality time together, as well as transparency and accountability in family matters.

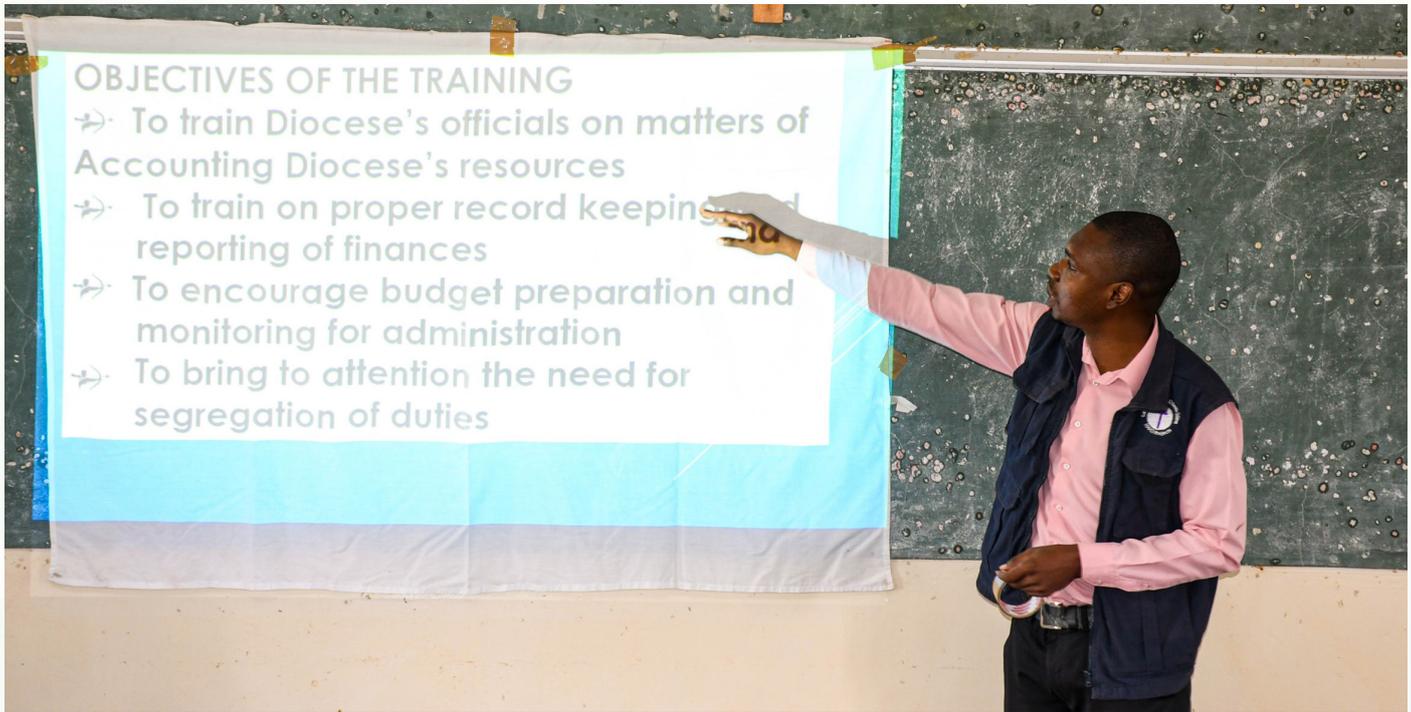
At the parish level, the Archbishop places strong emphasis on synodal governance. All pastoral decisions and plans are to be made collaboratively, with the full participation of the faithful according to their gifts and skills. The guidelines call for transparency in administrative and financial matters, as well as the integration of synodal themes into liturgical celebrations, prayers and homilies.

Among the key pastoral activities for the year are a parish or mission retreat during the first week of Lent, a parish-wide day of Adoration, prayer and fasting, and workshops on synodality and teamwork. Parishes are also expected to conduct mid-year and end-of-year evaluations to assess progress and strengthen accountability.

The pastoral resolutions reflect the Archdiocese's commitment to building a participatory and spiritually renewed local Church, where faith is lived concretely in personal conduct, family life and parish structures.

By providing clear and practical priorities, the Archbishop's message sets the tone for a year of spiritual growth, reconciliation and collaborative mission, inviting all the faithful of Bulawayo to journey together in unity of faith and purpose.

# Building trust through transparency: Gokwe diocese strengthens parish financial management



*Mr. Stanley Chataika lays out the objectives of the financial training.*

**By Fr. Johnston Mlambo**

As part of its efforts to strengthen accountability and responsible stewardship of Church resources, the Diocese of Gokwe conducted a three-day financial management training for parish leaders from 22 to 24 January 2026 at Shingai Pastoral and Training Centre.

The workshop brought together parish chairpersons and treasurers from across the diocese and focused on basic accounting, record keeping, budgeting, and standardised financial reporting. The training formed part of the diocese's broader effort to promote transparency, uniformity, and shared responsibility in the administration of the Church's temporal goods.

The training also reflected a key direction emerging from the Synod on Synodality, which calls local Churches to strengthen the functioning of participatory bodies such as parish and diocesan finance committees and pastoral councils.

By equipping lay leaders with practical skills in budgeting, record keeping, and financial

reporting, the Diocese of Gokwe is taking concrete steps to ensure that these structures are not merely nominal, but active instruments of participation, accountability, and shared responsibility in the life and mission of the Church.

### **Building Financial Literacy for Mission**

The training began with Mr. Stanley Chataika – a member of the finance committee of the diocese of Gokwe – explaining, in simple terms, what accounting is and why it is important for the life and mission of the Church. Participants were introduced to the key objectives of the workshop, which included:

- equipping parish leaders to account properly for Church resources;
- promoting accurate record keeping and regular financial reporting;
- encouraging budget preparation and monitoring; and
- highlighting the importance of segregation of duties to ensure accountability.

Mrs Loveness Kavhu, also a member of the diocesan finance committee and one of the facilitators, presented practical guidance on financial management, including proper

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*Participants pay close attention to Mrs Loveness Kavhu's presentation.*

cash-handling procedures. She emphasised the need to safeguard parish funds by ensuring that cash is kept securely and handled according to clear and consistent rules. The sessions also addressed one of the major challenges identified across the diocese — the lack of uniformity in financial reporting. Parishes had been using different formats, making it difficult for the diocese to compile accurate consolidated reports.

"The main thrust of this workshop is to standardise the reporting process and format," Mrs Kavhu explained. "We have developed a simple template which parishes can use so that financial information can be easily understood and consolidated at diocesan level."

### **Learning by Doing**

To ensure practical understanding, participants were divided into small groups and tasked with preparing a sample annual budget. Each group presented its work to the plenary, after which key income and expenditure items were identified and incorporated into a standard diocesan budget template.

The template was then distributed to parishes to guide their own budgeting processes. This hands-on approach helped participants to understand not only how to prepare a budget, but also the importance of planning,

monitoring, and evaluating parish finances throughout the year.

### **Formation for Responsible Leadership**

The Vicar General, Fr Mugara, said the training was particularly important because many parish leaders had been recently elected and were serving in these roles for the first time.

"Sometimes you meet people who have been given responsibilities in parishes without prior experience," he said. "It is important to give them formation so that they are able to lead their communities well and to follow a unified approach in budgeting and financial reporting."

He noted that the workshop intentionally targeted lay leaders.

"These are mainly rural communities where exposure is limited. Bringing them together for formation helps them gain confidence and understand their responsibilities."

### **Transparency as a Path to Communion**

In his closing remarks, Bishop Eusebius Nyathi thanked participants for their strong attendance and active participation, stressing that transparency in financial matters strengthens trust and collaboration within the Church.

*"Zvose zvatinounganidza... kuti suspicion dzipere hunge taita co-responsibility, tikashanda pamwechete tichiziva kuti mari iri*

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Group representatives present their groups' findings to the rest of the participants.

*kushandiswa sei.*"

He directed that monthly financial reports should not only be submitted to the diocesan office but also shared with parish communities, Small Christian Communities, and Mass centres so that the faithful understand how their contributions are used.

*"Ma monthly reports ngaasangoenda chete kuOffice yeDiocese... Zvakakosha kuti maReports aya asvike kuvanhu kuti pasave neku-fungirana uye to avoid unnecessary accusations and divisions."*

The Bishop emphasised that the goal of the initiative is steady growth rather than unrealistic expectations.

*"Hatisi kutarisira perfection asi tinotarisira improvement. Kutu mafambisirwo emari muSanganano redu ave nani."*

### Positive Response from Participants

Participants welcomed the training and expressed confidence that it would improve financial management at parish level.

Mr Mandebvu, vice chairperson of Siyakobvu Mission, said the workshop had equipped him to provide meaningful feedback to his parish. Mr Canaan Mavingire of Manyoni Mission noted that the sessions helped him understand his responsibilities as a leader.

Others highlighted the practical value of learning how to prepare budgets and maintain proper records, saying the training would help strengthen accountability and planning

in their communities.

### Stewardship for Mission

By strengthening financial literacy, promoting standard procedures, and encouraging transparency, the Diocese of Gokwe is laying a foundation for responsible stewardship and greater trust within parish communities.

For a largely rural diocese, the workshop represents more than administrative formation. It is a practical move towards a synodal way of being Church, where leadership is exercised collaboratively and the faithful participate responsibly in planning, decision-making, and stewardship. In this way, strengthening financial management becomes not only a matter of good governance, but an important step in making synodality visible and effective at parish level.



Mrs Loveness Kavhu emphasises a point.

## Zimbabwe Catholic Community in Johannesburg Donates Science Equipment to St Augustine's College



**By SOCCOM Reporter**

The Zimbabwe Catholic Community in the Archdiocese of Johannesburg has donated science laboratory equipment valued at R53,000 to St Augustine's College in Bulawayo, in a gesture aimed at strengthening science education and holistic formation of young people.

A three-member delegation from the community arrived at the school on Monday 26 January 2026 morning to present the donation.

The delegation comprised Mrs Christine D. Nzwere, Vice Chairperson of the Zimbabwe Catholic Community, Mr Charles Chigurah, Head of Welfare, and Thembi, representing the youth. The handover ceremony was witnessed by Archbishop Alex Thomas – the archbishop of the Archdiocese of Bulawayo – Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference Secretary General – Fr Tryvis Moyo, and

members of the school management team, including Head Mr T. Khumalo, Administrator Ms V. Madzivire, and Accounts Clerk Ms B. Maviza.

Following brief introductions, Fr Moyo delivered opening remarks, outlining the history of St Augustine's College and the Bishops' Conference's vision for the institution.

Mrs Nzwere and Mr Chigurah then described the composition and pastoral life of the Zimbabwe Catholic Chaplaincy in Johannesburg, explaining that the donation was raised through contributions from a broad cross-section of Zimbabwean Catholics living in the diaspora.

Receiving the donation, Archbishop Alex Thomas expressed deep appreciation to the Zimbabwe Catholic Community for responding to the Conference's appeal to support the college.



By SOCCOM Reporter

He noted that the contribution was timely and would have a lasting impact on students' formation.

In his address, the Archbishop also highlighted the broader challenges facing young people today, particularly drug and substance abuse.

He emphasised that the Church's educational mission goes beyond academic excellence to include moral and faith formation. "In its formation of a holistic person, the Church is contributing to the arrest of the so many ills that are bedeviling our world today," he said, adding that investments in young people help secure a hopeful future for society.

The donated items included five digital microscopes, 40 advanced Bunsen burners, 40 crucible tongs, 40 medium tripod stands, 40 ceramic gauze wires (15 x 15 cm), and measuring cylinders in various sizes (10 ml, 25 ml and 100 ml).

After the handover, the visiting delegation joined the Archbishop and the school management team for a tour of the college to view facilities that will benefit from the new

equipment.

St Augustine's College is a private Catholic high school under the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference.



## Diocese of Gokwe celebrates ordination of two deacons



*The ordinands lie prostrate during the singing of the Litany of the Saints.*

**By Tafadzwa Mafiravana and Narciso Tevedzai**

The Diocese of Gokwe witnessed a moment of great joy and spiritual significance with the ordination of two new deacons during a solemn Eucharistic celebration held at the Cathedral of St John the Baptist on 31 January 2026.

Minister Honest Dangaiso of Chevecheve Parish and Bro. Austin Saira, CMF, of Mai Vorugare Parish were ordained to the Order of Deacons by the Bishop of Gokwe, Rt. Rev. Eusebius J. Nyathi, in the presence of clergy, religious, family members and a large congregation of the faithful.

### **A Celebration of Faith and Vocations**

The cathedral was filled to capacity as parishioners gathered in prayerful celebration, singing with enthusiasm and participating actively in the liturgy. The dignified entrance procession of clergy set a tone of solemn joy, reflecting the importance of the occasion for the life of the diocese.

The multilingual celebration reflected the

rich cultural diversity of the local Church. The first reading from Jeremiah (1:4–9) was proclaimed in Tonga, the second reading from 1 Peter (4:10–14) in Ndebele, while the Gospel reading was taken from Luke 15:3–7. A powerful moment of the liturgy was the Litany of the Saints, during which the candidates lay prostrate as the congregation invoked the prayers of the whole Church, highlighting the communal nature of the vocation.

### **Called to Serve with Humility and Love**

In his homily, Fr Joaquin Bejar, CMF, Mission Coordinator, encouraged the newly ordained to allow the Lord to guide their ministry, to live lives rooted in prayer, and to serve the People of God with humility and dedication. He explained that the ministry of a deacon involves proclaiming the Word of God, assisting in the celebration of the sacraments, and carrying out works of charity, especially among the poor, the sick and the marginal-



*Bishop Eusebius Nyathi welcomes the newly ordained deacons into the family of the clergy.*

ised.

The faithful were also urged to support the new deacons through prayer and encouragement as they begin their ministry.

Immediately after the ordination rite, the newly ordained deacons began their service by assisting the bishop at the altar and helping to distribute Holy Communion, visibly embracing their new pastoral responsibilities.

### **Bishop's Call to Protect Life**

In his address, Bishop Nyathi called on the new deacons to carry out their ministry in a spirit of synodality and communion with the Church. He also used the occasion to draw attention to the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference pastoral message, *An Appeal to Conscience: Defending Innocent Lives*, urging Christians and all people of goodwill to stand firm in protecting human life from conception to natural death.

Earlier in the celebration, the bishop had also emphasised the sanctity of human life and encouraged Catholics not to support the legalisation of abortion.

### **A Sign of a Living Church**

The strong turnout of clergy and faithful, together with the vibrant participation of the congregation, demonstrated the vitality of the local Church and its commitment to nurturing vocations. The presence of priests from across the diocese and Claretian mis-

sionaries further highlighted the unity of the Church in supporting those called to ministry.

Following the Mass, the faithful shared a communal meal, extending the spirit of fellowship and thanksgiving that marked the day.

The ordination of Deacons Dangaiso and Saira stands as a visible sign of hope for the Diocese of Gokwe, strengthening the bond between bishop, clergy and laity, and inspiring especially young people to consider the call to serve the Church.

The celebration reaffirmed that vocations remain alive and that the Church continues to grow through faithful service, prayer and commitment to the mission of Christ.



*The ordinands wait eagerly for ordination.*

# CHURCH AND SOCIETY

## Chief Justice launches 2026 legal year with focus on technology and performance reform



By Fr. Johnston Mlambo

Chief Justice Luke Malaba officially opened the 2026 Legal Year on Monday, 12 January, with a strong call for the transformation of Zimbabwe's justice delivery system through enhanced performance management and the strategic use of technology.

Speaking at the official ceremony, the Chief Justice outlined the Judiciary's priorities under the theme: "Using Performance Management and Technology to Ensure Quality, Inclusive and Sustainable Judicial Service." The annual opening provides an opportunity for the Judiciary to communicate its vision, review progress and engage stakeholders at the beginning of the legal calendar.

"The occasion enables the Judiciary to communicate with the nation, articulate its vision for the administration of justice, and interact with all stakeholders for the first time in the new Legal Year," he said.

### **Technology and Accountability at the Centre of Reform**

Justice Malaba emphasised that performance management and digital innovation are not ends in themselves, but tools to en-

sure that the administration of justice meets constitutional standards of quality, inclusivity and sustainability.

He stressed that judicial authority is exercised on behalf of the people and must therefore demonstrate measurable results, transparency and accountability, noting that judicial authority "derives from the people of Zimbabwe and is vested in the courts."

The Chief Justice further underscored that reforms must be judged by their practical impact, saying, "Every reform must be judged by its effect on the lives of the ordinary people who seek judicial remedies to vindicate their rights."

The Integrated Electronic Case Management System (IECMS) continues to be the backbone of judicial modernisation, enabling electronic filing, virtual hearings, case tracking and improved statistical monitoring. All superior courts are now paperless, while digitisation of magistrates' courts is being progressively rolled out nationwide to reduce delays and expand access to justice, especially for citizens in remote areas.

The Judiciary is also preparing to expand the

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**Chief Justice Luke Malaba (Photo: C CITE)**

use of Artificial Intelligence in areas such as transcription, research and administrative support, while developing safeguards to prevent bias and protect judicial independence.

### **Addressing Systemic Challenges**

The Chief Justice acknowledged that monitoring exercises conducted in 2025 revealed operational weaknesses, including inconsistent case management, inaccurate reporting, dormant cases and instances of staff indiscipline. In response, the Judicial Service Commission restructured registries, introduced standardised reporting systems and cleared more than 6,500 inactive High Court matters. Despite these improvements, Justice Malaba raised concern over human resource constraints, noting that a population of over 16 million people is currently served by only about 80 judges and 250 magistrates.

"It is not ideal that such a large population expects both its criminal and civil dispute resolutions to be shouldered by a paltry eighty judges and two hundred and fifty magistrates," he said, warning that staffing shortages contribute to delays and increased pressure on judicial officers.

### **Progress in Access and Infrastructure**

The Judiciary recorded significant progress in expanding access to justice through decentralisation and infrastructure development. New courts were completed or upgraded in several districts, while additional Labour Court judges and regional magistrates were

appointed to strengthen the bench and ease workloads.

The Commission also advanced plans to introduce court-annexed alternative dispute resolution, particularly mediation, as a faster and more cost-effective way of resolving disputes.

**Court Performance and Growing Caseloads**  
Statistics presented during the address showed strong performance across the superior courts, which reduced their backlog by 2,469 cases in 2025. Magistrates also handled increased volumes of both criminal and civil matters, reflecting a more economically active society and growing public awareness of legal rights.

However, the Chief Justice expressed concern over rising civil case backlogs in the magistrates' courts, attributing this to high filing volumes and supervisory weaknesses, and indicated that corrective measures had been put in place.

### **New Strategic Plan Launched**

The ceremony also marked the launch of the Judicial Service Commission's Strategic Plan for 2026–2030, which outlines priorities including expanded access to justice, digital transformation, strengthened governance, improved performance management and enhanced staff welfare. The plan aligns the Judiciary's work with national development goals and Vision 2030.

The Chief Justice described the plan as "a contract between the Judicial Service and the people of Zimbabwe for the period 2026 to 2030."

### **Commitment to Public Trust**

In his concluding remarks, Justice Malaba reaffirmed the Judiciary's vision of "a Zimbabwe in which world-class justice prevails," stressing that reforms must ultimately improve the lives of ordinary citizens seeking to vindicate their rights.

The ceremony also paid tribute to judicial officers and staff who passed away during the past year, with a moment of silence held in their honour.

The 2026 Legal Year, the Chief Justice said, represents a renewed commitment to building a modern, efficient and people-centred justice system anchored in constitutional values and public trust.

# High Court orders government to publish Uchena commission reports in landmark transparency ruling



*Justice Takuva (Photo: The Herald)*

**By SOCCOM Reporter**

The High Court has ordered the Government to publish the long-withheld reports of the 2017 Commission of Inquiry into the sale of State land, in a judgment widely regarded as a major affirmation of transparency, public accountability and citizens' constitutional right to information.

The ruling follows an application by former Member of Parliament and Harare City councillor Allan Markham, who argued that the continued secrecy surrounding the findings of the Justice Uchena-led Commission violated Section 62(1) of the Constitution, which guarantees citizens access to information held by the State where it is required in the public interest.

## **Background to the Commission**

The Commission of Inquiry was appointed in August 2017 to investigate the allocation, occupation and development of State land around urban areas following widespread public concern over illegal land sales and the growth of unregulated settlements.

After completing its work in 2019, the Commission submitted twelve reports to the President, including a main report, ten provincial reports and an executive summary. Among the key findings disclosed at the time

were that the Government had recovered less than 10 percent of the value of subdivided State land, resulting in losses of up to US\$2.97 billion, and that many new residential areas lacked basic infrastructure such as roads, water and sewer systems. The estimated cost of servicing these settlements was placed at more than US\$2.5 billion.

Despite the scale of the findings, the reports themselves were never made public, and it remained unclear whether any of the Commission's recommendations had been implemented.

## **Constitutional Challenge**

In his application, Markham argued that non-publication undermined the public's right to hold Government accountable and violated the constitutional principles of transparency, justice and responsiveness.

The Government, represented by the President and the Attorney-General, countered that the Constitution requires access to information only upon request and does not oblige the State to publish reports proactively. It also argued that publication could expose commissioners to possible legal action.

## **Court's Findings**

In his judgment, Justice Takuva rejected the Government's arguments and ruled that access to public information is "a pillar of constitutional democracy and good governance." The Court held that the Commission's findings—relating to alleged corruption, abuse of office and massive loss of State revenue—clearly constituted information required in the interests of public accountability.

Justice Takuva further noted that providing selected information to some stakeholders while withholding the full reports from the public did not meet constitutional standards of transparency. Continued non-disclosure, he ruled, violated both the right of access to information and the founding constitutional values of accountability and responsiveness. The Court ordered the Government to publish the reports within 90 days.

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Legal observers say the judgment strengthens the enforceability of Section 62 of the Constitution by affirming that the right of access to information includes the right to see the information itself, not merely selected extracts.

The ruling also reinforces broader constitutional provisions that require transparent governance, including the obligation on public institutions to provide timely and accessible information to citizens.

The case now turns to whether the Government will comply with the order. Publication of the reports would allow the public to assess the extent of institutional and individual responsibility for the loss of State assets and the growth of poorly serviced urban settlements.

The decision is being viewed as a significant addition to Zimbabwe's constitutional jurisprudence and a potential milestone in advancing openness, accountability and the rule of law.

## Zimbabwe marks International Data Privacy Week with awareness drive



By **SOCOM Reporter**

Zimbabwe joined the global community in commemorating International Data Privacy Week from 26 to 30 January 2026, with the Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ) leading national efforts to promote responsible data protection under the theme, "Take control of your data."

The annual observance focused on empowering individuals and organisations to understand their rights and responsibilities in an increasingly digital environment, where personal information is routinely collected, stored and shared online.

According to POTRAZ, the week's activities were designed to achieve three key objectives: raising public awareness on the protection of personal information, encouraging individuals to manage their digital footprints, and promoting the integration of data protection principles into organisational systems

and processes.

As internet usage and digital services continue to expand across Zimbabwe, the regulator emphasised the importance of safeguarding personal data against misuse, identity theft and cyber-related risks.

As part of the awareness campaign, POTRAZ hosted a series of online webinars providing practical guidance to organisations and the public. The sessions covered:

- Registration and licensing of Data Controllers
- Procedures for reporting data breaches
- How to lodge complaints and inquiries with the regulator

The webinars, held on 28, 29 and 30 January via Microsoft Teams, aimed to help organisations understand their legal obligations and strengthen compliance with national data protection requirements.

In addition to the virtual sessions, POTRAZ conducted a Data Privacy Week Roadshow in Masvingo Province throughout the week. The outreach programme sought to engage communities, businesses and public institutions directly, providing information on data protection rights and responsibilities.

The awareness campaign comes as Zimbabwe continues to implement the Cyber and Data Protection framework, which came into effect through licensing regulations introduced in September 2024. The law places obligations on organisations that collect or process personal information to obtain a Data Controller Licence and to establish ap-



## Parliament sets the tone for 2026 legislative work

*By Fr. Johnston Mlambo*

The year began with Parliament having a wide-ranging legislative agenda covering governance, public service delivery, environmental management and social welfare to discuss and decide on.

Both the National Assembly and the Senate were resumed their sittings on 10 February 2026, facing with an extensive Order Paper that reflected key national priorities and policy concerns for the year.

Legislative Progress in the National Assembly

In the National Assembly, several important Bills were to be brought forward for consideration. The Zimbabwe School Examinations Council Amendment Bill has since moved into its Committee Stage, while the Insurance and Pensions Commission Amendment Bill, the Climate Change Management Bill, the Tourism Bill and the

Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Amendment Bill have since undergone their Second Reading.

Debate has already continued on issues raised by the Parliamentary Legal Committee regarding the constitutionality of provisions in the Mines and Minerals Bill, the Public Service Amendment Bill and the State Service (Pensions) Bill.

Beyond legislation, the Assembly has also since carried out its oversight function by examining audited financial statements from key ministries and reviewing budget performance reports. Parliamentary committees has already presented reports on the state of vocational training centres, the condition of digital information facilities and the challenges facing university students. Members further put questions to ministers on matters affecting citizens' daily lives, including agricultural inputs, teacher recruitment, electricity supply, economic

development initiatives and assistance for vulnerable groups.

#### Senate Deliberations and Health Bill Update

In the Senate, the Medical Services Amendment Bill has since been tabled and discussed. During deliberations, the responsible ministry clarified that Clause 11, which dealt with abortion, had not been part of the original draft submitted to the ministry but had been inserted during the drafting process without its approval.

As a result, the clause was not debated, and senators did not proceed with discussion on abortion-related provisions.

The Senate also considered international agreements, including a treaty on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters and a regional protocol on the transfer of sentenced prisoners.

Committee reports addressed national concerns such as recurring droughts, access to mining opportunities for women, youth and persons with disabilities, and the state of prisons in Zimbabwe.

#### Motions on Social Protection and Governance

Debates in the Upper House further focused on social and governance issues.

Motions before the Senate included calls for:

- the protection of inheritance rights for

widows and children,

- the promotion of indigenous languages in education,
- the review of civil servants' salaries and conditions of service,
- and measures to curb vandalism of natural resources and public infrastructure.

#### Strengthening Accountability

Both Houses also began considering annual reports from constitutional commissions and statutory bodies, including the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission and the Judicial Service Commission, as part of Parliament's oversight role in promoting accountability and good governance.

#### Looking Ahead

Much of the business listed at the beginning of the year remained under consideration, with some items carried forward for further debate in subsequent sittings.

The legislative programme for the opening period of 2026 highlighted the broad range of issues before Parliament, from environmental protection and economic management to social welfare, governance and public service delivery.

Through the Bill Watch column, readers will continue to be updated on parliamentary developments and their implications for national life.

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appropriate safeguards for data security.

However, POTRAZ noted that many organisations are still operating without the required licences, potentially exposing themselves to regulatory action and legal liability.

The regulator expressed hope that the Privacy Week initiatives, together with ongoing training and outreach programmes, would encourage both organisations and individuals to prioritise data security and comply with the law.

With digital platforms playing an increasing role in banking, education, healthcare and social interaction, data protection has become an important public issue. The International Data Privacy Week activities highlighted the need for a culture of responsible data use — one that protects personal privacy while supporting innovation and digital growth.

As Zimbabwe deepens its participation in the digital economy, initiatives such as Data Privacy Week underscore the importance of protecting personal information as a matter of both legal compliance and public trust.

# NEWS FROM THE REGION

## Papal Nuncio to Zambia urges bishops to build family without borders



*From Zambia SOCCOM*

The Apostolic Nuncio to Zambia and Malawi, Archbishop Gian Luca Perici, in his homily at the opening Mass of the Bishops' plenary meeting on 27th January at the Catholic Secretariat, stated that Jesus identifies His family as those who perform the will of God.

He noted that this definition establishes a family that exists without tribes or borders, asserting that the Church serves as the space where all people become one blood through Christ.

The Nuncio addressed the nature of leadership, inviting the bishops to embrace the authority that originates from listening to Jesus.

He emphasized that leaders function by remaining under the authority of Christ alongside the people.

He concluded his homily with a call for Church leadership to find purpose by sitting with the people in obedience to the Gospel, despite how the world perceives their actions.

He then wished the bishops God's blessings during these days of their plenary meeting.



# Malawi Bishops Chart Pastoral Direction at First Annual Plenary for 2026



*By Fr. Johnston Mlambo*

The Malawi Conference of Catholic Bishops (MCCB) held its First Annual Plenary Assembly for 2026 from 26 to 30 January at the Catholic Secretariat in Lilongwe, bringing together the country's Catholic Bishops to reflect on the mission, pastoral priorities and future direction of the Church.

The assembly was attended by the Apostolic Nuncio to Malawi and Zambia, His Excellency Archbishop GianLuca Perici, who commended the Bishops for their unwavering commitment to pastoral and missionary service. He noted that the plenary provided a valuable opportunity to engage directly with them and to gain deeper insight into the life, mission and pastoral realities of the Church in Malawi.

According to a press release issued by MCCB Secretary General, Very Rev. Fr. Vale-

riano Mtseka, the Bishops discussed a wide range of ecclesial and institutional matters. These included a study session on the Synod on Synodality, updates from the National Pastoral Office and lay associations, reports from the Catholic Secretariat's directorates, issues relating to priestly formation, and progress reports from national Catholic associations, development projects and Church-run universities.

### **Key Pastoral Resolutions**

As part of the plenary outcomes, the Bishops approved a number of concrete pastoral resolutions for implementation through the National Pastoral Commission.

To deepen Eucharistic life in the Church, the Bishops resolved that "each diocese will organise its own Diocesan Eucharistic Congress in 2026" in order to sustain and deep-

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en the fruits of the First National Eucharistic Congress.

The assembly also outlined pastoral priority areas for 2026–2028, including “enhancement of the capacity and commitment of Agents of Evangelisation,” the “provision of solid catechesis to all age groups,” and the “promotion of the Christian family, rooted in the Sacrament of Marriage and nourished by the Eucharist.” Other priorities include care for the environment, strengthening ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, and “promotion of synodality as a mode of evangelisation.”

In preparation for a major historical milestone, the Bishops announced that the theme for the 125th anniversary of the permanent establishment of the Catholic Church in Malawi will be: “Rooted in Christ, Sent for Mission: Celebrating 125 Years of Evangelisation in Malawi.”

To ensure greater unity and order in apostolic initiatives, the Bishops further resolved that a task force be established to develop pastoral guidelines for the “establishment, recognition, and approval of lay movements and associations within the Church.”

In the area of specialised ministry, the plenary directed that “priests who attended the official training on Exorcism... shall be formally appointed as Diocesan Exorcists by their respective Bishops.”

#### **Focus on Youth and Families**

Youth ministry received special attention, with the establishment of a National Youth

Fund. The resolution states that “every Catholic youth will contribute MK 1,000 per year to support youth ministry,” with the funds shared between national and diocesan offices.

The Bishops also confirmed that a National Youth Conference will be held from 26 to 30 August 2026 at Bembeke Teachers’ Training College under the same jubilee theme.

In addition, the plenary resolved that a National Family Conference will take place in 2027, while the Association of Ex-Seminarians will henceforth be officially known as “The Association of Former Catholic Seminarians.”

To support major national ecclesial events, dioceses approved contributions totalling MK50 million, to be allocated to the Quasiquincentennial Jubilee, the Centenary Jubilee of World Mission Sunday, and national youth initiatives. The Bishops also endorsed a comprehensive national pastoral calendar for 2026 to coordinate major liturgical, formation and pastoral activities across all dioceses.

Fr. Mtseka called on the Catholic faithful and all people of goodwill to keep the Bishops in prayer as they carry out their responsibility of guiding the Church’s mission.

The annual plenary remains a key moment of discernment and planning, enabling the Bishops to respond collectively to pastoral challenges while strengthening the Church’s evangelising presence and missionary witness in Malawian society.

# NEWS FROM THE VATICAN

## Pope Leo XIV continues Vatican II catechesis, highlights unity of scripture and tradition



*A general audience congregation. Photo courtesy of Vatican News.*

*By Fr. Johnston Mlambo*

Pope Leo XIV has called the faithful to rediscover the enduring relevance of the Second Vatican Council, presenting its teachings as a guiding light for the Church's mission in today's world. The appeal came during his General Audience on 28 January, as part of a new catechetical series dedicated to the Council's documents.

### **A New Catechesis on Vatican II**

The Holy Father launched the series on 7 January 2026, marking the beginning of a renewed reflection on Vatican II following the Jubilee Year, during which catechesis focused on the mysteries of the life of Christ. In his introductory audience, Pope Leo XIV described the Council as a "great grace" for the Church and invited the faithful to rediscover its beauty and prophetic vision by re-

turning directly to its texts rather than relying on interpretations or hearsay.

Recalling the words of Saint John Paul II, he noted that the Council was "the great grace bestowed on the Church in the twentieth century," while Pope Benedict XVI had affirmed that its teachings have lost none of their relevance in the changing circumstances of the modern world.

The Pope explained that Vatican II opened a new ecclesial season by presenting the Church as a mystery of communion, renewing the liturgy with active participation of the faithful, and encouraging dialogue with the modern world, other Christians, other religions and all people of goodwill. He stressed that rediscovering the Council should help the Church today to read the signs of the times, restore primacy to God, and renew her commitment to proclaiming the Gospel

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*Pope Leo XIV Greeting the crowd. (Photo: Vatican News)*

and working for justice and peace. In his introductory catechesis, he described the Council as a great grace for the Church and encouraged believers to study its teachings so as to better interpret the signs of the times and renew the Church's mission in today's world.

Beginning on 14 January, the Holy Father turned specifically to *Dei Verbum*, the Council's Constitution on Divine Revelation. The reflection of 28 January marked the third catechesis dedicated to this foundational document.

#### **Scripture and Tradition: One Divine Source**

In the latest audience, Pope Leo XIV focused on the relationship between Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition.

Drawing on Gospel passages, he recalled Jesus' promise that the Holy Spirit would teach the disciples and guide them into the fullness of truth, as well as the Lord's command to proclaim His teaching to all nations. These scenes, he explained, reveal how the words of Christ continue to be transmitted throughout history.

Quoting *Dei Verbum*, the Pope stressed that Scripture and Tradition "flow from the same divine wellspring" and together form a unity ordered toward the salvation of souls.

Ecclesial Tradition, he noted, unfolds through the life of the Church, which preserves, interprets and lives the Word of God. The Church, he said, "in her teaching, life and worship, perpetuates and hands on to all generations all that she herself is and all that she believes."

#### **A Living and Growing Word**

The Holy Father emphasised that the Word of God is not a static reality but a living and dynamic one. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Church grows in understanding through the study and contemplation of believers, their lived spiritual experience, and the preaching of the successors of the Apostles. Citing the Church Fathers, he recalled that Scripture is written above all in the heart of the Church and grows with those who read it. He also referred to Saint John Henry Newman's insight that Christian doctrine develops organically, like a living reality growing from within.

The "deposit" of the Word of God, he explained, remains entrusted to the Church today, and all the faithful share responsibility, according to their vocation, to preserve and transmit it faithfully as a guide for life amid the complexities of the modern world.

#### **Rediscovering the Council for Today**

Pope Leo XIV reiterated that returning to the documents of Vatican II is not merely an academic exercise but a pastoral task. By rediscovering the Council's teachings, the Church is better equipped to proclaim the Gospel with renewed joy and to respond to the challenges of contemporary society.

#### **Appeal for Memory and Vigilance**

At the conclusion of the audience, the Pope recalled International Holocaust Remembrance Day, praying for a world free from antisemitism, prejudice and persecution. He urged the international community to remain vigilant so that the tragedy of genocide is never repeated and called for societies founded on mutual respect and the common good.

The Holy Father also greeted English-speaking pilgrims from various countries, invoking upon them and their families the joy and peace of the Lord.

Through this ongoing catechesis, Pope Leo XIV continues to invite the faithful to rediscover the rich heritage of Vatican II and to become living witnesses of the Word of God handed down through Scripture and Tradition.



# Catechesis Corner

with Fr. Johnston Z. Mlambo



- ✓ Why We Believe in God
- ✓ Understanding Our Faith
- ✓ Growing Closer to Jesus

## Why Do We Believe in God?

**M**any people ask: Why do we believe in God?

Others may wonder: Where is God in my life? The Church teaches that the desire for God is already in every human heart. This means that deep inside, every person is searching for something more — for truth, for peace, for lasting happiness.

Think about it. A person may look for happiness in money, success or pleasure. Yet after some time, there is still a feeling that something is missing. That restlessness is a sign that our hearts are made for God.

Every Sunday at Mass, we stand and say the Creed. We begin with the words: "I believe." But have you ever stopped to ask yourself what it really means to believe?

To believe is more than knowing something with the mind. Faith is trusting God and opening our lives to Him. Faith is our response to a God who first loves us, reveals Himself to us, and invites us into a relationship with Him.

We see the human search for meaning everywhere. People work hard, seek success, build families and look for security. Yet many still feel that something is missing. That restlessness shows that our hearts are made for something greater — our hearts are made

for God.

Saint Augustine expressed this truth beautifully when he said:

"You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you." God created us out of love, and He continues to draw us to Himself. Throughout history, people have tried to find God in different ways — through prayer, worship, reflection and acts of sacrifice. Even those who say they do not believe are often searching for truth and purpose. This shows that the search for God is part of being human. God is not far from us. In Him, as the Scriptures say, we live and move and have our being.

We can also come to know God by looking around us. When we see the beauty of creation — the sky, the rain, the mountains, the gift of life — we begin to ask: Who made all this?

We can also discover God within ourselves:

- Our conscience tells us what is right and wrong
  - Our hearts long for goodness and love
  - We desire a happiness that never ends
- All these point to God.

Yet sometimes people forget God or turn

away from Him. This can happen because of suffering, the worries of daily life, the attraction of wealth, lack of knowledge about faith, or even the bad example of believers. But even when people forget Him, God never stops calling them back. He continues to invite every person to seek Him and to find life and happiness in Him.

Faith, therefore, is not blind. It is a reasonable response to the God who reveals Himself through creation, through our human experience, and above all through His Word and through Jesus Christ.

At the same time, we must remember that God is greater than our understanding. We speak about Him using human words, but

His mystery is far beyond anything we can fully grasp. What we know about Him is true, but it is only a small part of the greatness of God.

For us today, this teaching is an invitation to listen to the deepest longing of our hearts. When we feel restless, empty or searching, it may be God calling us closer to Him. Faith grows when we make time for prayer, reflect on our lives, and open our hearts to His presence.

To say "I believe" is to say:

I trust you, Lord.

I open my life to you.

I want to walk with you.

**Next in Catechesis Corner: How God Speaks to Us – Understanding Divine Revelation.**

## Why Do We Believe in God?

### 1 The Question

*Why do we believe in God?  
Where is God in my life?*

The Church teaches:  
The desire for God is written in every human heart.



“You have made us for yourself,  
O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”  
All this points to God.

### 2 Restless Heart

People seek happiness in:

- ✓ Money
- ✓ Success
- ✓ Pleasure

Within Ourselves

- ✓ Conscience (right and wrong)
- ✓ Desire for goodness and love
- ✓ Longing for lasting happiness

All this points to God.



### 3 What Does It Mean to Believe?

- ✓ Trusting God
- ✓ Opening our lives to Him
- ✓ Responding to His love

**Why?**  
Because our hearts are made for God



### 4 Signs That Point to God

**In Creation**

- ✓ The sky and the stars
- ✓ The beauty of nature
- ✓ The gift of life

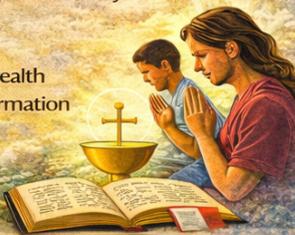
Who made all this?



### 5 God Is Always Calling

Reasons why people turn away:

- ✓ Suffering
- ✓ Daily worries
- ✓ Attraction to wealth
- ✓ Lack of faith formation
- ✓ Bad example from others



### 6 Our Response

When we feel restless or searching, God may be drawing us closer.

Faith grows when we:

- ✓ Pray
- ✓ Reflect on our lives
- ✓ Open our hearts to God.



# REFLECTIONS AND OPINIONS

## Show up while it matters

By **Lorna Chosani**

There is a painful truth woven into modern society: people will travel miles, rearrange schedules, and spend money to attend a burial, yet when that same person was alive and struggling, help was scarce and excuses were plenty. This contradiction reveals more about us as a society than we are often willing to admit.

When someone is alive, their needs are inconvenient. They may need financial support, emotional presence, time, patience, or advocacy. These demands require sacrifice, consistency, and discomfort. Helping a living person means getting involved in their problems, sharing their burdens, and sometimes facing situations that have no immediate recognition or reward. For many, this feels too costly.

In contrast, a burial is predictable and socially accepted. It comes with a clear timeline, defined rituals, and public visibility. Attending a funeral is often seen as a moral obligation, a cultural expectation, or a way to demonstrate respect. It is easier to show up for a burial because it requires less emotional investment and no long-term commitment. Once the ceremony is over, life moves on.

Ironically, funerals are also moments when guilt speaks louder than compassion ever did. People show up carrying regret for calls

not made, visits postponed, and help withheld. Wreaths replace words of encouragement that were never spoken. Condolence messages stand in for support that could have changed a life while there was still time.

This behaviour highlights a deeper issue: we are more comfortable honouring the dead than supporting the living. We praise resilience after it is no longer needed. We celebrate lives only when they are no longer present to feel the appreciation. In doing so, we miss the true essence of humanity—showing up when it actually matters.

If we are honest, the greatest respect we can give someone is not at their burial, but during their lifetime. It is in the small acts of kindness, the willingness to listen, the decision to help without being asked, and the courage to stand with someone in their darkest moments.

Presence while someone is alive has the power to heal, restore dignity, and even save lives.

Society does not need more crowded funerals. It needs more compassion in real time—fewer excuses when help is required, and more action when someone is still breathing, still hoping, and still fighting.

The question is not whether people will show up when life is over—they always do. The real question is whether we will learn to show up while it still counts.



## The 40 days of Lent



**By Tonderai Muginyi**

**W**ednesday, 18 February is Ash Wednesday. This marks the beginning of the season of Lent. Our churches are full on Ash Wednesday, but the numbers go down afterwards. During an Angelus address in 1986, Pope St John Paul II said, "We are an Easter people and Alleluia is our song." It is my hope that this reflection on the 40 days of Lent will help us experience the complete joy of Easter.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that Lent is a 40-day penitential and renewal season to prepare the faithful to celebrate Easter. The 40 days of Lent correspond to the 40 days that Jesus spent in the wilderness to fast, pray and endure the temptations of the devil, all in preparation for His public ministry, which would culminate in His death on the Cross.

One might ask: why 40, and why in the wilderness? In the Bible, the number 40 is used to symbolise a long period of time. This is because a generation is roughly 40 years. We recall that the Israelites spent 40 years in the desert on their journey from Egypt to Canaan. Geographically, the journey from Egypt to Canaan is an 11-day walk. Yet God took 40 years with the Israelites in the desert in order to form an intimate relationship with them. Through trials and testing, the Israelites learnt to return to the Lord their God, on whom they relied for their survival. In the same way, the 40 days of Lent invite

us to "rend our hearts and not our garments, and return to the Lord our God" (Joel 2:13), for in Him alone our joy is complete.

In any race, everyone starts with enthusiasm, but many fall away. How then do we stay on course during the 40 days of Lent? Luke writes that Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness (Lk 4:1). We need to pray for the same Holy Spirit to journey with us. The Psalmist says, "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my path" (Ps 119:105). The ministry of Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit are closely united. Let us therefore pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit and meditate on the Word of God during these 40 days of Lent as we prepare ourselves to celebrate Easter.

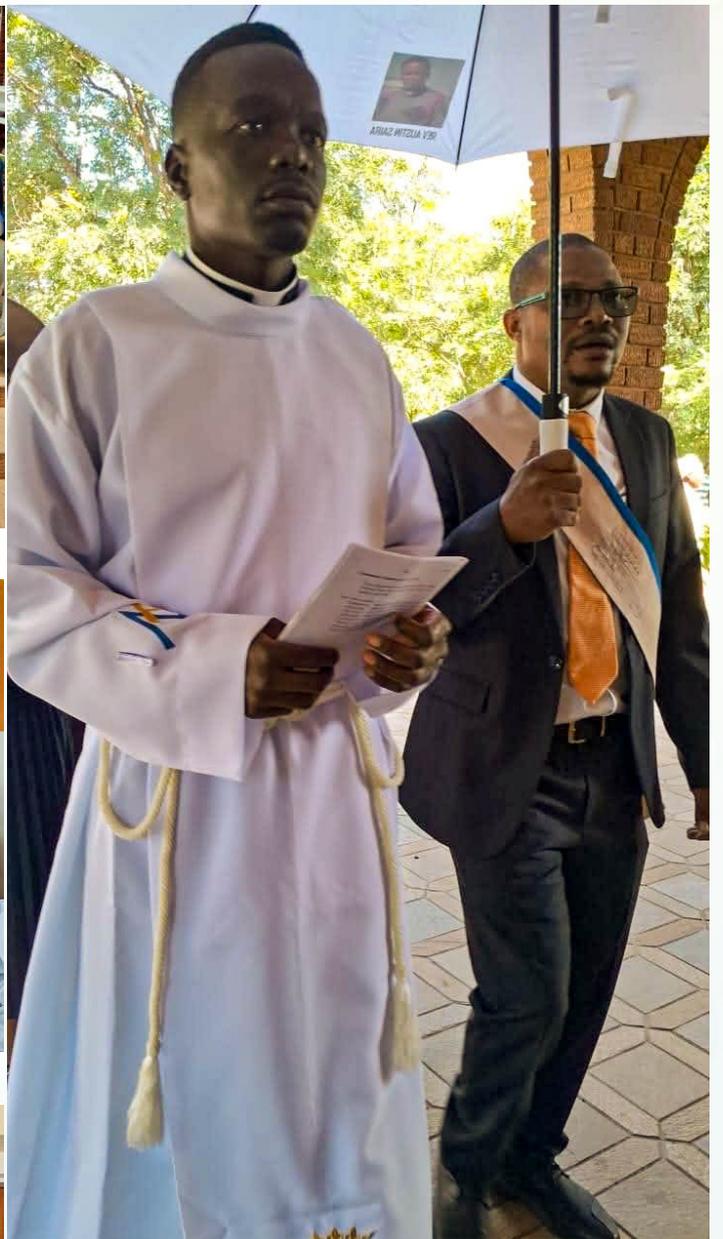
May I conclude with the story of John Stephen Akhwari, who dislocated his knee and injured his shoulder while competing in a marathon at the 1968 Olympic Games. He finished last, late in the dark, to an almost empty stadium. When journalists asked him why he did not abandon the race, he replied, "My country did not send me 5,000 miles to start the race; they sent me 5,000 miles to finish it."

Do not give up! We have fallen and risen before, and we may fall again during these 40 days of Lent. The difference between a saint and a sinner is that a saint is a sinner who does not quit. We are invited to repent and believe in the Gospel. As St Paul says, "If then we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him."



# NEWS IN PICTURES





## Ndaiti Ndiye

Kudya asati,  
Yaiva mhaka,  
Hapana chandaiita,  
Akarumbidza.  
Iye kuti hekani waro,  
Waiti taronga  
Achida kundisiya mugoronga.  
Muviri ava mavanga,  
Iye ava neshoroma.  
Rudo here?  
Ndaitoti ndawanawo.  
Taiva gumi mupfungwa imwe yaive  
miswe.  
Ndaiti tiri kukurukura kusaziva chim-  
we chitunha.  
Kushinga nekushingairira zvisina  
muoni nerumbidzo.  
Zuva mwaka nenguva zvakambey-  
era mashangurapata.  
Ruzha nemitsindo yangu zvaiunza  
kundengendeka.  
Wangu musha waiva mupenyu vam-  
we vakasooneka rangova dongo.  
Ndaiti ihuku dzose izvo munewe zizi  
wakandigona.  
Shangu kupera ndichinge sasa,  
Kuenda humbangu kudzoka hum-  
bangu.  
Ndokutenda mandionesa mandi-  
chenjedza nhasi,  
Handichavaraidzwa nemavara.  
Mwaka wese ndaiti inyanga izvo  
inzeve.  
Taiti tirime tigokohwa,  
Gandiwa ndarima raimemewa na-  
Toziva.  
Kudya hake isu takarinda kuedza  
kwekunze.  
Kuzotsindikira mbesa dzaroverwa.  
Kudouchika, kudofamba.  
Kana shanduko  
Izvo aiva nejadel

*By Fredy Mushanga*

## Nziyo

Hakuna inenge dombo isingakuve.  
Kunyangwe itambwe kana irire sei.  
Ngoma netambo zvingabikwe  
nekubatanidzwa sei.

Manzwi nemutinhimira zvigopindira-  
na zvakaita sei.

Pouya panoda mazwi akatetepera  
nemakobvu zvakavhanganiswa asi  
inongo kuva zvakadaro.

Ine musu nenguva ichazongo nyarara.  
Ingadzoke pane dzakaita mukurumbi-  
ra asi inozongo kuva.

Kunyangova ikaita mukurumbira  
padzakaita mukurumbira inozongo  
pera.

Chino bhururuka chinomhara vakada-  
ro vana chipanga mazano.

Kwaisava kunyepa kuti aive madziva  
ave mazambuko.

Sezuva nguva yekupisa kwaro ndoi-  
nosiyana muchando, muzhizha kana  
chirimo here?

Iri nziyo iyi haiwawo handiirangarire  
yaitondi nyaudza. Pamwe iwairesi  
kurira yakazhezhera iine ruzha muim-  
bi achinge anoropodza.

*By Laquila Pescatrice*



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