

**GIVE US THIS DAY AND FOREVER OUR PEACE:**  
**An address for truth and love, justice and peace in my homeland, Cameroon<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Introduction**

The topics I will address here for my beloved homeland are religious, spiritual and theological. But they are also highly political and even economic and social issues. Nevertheless, I do not believe that I am engaging in politics by addressing them. And even if I were, I would do so as a concerned and responsible citizen of the common good and public affairs, which are the duty and responsibility of all citizens, regardless of social status. I would do so as a brother in humanity, in this part of the world that is Cameroon.

I don't care how people might take it, understand it or interpret it. Because, to paraphrase Dom Helder Camera from the last century, if you give a piece of your bread to help the hungry poor, people will say of you: here is a humanist, a Samaritan, a man or woman of God. There is a saint. But when you ask, 'Why is this poor man sleeping hungry?', you will be told that you are interfering, that you are a communist, a subversive opponent, a politician meddling in things that do not concern you.

In Cameroon, Africa, Europe, Asia, America, Oceania and everywhere else in the world, peace has become like daily bread that must be asked for every day. Without the 'bread of peace', we will die of famine, the famine of war. Without the 'bread of peace', we cannot live and eat organic bread. For the Church, society and the State, peace is therefore imperative; a peace built on the foundations of justice, truth and love, humanity and fraternity. We propose to analyse this on the basis of Cameroon's motto (*Peace-Work-Fatherland*), which imposes a political duty and responsibility on the Church, Christians and citizens in political, economic, cultural and spiritual society. The dynamic of the two kingdoms, the two cities (that of earth and that of Heaven) is played out in this responsibility.

## **Church, Society, State and Politics**

According to the Second Vatican Council (Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* on the Church in the Modern World): "The specific mission that Christ has entrusted to his Church is neither political, economic nor social: the goal he has assigned to it is religious."<sup>2</sup> Its sphere of competence is more spiritual, transcendental and eschatological.<sup>3</sup> Following Christ, its Founder, the Church proposes a revolution of love.<sup>4</sup> It is this revolution that we propose and will continue to propose through our prayers, our words, our lives and our acts of charity, in the Church, in society and in the world.

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<sup>1</sup> Meditation for justice, reconciliation, peace and unity in Cameroon and in the World.

<sup>2</sup> Constitution pastorale *Gaudium et Spes* sur l'Eglise dans le monde de ce temps, no. 42, §2, in *Vatican II : les seize documents conciliaires. Texte intégral*, Montréal/Paris, Fidès, 1966.

<sup>3</sup> See *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 76. Also read numbers 40, 41, 42, 43 ; et 75-76.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. BENOÎT XVI, Exhortation Apostolique Post-Synodale *Africae Munus* sur l'engagement africain, Vatican, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2011, no. 26.

However, "the Church cannot remain indifferent to economic [political and social] processes that negatively affect all of humanity. She insists on the need to build the economy [politics and society] on moral principles,"<sup>5</sup> on the principles of the Gospel, which is, forever, the Good News of God's Love and Truth for humanity. The Church cannot abandon its universal mission for truth and love, for justice and peace, for the fight against injustices and other scourges that tarnish the dignity of human beings whom He, in Christ, created and saved in His image and likeness (cf. Gen 1:26). And as a Cameroonian prelate, Cardinal Tumi, pointed out, "wherever free human beings created in the image of God are oppressed, their liberation from all forms of oppression is a duty imposed on me by the Gospel, which frees us from all bondage."<sup>6</sup>

There is war in our country, not just one war, but many wars: in the Far North, the North-West and the South-West, for more than ten years. These wars have created refugees and internally displaced persons. There is social and political unrest, and general social malaise, worsened by the aftermath of the October 12<sup>th</sup> 2025 presidential elections. There are issues of bread and water, electricity and light, schools, hospitals and healthcare for all in most parts of the country. In fact, armed conflict does not prevent the misery and poverty that it creates and often exacerbates. However, as Luneau wrote, "the life of the Christian community cannot be separated from the nation to which it belongs."<sup>7</sup> For this reason, when our societies are in trouble, our churches cannot be well either. This cannot make the Church indifferent or inactive. In fact, in his encyclical, John Paul II noted:

"The Church has no technical solutions to offer... Indeed, it does not propose economic or political systems or programmes, nor does it express a preference for one or the other, provided that human dignity is duly respected and promoted and that it itself is given the necessary space to carry out its ministry in the world."<sup>8</sup>

However, John Paul II continues,

"How can anyone proclaim Christ on this immense continent if they forget that it is one of the poorest regions in the world? How could anyone fail to take into account the history of suffering in a land where many nations are still struggling with hunger, war, racial and tribal tensions, political instability and human rights violations? All of this poses a challenge to evangelization."<sup>9</sup>

This struggle has been that of the prophets of social justice such as Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, the psalmist, etc. (cf. Am 5:21-24; Is 1:11-17; Is 58; Hos 6:6; 8:13; Ps 50(49):7-15). One cannot be a Christian, a religious, a priest, a bishop, a cardinal or a pope without being sensitive to human needs and issues, to the joys and sorrows of our world. In fact, as Cosmao reminded us, "if the Church has a role to play in transforming the world, we must take into

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<sup>5</sup> Textes officiels adoptés par le Concile, « La mission de l'Église orthodoxe dans le monde contemporain », no. 21, in *Contacts*, no. 255, p. 315.

<sup>6</sup> Allocution of Mgr Christian TUMI, Archbishop of Garoua, 1983. Cited by Jean-Marc ELA, *Ma foi d'Africain*, Paris, Karthala, 2009, p. 31.

<sup>7</sup> René LUNEAU, « La théologie africaine et son devenir », in *Les quatre fleuves. Cahiers de recherche et réflexion religieuses*, Paris, Beauchesne, cahier numéro 10 « un christianisme africain », 1979, pp. 111-116. Ici voir p. 115.

<sup>8</sup> JEAN-PAUL II, Lettre encyclique, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, Vatican, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1987, no.41

<sup>9</sup> JEAN-PAUL II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, Vatican, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995, no. 51.

account the political effects of preaching the Gospel."<sup>10</sup> The motto of a state such as Cameroon aims at this ideal of transformation.

### Peace-Work-Fatherland

The motto of our beloved and beautiful country, Cameroon, is: '*Peace-Work-Fatherland!*' This motto is one of the national emblems. This motto was chosen – you will agree with me on this point of history – in a serious context of colonial occupation and oppression, which was preceded by long, very long centuries of slavery and the slave trade. We were then denied, rejected, excluded by some from the collective humanity in which our God, our Creator, our Lord and Saviour created us all as peoples, languages, nations and races.

This emblematic motto: *Peace-Work-Homeland* therefore translated, for our ancestors at that time, a cry of love and freedom, a zeal for love and freedom for something precious and noble to us: our land, our homeland, our heritage and ourselves, as peoples under a cruel and deadly yoke. It is, in fact, an affirmation and a defence of ourselves against our negation, the great negation that human history will never forget because black people were, for centuries, the '**black gold**' of several so-called Christian and civilised nations of the world.

This motto aims to free us from the colonial-commercial labels and stereotypes with which we have been branded, labelled and sold to the world. In fact, according to Old Portuguese, Cameroon means shrimp, in its etymological sense. We are therefore *camaroes*, *majangas*, *shrimps*. That was the colonial-commercial trademark placed on us. This motto of *Peace-Work-Fatherland* aims to free us from this colonial-commercial trademark, for which we continue to pay taxes and fees. To apologise to our fathers, these poetic words came to me: Shrimps. How touching these words are! Let us listen to them, in the dynamic struggle for justice and lasting peace that we sought and begged for in Cameroon throughout the world:

### Shrimps<sup>11</sup>

Shrimps,  
They call us shrimps,  
*Camaroes*,  
Shrimps that are grilled,  
Shrimps that are eaten,  
Often dry, without grilling,  
Often chilled, without preparation.  
*Camaroes*

We are called prawns,  
*Camaroes*,  
Fresh prawns,

We are transported and exported,  
Prawns of Nations, prawns of  
Markets  
Prawns-Export  
Prawns-Registered trademark  
And we accept

We are called Rivers of prawns  
So we are each Rivers,  
Rios where prawns abound,  
For years,  
From markets We have been,

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<sup>10</sup> Vincent COSMAO, *Changer le monde : une tâche pour l'Église*, Paris, Cerf, 1979, p. 175. Toute l'analyse du chapitre VIII du livre, « Pratique politique et théologie de la foi », est assez pertinent sur ce point. Voir pp. 175-189.

<sup>11</sup> Jean-Paul TAGHEU, *Vie agonique : le cv d'un pays du globe*, Douala, Les Éditions Gh'otam, avril 2021, p. 110-112.

We are still shrimps  
Our soil, shrimps  
Our subsoil, shrimps  
Our waters, shrimps  
Our forests, shrimps  
Our air, shrimps  
Everything, shrimps

But I am not a Rio,  
Nor one of,  
Nor a *Camaroes*

But I am not a river,  
But I am not a Rio,  
But I am not a shrimp,  
I am not a *Camaroes*  
I am not a *Rio de Camaroes*  
I am not a river of shrimp  
I am not for sale and for eating  
But I am a man  
But a being,  
I am a people, I am a homeland

This is an apology for liberation, because we are not shrimp. Cameroon's motto therefore shapes our particular destiny, in the context of the painful predicaments of African history. It defines our life project, to live together and not separately or divided. In a way, it also defines our destiny: The Fatherland, the Fatherland, the Fatherland! We want a Fatherland. Peace, Peace, Peace! We want Peace in this Fatherland. Work, Work, Work! We want Work in this Fatherland. I will start with Peace.

### **Give us this day and forever our Peace**

I would have liked the great prayer, the Lord's Prayer, to include the request: give us our Peace today, in this generation and forever. Give us our peace today and forgive us our offences against justice and peace, truth and love, against humanity, against brotherhood and sisterhood. This is because our world is in flames, violence and blood; and also because peace is the first word of our national motto in Cameroon: *Peace-Work-Fatherland*.

Thus, just as in the Lord's Prayer there is the part about asking for bread, I see this daily bread as a housewife's basket full of many good things. This bread contains many things. It is not only bread made from wheat or flour or corn or potatoes or cassava. It is also spiritual bread, the bread of peace. That is why I say: *Lord, give us our Peace for this day, the Peace of this generation, Peace forever. And forgive us our offences against justice and peace, truth and love, against humanity, against brotherhood and sisterhood*. Every day we should ask for this Peace for ourselves and for others. We should work, in speech and words, deeds and truth (cf. 1 Jn 3:18), for its coming. For without this Peace, we can no longer have a homeland, nor work according to the terms of our national motto. I therefore see this Peace as bread to be asked for every day, in the Lord's Prayer, the *Our Father*.

Today, throughout the world, this peace is threatened and even destroyed by selfishness, injustice, corruption, misery, poverty, theft of public property, crime, poor governance, and many other predicaments that today undermine our unity and peace, our autonomy and our development.

In this regard, the *Lineamenta* (guidelines) of the Second African Synod, held in Rome in October 2010, sounded the alarm and called Africans to wake up, stating:

"The greatest challenge to achieving peace and justice in Africa is to manage public affairs well in both the political and economic spheres... because the suffering of

African peoples is partly linked to the management of these two areas... Africa's immense resources contrast with the state of poverty of the poor in Africa (...) Hence the urgent need to study ways and means of promoting the emergence [of students, businesspeople, managers, Christians...], of politicians of integrity, determined to protect the common heritage against all forms of waste and misappropriation." (Paragraphs 10 and 15).

Praying for peace and unity in Cameroon therefore means praying for social justice, conversion to social justice and to the human and republican values of love, truth, peace, fraternity, sisterhood and humanity. Augustine defined peace as tranquillity in order. This tranquillity in order is not only to be seen at the social and political level. It can also be seen at the personal level of each individual, at the economic level. Peace is tranquillity in order, in justice, truth and love. Each one of us is an artisan, a person of prayer, a lover, a practitioner of this peace. Each one of us is a craftsman, a worshipper, a lover, a practitioner of this peace. That is why politicians and all those who divide the nation for political and power reasons are mercenaries of our homeland. They are no different from bandits. For, as Augustine pointed out, "if justice is not respected, what are states but bands of thieves?"<sup>12</sup> We should, nevertheless, pray for their conversion.

Christ is our Peace, Saint Paul tells us (cf. Eph 2:14; Rom 1:5). He is our Peace if, at least, we adhere to his values. "*I leave you peace, I give you my peace. I do not give it to you as the world gives it. Let not your hearts be troubled or afraid*" (Jn 14:27). He is the true Peace of the world, of the Church, of our societies and of each and every one of us. But the Peace of Christ passes through each and every one of us to be realised in our countries, our societies, in the Church and in ourselves. We are, therefore, artisans of the Peace of Christ in our world (cf. Mt 5:9).

For this Peace to blossom and manifest itself and set the world ablaze, we need conversion, not only to Christ, but to human and Christian values. Is not our hardness of heart and life, of ears and tongues, of touch and feeling, an obstacle to the blossoming and manifestation of this peace, in our country and in the world? The new name for peace today is conversion to Christ and to the values of Christ, which remain unique in history. Peace must be a task, a vocation for all.

### **Give us this day our Work**

Give us our peace for this day and forever also means: give us our work for this day. Work is the second word in our national motto. Peace goes hand in hand with work, just as work goes hand in hand with peace. Each and every one of us, even if we are unemployed, should work for this peace, for the good life, for the living together that we talk about. In this way, the first task, the first job of every Cameroonian citizen is to love their country and work for its progress.

God is the First Worker, the First Craftsman of the visible and invisible universe. He is the Worker and Employer par excellence. As Creator, He placed us in this world, in this

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<sup>12</sup> AUGUSTIN D'HIPPONE, *La cité de Dieu* IV, 4.

Cameroon where we were born, this Cameroon that He entrusted to us. Like God, only work will save our homeland. Working for ourselves, our families and our nation.

Many problems, wars and violence around the world stem from a lack of employment, unemployment, poor pay, etc. Working for peace, being working citizens and patriots, means working to ensure that Cameroonians have jobs and can flourish in their work by applying themselves diligently. Whether we are in the diaspora or in the country, it means being a patriotic and humane employer who knows how to treat their employees with good professional treatment and wages.

Indeed, if, as Saint Paul VI said, “development is the new name for peace,”<sup>13</sup> it goes without saying that unemployment, professional and wage abuse are the new names for war, as are poverty and misery among the population. To say this is not to choose one political and social class over another, nor to defend one against another. It is simply an observation and a challenge, as a Christian citizen or citizen Christian, living in society and in the Church.

In the biblical story of the Exodus, much murmuring, anger, violence and war arose over bread and water, simply bread and water. A proverb from our country poetically says: “*War will end up when famine ends.*” Without work, without paid employment, we will die of starvation or war. A country without work and without workers is a country in danger. A country of unemployed people will sooner or later become a country of thieves.

Even in Heaven, one day, we will still have to work. There is no rest here on earth because of our many needs. But even in Heaven, there will be no rest, as we will spend eternity praising, blessing, worshipping and contemplating God. The beatific vision is a certain task. A task, a work that has no weight and does not cause physical fatigue, in that our bodies will no longer be the same as those here below, subject to contingencies. They will be glorious and spiritual. They will not feel the burdens and loads associated with their activities.

### **Give us this day and forever our fatherland**

When we are in exile, wrote François René de Chateaubriand, it is not the country we miss but our homeland. He based this assertion on Saint Augustine of Hippo, whom he greatly admired. Anywhere, we can find a country, a land, but not a homeland. One cannot find a homeland everywhere. A homeland is something stronger than a mere country. We can therefore understand why the psalmist prayed: “*If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill...! ‘May my tongue stick to my palate if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above all other joys.*” (Ps (137)(136), 5-6) We are Christians in a land. Our earthly homeland prepares us for our true homeland in Heaven.

We did not choose to be born as Cameroonians, in this part of Central Africa, located just above the equator, which is Cameroon. It was our Creator who chose it for us, and He knows why. We must therefore accept it as such. He wanted it to be diverse, diversified in its geographical, ethnic and cultural nomenclature to the point where Cameroon is called ‘Africa in miniature’, little Africa. “The beauty of a carpet,” Hampaté Bâ wrote, “lies in the variety of

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<sup>13</sup> PAUL VI, Lettre encyclique *Populorum Progressio* sur le développement des peuples, Vatican, Libreria Edictrice Vaticana, 1967, nos. 76-80. 87.

its colours; the diversity of people, cultures and civilisations is what makes the world beautiful and rich. How boring and monotonous a uniform world would be.”<sup>14</sup>

Thus, the Peace we ask for, the Peace we seek, is also for our homeland, our common soul, our ideal, our common home. This homeland is only a reflection of the true Homeland that is in Heaven. It is only a reflection of our true City that is in Heaven. This homeland, this city, this Cameroon that is above is free, like the Jerusalem above (cf. Gal 4:26; Heb 12:22-23). It is free and awaits the freedom of the one on earth. Speaking of Cameroon above is only an image. You see, in Heaven, in the divine and eternal City, there will no longer be nationalities, tribes, races, or languages as there are on earth. Nations will no longer exist. There will be only one Nation, only one homeland: God.

That is why, in one of his prayers, King David said of his homeland: *"If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand forget...! 'May my tongue stick to my palate if I do not think of you, if I do not put Jerusalem before all other joys. "* (Ps (137)(136), 5-6). We could say, following his example: *if I forget you, O Cameroon, may my right hand forget me too. May my tongue stick to my palate if I no longer think of you, if I do not put Cameroon before all other joys. If I forget you, O my Africa, may my right hand forget me too. May my tongue stick to my palate if I no longer think of you, if I do not put Cameroon before all other joys.* In the same vein, I make my own this song of ascents, this song of David's pilgrimage to Jerusalem:

*"How joyful I was when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord!"*

*2We stood at your gates, Jerusalem!*

*3Jerusalem, built as a city that is bound firmly together,*

*4to which the tribes went up, the tribes of the Lord,*

*as was decreed for Israel, to celebrate the name of the Lord.*

*5For there are set up thrones for judgment, thrones for the house of David.*

*6Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: May those who love you be secure;*

*7may there be peace within your walls and security within your palaces!*

*8For the sake of my brothers and companions, I will say, 'Peace be within you! "*

*9For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good."* (Ps 122(121))

I adapt this psalm, I inculturate it, I make it my own and sing it, in these terms, for my country:

*"What joy when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord!' "*

*2Now our journey ends at your gates, Kamerun!*

*3Kameroun, here you are within your walls: O nation of one piece!*

*[Kamerun, a country on a continent!*

*O my Africa, a whole continent in one country, Kamerun!]*

*4There the tribes have gone up,*

*[The scattered tribes of Kemet], the tribes of the Lord,*

*according to the rule in Israel, to celebrate the name of the Lord.*

*5For there are thrones set for justice,*

*thrones for the house of David and our ancestors..*

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<sup>14</sup> Amadou Hampaté BA, Lettre à la jeunesse, in <https://www.deslettres.fr/damadou-hampate-ba-jeunesse-soyez-au-service-vie/>, consulté 21 janvier 2019.

*6Ask for happiness on Kamerun: Peace to those who love you!*  
*7May peace reign within your walls and happiness within your palaces!*  
*[May peace reign within your walls in NoSu, in the North and South,*  
*in EsOu, in the East and West,*  
*but especially in NoSo, in the North-West and South-West.]*  
*8For the sake of my brothers and companions, I will say:*  
*'Peace be with you!'*  
*9For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I want your happiness."*

In fact, our country, our homeland, is like our Garden of Eden. God has placed us there until Christ returns. Homeland means the land of our fathers and, conversely, the father of our lands. Our first land is where we were born, where we come from. We may have other lands after it, other lands more beautiful than it, but it remains the first. That is why there is a link between homeland, parent, sibling and fraternity.

However, God is the Father of our fathers, the Father of our fathers' fathers, and this homeland is, ultimately, the very land of God. God is our ultimate homeland, He is our Final Land. There is therefore also a link between the ultimate homeland and the Kingdom. For this reason, this Jesuit anthropologist's research on our country is profound. Father Jacques Frédy made a comparison between the name of God in one of the regions of southern Cameroon and the name of God in one of the regions of northern Cameroon.<sup>15</sup>

In the West Cameroon region, God and the earth (the soil) are referred to in the same way. They are homonyms: 'Si'. We live on earth, but the earth belongs to God. It does not belong to us. It is immanent to us, we live on it, we live with it, we draw everything from our existence, but at the same time, it transcends us. Similarly, in North Cameroon, among the Mafa people, God and heaven are expressed in the same way. They are also homonyms: 'Zighile'. God is our homeland because He is our heaven. He is "Si" and He is 'Zighile'. God is our Earth and our Heaven. This statement has implications not only for ecology, but also for the theology of creation, providence and eschatology. This unity in God reminds us of the two cities mentioned by Augustine of Hippo, a 5th-century Algerian.

### **The two cities, the two homelands: from earth to Heaven**

Before being condemned in 1633, Galileo declared: the intention of the Holy Spirit is to show us how to go to Heaven, not how Heaven works. Galileo thus laid the foundations for the separation between science and theology, geocentrism and heliocentrism. Geocentrism was the theory that the Earth is the centre of the world, around which the universe revolves. Heliocentrism, on the other hand, is the theory that the Sun is the centre of the world, around which everything revolves.

However, Galileo's statement allowed us to understand the principles and methods of theology and science. Philosophical, theological and spiritual questions and answers concern the foundations, the meaning of life, the why. The questions and answers of science and

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<sup>15</sup> For this read his article : « Dieu, notre ciel et notre sol : *Métaphores céleste et terrestre pour désigner l'Être suprême au nord et à l'ouest du Cameroun* », in *Pentecôte Afrique*, décembre 2018.



technology are more about conditioning, the how. The scientific universe is more temporal, while the theological universe is more spiritual, absolute, transcendent and transcendental.

For this reason, “as much as the Church rejects the separation of these two worlds, it affirms their vigorous distinction. It is necessary to constantly clarify both and keep them together.”<sup>16</sup> In other words, the questions of the *polis* are also those of the *spiritual* or the *telos*, of meaning, of why. Questions arising in one of these areas also concern the other area, because it is the same subject, the human being, who is at the centre of both areas and is affected by them.

"Between the spiritual and the temporal there is no separation but a rigorous distinction. Non-separation means that the spiritual and the temporal are not two areas that must ignore each other. There is a co-presence: the presence of all that is spiritual in the temporal, and the presence of the temporal in the spiritual; the distinction means that there can be no confusion between the two planes in the person who nevertheless experiences their strong relationship."<sup>17</sup>

However, Christians are both physical and spiritual beings. They belong to two cities: the city of men and the City of God. But it is the city of men that prepares them for the City of God, the City of the Kingdom, which is the higher city towards which the city of men strives. One cannot therefore be a good Christian if one is not a good citizen. In this regard, Augustine spoke of two loves and two cities. He wrote:

"Two loves have therefore created two cities: love of self to the point of contempt for God [created] the earthly city; love of God to the point of contempt for self [created] the heavenly city. One glorifies itself, the other glorifies the Lord. One begs for glory from men; for the other, God, the witness of its conscience, is its greatest glory. One lifts up its head in glory; the other says to its God: *You are my glory and you lift up my head* [Ps 3:4]."<sup>18</sup>

In the first city or homeland, it is self-love to the point of contempt for God (*amor sui iusque ad contemptum Dei*) that prevails. This often leads to atheism, to compromise with satanic or dark forces. In the second city or homeland, it is love of God to the point of self-contempt (*amor Dei iusque ad contemptum sui*) that prevails. In the second, charity and charitable service prevail, while in the first, it is the passion to dominate.

"One, in its leaders or in the nations it subjugates, is dominated by the passion to dominate; in the other, people serve each other out of charity, the leaders by governing,

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<sup>16</sup> Emmanuel MOUNIER, *Feu la Chrétienté*, chap VII, dans *Œuvres complètes*, tome III, Paris, Seuil, 1962, p. 704.

<sup>17</sup> Guy COQ, « Chrétiens de Gauche, une dénomination problématique », in *Transversalités. Revue de l'Institut Catholique de Paris*, no. 140 (« Des chrétiens en politique »), janvier-mars 2017, p. 13-22. See p. 15 for the reference.

<sup>18</sup> AUGUSTIN, *La cité de Dieu* XIV, xxviii, in *Œuvres de saint Augustin*, traduction française par G. Combès, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, « Bibliothèque Augustinienne » 35, 1959, p. 364.

the subjects by obeying. One, in its masters, loves its own strength; the other says to its God: *I will love you, Lord, my strength* [Ps 17 (18), 2]."<sup>19</sup>

We are of the earth and we are of Heaven. We are of the earth through our mortal flesh, which is a sister to creation with the earth. We are also of Heaven through our soul and spirit, which are brothers to creation with Heaven. In fact, through our flesh, we resemble more the earth from which we are drawn (cf. Gn 2:7). Through our immortal soul and spirit, we are more like Heaven, towards which we are heading. Therefore, if the flesh is the earth within us, the spirit and soul represent Heaven within us. We are of the earth, we are earthly, but we strive towards Heaven, because we are also heavenly beings. That is why the Apostle said :

*"...Seek what is above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God; 2for your goal is above, not on earth. 3For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4When Christ, your life, appears, then you too will appear with him in glory."* (Col 3:1-4)

The earthly city has its sights set on the heavenly city, the City Above, which is the true and better homeland of the Christian citizen (cf. Heb 11:16; 12:22; 13:14). The earthly city, the earthly homeland, leads us to the heavenly city, the homeland above. That is why, to be a good Christian, one must also be a good citizen. To be a good Christian, one must be a good Cameroonian. Ultimately, both cities belong to God. They are God's cities, since God is the Creator of the visible and invisible universe. The only difference is that the earthly city entrusted to human beings has been arrogated to them as if they were its owners. As a result, they have lived and continue to live there according to their own standards, and no longer according to those of God. They live there as if it were their final homeland.

However, the City of God is the only permanent City, the final City. No earthly citizenship, no earthly city is permanent, just as no border is permanent. That is why Plotinus wrote: "We must flee to the beloved homeland where the Father is and where all things are. But what, he asks, is the means of embarking and fleeing? To become like God."<sup>20</sup> The great empires of yesterday are now reduced to small nations. The great nations of yesterday are now barely cities. The great Citizenship is therefore that of Above (cf. Eph 2:19-20; Phil 3:20).

*"God is love"* (1 Jn 4:8, 16). He is not a dictator. If He had been a dictator like some of our leaders, there would never have been sin against Him. But it is because He is love and His love leaves us free to choose Him or not to choose Him that there is this possibility for human beings to turn away from Him.

Citizenship here on earth is only a means, an *organon* for heavenly citizenship, where it is good to live. It is in relation to this permanent citizenship that St Paul thinks of us as emigrants, strangers here on earth (cf. Eph 2:19). In other words, earthly citizenship is a transitory, temporary and migrant citizenship. It guides us and leads us to the higher homeland. Consequently, we have a great duty and responsibility here on earth, in our nations, towards our higher and final homeland.

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<sup>19</sup> AUGUSTIN, *La cité de Dieu* XIV, xxviii, in *Œuvres de saint Augustin*, BA, 35, p. 364.

<sup>20</sup> PLOTIN, *Ennéades*, I, vi, 8 ; ii, 3. Cited by AUGUSTIN, *La cité de Dieu* IX, xvii, in *Œuvres de saint Augustin*, BA, 35, p. 398.

### **Political duty and responsibility of the Church, Christians and citizens**

To hope for happiness or eternal bliss one day means working every day for a better world, a world of justice, truth, humanity, fraternity, reconciliation, peace and love. Hence the social and political role of the Church and Christians in different countries. According to the conciliar document *Gaudium et spes*, the Church in today's world

“They will fight with integrity and prudence against injustice and oppression, against absolutism and intolerance, whether they come from a man or a political party; and they will devote themselves to the good of all with sincerity and righteousness, and even more, with the love and courage required by political life.”<sup>21</sup>

This duty and responsibility fall to all of us, citizens and Christians alike. They call on us to make a difference, to fight to build another Cameroon, another Africa, another world, another humanity where there is true humanity, without distinction of race or discrimination against persons, races, languages, tribes and nations. Is this not the challenge set for us by the exhortation of the Second African Synod of Bishops in 2011? The synod was entitled: "The Church of Africa in the service of reconciliation, justice and peace. "

When a citizen, when a people cries out for justice and peace, love and truth, hunger and thirst, schools and hospitals, water and electricity, and many other basic needs necessary for the cohesion of the homeland, they do so also in the name of love for their country. The zeal of your house consumes me, says the evangelist about Jesus in the scene of the cleansing of the Temple (cf. Jn 2:17; Ps 69(70):10). In the same way, zeal and love for our motherland, our mother and our home, consumes us. The motherland is our father or our mother. A person's mother, regardless of her social status, even if she is sick and insane, remains his mother. Rather than exposing or destroying her, we care for and protect her. That is why, as citizens, we can cry out our needs and denounce everything that is wrong to the various authorities representing the people in the nation.

Indeed, if all authority has meaning only in relation to God, who is the source and principle of authority and who willed that there be organisation and order in society (cf. Rom 13:1), when authority loses its point of reference, it no longer serves the people. Instead, it serves itself. The people often rise up or revolt when authority becomes detached from the people and from serving the people. The legitimacy of authority comes from its dependence on serving and loving the people. That is why not all political, economic, social and spiritual leaders necessarily come from God. It is therefore not enough to say that all authority comes from God, as many of our African autocrats like to quote to justify their eternal hold on power. They must also be mandated by God through the sovereign people, and their authority must be service, justice and peace, truth and love, humanity and brotherhood.

It is our duty and responsibility to seek, preserve and promote our homeland by promoting these values and resisting any system of oppression that does not place human beings at the centre of its concerns and as an end in view of God – the End of ends. The

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<sup>21</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 75, §6.

homeland, the nation, is a permanent quest. It is never acquired once and for all. It must be rediscovered and built every day.

<i>The homeland as a lost sheep<sup>22</sup></i>	
<p>Let us seek our nation,  Let us seek our homeland,  For our homeland is lost,  For our nation is lost,  Like a sheep.  We are all shepherds and sheep of our homeland,  Sheep and shepherds of our nation.</p> <p>Where are you, O my homeland?  Where are you, O my motherland?  It is you I have been searching for so long.  Let us climb the hills of the North  Let us descend towards the South  Let us run to the East  Let us return to the West  To search for our nation  To search for our homeland  For it is lost.</p> <p>Where are you, O my “matricide”?  Where are you, my mother?  It is you we seek.  Where are you, my homeland?  Where are you, my father?  It is you we seek.</p> <p>Ah! Yes! O come! said a messenger.  She is lost in the colony,  Your mother!  He is lost in the post-colony,  Your father!  She is in the hands of her black-robed legates  With their sceptres of totalitarian iron.</p> <p>The nation is lost in injustice  The homeland is lost in the violations of its children  It is lost in our silent silence  In the complicity of our collective betrayals  Of our hatreds  Of our lies</p>	<p>It is in the hands of its black-robed legates  With their sceptres of totalitarian iron.</p> <p>The nation is lost in injustice  The homeland is lost in the violations of its children  It is lost in our silent silence  In the complicity of our collective betrayals  Of our hatreds  Of our lies  Of our abominations for power and positions of power</p> <p>The ‘matricide’ is lost in poverty and misery  The nation is lost in torment and war  The homeland is lost in fratricide  The ‘matricide’ is lost in ‘matricide’  The homeland is lost in parricide</p> <p>There are women crying out in pain  There are children crying for milk  There is hunger and thirst  There are tears shed  There is blood shed.  Fire flows, barbarism is permanent.  That is where our homeland lies  That is where it is lost, our nation  Let us go there to search for it and we will find it again  Of our abominations for power and positions of power</p> <p>The ‘matricide’ is lost in poverty and misery  The nation is lost in torment and war  The homeland is lost in fratricide  The ‘matricide’ is lost in ‘matricide’  The homeland is lost in parricide!</p>

<sup>22</sup> TAGHEU Jean Paul, *For the love of the country and the country of love*, inédit.

## Conclusion

The greatness of a nation lies in its ability to convert and reconvert to its founding ideal, its revolutionary charisma, in times of crisis and adversity. To ask for peace, work and a homeland every day is to take up this challenge. In this sense, independence is like a country that is built every day, without ever tiring of the work. Otherwise, we will never achieve it. And we will remain dependent or become so forever. It is every day that we become independent and autonomous. So be careful! Be free and independent!

Prayer for Peace, Work and Country

*Lord, make me an instrument of peace*

*Lord, make me an instrument of peace*

*Where there is hatred, let me sow love.*

*Where there is offence, let me sow forgiveness.*

*Where there is discord, let me sow unity.*

*Where there is error, let me sow truth.*

*Where there is despair, let me sow hope.*

*Where there is darkness, let me bring light.*

*Where there is sadness, let me bring joy.*

*Lord, grant that I may seek not so much to be consoled as to console,  
to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love.*

*For it is in giving that we receive, it is in forgetting ourselves that we find ourselves,*

*It is in forgiving that we are forgiven,*

*It is in dying that we are reborn to eternal life (Saint Francis of Assisi)*