

Prayer for the Democratic Republic of Congo

The Francophone Network of the Anglican Communion, meeting in Douala, Cameroon, on September 11, 2012, adopted this report by His Grace Archbishop Henri Isingoma on prayer for the Democratic Republic of Congo, and commits its members to daily prayer for our sisters and brothers of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Introduction

The present situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo is very complex, giving rise to much confusion, and evoking not only great sadness but also showing the tremendous humiliation of the Congolese people, as if they were still living in another century. Repeated internal wars and the permanent presence of armed groups and foreign rebellions in Congolese territory are witness to the fact that the country is not organized militarily, and as a consequence, it is the most vulnerable nation in the region, incapable of protecting its natural wealth, enforcing the authority of the State, or bringing social justice to the whole of the land. Some political analysts see it as a vast insecure region with many internal organizational problems that in turn cause security issues for its neighbours. The immoral exploitation of its abundant natural resources attracts the world's covetousness, which it is incapable of repelling. Some trustworthy reports show that the number of organized crime networks is presently very high in the DRC, profiting from the country's disorganization to obtain natural resources at artificially low prices, with the complicity of certain political leaders. Corruption and the absence of the law and of a collective identity are the result of the weakness of governance and the incapacity of the government to apply democratic laws that guarantee the security of the majority of the people, who not only live in squalor but also are hard hit by the deadly consequences of this political and social instability. Ceaseless wars have made atrocity a part of daily life for the Congolese population, especially women and children.

Getting weapons is presently a way to get both political and economic power. Old and new warlords fight over who has power. Power calls forth money and money buys status. The minority in power are extremely rich while the vast majority of the people are extremely poor. There is no longer a middle class, as government officials and the military are poorly paid and unemployment is very high.

What is surprising is that this situation repeats itself over and over in the sight of the international community, which is the guarantor of the world economic order and is well-represented by the diplomatic corps, international NGOs, and the largest and most expensive United Nations force ever, present in the country for over ten years, and possessing firepower far superior to that of the so-called National Army.

For some, the DRC is the victim of its own history, as its people have *never* enjoyed the freedom to plan politically for the nation, and consequently have *never* taken in hand its own development. Since independence, the DRC has in effect *never* organized itself as a democratic state. Outside of occasional *diktats* from outside, the country has always suffered from a lack of the national collective identity foreseen in the vision of Patrice Lumumba, which the great powers quickly snuffed out six months after independence with his assassination. After the

colonial dictatorship of Leopold II, followed that of Marshal Mobutu, which lasted 32 years before giving way, since 17 May 1997, to the current wars characterized by strong interference from other East African countries.

It is generally admitted that, more than 50 years after independence, the DRC is difficult to administer by a centrally organized lawful state, and incapable of ensuring a prosperous life for the vast majority of its inhabitants. As a result, the intended partitions of the country that so divided the pioneers of independence in 1960 (Patrice Lumumba, Joseph Kasavubu, Albert Kalonji, Moïse Tshombe, Pierre Mulele, Antoine Gizenga...) have taken on new life, such that they tend to be endorsed by those who are victims of the humiliating consequences of the wars and the bad governance of the nation. Discouraged by the indifference of their compatriots in the western part of the country, the people of the east of the DRC, who have been continuously pounded by wars, seem to be placing their hopes more and more in the political partition of the nation. This is an expression of their disgust at being ruled by faraway political and administrative institutions in Kinshasa. For a long time, they have felt themselves badly exploited financially, abandoned to their fate, and relying on the economies and transport and social infrastructures of neighbouring countries.

What we have described above gives a certain satisfaction to the rebel groups, to neighbouring countries, and those in the world who see no profit in a united Congo. Rwanda, for instance, has put in place military support for the partisans of splitting up the second-largest country in Africa. The whole world knows that Rwanda is not alone in wanting to see the dismemberment of the DRC become reality; behind her are certain great powers. Rumours are growing little by little; many Congolese believe them. The Roman Catholic Church has shown this by organizing marches of its faithful with signs denouncing the 'balkanisation' of the DRC. Others do not believe it, without tangible proof. However, the ways in which the new wars have unfolded give rise to the suspicion that the antagonists have some sort of secret arrangement. Civilians have not only the barrels of cannons aimed at them but also face gang rape, pillage and forced exile! God only knows!

For without applying the partition hypothesis, the pretence of having ended Mobutu's regime does not hold up. In fact, up to now, he is the only Congolese politician who succeeded in blending together the Congolese peoples despite tribal, ethnic, and regional divisions to make up on purpose one Zairian nation. As long as the DRC is unable to apply federalism within its present borders, the ghost of Mobutu will continue to haunt it, with all his dictatorial and political methods to maintain national unity.

As an introduction to prayer, it is good to consider questions such as these:

- A united Congo, with borders traced by the 1885 Berlin Conference in answer to the wishes of the Belgian king Leopold II, is this really the will of God?
- Why has this united Congo always seemed to be favourable terrain for the power of evil to manifest itself?
- Is a dismembered Congo the best way to develop the peoples who live in the present

confines of the DRC? How much time might that take? Will this process not lengthen their suffering?

- How can the Congolese people be brought to recognize God's blessings on the land, and for all to benefit from these, without succumbing to ultra-capitalist egotism?
- Why is the international community so impotent or so indifferent to the dangers that beset human beings in the DRC?

Subjects for Prayer

- Let us pray for the purification of the land of Congo and the conversion of the Congolese people, that they may commit to walk in the way of holiness and free themselves from the cult of personality inherited from traditional religions, from the spirit of dependence derived from colonialism, and the spirit of powerlessness to determine their lives for themselves.
- Let us pray for all victims of the terrorism of the war in the eastern part of the country, and especially for those who have died, who have been forcibly displaced, and for refugees, for orphaned and abandoned children, for women who have been raped, for the victims of contagious epidemic illnesses, for the unemployed, and those robbed of their goods.
- Let us pray for those who govern, that they become conscious of their responsibilities toward those they govern; for the capacity and the application of democratic laws that can bring security; for the right exploitation of natural resources and for justice in the land.
- Let us pray for the churches and their leaders to work together in Christian unity, so as to call out courageously with a prophetic word from God, common and constructive, and to avoid taking part in the policy of humiliation; for right discernment of the political situation of the country; and that the churches avoid the confusion that divides them between outraged fanaticism and excessive opposition to the different sides of political parties. Let us pray that the churches with their Christian partners around the world may ask God for a divine vocation for good governance, for peace and justice in the land, and for social development.
- Let us pray for divine protection for human-rights activists and the establishment of a lasting peace as the starting-point of social development; for the awakening of an awareness of a national identity and the love of country by its people and leaders.
- Let us pray that the international community will work for real and complete independence of the DRC, establishing constructive bilateral cooperative agreements with the country that have the dignity of an equal with the rest of the nations of the world.
- Let us pray that the Lord will shorten the sufferings of his people and his creation, in answer to our daily lamentations! (Habakkuk 1)