

REPORT OF ZIMBABWE MISSION
AFRAM ZONAL ASSEMBLY
TOGO 2010

Present situation of the country

Since Independence from Britain in 1980 the country has been led by the same party with the same leadership. This brought stagnation to the economy. From the “bread providing” country to its neighbors, the country became the bread beggar. The leaders tried to stop this process through different reforms, but they failed. The mismanagement and corruption brought the country to its knees. In 2000 when the government was threatened by the opposition it embarked on the chaotic land reform. This destroyed the agriculture that was the backbone of the economy. As a result in 2008 there was complete collapse of every thing. Health, education and economy ceased to function. Inflation was running at 270 million percent. 2008 was a year of severe shortages, there was no food, no medicine, no schooling etc. Unemployment reached 85 percent. It is said that a quarter of the population of 12 million work outside the country

Two parliamentary and two presidential elections were stolen by the ruling party. There was complete chaos and political crisis. Under the pressure from the SADEC countries the major parties formed the Government of National Unity in February 2009.

This revived the hopes of the people for a better future although it looked bleak. Government adopted foreign currencies as formal means of trading (SA Rand, Botswana Pula, US Dollars, British Pound, Euro etc). This move somehow stabilized the economy and the basic goods reappeared in the shops. The new government works on the new constitution under which a fresh election should be held. We pray that nothing disturbs this process.

The church in Zimbabwe.

The number of Catholics stands at 10-12 %, of the total 12 million people. There is lot of potential for growth and development for the local church. Catholic population keeps growing. The same applies to the local vocations. There are 8 dioceses in the country. The Bulawayo Archdiocese is lead by a svd Archbishop.

Zimbabwe Mission.

The society came to Zimbabwe in 1987 and remained the district of Botswana Province till 1st June 2008. On that day a separate Mission of Zimbabwe was established. Its establishment took place at the time when the country was at the climax of political, social and economical turmoil.

At present there are 15 confreres (13 priests, 1 brother and The Archbishop). There are 3 confreres who applied for work permits and are waiting for the approvals. Three other confreres have been appointed to the Mission.

Pastoral ministry and apostolates.

The svd confreres work in two dioceses. We look after 3 rural missions, one parish in a small district town and 2 parishes in Bulawayo. Out of six places which we serve four were started by the svds.

There are 11 confreres that are directly involved in parish/mission ministry.

One is developing African liturgical art (stoles, paintings, sculptures etc).

One confrere is running Ilizwi Biblical Centre, where he provides pastoral and biblical courses for the faithful. Ilizwi centre also provides biblical and pastoral materials. The same confrere opened the audio recording studio in the beginning of this year.

For the past 16 years one confrere has been organizing Dei Verbum courses.

We are also involved in the student’s ministry. Our Mission house is located opposite the University. We provide Sunday services and the counseling for the students.

Challenges

- uncertain political situation and fears of the future
- inadequate number of confreres for proper community life, pastoral ministry and characteristic dimensions
- lack of communication with 3 of our missions
- insufficient accommodation for the Mission administration, and the confreres from the missions
- finances

Self-reliance

- Up to now we completely rely on funds from the Generalate.
- Ilizwi Centre if properly run and managed can bring some income to the mission
- Catholic Bookshop should be managed in a way to generate funds for the mission
- Tourist project if intensified can bring some profit (organized tours for tourists coming from oversea).
- Establish a network of the svd associates

Year for the priest

The year of the priest was opened by Apostolic Nuncio with the announcement that our confrere was appointed as a new Archbishop of Bulawayo.

We decided to participate in the diocesan activities for the year of the priest (recollections, retreats). The AGM meeting of priests dealt with priesthood. There is a congress planned for all the priests in March and we are going to close the year of the priest with priestly ordinations.

Assembly of SVD brothers

The document will be discussed at our meetings, where we will make some concrete steps pertaining to our mission. We are very happy that a number of youngsters are interested in the brotherhood in our society.

Future plans

- prepare formators and reopen the postulancy house in the mission
- extend the present Mission House or obtain a new property and put up something that will be suitable for the confreres of the mission
- open a new parish in Harare and a new mission in Hwange diocese
- form a mission finance committee that will spearhead fund raising activities and work on self-reliance
- provide a meaningful spiritual and pastoral care to the students

In conclusion

We are grateful to God for being with us during difficult times and showing us the way. I must say that these difficulties have brought us closer together and have strengthened us. We are grateful for the support that we receive from the Generalate, Afram Zone and all other confreres. We thank you for your prayers, concern and encouragement. Thank you very much and may God bless you all.

Presented by;
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