

An analysis of malawian pastoral letters 1992 and 2010

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PASTORAL LETTER ANALYSIS LIVING OUR FAITH, 1992: SUMMARY The church intends to help man in all the complex situations that man finds himself and here in Malawi through the bishops in the 1992 pastoral letter it played its role by tackling these realities by reminding the nation that all mankind falls from one father, (God) and is all equal, for this man's value should be observed and preserved, it continues to impart the idea that it is an integral part of the society and is assigned to maintain a conducive environment worth living.

The church calls for a need to sustain the socio-economic statuses of all to achieve equal experience of God's gifts, it proceeds to foster the observation of conditions of labor for both the employer & employee nevertheless the supported families of the two parties.

Educationally the church questions the state on the need of quality education provision & combating of the odds that exist in the education field as it is included on the state's list of duties and to apprehend these odds the church suggests on its bond with the state.

In the health sector the church strikes on the need to improve health services by also putting medical personnel on the quest of full dedication in their service provision as they deal with human dignity which is to be kept intact in respect to the creator, on the issue of HIV/AIDS the church commends the state, non-governmental organizations ; the general public for all their efforts to deal with the pandemic furthermore condemns other protective measures that encourage practices that spread the infection e. g. condom use.

The church also intervened on the issue of cooperation so that common good can be achieved and that all are entitled to freedom of expression regardless of their differences, finally the church calls the state and the nation to observe love and that the truth, humbleness should always prevail in all the state's acts.

READING THE SIGNS OF TIMES, 2010: SUMMARY The pastoral letter published on 31 October, 2010 by the church through the bishops of the Episcopal conference of Malawi aimed at acknowledging the state on its positive accomplishments.

The church also commented by criticizing the state's governing strategies that prophesied fiasco on the nation's progress. In complement the church applauded the state for its efforts to reduce food shortage problems through initiatives and advanced farming methods e. g. irrigation that would help make food available all year round. In the education sector the church appreciates the state's idea of increasing tertiary education enrollment number to improve education standards.

The church finally complemented the state for the hard working spirit being expressed through its economic independence by self-funding. As the church seeks to play its part of creating an atmosphere worth living since it is part of the atmosphere, by expressing its concerns and appreciation through the two pastoral letters, it focuses on a number of issues which vary in angles of approach but also differ in expressional amounts, this holds the differences and notable similarities between the two letters.

One of the similarities is that of their intended targets which the state is. This is so because humans are political beings by nature and hold the ability to self-direct, this means that every problem and benefit experienced by the general public arises from the political field's state of progress making the state an eligible target of the messages. The other similar factor is that they both stress much tension on the need to achieve the community's common good.

This can be noted as all the addressed issues in both letters either to the state or the general public appeals for both parties' benefit rather the common good. Considering the thematic discussions made on different grounds, education can also be noted as the other similarity. Considering the fact that the political authority ought to promote and maintain the social welfare of its citizens, where education also shapes the citizen's wellbeing.

The two pastoral letters spear head education by commenting on the government's effort to improve the education standards in the tertiary category, the church also pin points the problems faced by the education sector which include, personnel and material insufficiency etc. where these odds are a source of poverty which is God's intention on mankind.

For God is a just God and that we imitate him, the church through the two pastoral letters intends to the general public and the state on the need to exercise justice in all its actions.

In the pastoral letter ' living our faith', the church imparts this sense of justice by advising the state to be constituted by a clear system that is just and that no judgment should be passed according to one's social condition

but the truthfulness of the story, and the pastoral letter 'Reading the signs of the times', the church approaches the issue of justice by advising the state to equip the Anti-Corruption body to enable it perform its assigned duties in the required manner.

The church also pleads with the general public to give cold shoulders to all activities that they find to defy the walls of justice. The pastoral letters also hold resemblance in the sense that they both foster observation of the freedom of expression, as it is one of the duties of the church to speak out for the under privileged whose voices are unheard because of their social standards, the church handled the issue in the letter 'Living our faith', by reminding the state that all man has the right to freely express their views despite their differences for the common benefit.

The church through the bishops in the pastoral letter 'Reading signs of the times', commented on freedom of expression by stating that the media should not be abused nor receive any threats because of imparting the truth.

Even though there are areas where both letters tackled simultaneously making them similar in some sense they also have differences, one of which is that the pastoral letter Reading signs of the times much appeals to the state, particularly the political body. The letter expressed its concerns on the need to observe and maintain the values of the office of the vice president as it is second highest in power in the land.

Thus to say responsibilities of the office of the vice president should not be violated in any way and specific duties should be assigned to the office in respect to its liberty and this has not been discussed in the letter Living our

faith. To back up the idea that the pastoral letter 'Reading signs of the times', the letter unveils the malpractice of party ownership in by party headers or pioneers where they deny introduction of the eligible youth to lead the political group. This clearly explains the failure of our political body as the parties are disassociated leading to poor governance and political progress.

As the catholic social teaching through which the church interprets God's call of love on mankind is a branch of moral theology, the church in the letter 'Living our faith', expresses its concerns on the need to induce the sense of morality in the youths of the nation participating in education.

Considering the fact that we all are equals in this world the church calls both the state and the general public to take part in the socio-economical driving of the nation since we all are entitled to maintaining the common good which the letter Reading signs of the times does not talk about.

Despite the differences in the church and the state but considering the fact that the church is an integral part of the society that liberates it to take part in dealing with complex realities of the world, so the church showed this in the pastoral letter 'Living our faith', by pointing out problems in the education sector and suggesting the need to foster church-state relations in order to combat these realities forthwith. This also differentiates the letter from the pastoral document Reading signs of the times.

As the Lord created us all under his image and that no man holds no right to devaluate human existence in order to preserve human dignity. The pastoral letter 'Living our faith', differs from the letter 'Reading the signs', in that it

recognizes this dignity by calling all members of the Malawi community together for the common benefit. It also recognizes human dignity by pleading with all medical personnel in in the health sector to fully dedicate themselves when delivering their medical services because they deal with human existence.

On the same issue health the church addressed the problem of the AIDS by encouraging the state and other non-governmental organizations to continue combating the pandemic. The pastoral letter ' Reading the signs of the times explained something on ' land', which is also another difference between the two letters, the letter states one of the way of combating poverty that arises from displacement of people for infrastructural purposes, people end up in poverty as they are left homeless.

The church advises the government and its administration to properly locate these displaced persons on the other hand combating poverty and achieving common good. The other notable difference from the letter ' Reading the signs of the times' is that of its comment on the food administration in the country by cautioning the state no to politicize food security issues, that the government should rush to the rescue of those that experience harvest problems despite of their racial, economic and social differences.

Having discussed some of the notable similarities and differences one can agree with me that both pastoral letters aimed at achieving the common good in order to create a conducive environment since it is the desire of the Lord that all man should have equal dominion over the earth for example on the case of conditions of labor which was also talked of in the encyclical

Rerum Novarum where Pope Leo wanted to create an environment with people with balanced standards of living in the post Constantine era.

Even though the letters tackled most of the barriers of building a conducive environment they did not cover some of the important areas for example, the environment and natural resources, where the resources keep depreciating for example, soil erosion through soil degradation and bad farming practices.

By sensitizing the nation on care taking of the environment would help combat some of the problems for example food insecurity that arise from the poor environment treatments. The other issue that the letters should have covered could have been that of inclining cases of gender based violence, domestic violence, child abuse etc.

These practices pose a threat to human existence. The other thing could have been that of reminding the political body that politics is a game of national development and not life and death, thus to say no life should be lost because of political misunderstandings for example, the death of a little girl in 2004 due to people's disagreement to presidential election results, which could have been avoided if the people had peacefully demonstrated against the results demanding a review since this is a democratic nation.

Conclusively the church through its comments made in the two letters 'Living our faith' and 'Reading signs of the times', on some of the concrete situations the nation finds itself has helped to enlighten the state on the ways by which it can combat these problems but also complementing it to get to greater heights with its positive strides towards development.