



ANGLICAN  
DIOCESE  
OF MAURITIUS

To live according to God's  
plan of salvation

*Bishop's Pastoral Letter* 2018





## Introduction

'For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.'

(1 John 3. 16,18)

Dearly beloved in Christ,

I warmly wish to greet you, as Bishop of Mauritius, and on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of our country's independence, with these words from John's Epistle. At the heart of the Lenten season, and by means of this episcopal letter, I wish to call for a personal and national renewal.

« We perceive God's love because he laid down his life. »

Lent is a period of the Church's Liturgical year which reminds us that God through Jesus extends his love to us by giving up his life. By His loving act which surprises us, Salvation is given to us and, henceforth, we can live under God's reign, which is one of justice, peace and love.

Thus we are invited at this Lenten season, to examine our conscience, and to repent. This would allow us to discover God's intentions for us.

'I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.  
And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must  
bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one  
shepherd.'  
(John 10:14-16)

As we start along this road which leads us towards God, this period of forty days allows us to remember three biblical pictures: the forty days of Moses on Mount Sinai

'And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the  
mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.'  
(Exodus 24:18),

the forty years of the people of Israel in the desert,

'And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee  
these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee,  
to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his  
commandments, or no.' (Deuteronomy 8:2)

and the forty days of Jesus in the desert, fasting and praying.

And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and  
was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him.  
(Mark 1:13)

And so at this Lenten period in this year of Grace 2018, the Church proposes that we should think about our own lives and about our own relationship with God and with our neighbor. This reflection should be made following the example of Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life. Through Christ, the nature of divinity has been shown to us.

The Lenten letter is but a tool, a support which is given to you so that you are encouraged to listen more to God's word, to practice more a life of constant prayer, and to faithfully serve God and your neighbor.

This letter closely connected to reflections based on the celebrations of the 50th Anniversary of the independence of Mauritius, proposes some areas of meditation to inspire us so that we might make a success of our lives as individuals and succeed as a sovereign nation. To begin with, this pastoral instruction aims to lead us to recognize God's presence in our lives. This divine presence is providential for without it the human undertaking would be unable to succeed. As a nation which calls itself religious let us never forget our need for God. Christ's temptations in the desert sums up the challenges which we meet every day of our lives. Jesus faced, like us, three great challenges.

As far as we are concerned, we face a world:

- a) Which proposes to us that material well-being is the source of happiness.
- b) Which gives importance to power, wealth, and to apparent success where a spirit of self-sacrifice and humility no longer exists.
- c) Which seeks to control other people's lives and places its own interest above that of others.

When we are beset by this world, we are encouraged to learn from Jesus how to overcome these temptations of power, pleasure and possession. Jesus teaches us three things which we must conscientiously put into practice during Lent in the year when we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Independence. Jesus prayed, fasted and meditated in obedience to God's will. We certainly need to refresh our minds about divine nature: source of life, peace, justice and love.

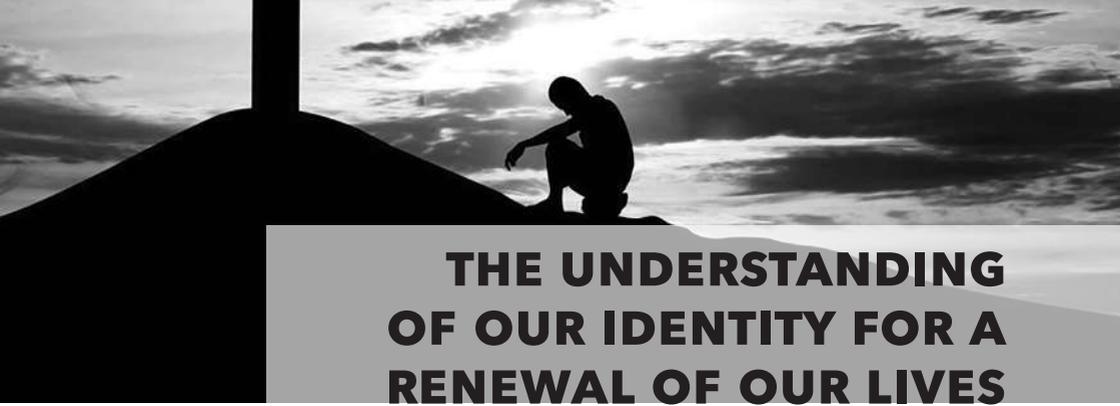
'Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise.  
For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth.'  
(Psalm 33. 4-5)

The aim of the Lenten letter is to accompany us on our course towards understanding the plan of God's salvation offered to all mankind. The different chapters will allow us to discover what we are destined to be, and what we are to receive, as God's children. This Lenten letter will also speak of our responsibility to carry out our engagement to reflect Christ by our acts of goodness, generosity, justice and forgiveness. In this way we can renew our lives and that of our nation. In this way we may enjoy hope, joy and happiness. This is God's world.

'Because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul.'

(Jeremiah 32, 41)





# THE UNDERSTANDING OF OUR IDENTITY FOR A RENEWAL OF OUR LIVES

## Chapter 1

Since Lent is a time of prayer which leads to a new life, God's Word is able to inspire and lead us to rediscover truth.

'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.  
I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous  
judgments.'  
(Psalm 119. 105-106)

To rediscover this Truth it would be important to go back to our origins: We belong to a Church established by St Augustin in 597 AD following missionary initiative of Pope Gregory the Great in Britain. But in the 16th century there was a wave of reform in the theological and scientific domains. This brought about the end of obscurantism of the middle ages in a radical way. Theological thought received a jolt in October 1517 when Martin Luther nailed on the door of a church in Wittenburg 95 points denouncing abuses.

This led to the Reformation which also affected the Church in England. This reform was clearly expressed by Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, in the Book of Common Prayer. The objective of the Book of Common Prayer was to reform the doctrine and liturgy of the Church. Thomas Cranmer was one of the initiators of this reform who saw the need to free the Church from any forms of corruption. Idolatry must be rooted out and ignorance dissipated. It was necessary to support every doctrine and ritual by true understanding of God's word in the Holy

Scripture. Thus public worship, according to the Book of Common Prayer, became an instrument to transmit true Faith and form the people. The new liturgy became the central axis of the Reformation in England. Bible reading and the liturgical service in the mother tongue aimed to allow everyone to become familiar with Christian doctrine. God's people had to be attentive when participating in liturgical services. Congregations of the Church of England were encouraged to recite the Lord's Prayer, the Creed and the 10 Commandments in order to be eligible for Holy Communion and Confirmation. The Book of Common Prayer also contains the 39 Articles of Religion which set out the discipline and doctrine of the Church. They also recognize the Church's need to initiate liturgical reforms in order that worship should be contextual and appropriate.

Thus the spirit of reform became a force which gave birth to modern civilisation. The Reformation radically renewed the life of the Church, bearer of the Good News of Jesus Christ. This can influence our thoughts when we wish to reform our lives and the life of our nation. In themselves reforms are good as they cause us to review our truths and make Truth burst into full daylight. Karl Barth in 1947 popularised this Latin phrase from St Augustin of Hippo.

**“Ecclesia semper reformada” – “The Church must always be reformed.”**

Twenty generations have passed since the foundation of the Christian era and in this time when constant revolution and evolution in the domains of science and communication are to be seen, it is time that we should be engaged in the renewal and reform of the Church. A more proactive approach would allow us to respond more adequately to today's needs while nevertheless remaining faithful to these three supports necessary to us: a Church which is Welcoming, Instructive and Loving.

These supporting pillars are based on the imperatives of the Gospel which describe the ministry itself and the mission of Christ among us. The prophet Isaiah and the Gospels state:

‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

And he began to say unto them, this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.’

(Luke 4.16-21)

## **HOW CAN REFORM HELP US TO CARRY OUT THE MISSION ENTRUSTED BY GOD TO HIS CHURCH?**

Reform is based on the Truth revealed by the Scriptures. It defines our identity as God’s children and Christians of the Anglican family. This identity is confirmed by our baptism.

This Church sacrament commanded by Christ is a power that can direct our thoughts to recognize the basic aspects of church doctrine. They are:

### **(1) The importance of the Bible**

Reformers affirm that the scriptures contain everything needed for salvation. They affirm that Christians should be encouraged to read and study the Bible in a knowledgeable way in order to pronounce clearly a biblical theology based on Scriptural authority. We speak of Holy Writ as the Word of God. Because God himself inspired their human authors and because God continues to speak to us in the Bible.

## **(2) Christ alone**

Salvation is offered to us by Christ alone. It does not belong to an organisation or to the Church but belongs to Christ. The Holy Scriptures propose only the name of Jesus Christ by whom men must be saved.

## **(3) Grace alone**

We are accounted before God only through the merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ and not through our own acts or merits. We do not have the ability to carry out good works unless God's grace works through us. Grace is God's favour towards us which revives our hearts and strengthens our will.

## **(4) Faith alone**

Faith is a gift of God's and is compatible to God's grace. Christ asks us to believe in Him for He promises to guide us to the Kingdom of God and to give us life in all its fullness.

## **(5) God's Glory alone**

A fundamental aspect developed by the Reformation is that God's Glory is the final accomplishment of all things. God's sovereignty is confirmed through God's effective summons to man's salvation.

Recognising what we are as Christians we must affirm it in the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ. This Good News neither ages nor withers. Today we are surrounded by technology which allows the social networks to spread all kinds of information. Unfortunately, this influences human nature which is overwhelmed by sin. Consequently, we are deceived by errors that bring confusion and despair. But when we return to the Good Shepherd he restores our souls and guides us on the paths of righteousness and fullness of life.

Through our relationship to Christ we are provided with our identity which allows us to accomplish good works according to God's will. Faith, God's Word and Grace, then, are the pillars on which our identity will affirm itself in order that God's Glory becomes visible by our works and our engagement to serve God and our neighbor. Thus, the renewal of our lives becomes possible for the mission entrusted by God to the Church







# **TO REVIEW OUR RESPONSIBILITY AS BAPTISED PERSONS AND DISCIPLES**

## **Chapter 2**

The period of Lent which allows us to meditate seriously on our relationship to the Christian Faith will lead us to understand the meaning our baptism, a sacrament instituted by Christ. Baptism initiates a living relationship with the risen Lord and forms part of God's plans for salvation.

**“Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”**

**(Romans 6.4)**

Baptism is the sacrament of Christian initiation by which we are united with Jesus Christ and made members of his church. Through baptism we participate in his death and in his resurrection, which gives us salvation and we become God's children and co-inheritors with Christ.

Through baptism and confirmation, the church proclaims what God has done for his people in Christ. It also allows us to begin a move which leads us from darkness to light, from death to life, from egocentricity to a life consecrated to God. During the ceremony of baptism, the candidates accept “a shared responsibility” to increase in faith. There is a solemn renunciation of evil and the expressed desire to follow Christ. When a child is baptised, it is the parents and godparents who make these promises in his place. It is recognised in Anglican tradition

that when infants are baptised they become members of God's family, the church. In his letter to the Romans, Chapter 5 verse 8, Paul tells us:

**“But God proved his love for us in that when we were still sinners, Christ died for us”**

God offers us his saving grace and asks us to respond with faith. God provides this grace through the Holy Spirit and so makes our response possible. Thus, the practice of infant baptism clarifies our understanding that grace is offered to us by God who initiates it. It is not our profession of faith which gives us God's grace but faith is our response to the grace which is given to us; even a child can receive this grace.

As a sign of our belonging to this community founded on a new covenant, baptism corresponds to the Old Testament practice when boys were circumcised. They, thus joined the covenant made by Abraham with God. Similarly, children join the new Covenant in Jesus Christ through baptism.

Jesus himself began his ministry of proclamation and healing by being baptised in the Jordan. For more than 2000 years his disciples have begun their Christian life in baptism.

Baptism is an act of purification, Christians believe that baptism is a sign which shows the will to live a completely new life with God. It is nevertheless only the beginning of progress towards a life with Christ. Baptism is an act which allows us to identify ourselves with Christ. St Paul reminds us that by baptism the Christian is invested in the life of Christ himself”

**“All you who have been baptised in Christ, you have put on Christ” ( Galatians 3.27)**

Thus through baptism we are united with Christ's death and resurrection. We are called to die in order to be re-clothed in the light of Christ. We also live with this promise, that when we die we will share eternal life with Jesus. This initiation into Christ's life is established by an act of purification and the laying on of hands for adult converts. This laying on of hands can be carried out only by one who is invested with episcopal responsibility, because it reflects the custom of the apostles who laid on their hands when they prayed that a person receives specific gifts. This act of imposition is called confirmation and is the rite in which we affirm our considered engagement to Christ and in which we receive the force of the Holy Spirit through prayer. A person who is confirmed must have been baptised, adequately instructed in Christian Faith and ready to ask forgiveness and confess publicly Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. The laying on of hands should complete the act of baptism.

“Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 8.17)

Baptism is also an act which signifies our belonging to the church, God's family. During the baptism ceremony the person baptised is received by those assembled with these words:

“We received you into God's family. Confess your belief in Christ crucified, proclaim his resurrection and with us share his eternal priesthood”

### **WHAT MUST BE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE BAPTISED PERSON, THE CHILD OF GOD, THE CONFIRMED PERSON AND THE DISCIPLE OF CHRIST?**

Our responsibility is to live according to God's rule, in the milieu in which we are placed. What a challenge?

By God's grace and through Jesus Christ we have become citizens of his eternal Kingdom. Thus our challenge is to live our lives as people who belong to God in the midst of the society and culture around us. This demands that we remain firm in what we believe.

As children grow it happens very often that they adopt the beliefs, ideas and opinions of their parents. But at adolescence as stated by philosopher, theologian and writer Von Hugel, they develop their true personalities and begin to define what they like or don't like, their values and convictions about life. This life stage is often described as the time of rebellion, and it is the figures of authority who receive forcefully the feelings which express the thoughts of younger people. This can be observed as a peaceful process and can sometimes cause conflicts. This period of transition from childhood to adulthood is a time which causes people to hold on firmly to their convictions about life.

The same experience is lived in our Christian life. At Confirmation after periods of struggle and interior conflict, we take responsibility for our religious faith. It is the moment when we declare publicly our belonging to the church, and we do this before the Bishop, who represents the universal church. It is also the moment when we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This prayer is spoken by the Bishop at this moment:

**"O Lord, strengthen thy servant by the power of thy Holy Spirit,  
give him/her the ability to serve thee and sustain him/her all the  
days of his/her life"**

According to Confirmation our responsibility and our role makes ambassadors of us. An ambassador is a person who represents his country overseas. He must represent the culture, beliefs and values of his country.

When Christians are confirmed, those who were infants when baptised reaffirm the promises made by their parents and godparents. Adults

who are baptised must also re-affirm their promises of adherence to Christ. From baptism to confirmation is a stage of transition which leads us from spiritual infancy towards a maturity like Christ's standing.

**"For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."  
(Hebrews 5:13-14)**

And it is in attaining Christ's stature that we accept the responsibility to represent Christ in the world. Thus, we are all ambassadors of Jesus Christ. We are stewards of the divine works in the world.

To be Christ's ambassador carries a price to pay. Here is the witness of a young Christian:

*"It is often very difficult for me to hold fast to what I believe. It can make me unpopular in front of my friends above all when they do thing I don't accept. It would be much simpler to follow the crowd."*

Our responsibility is to accept to be God's messenger.

**"And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written,  
How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of  
peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"  
(Romans 10.15)**





# OUR LIFE WITH GOD AND THE PRACTICE OF OUR FAITH

## Chapter 3

As we have been chosen and elected to be Christ's representatives in the world it would be right to understand that God expects us to live with him in a loving relationship.

**"And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, said the Lord Almighty." (2 Corinthians 6.18)**

But we cannot serve God and the world if we don't understand the meaning of our life itself. This is crucial for what we are called to be. Thus, it is appropriate for us who are created in God's image to know that our life will only reach its fullness when we live in a relationship with him. St Augustine, one of the Fathers of the church who strayed for a long period to give a direction to his life finally prayed that "his soul should find rest in God".

Despite of all this we live in a world which is in constant quest, seeking the Truth, at times confused, and when everything becomes relative. For many of us it would seem that belief in God is like modern abstract art: one is either hooked or not. It is at times perceived that Christian Faith is subjective, depending on each person's personality and inclinations. It's not a question of good or evil, of truth or untruth; it's simply, for many a question of personal choice. But we, who are called to be Christ's ambassadors surrounded by this modern way of thinking, should know that what we proclaim is objective. It is only a

question of believing in the truth demanded by Christian Faith. This truth which opens us to love and justice is the source of the peace which everyone desires with the deepest aspect of his being.

But within this mentality, which reflects the spirit of our age and that of all civilizations, the author of the letter to the Hebrews emphasises who Jesus Christ is. Let us not forget that it is Christ who reveals who God is for us. So it is important to note that it is only through Christ that we will establish a relationship with God.

**“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever”  
(Hebrews 13.8)**

Christ is the Son of God and the Saviour of all men and women, he is the teacher who instructs with divine authority; he accomplishes signs of the presence of God who heals, frees and sanctifies. Christ's divine nature, his words, his attitudes, his promises and his commandments transcend time. The reality of life of the first Christians during the time of the Apostles is not at all different from that of our own post-modern period. Today's society is as plural as it was in the time of the Apostles. The New Testament was written in a multi-cultural religious context. The world of the Apostles was what the Republic of Mauritius is today: a world where a variety of religious persuasions abound. Like the first Christians we have the same challenge to proclaim the Good News of Christ, the Saviour of the world. The men and women of the time of the Apostles were deeply imbued by the mentality of the period just as we are influenced by the mentality of the period in which we live today. Our country is rather like Athens, the capital of Greece as it is described in the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 17. Mauritius, like Athens, is a spiritual supermarket where anyone can choose the God that he or she wishes to adopt and worship. But like St Paul, we must defy today's ignorance by proclaiming the facts that God demands to be accepted. Yes, we are all accountable to God who has chosen us for on the day of judgement we will have to render an account of our behaviour and of our religious engagement itself. We

ought then to be sure of our convictions about our faith since they are based on the historic and objective reality of Christ's resurrection.

## **THE CONSISTENCY OF OUR FAITH DEPENDS ON OUR RELATIONSHIP TO GOD**

**How should we adapt this idea to the  
practice of our faith?**

- (1) The Bible is the primary source which makes it possible for us to understand how God acts and how Christ came into the world to save us. By definition the Church is called to teach the Word of God and to apply it in the context in which we live. The Bible is a book which conserves its vitality through the living community of the church. Thus to practice our faith it is important to study it as the living word and give ourselves the required time for it to speak to us.
- (2) Through the Creation, God's work, we shall discover the powerful presence of God in the world he created. God's beauty and majesty are manifested and it would be good for us to know that we are entrusted by God to act as responsible stewards. Didn't he entrust to us earth's plenty

"God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

(Genesis 1.28)

Admitting that God chose us to administer creation, his work, we must develop an obedient and loyal relationship with Him.

“ And the LORD God commanded the man, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.” (Genesis 2.16-17)

- (3) By experience in living we learn that we have a conscience which tells us to do or not to do something. Where does our capacity to distinguish good from evil come from? Christians acclaim that God speaks to us through conscience. We develop this conscience by learning what the Bible teaches and what the Church’s tradition teaches us. God speaks to us through our everyday lives, through the people we meet and the things that happen. But frequently there are many people who reject the idea that God speaks to them, saying that it is purely coincidence, Sometimes God speaks to us in unexpected ways. While some are converted by experience, which takes its time, whatever our experience of God, we should know that with Him our values and attitudes change, becoming closer to God’s will.

“for each tree is known by its own fruit. Figs are not gathered from thorns, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good, and the evil person out of evil treasure produces evil; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks.”  
(Luke 6 44-45)

- (4) 4. Through prayer we develop a relationship with God which is intimate and intense. St Basil in his writings in Hexameron, exhorts us to give time to God. Knowing that those who come to the church to worship had not very much time since a day’s wages was not enough for their needs, he tells them this:

“Time that you give to God is never lost. He will return it to you with great interest whatever difficulties you meet, the Lord will disperse them. And for those who undertake life with God, he will

give them bodily health, liveliness of mind, success and prosperity in their undertakings. Even if agreed efforts do not manage to realise life's expectations, the Holy Spirit offers us a rich treasure to come. So free your hearts from the earthly treasure and look for God's things.

**“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”  
(Matthew 6.19-21)**





# OUR LIFE WITH GOD IN CHRIST DETERMINES OUR WITNESS

## Chapter 4

For the least forty-nine years our country has built itself an identity thanks to its social and economic stability. It has become an international tourist entity and claims, through the different sectors of economic life to be a strategic bridge between Asia and the African continent. It has hopes of being a society with high incomes and it is recognised for its ability to maintain a harmonious social life despite its ethnic and religious diversity.

Consequently, our Christian identity is called to reveal itself in the plural world around us. The challenge is important since it involves us as witnesses of Christ.

**“ Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honourable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.”  
(1 Peter 2.12)**

As mentioned in chapter two we are Christ’s ambassadors and so Jesus appears to the rich Mauritian community through his people, the Church. This presence is not just as words but in actions which dare to cause us to face people’s misery and suffering and allows us to see clearly the injustice which cause them. Social transformation is possible when the work of the church becomes the mirror of the work which Jesus came to accomplish so that all might enjoy abundant life.

**“ For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.” (Romans 14. 17-19)**

As we seek to spread Christ's presence in our social milieu we should avoid two options which could weaken the particular quality of our allegiance to Christ. The first two is a form of assimilation which could cause us to lose what is distinct to the Christian. The second is to withdraw and to shut oneself up. This example unfortunately shows that the Christian engages himself in society only to earn his living and he avoids participating in the nation's life. According to the Old Testament these two options were present in God's people when they went into exile into Babylon.

Bible passages such as Psalm 137, the first letter to Peter and the letter to the Hebrews warn us of the dangers of the first option, which is to allow ourselves to be seduced by the culture around us. But it is interesting to meditate on Jeremiah 29.4-14, which encourages us not to withdraw into ourselves but to take an active part in the life of the nation.

In a surprising way God commands his people to settle in Babylon:

**“ Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.”  
(J eremiah 29.5-7)**

These divine words were not what the people of Israel expected to hear. They wanted divine judgement to punish severely their enemies. These words expressed by Jeremiah are grafted on Christ's commands "to love our enemies" and "to pray for those who persecute us". This seems to be in tune with what Jesus asked of his disciples: "to be in the world and not of the world" and to be "the light of the world".

T

hus, the church's message today is without ambiguity: seek the welfare of the city where you spend your days. After fifty years of sovereignty as an independent nation the Republic of Mauritius has succeeded in raising the living standard of its citizens. The agricultural industry has been diversified and has changed over the years to give place to a more flourishing tourist industry. As the years pass our country is becoming a hub in the education, finance and sophisticated technology domains. This reminds us that we wish to reach the living standard of the Babylonians, and that Babylon can be compared to Paris, Melbourne and New York, to cite a few.

We are proud, despite the demands of the Mauritian who legitimately asks for better, of our education plans and our health system which attracts people from the region and the African continent. Mauritian development has not ceased to assert itself and today, after fifty years of independence it would be appropriate to consider the risks and the dangers which lie in wait for us and could take away what we have acquired.

These dangers are

### **1. Rampant Materialism**

Rampant materialism which can influence us and cause us to lose our critical sense. Everyone wants happiness but money and material possessions are not enough. The love of money and profit leads to greed, exploitation, quarrels and an army of vices.

## **2. The Spirit of Individualism**

The spirit of individualism which seems to overcome us so that we want only that which is good for us. We have very little concern for others. More and more we lose the idea of duty and we think only of our own rights and privileges. We see the proof on our roads and the behaviour of those who defy moral values.

## **3. Social Polarisation**

Big salarial differences among the various socio-economic groups that can create abuses, causing tensions in Mauritian society. We should therefore be watchful not to encourage these differences which, when coupled with the ideological differences which spread easily through the social network, can cause conflicts between these groups.

**How to put right these situations which risk putting restraint on a person?**

**What should be the role and responsibility of each Christian facing these dangers which waylay us?**

The prophet Jeremiah proposes three elements, 3 P's, which can help us to ensure that human dignity in its fullness is respected.

### **(a) PROMOTE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE ETHOS**

We must encourage a certain lifestyle which creates active benevolence in the everyday life of Mauritian society. We should apply Christian ethics in family life, in our professional domain, in the world of business and in our interaction with others.

Justice and Love are two elements which emphasize the nature of Christian ethics.

Justice emanates from God and makes us able to distinguish good from evil. Thus the Christian is summoned to make the difference in the present atmosphere of society, by his character and his behaviour: a spirit of integrity, faithfulness to truth, and to promises made, the practice of equality without prejudice a serious understanding for the welfare of others and the sense of responsibility for the part he has to play.

## **(b) PRAY FOR PEACE**

Peace, Shalom in Hebrew, means several things: well-being, prosperity and peace. Peace includes everything good and encourages radiant and harmonious relationships. Thus we should admit our thanks to God for our country. Peace will be there if the country is governed with a sense of integrity, a global vision and with political strategies which are beneficial to the population as a whole. So, we are asked to pray for those who have responsibilities in public administration and in the judiciary so that peace in our country is tangible and brings serenity. We are also asked to pray for those who hold different responsibilities in society so that all work together to consolidate confidence for the common good. We should also pray for any evil force which perturbs the bases which promote peace. Finally we must pray for the preservation of universal religious principals and for the imperatives of the Gospel so that the Mauritian nation might respect moral values. We must work hard in order not to find ourselves in the dark depths of immorality. Our way of life, based on respect of the evangelical values, is crucial for the maintenance of social cohesion and justice. God in Jesus desires that we depend on his Mercy and Grace.

We pray that we should all be filled with humility and godly fear. The righteousness of life, the Holy Scriptures tell us, exalts a nation and makes of it a haven of peace and justice.

"In the path of righteousness is life,  
and in its pathway there is no death."  
(Proverbs 12.28)

## **(C) PROMOTE THE GOOD NEWS**

We are commanded by Christ to build a nation which has at its heart everyone's happiness and development. It is only by faith in Jesus Christ that one becomes able to create a kingdom of integrity and justice. Our society shaped to a large extent by the presence of the Church for more than two hundred years needs the continual support of the Church in its path of economic and social development. It is good to question the authorities by our example and the upright nature of our lives so that there may be a national repentance for past mistakes which have endangered the integrity of the nation. Good governance ought to be the most important priority so that justice and peace embrace in this country where it is good to live. A renewal of personal and national life will be possible only if our lives are provided with a new heart and a new ability to do what is right and good in the world.

The book of Jeremiah says: 29:11

"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope."

Each opportunity to extend the values of the Kingdom must be seized. We are asked to do it with our friends, our colleagues, and in our parishes.

We give thanks to God for the religious liberty in our country. All religions have the right to exist and everyone is free to practice his religion with responsibility. For us, the practice of Faith consists in proclaiming the Gospel, not arrogantly and with scorn for others, but with patience, love and courage.

" Persevere in Prayer, watch with Thanksgiving. Conduct yourself wisely towards those outside.... your word should always be accompanied with Grace, seasoned with salt, so that you know how to reply to anyone."







# THE CHURCH AND THE NATION IN GOD'S PLAN

## Chapter 5

As a Church our responsibility is to be rooted in the plan of God's Salvation for the whole creation, the Kingdom promised and realised in Jesus Christ.

**"And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come."**

**( Matthew 24.14)**

Since we are created in God's image according to the Bible, we bear an inherent capacity of communion with God and with one another. God's vision for humanity was unfortunately frustrated by human disobedience and the sin which destroyed our relationship with God, with others and with creation itself. In spite of our errors and our shortcomings God persisted in his faithfulness by penetrating in a dynamic way, human history, by sending Jesus Christ who by his death and resurrection restored communion, "Koinonia" with Himself and with others. This achievement is irreversible and today the Church, the body of Christ, carries on through the power of the Holy Spirit, this mission of bringing life. This mission consists in the Church carrying out, through the prophetic character and the ministry of compassion. Thus, it aids in the restoration of this world shattered by sin, hatred, prejudice and injustice.

"As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into  
the world." (John 17.18)

To be in communion with God is a gift through which the Church exists, and, simultaneously, offers to this broken world hope of reconciliation, healing and renewal.

During his ministry with us, Jesus was in towns and villages, teaching and proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom.

"Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching  
in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the  
kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. 36 When  
he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they  
were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."  
( Matthew 9.35-36)

The Church receives its orders and its promises from Christ himself. Jesus also calls men and women and sends them into the world by the strength of the Holy Spirit.

"Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you.  
As the Father has sent me, so I send you."  
(John 20.21)

By doing this, Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life, makes it possible for us to share in the transformation of structures which constrain liberty, and which do harm to human dignity. To live this mission, we must pray and seek constantly God's face and help. We must also learn to make sacrifices when necessary to rid ourselves of bad habits.

## God's plan for our Nation

Celebrating the fifty years of independence of the Mauritian nation any citizen may have expectations and dreams of progress, success and development. However, even if after fifty years all our dreams may not have been realized, we have nevertheless good reasons to give thanks to God for the gift of life.

All of us, who are descended from those who came here looking for a better life ought to welcome their efforts to establish a nation proud of what it has accomplished so far.

Our thanks to God express our joy that, in spite of ethnic, religious and cultural diversity, we have been spared from the worse form of conflicts and sectarian or political squabbles. The events of 1968 and 1999 which could have caused the country to see-saw in a situation of chronic conflicts, were controlled thanks to the Mauritian genius for preserving social harmony. This is the very key of the success of our country, we can only rejoice that those who helped maintain the unity of our country during these crises are great political, social and religious leaders to whom we can be grateful. Therefore, our responsibility to preserve these gifts is huge.

We have certainly good prospects for a better future but we must continue to thank almighty God and praise our compassionate creator. For us Christians, Lent calls us to make an objective evaluation of the nation's life so that we might direct our attention on the need for a much more proactive attitude in consolidating Mauritian togetherness. It is time that the law is properly applied in order that justice and meritocracy become the foundation of this nation. This would lead to the recognition of every citizen's potential.

When we sing the national anthem, we ask God to bless our beloved country. On the threshold of this anniversary we must admit that God

has blessed us. Our lagoons, our beaches, our forests, our agricultural industry, the paradise beauty of our island, and above all, our great human resources, our intellect and our cultural and religious riches.

Recognising that this fine heritage belongs to us we should renew our engagement always to promote the real welfare of the country by realizing that God is our Father and that his orders are the best assurance of our protection and of the development of a nation.

If as a sovereign nation we recognize that God is our shield and our protection, we must therefore collaborate and work ceaselessly to eliminate the vices which weaken our life together: drug trafficking, corruption, scorn for other components of our society. As a religious people that fear God let us be diligent, honest and just in everything that we do so that we may maintain a brilliant life ethos. In this way our descendants will enjoy the abundant blessings of God and his grace for Mauritius our beloved Motherland.

It is our dream to make of this country a truly united nation, one which is non-partisan and can motivate our young people to take its destiny in hand. Let us look to the future; for the future belongs to God. God's plan for salvation is the only one which can make us enjoy a life of fullness, joy, love and justice. To be a Mauritian, is to be responsible for our future according to God's will: an engagement in a way of life which in giving itself, would create a fairer Mauritian nation and would add more luminosity to the star which we are for the region and for the world. Indeed the Lenten season is an opportune moment for us to repent of all our shortcomings, and our errors, so that there should be a genuine renewal of life and so that Mauritius should be a great, strong and prosperous nation which bears in its heart awe for God.

**"Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked,  
or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers;  
but their delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law, they**

meditate day and night. They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away"  
(Psalm 1.1-4)







## Conclusion

Our challenge as a Church has always been to proclaim Christ's Gospel in a way which resonates within the context of Mauritian life with its clearly religious, linguistic and cultural diversity.

In Acts 17: 22-34 we see that St Paul makes use of local beliefs and writings to show how the first generation of Christians attempted to impart the Good News of Christ, his death and his resurrection. They referred to the cultural heritage of those listening to them. This was done with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They did this by using the Gospel as the leaven in the dough in order to foster the comfort of the social group in which they lived.

Today the Proclamation of Christ's Gospel which presents God's Plan of Salvation continues to evolve in a world in which circumstances are rapidly changing. Certain situations are especially difficult for the Church's Mission, as during the time of the first Christians. This means that we must find other means to proclaim the Gospel, to establish and maintain Christian communities in an increasingly secular world.

The object of the Lenten letter is to allow us to rediscover the fundamental aspects of our Faith and to help us to understand the very meaning of the call that God makes to us.

This letter, different from other Pastoral letters is registered within the framework of the 50th Anniversary of our country's independence and aims to arouse our desire to live as ambassadors of Christ. The different chapters emphasize that we must participate in the life of the nation while at the same time being aware of our responsibility as Christians.

Christ asks us to be worthy representatives, humble and modest, of his presence, which could guide the Mauritian nation towards a development which is human and in accordance with God's commands.

May this Lenten season be blessed and beneficial for you and I pray that God helps you as you strive to live as worthy children of God.

Yours Bishop and brother in Christ,

**+ Ian**

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