

Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Cameroun

National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon



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Le Secrétaire Général

48th Annual Seminar of the Bishops of Cameroon FINAL COMMUNIQUÉ

From the 4th to the 11th of January 2025, the 48th Annual Seminar of the Bishops of Cameroon was held at the Bishop Pius AWA Memorial Pastoral Centre in Molyko, Diocese of Buea, under the presidency of His Excellency Andrew FUANYA NKEA, Archbishop of Bamenda and President of the National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon (NECC). The theme of the Seminar was: “**Living synodality in the context of our local Church**”.

As a prelude to their work, the bishops celebrated the Solemnity of the Epiphany of Our Lord Jesus in the Divine Mercy Co-Cathedral, which was consecrated on the same occasion by His Excellency Michael MIABESUE BIBI, the host bishop, who presided over the Holy Eucharist. The celebration was well attended by clergy, consecrated persons, lay faithful and various administrative, academic and traditional authorities.

Another important moment before the work began was the Recollection led by His Excellency Sosthène Léopold BAYEMI MATJEL, Bishop of Obala, at the Our Lady of Grace Shrine, in Mevio, Sasse.

The solemn opening ceremony of the Seminar took place at the National Secretariat of the Catholic Men's Association (CMA), in the presence of the administrative authorities of the South West Region, the Fako Division and the city of Buea. After the opening prayer, four speeches were made. The Mayor of Buea, Mr David MAFANI NAMANGE, warmly welcomed the Bishops and praised the remarkable efforts of the Catholic Church in the fields of education, health and peace. He also expressed his satisfaction in being the mayor of Buea, a city of legendary hospitality, at a time when the annual Bishops' Seminar was being held. Governor Bernard OKALIA BILAI also expressed his joy at being able to welcome the Bishops, 46 years after the Mutengene meeting. In his capacity as the representative of the State in the Region, he underscored the excellent relations with the Church characterized by mutual esteem and respect for a better service to the people. In conclusion, he congratulated the local Ordinary in particular for his spirit of openness and dynamism, of which the Co-Cathedral is a visible fruit.

Bishop Michael MIABESUE BIBI, in his turn, said he was very happy to welcome his brothers in the episcopate; he thanked God and all the people of good will who had contributed to making this dream possible thanks to their enormous help in finalizing the work at the Pastoral Centre and the Co-Cathedral.

In his opening speech, the President of the National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon thanked the Governor, the Mayor of the city and the Bishop of Buea for their kind words and hospitality. He wished them a year blessed by the Lord in this *Jubilee Year of Hope*. He noted that the presence of the bishops in Buea, the mother diocese to all the particular Churches of Cameroon, in the 75th year of its creation, and 46 years after the last seminar in Mutengene, is a sign of hope. He also congratulated everyone for their collaboration in the gradual return of peace to Buea. Turning to the theme of the Seminar, he underlined the urgent need for the Church in Cameroon to continue its mission of evangelization in a spirit of communion and participation, because 'unity is strength'.

Speaking of the anxiety felt by Cameroonians at the moment, due to the very precarious socio-economic situation, the President of the National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon spoke of the urgent need for the public authorities to work for greater social justice. He also invited all Cameroonians to respect each other and to trust in God, who is capable of letting his light shine no matter how dark our social or economic situations may seem. With particular reference to the various reactions to the forthcoming elections, he reiterated the need to always promote peace, with which nothing is lost, but without which everything can be lost.

In the course of their work, the Bishops, following the Annual Seminar in Maroua, listened with interest to the reports of the delegates to the Second Session of the Synod in Rome in October 2024. In addition to sharing their experiences, the Synod Fathers, namely Archbishop Andrew FUANYA NKEA of Bamenda, member of the Synod Council, Bishop Philippe Alain MBARGA of Ebolowa and Bishop Emmanuel DASSI YOUFANG of Bafia, presented the content of the *Final Document* of the Synod, which Pope Francis has given to the universal Church as a text of the Church's ordinary magisterium.

After listening to the various speakers, the Bishops decided as follows:

- i. To work towards a global reception of the Final Document of the Synod, drawing on the various synodal paths already manifested in numerous structures, initiatives and pastoral processes in their particular Churches;
- ii. To engage their particular Churches in the effective formation of experts, pastoral workers and other faithful in the synodal way, in accordance with the recommendations of the Synod (cf. *Final Document* nn. 140-151) ;
- iii. To organize a National Ecclesial Assembly to examine and evaluate the pastoral strategies in the spirit of synodality. (Cf. *Final Document* nn. 127,129).

The Bishops are inviting all the Christian faithful and people of goodwill to the national pilgrimage they are organizing on 26 and 27 April at the National Marian Shrine of Marienberg (Diocese of Édéa), to mark the Jubilee Year. The aim is to pray for **peace, justice and reconciliation** in Cameroon. To this end, there will be a special collection in

all the particular Churches of Cameroon on the first Sunday of Lent, in order to raise funds for the short-term rehabilitation of the pilgrimage site.

The Bishops also expressed their gratitude to the entire people of God and to all men and women of goodwill for their generosity towards the people of the Diocese of Yagoua, following the destructive and deadly floods of July and September 2024.

After a day of excursions in the Limbe and Bota Deaneries, culminating in the celebration of Holy Mass at the Holy Family Parish- Limbe, presided over by His Excellency Faustin AMBASSA NDJODO, Archbishop of Garoua, the Bishops met the following day, Friday 10 January 2025, behind closed doors.

On the eve of the closing session, the Bishops welcomed Reverend Father Andrew SMALL, who had come specially from the United States of America to present his *Missio Invest* structure.

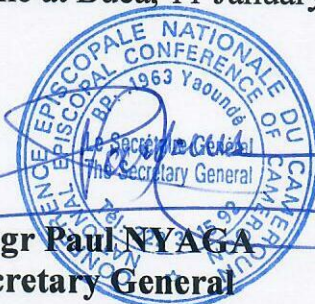
His Excellency José Avelino BETTENCOURT, Apostolic Nuncio to Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea, paid a special visit to the seminar to meet his brothers in the episcopate and express to them the closeness and the apostolic solicitude of the Holy Father, Pope Francis. The Nuncio presided over the closing Mass of the Seminar and, at the end of the Eucharistic celebration, blessed the headquarters of the National Secretariat of the Catholic Men's Association.

At the end of their work, the Bishops, discerning the signs of the times and conscious of their pastoral responsibilities in the Church and in the community of mankind, decided to address *a message of hope* to the people of God, the political actors and to all men and women of goodwill, *concerning the socio-economic situation of Cameroon*, in the context of a renewed awareness and sense of responsibility on the part of every Cameroonian to build a better Cameroon.

The Bishops express their deep gratitude to His Excellency Michael MIABESUE BIBI, Bishop of Buea, to the priests, consecrated persons, lay faithful, all the people of God, as well as to the staff of the Pastoral Centre for their warm welcome and attention. They also extend their sincere thanks to the administrative authorities, all the security forces, and the journalists for their involvement in the success of the Seminar.

The next Bishops' Seminar will be held in the Diocese of **Kumba in January 2026.**

Done at Buea, 11 January 2025



Msgr Paul NYAGA
Secretary General