



# Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Cameroun

## National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon

Code postal : B.P. : 1963 Adresse : 7624 Avenue Mgr Henri Vieter, Yaoundé 3  
Tél.: 00 (237) 222 31 15 92/222 31 49 10 Fax: (237) 22 31 49 15 E-mail: [cenc20042003@yahoo.ca](mailto:cenc20042003@yahoo.ca)  
Pays : Cameroun Ville : Yaoundé – Mvolyé

*Le Président*

### **48th Year of the Annual Seminar**

### **THE MESSAGE OF THE BISHOPS OF CAMEROON**

*11 January 2025*

*“Take courage, do not be afraid!” (Mk 6, 50)*

- ✓ **To all priests, consecrated persons, lay faithful and all other believers,**
- ✓ **To politicians, and all men and women of good will**

### **On the Socio-economic Situation of Cameroon**

**Dear brothers and sisters,**

1. At the beginning of this New Year, the Jubilee Year 2025, which we have just received from God, we, the Archbishops and Bishops of Cameroon, present to you our new year wishes for peace, joy and every good, from the historic city of Buea. From the 4th to the 11th of this month, we met for the 48th Annual Seminar of the National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon. And we give thanks to God for the gradual return of security to the city of Buea. We dare to hope that efforts will be intensified so that lasting peace can return to all the Regions of Cameroon.

2. As the Second Vatican Council puts it : “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.” (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 1). In addition to the work of our Annual Seminar, we have wanted, by virtue of our mission as sentinel, to address this special message to you, dear Christians, and to all people of good will; a message of hope in this *Holy Year of the Jubilee of Hope*, in the face of the particularly worrying socio-economic situation of our country.

#### **I. The Power of Hope**

3. In the Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025 that we have just begun, Pope Francis says some words that we could apply to the situation of our country:

AFM

“Everyone knows what it is to hope. In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring. Even so, uncertainty about the future may at times give rise to conflicting feelings, ranging from confident trust to apprehensiveness, from serenity to anxiety, from firm conviction to hesitation and doubt. Often we come across people who are discouraged, pessimistic and cynical about the future, as if nothing could possibly bring them happiness.” (*Spes non confundit*, n° 1).

4. The title of this papal bull comes from the epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Romans (*Rm 5 :5*), St Paul a disciple of Jesus who experienced extreme hardship and suffering in his life, who yet was able to preserve the joy that comes from Jesus, his joy and his hope. Paul is not a prisoner of circumstances; he is striving, full of hope, towards a goal. This is not a fleeting happiness that can be felt in certain circumstances, not some fickle pleasure that comes and goes at the whim of opportunity, but a joy that could only be a gift from God. It is expressed in the profound confidence that all is well, whatever the circumstances, whatever the difficulties, whatever the problems. It is, in a word, a joy that nothing can interfere with, a joy that comes from the Holy Spirit to all those who abandon themselves entirely into the hands of God, whose Word we must keep, in the midst of trials.

5. The Apostle Paul is convinced that in Jesus there is no such thing as a lost or hopeless situation: anyone who desires God's salvation can find it, provided one pays heed to the call to conversion and commits oneself to it in order to enter into the joy of forgiveness. Therefore the Hope of the Jubilee should not be an empty word, but a reality based on the possibility of conversion for every human being. God loves all his children and does not want to lose any of them, yet his call to conversion is addressed to every generation of men and women, in every moment of life. The Church, for her part, cannot be despaired in any situation, of course, neither can she limit herself to presenting only God's goodness towards all. She has a duty, after the example of Christ, to call to conversion, a cause of profound joy for the Father in Heaven, who stands at the door of hope waiting patiently to celebrate the return of each of his children. Our wish is that this Jubilee will be a favourable opportunity for each of us, citizens of Cameroon, to rekindle hope.

## II. Hoping against Hope (*Rm 4, 18*)

6. For some years now, and increasingly so in recent times, the anxieties of the vast majority of Cameroonians have been transformed into cries of despair at the misery they are living through and the degradation of our beautiful country, Cameroon.

Our consciences as pastors and citizens cannot remain indifferent to these cries of distress. For, from the North to the South, and from the East to the West of Cameroon, we are all brothers (*Mt 23:8*) united by this beautiful garden that our forefathers cultivated and bequeathed to us as a heritage. We therefore recognize that we are truly and intimately united to all the peoples of Cameroon, and to their aspirations; and sharing their worries and sorrows, we, your Bishops, have made a

point of discerning, from a primarily pastoral point of view, the various aspects of the general situation prevailing in our country. As in the past, we are keen to make our contribution in the search for ways to assist the country to diligently pursue its flight towards the heights of development, which guarantees the social well-being of all Cameroonians.

7. In 1990, we addressed a pastoral letter to all our compatriots on the economic crisis in our country, in which we invited each of our fellow citizens to examine his or her conscience in the face of the “too serious” economic crisis that our country was going through at the time. It was our hope that such an examination of conscience would lead to “rapid and radical solutions”. Speaking of the internal causes of the crisis, we said that “the structures of sin that have perverted international economic relations have also found a privileged home in our countries. It is well known that it is in absurd wars, in the arms industry and trade, in the support of regimes of oppression and social injustice, in the unbridled wastefulness of megalomaniac tyrants, in drug trafficking, in the embezzlement of public funds... that our monetary debt is often, too often, wasted. Prestigious pseudo-investments are swallowing up billions and billions in palaces, unfinished skyscrapers and bogus projects, emptying state coffers and increasing the misery and destitution of generations condemned to debts they did not incur. We are thus faced with a real global industry of misery and death, maintained by these structures of sin whose ramifications extend right into our society” (CENC, “Lettre pastorale des Évêques du Cameroun sur la crise économique dont souffre le pays”, 17 May 1990, in *L'enseignement social des Évêques du Cameroun 1955-2005*, n° 11 p. 151).

8. But it is even more interesting to recall what we said about the particular situation of Cameroon: “We cannot, we must not ignore the hour of crisis, misery, hunger, destitution, unemployment, and in some rural areas, real despair, weighing heavily on the destiny not only of the people in general, but especially of the poorest, the weakest, the most destitute. We cannot fail to listen to the distraught people... The weight of so many unanswered questions creates discontent among the people. Hatred finds a fertile breeding ground. Tensions provoked and fuelled by unscrupulous and often hidden interests threaten the stability of public institutions, social cohesion and family peace...” (Id. “Lettre pastorale des Évêques du Cameroun sur la crise économique dont souffre le pays” p. 156, nos. 13 and 14).

9. We then appealed to the public authorities to ensure that the people, in their distress, would always and everywhere feel the support of the State. They should ensure that the interests of the nation and the well-being of our people were given priority in their actions. We also called on all Cameroonians to change their lives, to convert their hearts and radically change their mentalities. We then invited the Cameroonian people in general and Christians in particular to know that “we are not just victims of the crisis; we are also its causes and agents” (“Lettre pastorale des Évêques du Cameroun sur la crise économique dont souffre le pays” p. 157, no. 16).

10. In the aforementioned *Pastoral Letter*, as in our previous and subsequent messages, we have always stated our readiness to serve human society in accordance

with the particular mission received from our Lord Jesus. The Church is the light of the world and always invites us to turn our gaze towards Jesus Christ, the Saviour. So we have never ceased to invite you all to conversion, reconciliation, mutual love and the practice of justice.

**11.** Unfortunately, 35 years after the alarm bells rang concerning the economic crisis, and 65 years after our country gained independence, it must be said that we are still living in economic and social stagnation, with an uncertain future.

**12.** In his speech on 31 December 2024, the President of the Republic addressed issues of security, the economy, infrastructure and governance; he acknowledged the frustrations linked to the state of roads and urban infrastructure, the lack of drinking water, not to mention the problems linked to energy; we could add those linked to telephony in general.

**13.** One of the causes of Cameroon's anguish is undoubtedly the tax burden, which increases year in, year out, to the detriment of the most vulnerable populations. It is seen as the ultimate means of suffocating those Cameroonians whose purchasing power is so low. The proof of this is the failure to apply Article 66 of our Constitution and its implementing text, Law No. 003/2006 of April 25, 2006, which requires all Cameroonians who assume important responsibilities in the service of the nation to declare their assets.

**14.** We wonder whether a country can only be built on and through taxation. It is well known that Cameroon constitutes a real "scandal" of blessings because of the wealth of its forests and waters, its soil, its subsoil, and so on. On the other hand, we are witnessing the organized plundering of our economic heritage; we are thinking in particular of the sell-off and alienation of mining and agricultural concessions which are being carried out through agreements signed here and there in a highly questionable manner.

**15.** The Head of State acknowledged that the malaise of Cameroonians also stems from bad governance and therefore poor management of public affairs; he cited, for example, the case of roads and urban infrastructure. How can we explain that the year 2024 ended with only 446 km of asphalted roads and 228 km of rehabilitated roads! In other words, if the budget voted each year for road infrastructure were judiciously used for this purpose, it would be a long time since Cameroon suffered so much from this problem.

When the Head of State calls for great mobilization to face persistent challenges, it seems to us that the greatest of all these challenges is corruption, with its corollaries of embezzlement and lack of transparency.

**16.** In the year 2000, we deplored the fact that "Our country seems, de facto, installed in corruption. Each of us seems obliged to corrupt or be corrupted. It's as if we are forced to live with corruption, to accept it as part of our daily existence, and in so doing we only reinforce it. We can't seem to do anything to get rid of it" (CENC

« Lettre pastorale des Évêques du Cameroun aux Chrétiens et à tous les hommes de bonne volonté sur la corruption », September 3, 2000, in *L'enseignement social des Évêques du Cameroun 1955-2005*, n° 8, p. 216).

17. Embezzled public funds can only considerably slow down the country's progress towards development, while at the same time preventing any Cameroonian from enjoying a minimum standard of living. There can be no peace without development, says Pope Paul VI (cf. Encyclical *Populorum Progressio* 1967, no. 76). The duty of public authorities is to promote the integral development of our people. While there has been some progress in building basic infrastructure, our country is still a long way from achieving the goals of sustainable development. How can we explain the fact that 65 years after independence, our development cannot guarantee basic human rights: the right to food, the right to education, the right to quality healthcare, the right to justice, in short, the right to life? The Cameroonian citizen feels a real despondency because he or she lacks the necessities of life. It suffices to look at the standard of living in most families in our towns and villages; it simply leaves much to be desired. It's a truism that poverty is on the rise in our country; many of our fellow citizens are living in dramatically precarious conditions, and in deplorable, undignified conditions.

18. Unemployment among young people seems to have no end in sight, even among graduates, hence the mass exodus from the country in search of a greener pastures!

19. The crisis in the North-West and South-West Regions is certainly being contained, but it still remains and continues to cause the loss of human lives. In the North-West Region in particular, where reconstruction had begun, the violence continues, with “guerrilla” groups wreaking havoc, sometimes even routing/overwhelming military forces. We're thinking of the new “ghost town” operation, to be observed on Saturdays too!

20. The violence in the South-West and North-West Regions has been going on for seven years now and counting. Could it be that those who wage the war are getting scandalously rich and do not want the war draw to an end? Yet it's clear that, as with any conflict, the NOSO war is ruinous and destructive for our country. It continues to breed divisions and resentments, hatreds and settling of scores. Is it not time for the political class to sit down in humility and engage in calm dialogue, mindful of its responsibility to lead our people, our country, towards happiness, which requires justice, forgiveness and reconciliation? True peace is not that of cemeteries, but that comes about through reconciliation. The Church proclaims the gospel of peace (*Ep* 6:15) and thus invites her sons and daughters to dialogue as a contribution to peace (Cf. *Evangelii gaudium*, no. 239).

### III. Appeals

21. At the dawn of the year 2025, the year of the *Jubilee of Hope*, the *Holy Year*, considering the expectations and aspirations of our people, the analyses and

the official orientations of our country, in the name of our national conscience and the common good, we call on the State and all the other stakeholders of this nation to commit themselves to effectively work to achieve the development goals so well appreciated in our country:

- That all Cameroonians in charge of managing public affairs, as a matter of conscience, must be committed to promoting efficient public services, employment, especially for young people, and economic growth to combat the distressing and scandalous impoverishment of the masses and social inequalities;
- To put an end to land mismanagement;
- To ensure that Cameroon is no longer transformed into a permanent market for the cheap exploitation of some of its natural resources;
- The promotion of education and vocational training, and support for businesses;
- Improving public infrastructure, promoting security and justice for the population;
- The fight against corruption and crime;
- That entrance examinations to the distinguished and professional schools follow meritocratic criteria;
- The preservation of the environment;
- It is clear that responsible and transparent execution of the national budget is essential to improving the living conditions of the population, who have a right to accountability for the credibility of public institutions is also at stake;
- We welcome the constant willingness to sanction those responsible for misappropriating public funds; in the event that this is fruitful, we ask that the money unjustly taken from Cameroonians be reimbursed to the public treasury;
- We also demand that those charged with recovering embezzled funds of the State should not have to endure threats and intimidation of any kind. Back in 2000, we said that “corruption and the widespread theft of public funds with impunity were the main causes of the crisis” (CENC., “Lettre pastorale des Évêques du Cameroun sur la crise économique dont souffre le pays”, no. 18).

We appeal to the conscience of every Cameroonian and to everyone's sense of responsibility with regard to hygiene and sanitation.

**22.** We also strongly reiterate our commitment to working together to promote human dignity, fraternity and solidarity among all Cameroonians, without forgetting the ethical principles of the common good and subsidiarity. These principles of the Church's social doctrine are values that we must strive to place at the heart of our lives and our co-existence. We therefore invite to exercise our fundamental rights and freedoms responsibly. Freedom of expression, for example, is a fundamental right of every human being, but a right that also entails the duty to respect the rights and freedoms of others.

23. The means of communication are a great technological advancement. We should use them with a great sense of responsibility. They exist so that we can help the Cameroonian people to inform and educate themselves; they are at the service of truth and not ideologies. In this regard, Pope Francis affirms that "it is easy to give in to temptation...to feed the flames of mistrust, fear and hatred. On the contrary, courage is needed to guide people into the processes of reconciliation; and it is precisely this positive and creative audacity that offers real solutions to old conflicts and the opportunity to achieve lasting peace" (Pope Francis, *Message on the occasion of the 50th World Communications Day*). Let the men and women of the media therefore be competent; distinguishing themselves by their know-how and the quality of the information they disseminate, as well as by their resistance to pressures contrary to their deontology.

24. We must be particularly wary of those of our fellow citizens and non citizens who stir up dissension and scandal, and who, through lies, hold the people hostage, plunging them into the reign of darkness, hatred, violence and death. Since we are all brothers and sisters, we must also avoid giving in to ethnocentric ideology, with its tendencies towards exclusion and domination.

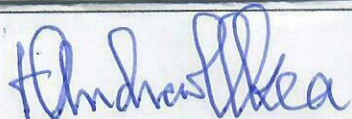
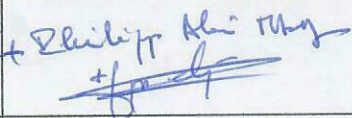



**Conclusion**


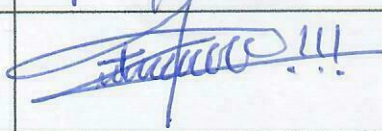





25. We must not be discouraged by our country's current dramatic situation, for God is with us. We urge you to trust in a happier, more prosperous future for our country, based on adequate social, economic and political structures and institutions. To achieve this, we appeal to our individual and sense of responsibility. Cameroon was bequeathed to us by our forefathers, so we must make it prosperous. This is our collective duty. Let us resolutely accept to convert ourselves and above all our mentalities, and God will do the rest.

May God, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Queen of Apostles, Queen of Peace and Patroness of our Country, watch over every citizen and grant us all the gifts of true brotherhood and love for our common home.


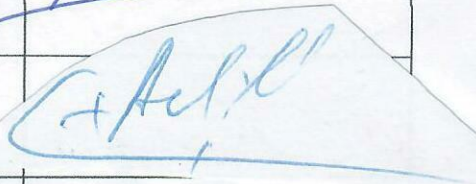




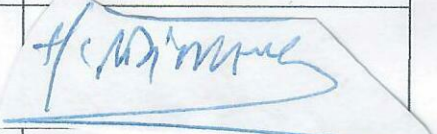

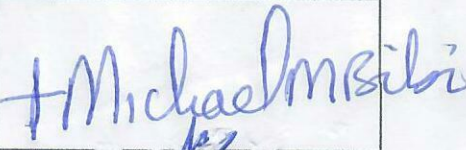


Given at Buea, January 11, 2025

**The Bishops of Cameroon**

1.	S. E. Mgr. Andrew NKEA FUANYA	Archevêque de BAMENDA, Président de la CENC	
2.	S. E. Mgr. Philippe Alain MBARGA	Évêque d'EBOLOWA, Vice-président de la CENC	+ 
3.	S. E. Mgr Samuel KLEDA	Archevêque de DOUALA	
4.	S. E. Mgr. Abraham KOMÉ	Évêque de BAFANG	+ 
5.	S. E. Mgr. Agapitus NFON	Évêque de KUMBA	+ 

6.	S. E. Mgr. Aloysius ABANGALO FONDONG	Évêque de MAMFE	
7.	S. E. Mgr. Barthélemy YAOUA	Évêque de YAGOUA	
8.	S. E. Mgr. Bruno ATEBA EDO	Évêque de MAROUA-MOKOLO	
9.	S. E. Mgr. Christophe ZOA	Évêque de SANGMÉLIMA	
10.	S. E. Mgr. Damase ZINGA ATANGANA	Évêque de KRIBI	
11.	S. E. Mgr. Dieudonné Espoir ATANGANA	Évêque de NKONGSAMBA	
12.	S. E. Mgr. Emmanuel ABBO	Évêque de NGAOUNDERE	
13.	S. E. Mgr. Emmanuel DASSI YOUFANG	Évêque de BAFIA	



14.	S. E. Mgr. Faustin AMBASSA NDJODO	Archevêque de GAROUA	
15.	S. E. Mgr. François Achille EYABI	Évêque d'ESÉKA	
16.	S. E. Mgr. George NKUO	Évêque de KUMBO	
17.	S. E. Mgr. Jan OZGA	Évêque de DOUMÉ-ABONG' MBANG	
18.	S. E. Mgr. Jean MBARGA	Archevêque de YAOUNDÉ	
19.	S. E. Mgr. Jean-Bosco NTEP	Évêque d'EDÉA	
20.	S. E. Mgr. Joseph Marie NDI-OKALLA	Évêque de MBALMAYO	
21.	S. E. Mgr. Marcelin Marie NDABNYEMB	Évêque de BATOURI	
22.	S. E. Mgr. Michaël MIABESUE BIBI	Évêque de BUEA	
23.	S. E. Mgr. Paul LONTSIE KENNE	Évêque de BAFOUSSAM	
24.	S. E. Mgr. Paul LONTSIE KENNE	Administrateur Apostolique de YOKADOUMA	
25.	S. E. Mgr. Sosthène Léopold BAYEMI MATJEI	Évêque d'OBALA	