

PRESIDENT'S LENTEN CAMPAIGN SPEECH 2019

**DELIVERED BY PROF MARGARET KOBIA, PhD MGH CABINET
SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC SERVICE YOUTH AND GENDER AFFAIRS
DURING THE LAUNCH OF THE LENTEN CAMPAIGN IN ARCH-DIOCESE
OF NYERI 2ND MARCH 2019**

**THEME: *UNITING HEALING AND RENEWAL OF OUR NATION: GOD'S
GIFT***

Your Eminence,

Your Graces,

Your Lord Bishops,

Rev. Fathers and Sisters,

Religious leaders present

Honourable MPs, Senators

Excellencies and

Fellow Christians and people of goodwill,

Let me begin by thanking the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops for once again inviting me to the Annual National Lenten Campaign launch. I am glad that the Church is consistent in engaging her faithful on the Church's calendar and that they are addressing not only spiritual matters, but also social issues which affect us as a people in our country. More importantly, the church invites us to reflect and take action on current challenges.

In the catholic faith, the Lenten period prepares the faithful for spiritual fulfilment through prayer, repentance, giving alms and self-denial. I note

that the theme for 2019 Lenten Campaign is: “**Uniting, Healing and Renewal of our Nation ... God’s Gift**”. The chosen theme is indeed befitting as it invites us to a journey of transformation towards inclusive, people-centered, and sustainable development, guided by the principles of human rights and freedom from all forms of discrimination. The theme is very much harmonized with the **Building Bridges Initiative to a New Kenyan Nation**.

I am encouraged by the concern of the Religious Leaders’ on the state of our nation, and sincerely appreciate their contribution to national healing and reconciliation. I am particularly grateful to the Catholic Church’s contribution towards building a cohesive and inclusive society. The church has embraced the principles of inclusivity and participation, the very doctrines that propel the Building Bridges Initiative. We must accept that at times we have erred as a Country, because to err is human. However, we must also engage our God-given intellect to analyse our situations and know when to pause, reflect and take remedial action.

Your Eminence, Your Grace, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Besides the overall theme of the 2019 Lenten campaign, I am aware of the topics that the Lenten campaign has presented for social discourse during the 40 days of Lent. These are opportune topics that address the issues that we are currently facing as a nation. Discussions on these topics will serve to sensitize Kenyans as they seek solutions to the challenges. These include:

- i) **Environmental Conservation and Protection:** As we grapple with the challenge of climate change, environmental protection is important to preserve our common home, planet earth. As stated by the Holy Father, Pope Francis, environmental degradation poses urgent challenge to the human family and we need to protect our environment. Together we can seek sustainable and integral development, which resonates with the Catholic Social Teaching. I am informed that in this regard, each diocese plans to plant a million

trees in the next one year. With 25 Diocese the church can plant 25 million trees and make a great contribution to our environmental conservation efforts.

- ii) **Family values:** We recognize the family as the basic social unit and the first institution of socialization in our lives. The family unit has been facing challenges globally and we need to jealously guard its function in society. By strengthening the family institution, we shall ensure the inculcation of the desired values for our communities and nation.
- iii) **Corruption:** The abuse of power for private gain in government and private institutions could erode all the gains we are striving to make for the development and social welfare of Kenyans. Integrity, morality and high principle are values that we must regain in every sector of our society for the sake of social justice. Every citizen has a role to play in this regard. The choice of this topic for social discourse is timely as it will mitigate social acceptance and proliferation of the vice.
- iv) **Socio-Political Inclusion:** Inclusion and participation are important principles for a stable and sustainable modern democratic system such as we desire for ourselves. In the past the country has suffered much from exclusion and marginalization. As we embrace the Building Bridges Initiative, I hope the process will enable us Kenyans to talk to each other and live together harmoniously. We should never allow ourselves to be divided and exclude others along ethnic, racial, gender or any other basis.
- v) **Respect for the Rule of Law:** Every citizen enjoys fundamental human rights that are constitutionally enshrined. These rights may only be realized when the rule of law is respected. Social discourse to educate our congregants and citizens on the importance of respecting laws will promote social co-existence and justice in our communities.

I find these topics very opportune. I do appreciate that for Kenya to thrive, systems of governance, in the public and private sectors, must have strong foundations in shared cultural values of tolerance, justice, freedom, rights,

and shared responsibilities that deliver progress for people. This can only be achieved if we are united as a nation. Our social discourse will fasten the bonds that bind us together as a nation.

Your Eminence, Your Grace, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In practice, the ideals of democracy, national harmony, and reconciliation are best achieved when poverty and inequality are urgently addressed; when prosperity is shared; and when communities are empowered and engaged to have a voice and representation in decision-making and public life. The Government's Big Four agenda seeks to achieve the above objective. In this regard, I urge the leadership of the Church and Kenyans at large to continue supporting and collaborating with the Government towards the success of the Big Four pillars.

For real healing to be achieved, we must address the root causes of grievances. These complaints are often based on perceptions of lack of development, lack of inclusion and participation. The Government has isolated the guarantors of human dignity including decent productive jobs, food security, decent housing, good working conditions, access to healthcare and education – as the cornerstones which will build a cohesive society.

I call upon every one of us to embrace processes that drive us towards national healing and renewal of broken relationships within our communities. Let us take the Lenten period to make changes in our mind-sets and behaviours. The change will place us on course towards more democratic institutions such as free elections, human rights, corporate governance, and the rule of law.

Your Eminence, Your Grace, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me take this opportunity to recognize the practical efforts that the church has proactively taken in addressing the youth challenge in the country. I particularly wish to commend our host, the Arch-bishop of Nyeri Most Rev Anthony Muheria, who is also the chaplain of youth in the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops. We commend you, Your Grace, for canvassing youth issues in the church. I note with appreciation the Training of Trainers conference that you have hosted for up to 30,000 youth drawn from every part of the country, for the last one week. I am informed that the youth conference will be crowned with a befitting celebration mass tomorrow. Thank you, Archbishop, for rising to make a most practical contribution to the youth challenge.

As Kenyan Christians and people of goodwill, I ask you to embrace the spirit of lent and join the Kenyan Bishops in your individual efforts to advocate and seek solutions for the challenges facing the country. Together our individual voices become louder, and our individual actions are multiplied.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that promoting a culture of democracy and national unity is about building trust, mutual respect and understanding - starting from the shared needs and common interests of all, to create peace and shared prosperity. As a nation we possess a great spirit and even greater promise. It is my prayer that we use the national 2019 Lenten period to reflect on, and achieve these ideals.

Finally let me wish everyone of you a blessed and productive 40 days of the Lenten period.

Thank you, and may God Bless Kenya.

Yours Excellency,

Prof. Margaret Kobia, PhD, MGH

For: President Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta