

## **THE ANGOLAN PEOPLES' CALVARY.( ED. CRUCIFIXION EXPERIENCE)**

### **Pastoral Message of the Angolan Catholic Bishops**

#### **1.An Appeal to Reason.**

The church, which lives among the people, suffers with the people, and is an Advocate for the people, once again feels that it needs to be a voice of the voiceless. Confronting the sufferings of the real victims of this unwanted and incomprehensible war, the Bishops of Angola, meeting in extraordinary session, direct this message to all Angolans and people of good will.

The present war in our midst, as in the past, doesn't just strike its intended targets, but wounds and kills other people, thousands and thousands of innocent people who do not deserve those sufferings that are happening to them.

#### **2. The people are destroyed.**

The war destroys the people, reducing to a state of misery so many children, who are hungry, without schools, without family, without shelter; so many old and sick people who are fleeing in despair from the bullets' violent death and who end up dying exhausted and abandoned, perhaps on the open ground; so many young people turned into soldiers, obliged to go on killing each other- Angolans against Angolans. *In all of this, those who suffer are the people.*

The war destroys the people by destroying numberless families, who are broken up by military confrontations; some in hardships, some seeing their loved ones mowed down by war, others separated and out of communication with each other in the flight, and many others bereft of all their personal belongings because of sudden flight which forced them to leave behind all their personal possessions, and to take refuge in more secure places; *In all this those who suffer and die are the people.*

The war destroys people by throwing them in to the most miserable situations of famine, their faces haggard, limbs bent, bodies shrunken, some already without enough strength left to stand. To show how serious this is, even soldiers go hungry, as much those on one side as on the other. These are the very ones who complain about this, and use it as an excuse to take what the people have, leaving them in a misery that is total. *In all this those who suffer and die are the people.*

#### **3. The people are the victims.**

The war victimizes people through the gravest violations of human dignity. One of these violations is the abduction of individuals or even of entire villages, a practice which violates one of the most sacred rights of people, liberty. Many women and girl so captured are victims of sexual violence, and forced to become the soldiers' women. Such violent treatment reduces those who administer it to very lowest level of humanity. *In all this those who suffer and die are the people.*

The war victimizes innocent people by frequent practise of torture, even continuing until the victim dies; sometimes simply out of revenge, and other times out of desire to extort military secrets. The ease with which citizens are eliminated simply because of being politically suspect, without any crime being proven, really constitutes murder, making humans beings of no value among their fellow Angolans. When hate goes to the extreme of torching entire villages, burning the people inside their own homes, we get a most complete picture of what this war has come to. *In all this those who suffer are the people.*

To make this picture of the peoples' situation even more sombre, there is added the fatigue of our donors who do not disguise their reluctance to continue helping us when they don't see the results of so much assistance sent to us to consolidate peace among us. On the other hand at a time when our needs are even

greater, many NGO's are leaving us, especially those who have worked in the field of health. *Because of all this, it is the people who suffer and die.*

#### **4.A Light in the darkness.**

However the Holy Father is with us, sharing our deep concerns, through an appeal he put forward in Rome, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of this month, which states:

” My thoughts go out at this time, to Angola, where fratricidal war has broken out again. I echo all the anxious appeals which are coming to me from all sides, and I direct to political and military leaders my appeal that they initiate all possible measures to bring in a just and lasting peace.”

In this appeal the Pope is showing the way toward gaining a peace, which to be a lasting one will have to be based on justice, including a guarantee of respect for human rights. Peace will be obtained only through the initiatives and efforts of all leaders.

The most important of these initiatives is the formation of a single army for the country; as long as we have two armies we will never have peace. We need One Nation with one government, one army and one territory. The first leaders to take these initiatives are those who are currently leading the war. The Pope's appeal is directed in the first instance, to them.

But there are other leaders on whom these same initiatives are incumbent. Among those we must single out the United Nations, who took on the responsibility to consolidate peace in Angola, including rightly the unification of the Armed Forces and of the territory. We hope they will still honour their promises.

#### **5. Conclusion.**

We remember here, with special solicitude, our self-sacrificing missionaries, Fathers, Sisters, Brothers, and Catechists, who, in the midst of so many risks continue to give the people their spiritual, moral, and medical support. We exhort them to do everything in their power not only to help the sick, but also to provide education for our children, teen-agers, and youth. In this way the Church will continue to be a source of hope for Angolans as it concerns itself with their needs, not only spiritual but also social and especially medical and educational.

From the World Food Program, CARITAS, and various NGO's we solicit the continuation of their generous help for our most needy peoples.

Finally, we recommend to all our parishes and catechists to put all their energy into a careful celebration of the National Day of Reconciliation, as our program has laid out. We greatly desire that this Day should mark the launching of a MOVEMENT FOR PEACE, which will include also other churches and reach even to the Political Parties. We pray to the Immaculate Heart of Mary that She pour out her motherly blessing on this Message and all its readers.

Luanda, 28 January, 1999.  
The Angolan Bishops.