



AFRICA/ZAMBIA-After the attacks on behalf of the media to the Church, the Bishops appeal for calm and reconciliation against any form of provocation

Lusaka (Agenzia Fides) - The President of the Zambia Episcopal Conference, His Exc Mgr. George Lungu, Bishop of Chipata, sent a letter to all Catholics in the nation, which will be read in all the parishes on Sunday, June 5, concerning recent attacks by state media to the Catholic Church, to its leadership, to the priests and to the doctrine. In a statement released by the Catholic Information Service for Africa, Mgr. Lungu highlights the fact that these attacks were well planned and coordinated to coincide with the preparations for the elections this year. The Catholic Church is accused of commenting on certain political issues and to support one of its candidates for president against the minister in charge, Ruphia Banda. In the letter the President of the Episcopal Conference claims that these attacks are attempts to distort the Church's teaching on celibacy and homosexuality. Regarding homosexuality, the accusers declare that the Church supports gay people. Mgr. Lungu said the Church's position on this is to respect homosexuals as human beings who do not deserve discrimination, though claiming that homosexual acts are profoundly wrong and sinful, and that under no circumstances could the Church ever accept them. The President of the Episcopal Conference stresses that the aim of the attacks is to bring discredit, division and confusion among Catholics. In the exercise of his ministry, he added, the Bishop is neutral and cannot be biased. The Bishops' message has nothing to do with any alleged aversion or preference for any president or any political party.

Bishop Lungu emphasizes that the Bishops will not be intimidated or forced into silence on national issues that affect poor people, and appeals to the Catholics of Zambia to remain calm in the current situation and, in case of provocations, to assume an attitude of reconciliation. (AP) (Agenzia Fides 05/28/2011)