

**AN APPEAL BY THE ARCHBISHOP OF BAMENDA TO
ALL THE CHRISTIANS AND PEOPLE OF GOOD WILL CONCERNING
THE RECENT VIOLENT MANIFESTATIONS
OF YOUNG PEOPLE**

Fourth Sunday of Lent, 2nd March 2008

My dear brothers and sisters,

Since last Monday, 25th February 2008, we have witnessed an unprecedented wave of demonstrations of young people in many towns of our national territory. What started as a peaceful strike of public transport personnel soon degenerated into open street violence with the wanton destruction of property and the loss of human life. This seems to be the expression of a general malaise and frustration which have been looming over our society for quite some time now.

We do have the right to go on strike for a just cause and only in the absence of frank and meaningful dialogue. But we do not have any right whatsoever to destroy life or the property of innocent people. Violence, no matter from where it comes and by whom it is perpetuated must be vehemently condemned. It is morally wrong and counter productive. Violence can only generate violence. We cannot champion the cause of social justice by creating more social injustice, causing more suffering, poverty and misery through the destruction of property or of human life. Human life is sacred and we must respect and protect it: "Thou shall not kill" (Exodus 20:13).

We thank God for the relative calm that we are beginning to experience and for the fact that life is returning to normal in Bamenda and in the other towns where there has been violence. I call on all the young people, and in particular those of the Archdiocese of Bamenda, to stop the destruction of property and to refrain from all forms of violence and lawlessness.

I appeal to all the Christians and people of good will to do everything in their power to persuade the youth to desist from disturbing public order and from violence. We are a peace loving people. Cameroon has been a peaceful country, thanks to our understanding, our love for one another and to our patience. Let nothing tempt us to compromise God's gift of peace which we have been enjoying and which is more precious than silver and gold. God loves Cameroon.

This is the time of Lent when the Church invites all of us to conversion through, fasting, prayer and almsgiving. Fasting enables us to discipline ourselves and to control our emotions, and thus to be more open to God and to our neighbour. Prayer enables us to be more united to God. Almsgiving is the concrete expression of our love for God and neighbour. It enables us to share our riches and poverty with others and to be in solidarity with the poor, the needy, the suffering and the marginalized. Lent invites us to work for the establishment of social justice and peace.

The theme of our Lenten Pilgrimage this year is "Reconciliation in our families, in our Christian communities and in our society". There can be no genuine

peace without justice and reconciliation. Let us be ready to forgive those who have wronged us. Let us be the first to offer pardon. Let us establish structures of open and meaningful dialogue at all levels of our society. "The appeal that we make to you in Christ's name is: be reconciled to God" and to one another. "Well, now is the favourable time" (cf. 2 Cor 5:2; 6:2).

I invite all of you to offer today and throughout the rest of the Lenten season special prayers to our Almighty Father for our young people and for peace and tranquility in our country. May the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Queen of Peace and Patroness of Cameroon, intercede for us.

+Cornelius Fontem ESUA
Archbishop of Bamenda