

Your Eminences, Archbishops, Bishops, Administrators, General Secretary, and Staff of the Southern African Bishops' Conference,

Allow me to begin by expressing how happy I am that the Holy Father has sent me to this beautiful country. From the beginning of my nomination, I received the expression of your welcoming goodwill. I would like to express my gratitude to Most. Rev Sithembele SIPUKA – President of the SACBC (Southern African Bishops' Conference) for your greetings and invitation to this meeting of the SACBC.

I arrived on Sunday the 14<sup>th</sup> of July very early in the morning which was not the opportune time I know but the warm welcome received and the countless messages meant so much to me. To Bp. John Selemela and Fr. Hugh O'Connor thank you for being at the Nunciature upon my arrival.

I would also like to thank Archbishop Dabula MPAKO of Pretoria and Archbishop Buti TLHAGALE of Johannesburg for their gracious hospitality when I visited their respective missions.

As the Holy Father's personal representative in this part of this wonderful continent, I assure you I will try my best to support you in your efforts to carry out the invaluable mission entrusted to you.

My function as a pontifical legate is daily to make stronger and more effective the bonds of unity that exist between the Apostolic See and particular churches. *Can 364*

Over the last few years, the entire world has suffered through an uncharted moment in our shared history. The pandemic has taken its toll on not only our personal lives but also on the collective Church. The collections for the World Mission Day and Peter's Pence as you know have suffered a significant decline. We have seen a significant reduction in donations from the faithful all over the world due to either economic crisis or unfavourable opinions or controversy within the Church.

As a result, the Pontifical Missionary Society for the Propagation of the Faith (POPF) has faced considerable difficulties in meeting all the subsidy request and contributions it would normally provide. It continues to grant extraordinary subsidies for retired bishops. ***The Episcopal Conference must provide adequate and dignified support to a retired bishop, paying to the primary obligation that binds the diocese he served. Can 402§2.***

If an Ordinary of a particular church in territories of first evangelization and of a new particular church is not able to provide adequate support to the retired bishop (or bishops) of his particular church, he can request an extraordinary subsidy for this purpose. Once the Retired Bishop receives his grant a letter of acknowledgement and

gratitude needs to be sent to the Dicastery of Evangelization. The best and safest way to do this is, I believe, is through the Apostolic Nunciature.

Until recently, Dioceses under the jurisdiction of the Dicastery for the Evangelization, First Section for the Evangelisation and the New Churches, received an Ordinary grant without submitting a formal application. Some of you have since renounced this subsidy or asked for it to be reduced, following an adequate level of economic self-sufficiency achieved by some Local Churches. The Dicastery requests that should a Local Church be in real need of an Ordinary grant, its Administrator (Archbishop, Bishop, Apostolic or Diocesan Administrator) will have to make a formal request, addressing the letter to the Secretary General of the POPF, Rev. Fr. Tadeusz Nowak, OMI. The letter must contain the reasons for the request and include a financial statement, certified by the Financial Administration of the Local Church, Diocese/Church Council concerned, of the previous year.

I would also like to remind you that all Subsidy applications need to reach this Nunciature no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> of November and I've been asked to remind you that all submission needs to be submitted in duplicate. Original for Rome and a copy for the Nunciature.

Each year the Papal Foundation generously funds numerous projects all around the world and many here have been in receipt of funding for projects submitted to the Foundation.

In this regard I would like to inform you that any application for funding now needs to be submitted with documentary evidence that 30% of the money needed for the project has been secured either by fundraising or loans (copies of bank statements or loan approval documents) must be sent along with any other documents require for the approval of the grant.

My brother Bishops I ask for your collaboration and assistance in this my new mission, as you are aware the Canonical process for the election of new Bishops is not an easy one and I now ask for your assistance in making the process just a little easier.

Can the Metropolitan Bishops send a list of possible Episcopal candidates along with their Curriculum Vitae.

And can each Bishop forward to the Nunciature a Directory of names, contact numbers and addresses of every priest in your Diocese, enabling the Nunciature to send the Provvista questionnaires to the Diocese for further distribution. Yes, I've been made aware of the non-operational postal system here in South Africa, so I ask once again for your collaboration in the distribution of the letter to the priest in your Diocese.

Encourage them to answer each question honestly and if they do not know the candidate in question to simply answer "I do not know the candidate" sign their letter and return it to this Nunciature. When we do not get a response, this prolongs the process and prolongs the appointment of a Bishop "*a sign of Christ's presence in the world, going out to meet men and women where they are: calling them by name, helping them to rise, consoling them with the Good News and gathering them into one around the Lord's Table.*" (Rise, let us be on Our Way)

I would like to remind you that preparations are already underway in Rome for the 2025 Jubilee, a special year of grace and pilgrimage in the Catholic Church.

The Jubilee will be the Church's first ordinary jubilee since St. John Paul II led The Great Jubilee of 2000.

The motto approved by the Pope "can be summed up in two words: *Pilgrims of Hope.*"

As many know, the Jubilee is a special year of grace, in which the Catholic Church offers the faithful the possibility of asking for a plenary indulgence, that is, the remission of sins for themselves or for deceased relatives. It is imperative that the local church gives back hope to the lay people, a hope of fostering holiness and a personal encounter with God in a world where many faithful feel the hopelessness of the challenges they face each day. Through your encounters each day go out spread the Christian message be the Good Samaritan in other words engage in authentic dialogue, for the benefit of the community and for the good of the local and universal Church.

Thank you and God bless you.