

POPE SENDS NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE, CALLS FOR ABOLITION OF DEATH PENALTY

BY MATHIAS MAZINGA

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Pope Francis has called for greater co-operation between politicians, religious leaders, civil society organisations and individuals of good will to promote peace, justice and holistic development.

He has also called for greater commitment to environmental protection and women empowerment. The Pontiff has further asked world leaders to protect the fundamental human rights of migrants, prisoners and also to abolish the death penalty in countries where it still prevails.

Pope Francis made these pronouncements in his message for the World Day of Peace. The message was delivered by the Acting Apostolic Nuncio to Uganda, The Very Rev. Msgr. Fernando Duarte Barros Reis, during the New Year's Day High Mass at Rubaga Cathedral, Kampala.

Quoting from the Pope's written message, Msgr. Fernando said: "Globalised indifference threatens peace and affects our ability to conquer evil. We need to build a culture of solidarity and mercy, to enable us take care of our neighbour and the environment, which is our common home."

Pope Francis further called upon world leaders to adopt policies that foster international co-operation and safeguard human life. He also called on the affluent nations to cancel the debts of the poor nations. The Pope further appealed to teachers, journalists, Non Government Organisations and opinion leaders to use their influence to advance peace, solidarity and the promotion of the common good.

The Pontiff also advocated pro-people laws that facilitate the integration of migrants and policies that ensure the economic empowerment and social welfare of women, which he described as signs of the jubilee year of mercy that he declared recently.



Acting Apostolic Nuncio to Uganda, The Very Rev. Msgr. Fernando Duarte Barros Rei (second left), Archbishop Lwanga, Msgr. Kasibante and other Christians after the High Mass at Rubaga Cathedral on New Year's Day

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Complementing the Pontiff's New Year's message of peace as he delivered his homily, the Archbishop of

Kampala, Dr. Cyprian Kizito Lwanga, asked Ugandans to pray and work for peace, especially now as the country braces herself for the Presidential and parliamentary elections in February. Lwanga asked candidates to avoid slandering their opponents.

"Our national motto, 'For God and My Country', is the most beautiful motto. Before you say or do anything, ensure that it does not contravene the motto. If you verbally abuse or clobber others, do you do that for God and your country?"

Lwanga later read out Pope Francis' resolutions for the New Year, which he asked Christians to emulate. The resolutions are:

"Do not gossip, finish your meals,

make time for others, choose the more humble purchase, meet the poor and stop judging others."

The others are: "Befriend those you disagree with, make commitments (like marriage), make it a habit to ask the Lord and be happy."

The New Year's Day thanksgiving mass was also celebrated by Emmanuel Cardinal Wamala, Msgr. Charles Kasibante (Vicar General), Fr. Mark Richard Ssajjabbi and Arch-priest, Fr. Joseph Mary Bbuye.

Prominent politicians, such as the embattled Lord Mayor Elias Lukwago, area MP John Ken Lukyamuzi and former Democratic Party president, Paul Ssemwogerere attended the mass.