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**DECLARATION OF THE BISHOPS OF CAMEROON ON ABORTION,  
HOMOSEXUALITY, INCEST AND SEXUAL ABUSE OF MINORS**

We, the Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church which is in Cameroon, gathered in Sangmelima, during the 36th Annual Seminar of the Bishops of Cameroon from 5 to 12 January 2013,

Aware of the general climate of permissiveness, forgetfulness of God, of creation, of nature as God created and intended it for our happiness, a climate experienced and resisted by families and against which they courageously protect and defend themselves, upholding human and divine values,

After having noted the proliferation and the normalization of induced abortions in our country, despite current legislation,

Noting also, with pains, that under the pretext of the respect of human rights and the principle of non-discrimination, international organizations tend to impose on African countries and on the world, legislation for the recognition of sexual orientations contrary to nature, our culture and our faith, such as homosexuality, gay marriages with the possibility of adoption of children by these "couples",

Deploring also the increase in our cities, our neighbourhoods, our villages and families of victims of incest often linked with a permissive mentality and the presence of networks that impose inhuman practices which are against nature, despicable and criminal; without leaving out numerous abuses of minors,

Taking into account the plan of God for the whole creation, the humanism which derives from it, his infinite mercy for the sinner and our mission of the salvation of the whole person and of every man in Jesus Christ,

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**In the name of the Church, expert in humanity, we, the Bishops of Cameroon unanimously declare the following:**

**I- CONCERNING INDUCED ABORTION**

- Human life is sacred and inviolable from conception its natural end. It must be respected consistently and unconditionally (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) n° 2270)
- The human embryo has the dignity of the human person. Killing an embryo is killing a person and destroying life (cf. CCC n° 2274).
- Pregnancy is neither a disease nor a misfortune which must be disposed of, but the gift of life to humanity to be preserved with great care.
- Families, medical, social, civil and religious organizations should support families or couples disturbed by unwanted pregnancies, teenage pregnancies, illegitimate or at risk from rape, to save these unborn children and give them human life.
- Religious communities, social organizations, schools and universities, families must arrange and consistently prevent induced abortion through education and sensitization of young people, families and society as a whole.
- To Christians, we ask to read once more in ecclesial communities, families, associations, schools and universities our **Pastoral Letter on abortion** of 1979 that that still retains its relevance: "*Respect the life of the child who is not yet born. Be faithful to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who loves all men, and especially the weak and the helpless* » (p.20)
- To abort and to assist in committing abortion are crimes which are considered direct and voluntary killing of the human, being. This is a grave sin punishable by excommunication whose absolution is reserved to the Pope, the Bishop of the place or priests authorized to act. (cf. CCC n° 1463). The door of God's mercy is always open, priests must accompany in prayer, ensure the spiritual and compassionate monitoring of those who come to reconcile with God and the Church.

## II- CONCERNING HOMOSEXUALITY

- Homosexuality deals with men and women who experience sexual attraction exclusively or predominantly toward people of the same sex. The debate on homosexuality raises the question of sexuality and its dignity, its meaning; its language and its purpose.
- Given the multifaceted claims of the promoters of homosexuality: the right to legal marriage, adoption of children, founding a family, and medically assisted procreation etc..., claims which are based on several concepts whose main ideology of gender opposes the classical notions of family, gender and reproduction.
- Faced with semantic abuses intended to distort realities and the real meaning of the concepts of family, spouse, sexuality, marriage, procreation.
- For human dignity and salvation of all mankind in Jesus Christ,

**We, the Bishops of Cameroon, unanimously declare the following:**

- The Church, Mother and Educator teaches the sacredness of the sexual identity of the man and woman created in the image of God (Gen 1, 26), the dignity of their sexuality and of their marriage which forms basis of their family.
- The human person is created man and woman "*Male and female, he created them*" (Gen 1, 26). This invariable difference is the basis of their relationship and their complementarity and this is fulfilled in marriage.
- Homosexuality falsifies human anthropology and trivializes sexuality, marriage and family as the foundation of society. In African culture, it is not part of the family and social values. It is a flagrant violation of the legacy which our ancestors, faithful to heterosexuality and the family have handed down to us. Throughout human history, practices of homosexuality have never led to the evolution of society, but have always been the obvious signs of the outrageous decay of civilizations. In fact, homosexuality opposes humanity to itself and even destroys it.
- The identity of sexuality is deeply misunderstood, misused, perverted outside conjugal relationship of man and woman. Therefore acts experienced in the context of homosexuality are not « sexual » but "*relationships against nature*" Rom 1, 26).

- Marriage is an institution that legalizes sex and parentage for the foundation of a new family. It is the union of a man and a woman who agree to start a family and live together in love. The homosexual union is not a marriage, it distorts the meaning of marriage by reducing it to a link that is sterile, hedonistic and perverse, "*the infamy of man to man*" (Rom, 1, 26).
- Men and women have the natural right to assume the specificity of their nature, it is a right which is invariable, irreducible and structuring, and which can be understood only in the context of the couple, sexuality and the family as the basis of paternity for the man and maternity for the woman. The "liberal" orientation of sexuality brandish by the promoters of homosexuality is a denial of this law.
- Every child, boy or girl has the right to live his or her identity in connection with a mother, a father. Promoters of homosexuality who are clamoring for a law on adoption want to ignore this primordial right which is necessary for the balance development of the child.
- In fact, homosexuality is not a human right but a disposition that seriously harms humanity because it is not based on any value intrinsic to human beings; « *it is an abomination* » (Lev 18, 22) as evidenced by the biblical tradition. Rejecting it is not discrimination but a legitimate protection of constant and perennial values in the face of vices against nature, for the right to difference is only justified when it is founded on human values.

Faithful to this constant teaching of the Magisterium which states that acts of homosexuality are intrinsically disordered and contrary to natural law (cf Catechism of the Catholic Church n° 2357),  
 We, the Bishops of Cameroon, reiterate our disapproval of homosexuality and homosexual unions. On this subject we call, we call on all believers and people of good will to reject homosexuality and the so-called "gay marriages" and to accompany those who are inclined towards homosexuality and homosexuals by means of prayer, spiritual follow up and compassion, in view of their conversion.

### III-CONCERNING INCEST

Reported cases of incest in families are dramas of great suffering and deep despair. This plague brings about the deterioration of relations between relatives.

Faced with the moral evil of incest, a true human and social turmoil is taking on more and more momentum in our society,

Moved by the pastoral concern to protect and promote the family, and its human and spiritual values,

We, the bishops of Cameroon, unanimously call your attention on the following:

- Consanguinity is sacred,
- Incest « *designates intimate relations among relatives or to a certain degree that prohibits marriage between them* » (CCC n° 2388). It is a violation of prohibited sexual relations and therefore marriage between two persons related by consanguinity that is to say, by natural kinship, legal kinship and by direct affinity,
- The prohibition of incest is universal. Society planned it to strengthen family cohesion,
- The Lord God forbids marriages between consanguineous Israelites (cf. Lev 18, 6-18)
- The Cameroon penal punishes incest (art. 360),
- The prohibition of incest is a natural law,
- Incest seriously destroys consanguinity and direct affinity and destroys the balance of the family.
- Children born of incestuous relationships, suffer from an identity crisis that traumatizes their personality.

We strongly condemn:

This horrible abomination that destroys the fabric of the family, denigrates its authors (cf. 1Co 5, 1ss), causes the curse of incestuous people (Deut. 27, 20) and can cause misery and even death of the guilty if they are not purified (cf. Lv 20, 11).

We insistently urge:

- All families, tribes, ethnic groups have to scrupulously respect the consanguinity and affinity and to make known to their descendants the relationship between them.
- The whole society and authorities in their diversity have to protect consanguinity, the foundation of the human family.
- All the faithful, priests and religious have to accompany them in prayer, monitoring of spiritual and compassionate life of victims and perpetrators of incest for a new life in the Lord.

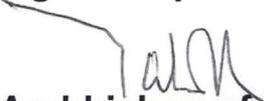
#### IV- CONCERNING THE ABUSE OF MINORS

- Child abuses are varied and thrive in our society. We denounce the theft and sale of children, all sexual abuses namely: pedophilia, rape, incest, sexual assault, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, child pornography, child prostitution... these outrages on a minor are unanimously condemned by the scriptures, nations and are punishable by law.
- We the Bishops of Cameroon,
- In accordance with the legislation in force in our country, the African tradition so attached to the sacredness of the child,
- Following the particular example of Jesus Christ who blessed the children and recommended: " Beware not to despise one of these little ones" (MT 18,10) because what you have done to the least of mine, it is to me that you have done" (Mt 25,40)
- Unanimously condemn child abuse in all forms
- Urge the society to enhance the protection of minors at all levels, to denounce and fight firmly the perpetrators while providing medical care,
- Call on all the parents to cover their children with affection and respect, to ensure a good education and to preserve them from these abuses inside as well as outside of the family home,
- Ask educators to protect children, to inform them of the abuses that threaten them and on what to do against aggression.

Dear faithful of Christ, men and women of good will,  
Following Jesus Christ who said: "I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly" (Jn 10, 10), let us be united from this 2013 Lent to protect and promote the culture of life in our country and around the world.

Done at Sangmelima, January 12, 2013

**For the Bishops of Cameroon**  
**Mgr. Joseph Atanga**

  
**Archbishop of Bertoua**  
**President of the NECC**

