

Response

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In introducing his topic on “Hope”, Rev Mandlate stresses the philosophy of poverty as the philosophy of desperation and an enemy of hope. He emphasizes that this prevents people both in the society and the Church from doing anything to resolve or to get out of their situation.

As he explains further on, this philosophy is “the main source of the majority of problems the Church is facing here in Africa” (Mandlate:1). He also looks at three other main issues:

- Low annual enrolment in ministerial programmes to match the growth of the Church.
- Low number of youth willing to remain in ministry after graduation because of low pay.
- Difficulties of engaging pastors’ children in the ministry.

I agree with him when he says, “Since the beginning God has demanded man’s participation for the solution of his own problems” (Mandlate:2).

In addition to the points that Rev Mandlate has given in answering the question, “how can the church solve so many problems” (Mandlate:3), I have some thoughts.

I will start by asking a question: Have the leaders been open and honest to help African Christians claim ownership? When we as leaders encourage and guide the African faithful to know that the church belongs to them, I believe they will stand on their feet to do what they can for the survival. What people should give must not be only money. I believe in giving anything that one can find, be it grains, materials, or other kinds of farm products. Physical participation could also be a possibility. This will help our people get involved without feeling discouraged that they must only bring money to support the ministry.

Secondly, I would like to challenge our leadership in Africa (the African) to be positive in the ministerial work. The youth are listening to and watching what we say and do. Whatever we do should be a model for the

youth and our younger children. How can my child want to follow in my footsteps if I am not positive about my work and do not love it? We need faithful leaders who show great support for their church. We are still in the growth process.

Thirdly, my income with other support has helped my child to get what he has; he therefore needs to start building on that. Different churches in different fields and districts are at different levels. Their income may not be the same. The young graduates should be able to understand that, as they come out of the colleges, there is nothing on the plate waiting. They are coming to build on the foundation that has been laid by the present leadership.

I do not want to encourage them to build on ambition which may not give the right guidance. Whatever guidance we give should encourage and help the youth to open up their lives as they humble themselves for the greater opportunities that are there in the Church.

Our theology has continued to show an eschatological outlook. We have preached faith whereby Christians are encouraged to hold fast to the hope which is forward looking and forward moving, and which is also revolutionizing and transforming the present. Poverty, despair, and hopelessness cannot uphold our faith.

Our church has always pointed to the challenges that are facing us and has proposed solutions. Looking at the top priorities of our church at the Regional level, we see:

- a. Disciple Making for Children, Youth and Adults - which leads to the building up of a people with hope in a church they would call theirs for life;
- b. Pastoral Education and Training - which offers help to the needy from within and without in different fields;
- c. Compassion Evangelism - which demonstrates the selfless love and hope of Jesus Christ as seen in the church in Africa responding to the suffering by stretching her arms of compassion to the drought stricken, hungry, and displaced, et cetera.

There is light at the end of the tunnel as we unite together as leaders and theologians to offer hope to the continent.