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CATHOLIC NEWS ANALYSIS
FOLLOWING THE FOOTPRINTS OF GOD IN AFRICA

VoiceAfrique **Weekly Update**
Catholic News Analysis from Africa by Africans, for Africa and the World
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Begin your week with Sr. Helen Kasaka, the Pan-African Catholic Review and PACTPAN Updates

As an African proverb reminds us, "A single bracelet does not jingle." The saying speaks to the importance of collaboration and shared responsibility. We are strengthened by working together, recognising that each person has a contribution to make to the life of the community.

Dear friends in Christ,

Greetings from Lusaka, Zambia. This week, we bring you news of PACTPAN's preparations for the 2027 Pan-African Catholic Congress in Cameroon and the return of its Coordinating Servant, Fr Stan Chu Ilo, from Rome. We also highlight a breast cancer awareness initiative in Nigeria, calls for truth and reconciliation in Tanzania, and the Church's continuing efforts to promote the biblical apostolate in Africa. From the Vatican, Pope Leo XIV speaks about peace, invites young people to World Youth Day in Seoul and prepares for his forthcoming apostolic journey to Latin America.

Around PACTPAN this week

PACTPAN welcomes back Fr Stan Chu Ilo from Rome

The Pan-African Catholic Theology and Pastoral Network (PACTPAN) welcomes back its Coordinating Servant, Fr Stan Chu Ilo, following his participation in meetings and events in Rome.

Fr Chu Ilo took part in a Vatican meeting marking the tenth anniversary of Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*. The gathering brought together cardinals, bishops, theologians and married couples to reflect on the Church's pastoral accompaniment of families.

He also participated in the international conference *The Church of the Sheaves: Equipping the Saints for Mission as Gift Exchange*, held at the Pontifical Urbaniana University. The two gatherings provided opportunities for reflection on family life, mission and the Church's role in responding to the needs of communities.

PACTPAN streamlines preparations for the 2027 Pan-African Catholic Congress

Preparations for the 2027 Pan-African Catholic Congress in Yaoundé, Cameroon, are taking shape following the adoption of a streamlined planning structure.

The structure was discussed during the PACTPAN Assembly and a meeting of volunteers held on Friday, 30 October. It establishes a Central Local Organising Committee to oversee coordination, decision-making and accountability as preparations advance.

Seven subcommittees will support the planning process. These cover programme, theology and publications; arts, culture, agora and celebrations; liturgy, spirituality and ecclesial relations; finance, fundraising and partnerships; communications, media, registration and technology; hospitality, protocol and delegate services; and venue, logistics, exhibitions and volunteer services.

Each subcommittee will include two representatives of the PACTPAN core leadership. Their role is to support coordination, maintain communication and ensure that the committees remain aligned with the overall vision.

Scheduled for July 2027, the Congress will be guided by the theme, "Behold, I Make All Things New" (Revelation 21:5), and the focus, "Arts, Artificial Intelligence and Culture in Africa: Remaining Human, Remaining African, Remaining Christian."

Its four pillars are Think - Create - Encounter - Celebrate. Expected outcomes include the PACTPAN Charter, Congress proceedings and other publications.

PACTPAN Nigeria brings breast cancer awareness to schoolgirls

Breast cancer awareness must begin with education, open conversations and access to reliable health information. This was the focus of an outreach organised by PACTPAN Nigeria's Health and Healing Unit in collaboration with Amaraya Foundation and Akumi4Christ Global Care.

Held on 28 October at Ekwereazu Girls Secondary School in Mbaise, Nigeria, the initiative reached 220 students and 25 teachers through health talks and a practical demonstration of breast self-examination.

The outreach also addressed stigma, body shaming and fears that can prevent people from seeking medical advice. Students were encouraged to speak openly about their health concerns and seek guidance from qualified health professionals. The initiative further established a health club for students interested in careers in medicine and surgery, nursing and medical laboratory science.

In her article, Sr Grace Akunna John-Emezi, HHCJ, emphasises that protecting the future of the girl-child requires the involvement of families, schools, health professionals, churches and communities.

Read the full story: Save Her Future: The Girl-Child, Breast Cancer Awareness and the Responsibility of Every Community

In the wider Church

Tanzania's Catholic bishops call for truth and reconciliation after election violence

The Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC) has called for truth, justice and reconciliation as the country reflects on the violence that followed the disputed general elections of October 2025.

On 29 October 2026, the Conference dedicated a day to national prayer for those affected by the violence, marking one year since the elections. During Mass at St Andrew Kaggwa Cathedral in the Diocese of Lindi, TEC Chairman Bishop Wolfgang Pisa urged Tanzanians to acknowledge the truth and examine the country's electoral framework to help prevent further violence.

He also appealed for forgiveness for those detained or arrested in connection with the previous elections, warning that further violence would deepen hatred and division. The bishop encouraged people in public institutions and other sectors of society to use their influence responsibly to prevent a recurrence.

Read more: Tanzania's Catholic Bishops' Chairman Urges Truth, Forgiveness to Prevent Further Election Violence

SECAM lays foundation stone for new Biblical Centre headquarters in Nairobi

The Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) has laid the foundation stone for the new headquarters of the Catholic Biblical Centre for Africa and Madagascar (BICAM/CEBAM) in Nairobi, Kenya.

The foundation stone was blessed on 19 October by SECAM President Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo Besungu during the organisation's second Standing Committee meeting of 2026, held in Nairobi from 18 to 22 October.

The Centre promotes and coordinates the biblical apostolate across Africa and Madagascar, including efforts to translate the Bible into African languages. The new headquarters is expected to support the Centre's work in making Scripture more accessible and strengthening the biblical apostolate across the continent.

Read more: SECAM lays the foundation stone for the new headquarters of its Biblical Centre

Nigerian bishops call for prayer and fasting ahead of 2027 elections

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) has called on Catholics and people of goodwill to pray and work for free, fair, credible and peaceful elections ahead of the country's 2027 general elections.

Under the theme "Let Justice and Peace Flow" (Amos 5:24), the bishops have raised concern about electoral violence, vote-buying, manipulation and divisions along ethnic and religious lines.

The national prayer and fasting programme began with a parish-level day of prayer on 31 October. Further parish prayer days are scheduled for 28 November 2026 and 15 January 2027. A nationwide diocesan day of prayer will also be held on 8 December, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The programme includes Mass, the Rosary, fasting and a special prayer for the elections. On 8 December, Mass is scheduled for 3 p.m., followed by a Rosary procession at 4.30 p.m. and Eucharistic Benediction.

Speaking to Vatican News, Fr Michael Banjo, Secretary General of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, said the bishops' main concern is that citizens should be able to choose their leaders freely and that the announced results should faithfully reflect their choices.

Read more: Nigeria's bishops appeal for free and peaceful elections

From the Vatican

Pope Leo XIV: "There is no such thing as a holy war; only peace is holy"

Pope Leo XIV has called on religious leaders and people of faith to reject the use of religion to justify war and to become instruments of dialogue and peace.

In a video message to participants in the international meeting *Unarmed and Disarming Peace*, held in Assisi on 27 October, the Pope recalled the 40th anniversary of the World Day of Prayer for Peace initiated by St John Paul II in 1986.

He urged the international community to rebuild peace rather than prepare for more wars, insisting that faith must never be used to legitimise violence.

"War can never be waged in the name of God," the Pope said. "There is no such thing as a holy war: only peace is holy."

He also encouraged religious leaders to promote dialogue within their communities and across society, so that arrogance may give way to peace, negotiation and understanding.

Read more: Pope sends video message to international meeting on peace in Assisi

Pope Leo XIV invites young people to World Youth Day Seoul 2027

Pope Leo XIV has invited young people from across the world to take part in World Youth Day in Seoul, South Korea, in 2027.

In a video message released on 22 October, when registration opened, the Pope described the gathering as a pilgrimage of faith, friendship and hope. He encouraged young people to embrace the opportunity to deepen their relationship with God and encounter others from different cultures and backgrounds.

The theme for the gathering is "Take courage! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). The Pope urged young people to bring their dreams, hopes, struggles and wounds to the pilgrimage, reminding them that the Lord calls each of them by name.

Read the Pope's message: Invitation to register for World Youth Day Seoul 2027

Looking ahead

Pope Leo XIV to visit Uruguay, Argentina and Peru

Pope Leo XIV is scheduled to undertake an apostolic journey to Uruguay, Argentina and Peru from 6 to 17 November 2026.

The journey will include visits to Montevideo, Paysandú and Florida in Uruguay; Buenos Aires, Córdoba and Luján in Argentina; and Lima, Chiclayo, Cusco and Pucallpa in Peru.

The visit will provide an opportunity for the Holy Father to meet local communities, celebrate Mass, engage with Church leaders and encourage the faithful in their Christian witness. It will also take him to Peru, where he served as a missionary and bishop before his election to the papacy.

Read more: Pope Leo XIV's apostolic journey to Uruguay, Argentina and Peru

As we begin this new week, may we remember that the Church's mission is strengthened when we listen to one another, share our gifts and work together for the common good.

Wishing you a peaceful and grace-filled week.

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