

# Catholic Asmara

## Clarifications on the Recent Nationalization of the Catholic Clinics in Eritrea

28 Jul, 2019 in መልእክታት

### Further Clarifications on the Recent Nationalization of the Catholic Clinics in Eritrea



The Church, while carrying on her service to the Lord, cannot forsake the problems and difficulties of man (health, education...). In fact Jesus Christ has left her with an unambiguous commandment: it is not sufficient to love and honor God, it is as much mandatory to love one's neighbor and to cater to his needs. The services that the Church renders to society through her sons and daughters have no purposes of religious proselytism. She serves man in his diversified needs only and simply because charity is a constitutive part of her faith: in fact, "faith without charity is dead" (Jm 2,26).

With reference to the nationalization of the Catholic Church's clinics by the Eritrean government, in the last few weeks we have recorded some comments and declarations, which are overtly untrue and misleading. Hence, the need, on

our part, to offer our clarifications and refutations to such allegations for the sake of anyone interested in knowing the truth of the matter.

## Catholic Asmara

### **1.- The recent measures taken by the Government would be, it is said, an application of a 1995 proclamation!**

When the Proclamation was issued, the Catholic Church earnestly elaborated a clear and articulate response on the central points of the document, and delivered a finalized text to the highest government authorities. Her aim in doing so was to facilitate a mutual understanding and to suggest modifications and amendments to the Proclamation. The legitimate presupposition from which the Church's response set out was that it was impossible to keep silent when one is confronted with issues and approaches that, directly or indirectly, infringed on one's identity, rights and duties. The proposal that was submitted to the Government as a result of the above premise was to be open to dialogue, as this was a substantial part of freedom, which in turn would allow the Church to define herself and to illustrate her duties, rights and mandate. More concretely, in her response, the Church clarified, specified and amended the errors and inaccuracies contained in the Proclamation.

With all of the above in mind, our response restated that whatever service that the Church carries out for man's benefit, far from being incompatible with law and legality, purports to buttress the principles that the state itself, every state for that matter, claims to be committed to, for the promotion of society's veritable growth and maturity. In terms of time and space, the Church has pursued such goals for two thousand years now and in every latitude of the globe. She does not need only churches and chapels to celebrate her faith and to perform her worship. She needs places and structures as well, in order to give concreteness to that other dimension of her faith which is love for neighbor. Obviously the Church would never force anyone to resort to her social and charitable services. Instead, she has the duty, and the right, to fulfill all her responsibilities towards anyone who chooses to benefit from such services, because, let us repeat it once again, this is an irreplaceable part of her religious faith. If the Church misses such a dimension, it is faith itself that falls into irrelevance. Woe then, if due to inertia or laziness, the Church fails to meet her vocation to the ministry of charity. On the other hand, if and when external forces prevent her from carrying on her works of charity, then they would violate her right to the free exercise of faith.

**2.- The charitable institutions of the Church – here is another specious allegation – would belong neither to her, nor to the religious institutes in charge of them, and they wouldn't even concern them, as the said charitable institutions are donations from external benefactor entities.**

- c. The aid that is delivered out to the needy who come to our structures for help originates not from unspecified, undefined, self-styled benefactors; it is rather the result of an organic and properly planned inter-ecclesial cooperation, i.e. between the Catholic communities throughout the world and the church communities living and ministering in the developing countries. In this context, the donor entities deliver their aid to us with the clear understanding that it is put entirely at our disposal, so that, thorough us, it may reach out the needy. To that purpose, the aid is delivered to us by the donors on the basis of a proven and consolidated trust towards us. Otherwise one cannot fathom why the donors would not send their donations to the state authorities! On the other hand, who can deny that the governments themselves do receive aid for the population from individuals, groups, and organizations which they call “supporters” or “partners”?
- d. The donor institutions are free, always with due respect for the law, to choose or select whomever they see fit to run and administer their aid. In our specific context, from the very beginning they have chosen to avail themselves of the Catholic religious institutes, and entrusted them with the responsibility of administering their contributions. This they have done on the basis of their high consideration for our personnel's competence and first-hand knowledge of the needs and problems of our people.
- e. Inasmuch as a juridical person, the Church too has the native right to acquire and possess. Such a right is rooted in her very identity, faith and multifarious charitable ministries.
- f. This said, we don't see any reasonable motivation why the exercise of such a right should be outlawed, as long as it remains immune from crime, or whatever action retraceable to crime. To the contrary, the exercise of such a right is made imperative by the urgent needs of the people. In this connection, we have the privilege of stating, with clear conscience, the moral integrity and the transparency of our charitable services to the people, yesterday as much as today, and to reiterate the critical importance of all such services for the people. This can be attest to, anytime, by everybody, friends and not friends alike.
- g. In view of the above points, the competent ministerial and government authorities themselves have always recognized whatever aid came into our hands, through a process of recognition, legal recording and related documentation under our own name.

## **2.- Another gross misrepresentation: the clinics and schools of the Catholic Church would be located only in Catholic areas!**

- a. Gross misrepresentations such as the above wouldn't deserve the slightest attention, if it were not for the existence of some incurably naïve people ready to bite the hook, and for the need to keep track of the fabricators of the running about the wide spectrum of social media. The sheer number and the worldwide spread of Eritrean men and women educated and treated in our catholic institutions irrespective of ethnicity, religion and culture, is an incontrovertible evidence of the universalism of our work. All such activities are so well documented, properly filed and accurately recorded, that it would be extremely easy, for anyone interested, to verify who has studied or was treated where. Leafing through the registers kept in our centers and at the relevant government ministries would be sufficient to confirm the truth of our statements.
- b. Another point which does not require particular enquires or deep analyses is the distribution of our charitable activities and social promotion facilities (clinics and schools) throughout the national territory: it would suffice to give a glance at the map and identify the location of our social structures on the one hand, and the areas of Catholic settlements on the other: no doubt, the falsehood of the above contention would come to the fore in no uncertain terms!
- c. One more solid evidence disproving the claim that the services provided by our centers obey to ethnic, religious or cultural biases, is the fact that not only the beneficiaries of our centers, but the staff and the personnel working in them too, right from the doorman up to the teaching staff, the paramedical and the medical personnel, belong to the most diversified ethnic, religious, and cultural provenances.

## **2.-According to one more hoax, our charitable institutions would be instruments of religious proselytism.**

- a. The propagandists of such an allegation, generally, reconnect themselves to the one we have already mentioned above (see n.3), and inevitably their accusation is pulverized by its own internal contradiction: if our social structures are supposed to serve only the members of the Catholic community, how on earth is it possible for them to become, at the same time, instruments of Catholic proselytism?
- b. At this point, may we launch a challenge? If, from among the hundreds of thousands of men and woman who have attended our institutions, there is someone to whom conversion to Catholic faith was requested as a precondition for access to our services, can he or she please raise his or her

hand? We are definitely certain that the above accusers would be hopelessly belied by all the evidences to the contrary. In fact, simply, it is a normative modus operandi of the Church not to exploit the poverty of people in order to increase the numerical consistency of her membership. By the same token, the Church would never accept anyone who would ask to join her faith community guided by material interests; for the Lord's word is explicit: "you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I have performed, but because you ate the loaves and had your fill" (Jn 6,26).

- c. Quite different is instead the situation of those who, inspired by the witness of total dedication to God and to the brothers offered by the men and women serving in our structures, freely and spontaneously ask to join the Catholic Church. Here we have an instance in which the applicant cannot be deprived of the right of free choice. Rather, there is sufficient room for a legitimate pride for all the parties involved: for those who, with their life and selfless service, incarnate a living and credible witness, as well as those who, with full knowledge, mature discernment and free deliberation, choose to join the Catholic Church. The truth in fact is that every person has the inalienable right, rooted in the natural law and recognized by international legislation, to make his religious choice, without coercion, manipulation or conditioning of any type.



## About Catholic Asmara

Eritrean Catholic Archeparchy of Asmara

[View all posts by Catholic Asmara →](#)

### Post navigation

← መልሲ ካቶሊካዊት ቤተክርስቲያን ብዛዕባ ምዕጻው ትካላት ጥዕና ብመንግስትን ውጽኢ ጸለመን

Precisazioni e chiarificazioni in margine alla nazionalizzazione delle cliniche cattoliche in Eritrea. →

