

Text of Bishop Trevor Musonda Mwamba's address, published in

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“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.” (Matthew 5:9)

We begin with a prayer of Dag Hammarskjöld.

“Give us peace with Thee

Peace with men

Peace with ourselves,

And free us from all fear. “

Amen.

(Markings, 142)

Esteemed convenors and fellow participants across the world greetings from Zambia on this leap day.

I am delighted via this video recording courtesy of KBN TV Lusaka to join you at this conference jointly convened by the Institute of Commonwealth Studies / School of Advanced Study, University of London, and Westminster United Nations Association:

On Dag Hammarskjöld's Plane Crash: The Continuing Search for Truth.

Am speaking on 'Hammarskjöld the Peacemaker'.

We are all truth seekers in a moral universe where hidden truth ultimately comes into the open.

Our ongoing search for truth is like pieces of a jig-saw puzzle scattered across nations and we are finding and fitting the pieces of truth together till the picture is complete.

Some of the jig-saw pieces are in Zambia.

2024 is a significant year here for two reasons.

First, it's the 60th anniversary of Zambia's independence on October 24th which is also the United Nations Day.

Zambia's independence day was prudently chosen by our founders to connect with the goals and ideals of the United Nations Charter.

A crucial ideal is world peace. It's uncanny that Dag Hammarskjöld the greatest Secretary General of the United Nations in pursuit of peace in the Congo, died in Northern Rhodesia now Zambia in 1961.

A great man Hammarskjöld whom President Kennedy praised as "...the greatest statesman of our century," died on Zambian soil and his soul is a part of Zambia.

Second, 2024 is significant here as the centennial of the birth of our founding President Kenneth David Kaunda.

President Kaunda admired Hammarskjöld. They had much in common. Both were peacemakers. Both were a moral force. Both were great statesmen of conscience and conviction. Both believed in God and their faith informed their public role.

Zambia's 60th Independence anniversary and President Kaunda's centennial of birth reminds us of the noble ideals on which the UN was founded and inspired our independence; and the ethical leadership exemplified by Kaunda and Hammarskjöld which we must rekindle.

Hammarskjöld the peacemaker embodied the noblest ideals of the UN. He was the conscience of the World and spoke truth to power. Brilliantly competent the mantra of most world leaders was "Just leave it to Dag!"

His exemplary statesmanship graced with wisdom, humility, courage, patience, spirituality, judiciousness is what politicians must nurture.

At his inauguration as the second Secretary General of the UN in 1953 he quoted from a Swedish poem these words:

"The greatest prayer of man is not for victory but for peace."

Peace was his brand. Hammarskjöld in self - scrutiny said:

"Our work for peace must begin within the private world of each one of us. To build for humankind a world without fear, we must be without fear. To build a world of justice, we must be just..."

He was a "noble servant of peace". In the apt words of Dr. Roger Lipsey, "...he endowed the United Nations with a heightened sense of its mission through his clarity of mind, breadth of vision, unshakeable integrity, and quiet eloquence."

An expression of the Christian faith and values which guided his life and work.

Hammarskjöld believed that no life was more satisfactory than one of selfless service to one's country or humanity.

He believed that the radical teaching of the Gospels was the equality of all peoples as children of God which we all have to respect and reverence.

He believed from the writings of the medieval mystics like Meister Eckhart self surrender was essential for spiritual growth.

Hammar skjöld's beliefs inspired him to offer a troubled world his sterling servant leadership.

In a world of chaos he sought to bring order; in a world of war, peace; in a world of intolerance, compassion; in a world of diversity, appreciation.

Hammar skjöld embraced his beliefs as gifts to serve humanity and make the world a better place. And being Secretary General of the UN was such a gift, a calling, making Hammar skjöld a political mystic.

A political mystic in the sense that such people have an acute awareness of God and see their calling as service to the Divine.

They feel connected to God and equally to people and all creation a relationship the German theologian Dorothee Soelle described, "borrows the eyes of God."

In the eyes of God faith is not private and otherworldly but active in political practice. Faith is politics and politics is faith. As Hammar skjöld said, "In our era, the road to holiness necessarily passes through the world of action".

Political mystics being truth-seekers enrich the world with their love, idealism, vision, and hope. They reconcile people, communities, and nations.

As channels of God's peace they strive to solve the nations and world's political, economic, and social injustices.

We have a dearth of peacemakers in our world today; making it lose its moral compass and sanity as the genocide in Palestine, and wars in Sudan, Yemen, and Ukraine verify.

Our world needs political mystics who can speak truth to power as Hammar skjöld did and who as a peacemaker wisely advised:

"You can only hope to find a lasting solution to a conflict if you have learned to see the other objectively, but, at the same time, to experience his difficulties subjectively."

Politics to Hammar skjöld was about relationships. It's what we need today politicians with the gift of sensitivity, empathy, objectivity, and love.

Politicians with a life of prayer and the mystery of stillness and silence where God in a quiet still voice speaks peace.

The peace Hammar skjöld heard and obedient to it created important peacemaking initiatives such as shuttle diplomacy and UN peacekeeping forces.

We need more Hammar skjöld's peacemakers committed to the service of dialogue and peace and focused on ending the many armed conflicts throughout our world.

After Hammar skjöld's death, in his Manhattan apartment was found a spiritual diary which he described as his negotiations with himself and with God - and later published as Markings.

He wrote in Markings. “Thy orders are given in secret. May I always hear them — and obey.”

He heard the orders of peace and was obedient as a peacemaker to death.

In the wreckage of his plane was found a book he was reading Thomas a Kempis’ classic the Imitation of Christ it summed up his life.

At the UN headquarters is the Room of Quiet, a meditation space, Hammarskjöld designed and inaugurated.

He wrote a message there for visitors - you and I, which says:

“We all have within us a center of stillness surrounded by silence. This house, dedicated to work and debate in the service of peace, should have one room dedicated to silence in the outward sense and stillness in the inner sense. It has been the aim to create in this small room a place where the doors may be open to the infinite lands of thought and prayer.”

The message ends:

“There is an ancient saying that the sense of a vessel is not in its shell but in the void. So it is with this room. It is for those who come here to fill the void with what they find in their center of stillness.”

In the “center of stillness” abides One who says, “Be still, and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46:10).

The One is the Peace of God who makes us peacemakers and children of God.

The One who made Dag Hammarskjöld the peacemaker because his life was graciously “open to the infinite lands of thought and prayer.”