

**MESSAGE FROM BISHOP ZEBEDEE MASEREKA FOR THE WORLD AIDS DAY, 01 December 2008**

HIV/AIDS is a devastating enemy against humanity, Uganda alone loses over 70-000 people due to AIDS each year. However, it is wonderful to know that there is a Day when every one can focus on the dangers of HIV/AIDS. In Uganda, World AIDS is being observed as usual on December 01. Bishop Masereka Christian Foundation medical staff persons are on the forefront of the fight against stigma and has intensified HIV prevention the activities by forming part of a larger contingent of counselors and HIV testing staff in the district.

It is encouraging to know that Governments like that of Uganda and many others in the world are working very hard to try and eliminate the virus and it's devastating consequences. It is also quite encouraging to know that the prices of Anti-retrovirals,(ARV) have been lowered over the years. But universal access to this these medications is still eluding many communities. The introduction of nevirapine medications for mothers a few years ago has been a great achievement, yet the availability of nevirapine to every one who needs it has not been achieved in many Countries.

It is evident that in spite of so many programs being established, many people continue to get infected by HIV. This is a big tragedy. HIV is a preventable and manageable disease. More vigorous and aggressive preventive programs must be set up in every single village or community in the whole world. There must be complete universal access to ART and nevirapine and all other forms of assistance. The fight against HIV and all related stigma and discrimination must be very well, and honestly facilitated in all the world. Humanity is one. The fight against HIV should be provided with adequate resources the world over. The world community must ensure that the battle against HIV involves every one because we are keepers of our brothers and sisters, and we must never be diverted from the battle or even be divided. Humanity must fight HIV as one family. Many years ago I used to be quite parochial in my attitude, but my faith in one God and in one human family challenged my narrow mindedness and I

have been fully converted.

The care and support for persons infected by HIV and families affected by the loss of dear ones must be increased. My faith teaches me that I must love my neighbor, and this love is unconditional. Faith communities must play a very important role in the fight against HIV and care for people infected and the orphaned children. Bishop Masereka Christian Foundation,(BMCF) of which I am the Executive Director assists over 500 orphaned children with school fees, but this is a tiny drop in the ocean. Children have not received adequate attention in the fight against HIV and it's terrible consequences.

The World AIDS Day gives us an opportunity to re-dedicate ourselves to the fight against the AIDS scourge, and helps humanity to make critical decisions that will help to reduce the spread of the disease. It is important to review the successes and failures in our HIV programs, because I think that resources being allocated for the work of HIV are still far too small, and are not reaching all the people who are suffering. I keep praying that there will be a change of attitude in the allocation of resources for treatment of HIV and AIDS and in amounts of research being done in the field of HIV.

Best wishes for the World AIDS Day.

May God give us the strength and courage to stop all unnecessary deaths due to AIDS and other terrible tragedies in the World.