



**WHAT IS  
THE CHURCH'S  
SOCIAL  
TEACHING  
SAYING  
ABOUT  
CORRUPTION**

**JESUIT CENTRE FOR THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION**  
*"Promoting Faith and Justice"*

P.O. Box 37774 10101 Lusaka - Zambia Tel: 260-211-290410 Fax: 260-211-290759  
E-mail: [jctr@jesuits.org.zm](mailto:jctr@jesuits.org.zm) Web: [www.jctr.org.zm](http://www.jctr.org.zm)

**WHAT IS THE CHURCH'S  
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Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection  
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## What is the Church's Social Teaching saying about Corruption?

*It is imperative that no one, out of indifference to the course of events or because of inertia, would indulge in a merely individualistic morality. The best way to fulfil one's obligations of justice and love is to contribute to the common good according to one's means and the needs of others, and also to promote and help public and private organisations devoted to bettering the conditions of life.*

*Church in the Modern World, #30, 1965*

This pamphlet has been prepared to assist Christian groups (Small Christian Communities, Justice and Peace groups, Bible Study groups, Fellowship groups, etc.) to learn more about the issue of corruption in the light of the Church Social Teaching and the Christian scriptures.

It is designed as a study guide consisting of four sessions, which can be taken slowly without rushing through the process. The process follows the "Pastoral Circle" encouraging us to:

- Begin with our own experience – "What is happening?"
- Move to social analysis of why the situation exists – "Why is it happening?"
- Subsequently to do some theological reflection – "What does it mean to me?"
- Finally move to an appropriate response of action – "What can we do as a Christian community in such a situation?"

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## Introduction

*"The accomplice to the crime of corruption is frequently our own indifference"*

**Bess Myerson**

Corruption in Zambia is widespread and continues to grow, despite the fact that Zambia is a fairly democratic and peaceful country. Nearly every day, there are significant number of corruption cases involving huge sums of money that are reported in the media. These cases have often involved people in key public offices, although, of course, the private sector is not totally exempt.

Corruption can be defined as the: "Misuse of resources or authority by a public official for personal advantage". Therefore, I am corrupt when I use my position dishonestly for my gain or when I get another to use his or her position dishonestly for my gain. Although the definition given above focuses on people in the public service, when looked at in a broader sense, corruption involves all sorts of bribery that can occur in the private sector as well.

According to Zambian law, the Anti-Corruption Commission Act No. 42 of 1996, corruption is defined as: "The soliciting, accepting, obtaining, giving or offering of a gratification by way of a bribe or other personal temptation or inducement, or the misuse or abuse of a public office for private advantage or benefit." Amongst other things, it includes dishonesty, bribery, extortion, profiteering, crookedness, embezzlement, fraud, payoff, stealing, nepotism and favouritism.

A distinction is often made between petty, middle and grand corruption:

- (1) *Grand corruption* refers to that committed by major government officials such as ministers and Heads of State or private actors. This type of corruption very often involves influencing decision makers (one thinks of the trial of former President Chiluba for "plunder of the national economy").
- (2) *Middle corruption* is that committed by public servants, for example, permanent secretaries, by theft of public funds (one thinks of the trial of Health Permanent Secretary Bulaya for awarding a contract to himself).
- (3) *Petty corruption* involves bribes taken by minor government officials such as policemen, immigration officers and clerks. At this level, routine procedures are either ignored completely or followed at a much quicker pace. For example, someone intending to obtain a new passport may not

follow the procedure of obtaining application papers, have an interview and collect the passport after ten working days, but simply give an officer a bribe and the passport is ready within a day or two.

More often than not when grand corruption is widespread in a country, middle and petty corruption also become much more difficult to curb. The three types of corruption adversely affect the quality of life of ordinary citizens but especially the most vulnerable in society. Therefore, corruption of any kind compromises the dignity of a human being.

## Session One: Experience

We have all heard of the phrase "Free and Fair". It is normally used in reference to elections and election procedures especially in so-called developing countries. By it, we usually mean that no corrupt practices were used in the action but that all was trustworthy, transparent and accountable. Often we forget to transfer this excellent idea of "free and fair" across to other areas of our lives. Unfortunately corruption takes place in much of life and few countries in the world are free from it in one or all three levels. Most of us only hear about grand and middle corruption cases on the news bulletins or in the papers. But instances of petty corruption are more familiar to us and we can even identify with some of them ourselves.

The following stories help us to reflect on ordinary everyday events that can lead to corrupt practices and which we can become immune to and often even take for granted. Some are taken from the perspective of the general public who feel they are forced to do what is corrupt, or whose actions encourage the spread of corrupt practices and the development of standards that may eventually seem to be normal. Others are from the side of the one who uses their position for their own gain.

### Story One – Petty Corruption

*Mr. Mooya is busy preparing for his visit to the United States. He has been there many times before, mainly on business trips with the international company that he works for. This particular trip came up rather suddenly and includes a two week holiday in a fashionable resort. He is really looking forward to it. At the last minute he checks his passport only to discover that it's actually out of date. He panics but only for an instant. He goes to his wallet and checks that he has enough money before rushing off to the immigration office. The lady at the desk says it will take over one month to process. Mr. Mooya does not want all the hassle of multiple trips to check if the passport is ready and the inconvenience of waiting in long queues. He takes out his wallet and wonders how much it will cost. He looks at the officer. Her seriousness puts him off at first but he must try it. To his surprise it is very easy. She takes the money and asks him to come back the next day.*

#### **Suggested Questions for Reflection:**

1. What choices did Mr. Mooya have in this situation?
2. What effect did the officer's actions have on the other clients?
3. Have you ever done something like this and justified it later?

## Story Two – Middle Corruption

*Mr. Bwalya is the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Health and his position makes him the key authority for all the ministry's procurements and activities. Due to raw greed, Mr. Bwalya sees his position as an opportunity for him to make some extra money for his personal projects. He would like to build a luxurious house for himself in one of Lusaka's prime locations but he lacks the necessary funds. When the Ministry decides to purchase drugs for the hospitals and clinics, Mr. Bwalya sees this as an opportunity to get the much needed funds for his house. After some clever manoeuvring he manages to divert part of these funds to his own account and uses the funds to build his luxurious house.*

### **Suggested Questions for Reflection:**

1. What is the impact of Mr. Bwalya's actions?
2. To what extent does raw greed contribute to the high levels of corruption in Zambia?

## Story Three – Grand Corruption

*General Kafizi has been Director of Purchasing in the Zambia Army for 6 years now. His position attracts a very good salary which has made his family live a comfortable lifestyle. Despite this comfort, he sees the need to accumulate more money so that his family is assured of living a comfortable life even after he leaves office. He knows he can easily acquire money in the shortest time possible through bribery in the process of purchasing military equipment.*

*General Kafizi has shares in the Kafizi-Lumfwemba Company (KLC) which deals in military supplies. He knows that these supplies are not a priority for government but it is actually telecommunications equipment which is of much more importance at this stage. He also knows that KLC supplies poor quality in comparison to other companies and tends to be a bit more expensive. It is even much cheaper to procure such military supplies of good quality from Israel. He however awards KLC a five-year contract as suppliers of military equipment. And the money accrued from this business is largely used for family holidays overseas.*

**Suggested questions for Reflection:**

1. Why was it so easy for General Kafizi to engage in this particular corrupt practice?
2. In what way do you think this act affected citizens?
3. What is the best way to deal with individuals in similar corrupt practices?

**Concluding Prayer:**

One member of the group should give a concluding prayer to close the discussion.



## Session Two: Social Analysis

Zambia ranks among those countries in the world which unfortunately fall into the category of most corrupt. On a scale of 10 to 0, with 10 standing for no corrupt practices and 0 standing for highly corrupt, Zambia gets a score of 3.0 and ranks 99 out of 180 countries, according to the 2009 Corruption Perceptions Index designed by Transparency International.

This simply signifies that there is a lot we need to do in terms of reducing corruption at all levels: grand, middle and petty. Corruption has a spiral effect on the economic development of any country and seriously impedes progress. The onus is on us to seriously deal with corruption which definitely affects the future of our country negatively.

Zambia has both private and public sector corruption and in most cases the causes of corruption are social, economic or organisational. Among the major corruption issues in Zambia are the following:

- Allocation of public service contracts as well as general procurement is not transparent (e.g., recently, serious questions were raised about how public service contracts were awarded at the Ministry of Communications and Transport).
- No proper and conclusive follow up on reports of Auditor General (e.g., while the Auditor General's report does highlight questionable activities in various ministries, no serious investigations are ever conducted).
- Misappropriation or stealing of K3 trillion kwacha by 326 public workers in various ministries over the period 2003 to 2007. This is a case which ultimately led to revenue loss of over K7 trillion from 1984 to 2004 according to the Auditor Generals' report.
- No proper system for reallocation of debt relief funds (e.g., since Government has not set up a proper system for reallocation, these funds are subject to misappropriation as they are not adequately budgeted for).
- Focusing too much on petty corruption while little is being done to deal with grand corruption (e.g., there is a lot of talk about how corrupt police officers should be brought to book, but there is need to apply the same amount of pressure on those that are involved in cases of grand corruption).

- Using bribery and other ways of manipulating the electorate (e.g., some political parties usually choose to distribute foodstuffs during the election campaign period as way of swaying voters their way).
- Lack of real and actual independence of the Electoral Commission (e.g., senior Electoral Commission officials are appointed by the incumbent President).
- General lack of corruption awareness in the communities (e.g., little is being done to educate people about corruption and its dangers).
- Communities do little to make leaders accountable (e.g., very few Zambians have demanded that their local MPs be accountable for the use of Constituency Development Fund).
- Lack of access to information by the public on the commercial transactions taking place in Zambia particularly in the privatisation process (e.g., the privatisation process lacked transparency).
- The decentralised system of governance seems to have been abandoned and this concentrates power in Central Government (e.g., acquiring land through the central office, i.e., Ministry of Lands in Lusaka, is a cumbersome process and therefore people have resorted to using corrupt practices as a means of getting access to land much faster).

### **The Dangers of Corruption**

Early in his term as third Republican President, Mr. Mwanawasa stated: "The impact of corruption is ghastly if not contained, and contained timely....Left uncontained, corruption threatens to undermine the credibility of government, and the very existence of Zambia as a nation. Therefore it is not HIV and AIDS, it is not poverty, but corruption, which poses the greatest threat to our people and nation."

More often than not, corruption impedes the development of any country. Below are some of the ways in which development of any type is undermined;

- *Corruption blocks Economic Development:* corruption discourages investments, both local and foreign, and cancels possibilities of receiving foreign aid. It also lessens chances for continued debt relief and may sidetrack funds that are meant for infrastructure improvement.

- *Corruption undermines Social Development:* corruption diverts and drains scarce and much needed resources (for hospitals, schools, etc). Where public spending on social sectors such as health and education is lowered, opportunities for poor people to invest in human capital are lessened. Consequently, these people are unable to participate effectively in nation building.
- *Corruption prevents Political Development:* corruption destroys free and fair electoral processes which in turn attracts undesirable elements into politics and discourages good people from taking part in the electoral process. A generally corrupt system also gradually weakens the political will to fight these injustices.
- *Corruption threatens Moral Development:* corruption builds a culture of dishonesty that hinders ordinary trust in relationships. It also offers the youth the wrong kind of role models that are destructive for community solidarity.

There is a tendency among Zambians to tolerate corruption as it is viewed by most people as a necessary aid when it comes to conducting business and accessing services. This attitude towards corruption facilitates and perpetuates a system that is already dysfunctional. Zambians need to move away from a culture where corrupt practices are seen as the norm and work towards a system where corruption is abhorred.

Corruption undermines economic development by generating considerable distortions and inefficiency. In the private sector, corruption increases the cost of business through the price of illicit payments themselves, the management cost of negotiating with officials, and the risk of breached agreements or detection. Although some claim corruption reduces costs by cutting red tape, the availability of bribes can also induce officials to contrive new rules and delays. Openly removing costly and lengthy regulations are better than covertly allowing them to be bypassed by using bribes. Where corruption inflates the cost of business, it also distorts the playing field, shielding firms with connections from competition and thereby sustaining inefficient firms.

Corruption also generates economic distortions in the public sector by diverting public investment into capital projects where bribes and kickbacks are more plentiful. Officials may increase the technical complexity of public sector projects to conceal or pave way for such dealings, thus further distorting investment. Corruption also lowers compliance with construction, environmental,

or other regulations, reduces the quality of government services and infrastructure, and increases budgetary pressures on government.

**Suggested Questions for Reflection:**

1. To what extent have you personally experienced corruption in Zambia?
2. Why do you think corruption is so widespread in Zambia today?
3. Why is corruption so difficult to fight and halt in Zambia?
4. Did you ever contribute to corruption or condone it?

**Concluding Prayer**

One member of the group gives a concluding prayer to close the discussion.

## Session Three: Theological Reflection

The Church Social Teaching sets out key principles that should guide us as we reflect on the issue of corruption and the negative impact that it has on the lives of others. These principles include the following:

1. Human dignity – *There is a unique and sacred worth that is present in each person simply because she or he exists.*
2. Community and the common good – *Human dignity can be recognised, developed and protected only in community with others. The vision of promoting common good involves working on developing in society all those conditions of social living through which each and every person can be enabled to achieve their authentic human development more fully.*
3. Rights and responsibilities – *Human rights flow from the intrinsic sacred dignity of the person in his or her vocation to serve the community. It is the responsibility of each of us to respect and protect the human rights of all.*
4. Option for the poor and the vulnerable – *The poor are at the heart of the Christian social vision. They are the people most often forgotten, exploited and marginalised in societies. They are the people who experience and reveal the failings and shortcomings of our social systems. Their experiences, insights and concerns offer important evidence in the search for the more just systems of social life to which God is calling the human community.*
5. Participation – *The opportunity for democratic participation in decision making is the best way to respect the dignity and liberty of people.*
6. Dignity of work and rights of workers – *While work is not the source of human dignity, it is the means by which persons express and develop both being and dignity. Work must be organised to serve the workers' humanity, support their family life, and increase the common good of the human community. These are the three purposes of work.*
7. Stewardship of creation – *People are to respect and share the resources of the earth, since we are all part of the community of creation.*
8. Global solidarity – *We all belong to one human family. As such, we have*

*mutual obligations to promote the rights and development of all people across communities, nations and the world, irrespective of the national boundaries.*

9. *Constructive role for Government – Church Social Teaching envisions a complex, layered society founded on the individual initiative and shared responsibility, which expresses itself through participation in a vast variety of organisations. It is government's role to coordinate and regulate the interrelationships of those organisations.*
10. *Promotion of peace – Peace is the fruit of justice and is dependent upon solidarity and right order among humans and among nations.*

## **Application**

In a culture driven more and more by individualism, it is essential that we uphold our tradition which proclaims that the person is not only sacred but also social. Human dignity can only be realised and protected in the context of relationships with the wider society. How we operate in society – in economics and politics, in law and policy – directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community.

Human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities met. Every person has a right to life and to those things required for human decency – food, shelter, clothing, employment, health care and education. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities – to one another, to our families and to the wider society. We can re-examine the stories given in the first section in the light of these rights and responsibilities.

It can be said that a basic moral test of society is how it treats its most vulnerable members. The poor have the most urgent claim on the conscience of the nation. That is perhaps why many Zambians question the efficient, effective and caring response in terms of medical treatment given to senior politicians when the basics of health care are not available to the poor.

In a corrupt society, many of the citizens become immune to the fact that they have a right to participate in the economic, political and cultural life of that society. They are vaguely aware that, for example, each constituency has a designated sum of money given for the development of that area and for its growth. Having rarely seen any beneficial outcome from such resources, they lack the enthusiasm to even question whether the fund still exists.

The economy must serve the people and not the other way around. All workers have the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, and to safe working conditions. People have the right to economic initiative and private property, but these rights have limits. No one is allowed to amass excessive wealth when others lack the basic necessities of life. In a society that is corrupt the opposite often happens and is rarely questioned. Instead we look in amazement at what others have achieved.

Stewardship of creation and global solidarity make us move beyond our immediate environment and consider how our actions may have both a positive or negative influence on others and on the wider canvas of earth and creation.

One of the key functions of government is to assist citizens in fulfilling their responsibility to others in society. That is why the principle of subsidiary exists and many different agencies and bodies within the state carry out the policies and principles of the government. In societies where corruption is rampant, the ordinary citizen usually feels disenfranchised as they tend to believe that they have nowhere to turn to since all levels of responsibility have been infected by this syndrome.

The Church Social Teaching promotes peace not just as the absence of war but as mutual respect and confidence between peoples and nations. Hence there is a close relationship between peace and justice.

## **Scripture**

In the Scripture, the prophets of the Old Testament remind the people of the need to move away from corrupt practices, exhorting them with strong language to describe the effects of corruption.

*Psalms 14:1 "The foolish ones say in their hearts, 'there is no God'. They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is none that does good."*

*Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt; who can understand it?"*

*Jeremiah 22:13 "Woe to those who build their houses on wrong, their terraces on injustices."*

*Hosea 9:9 "They have deeply corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah; he will remember their iniquity, he will punish their sins"*

Likewise, some of the writers in the New Testament refer to corruption as in the following passages:

*Matthew 23: 1-39 "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, you frauds."*

*Ephesians 4:22 "Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts."*

*2 Timothy 3:8 "As [they] opposed Moses, so these people also oppose the truth, people of corrupt mind and counterfeit faith."*

*Titus 1:5 "To the pure all things are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure; their very minds and consciences are corrupted."*

*2 Peter 2:19 "They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption; for whatever overcomes people, to that they are enslaved."*

However the Gospels do not merely criticise corruption, they also try to exhort us to that higher ideal, that which characterises a society where people have deep love, care and respect for all. Jesus' teaching could be summed up in the dictum: "Love one another". The Golden Rule is often put before us as the supreme model for behaviour: "Always treat others as you would like them to treat you". If our actions stem from these motivations, we will not be corrupt or act in a way that fosters corruption in our society.

**Suggested Questions for Reflection:**

1. In the light of what I have read, how do I now understand corruption?
2. Can I give some reasons why corruption is bad?
3. Are there still forms of corruption which I consider to be necessary parts of life? Or which I feel will never be eradicated?

**Concluding Prayer**

One member of the group should give a concluding prayer to close the discussion.



## Session Four: Christian Response

In fighting corruption and in our efforts to defeat it, we should tackle it from many angles – culture, attitudes, behaviour patterns, structures, institutions, legal responses. All these may lead us to address the deepest causes of corruption and see why some of those structures, etc., have not been working well. Corruption Zambia is as a result of lack of integrity and professional morals. We can fight corruption if we start by changing our attitudes as individuals. If I can refuse to be corrupted, then I can help the other person not to corrupt. We need to realise that we are to be at the service of others. Whatever we do must be for the benefit of others before we see our own rewards. This calls for a massive campaign through media and even workplaces. In order to do this effectively, the following has to be done:

1. Christians should call for courageous leadership at the highest level of Government, i.e., the Head of State. A leader who will stand for “zero tolerance to corruption.”
2. Christians need to speak out strongly against corruption, not only at national level but at community level as well. This can be done by forming community based anti-corruption sensitisation groups.
3. Christians should lobby for the integration of anti-corruption lessons in the national education system. This will help cultivate a culture that abhors corruption.
4. Christians should use the Church Social Teaching to strengthen them and help them to avoid engaging in corrupt practices.
5. Christians need to form strong alliances with Civil Society so that they are able to present a united front in the fight against corruption.
6. Christians should advocate for more adequate protection for “Whistle-blowers”. “Whistle-blower” an informant who exposes wrongdoing within an organization in the hope of stopping it. ‘Whistle-blowers’ are usually victimised and intimidated in an attempt to shut them up. A whistle-blower is an informant who exposes wrongdoing within an organization in the hope of stopping it.
7. Christians should campaign for the autonomy of the Electoral Commission and the Anti-Corruption Commission. This will allow these institutions to execute their mandates effectively.

All our religious teachings must clearly acknowledge the high level of corruption that currently exists in Zambia and we must adamantly state that this will not be tolerated at any level. To ignore corruption, to belittle its significance, even to accept its inevitability, is to contribute to its destructive nature.

Our religious teachings must uphold the values that counter the spread of corruption: honesty, justice, responsibility, solidarity, courage, unselfishness, concern for the poor. We must be brave enough to speak out fearlessly against all that undermines such values, as Jeremiah and Jesus did in their time.

It is imperative that we realise that an individual can only thrive in a community of people with principles and standards and common aims and values. Corruption has a devastating impact on all societies and therefore it is every individual's responsibility to ensure that the principles and values of their community are upheld. The challenge of corruption in Zambia can only be overcome if all its citizens see it as their duty to champion transparency, accountability and honesty.

**Suggested Reflection:**

In silence I try to spend some time in a personal examination of conscience in regard to corruption. I may like to share, in the light of this examination, on ways in which I can be more diligent in my effort to eradicate corruption from our society.

**Concluding Prayer**

God our loving Father, you desire that we live together in an environment in which each person is respected and treated freely and fairly.

Through selfishness or lack of consideration we have destroyed that ideal. In addition, we have taken as inevitable that things should be as they are without questioning them.

We have become used to a society of low ideals and dwindling principles.

Give us the courage to change this.

Give us the wisdom to say and do what is right.

Help us to see beyond our immediate actions to the greater and wider impact they may have.

Help us to realise that honesty, justice, truthfulness and transparency are the way to true life.

Make us abhor corruption in all its forms and never condone it in any way.

We ask all this through your Son Jesus who taught us the way of love.

Amen.

# **APPENDIX 1: SOME QUOTATIONS ON CORRUPTION**

## **National Anti-Corruption Policy 2009**

### **3.0 VISION**

The Government and the people of Zambia recognise the need to have a corrupt-free society which will enhance accessibility to cost effective public goods and services. It is in this regard that the vision of this policy is to have "A nation and its people that are zero tolerant to corruption".

### **4.0 RATIONALE**

**4.1** The current legal and institutional framework and social context do not match the aspirations for a corrupt free society. This is due to lack of a central unifying and harmonising framework that can act as the national agenda for action.

**4.2** Therefore, the harmonised and coordinated actions against corruption defined in this policy will lead to the following:

- (i) Poverty reduction;
- (ii) Good governance;
- (iii) Improved citizen's access to public services;
- (iv) Respect for human rights;
- (v) Respect of positive traditional values;
- (vi) Effective and efficient Government delivery of social services to the citizens; and
- (vii) Promotion of socio-economic and political development.

## **The Anti-Corruption Commission Act No. 42 of 1996**

### **PART IV OFFENCES, PENALTIES AND RECOVERY OF GRATIFICATION**

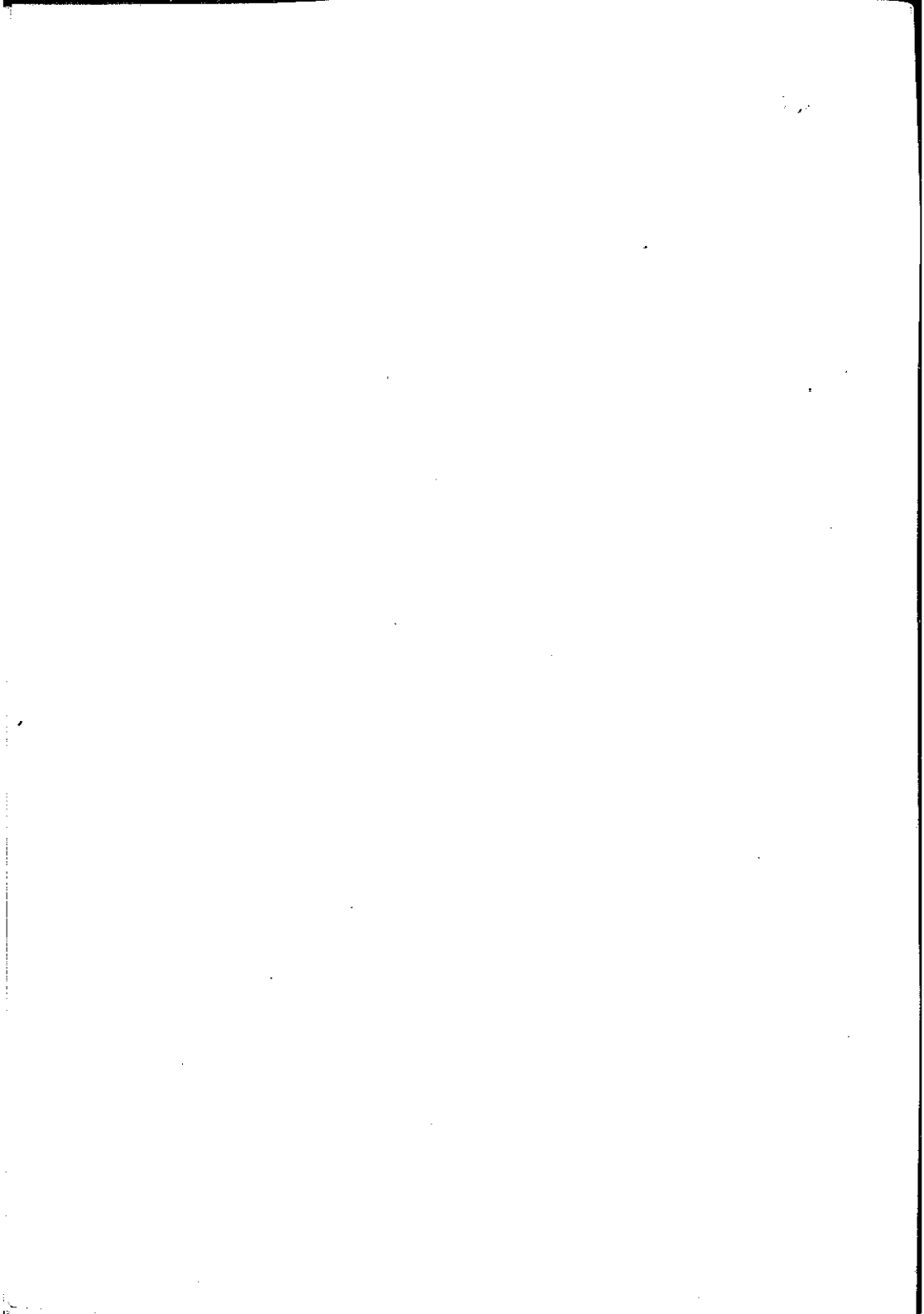
29. (1) Any public officer who, by himself, or by or in conjunction with any other person, corruptly solicits, accepts or obtains, or agrees to accept or attempts to receive or obtain, from any person for himself or for any other person, any gratification as an inducement or reward for doing or forbearing to do, or for having done or forborne to do, anything in relation to any matter or transaction, actual or proposed, with which any public body is or may be concerned, shall be guilty of an offence.

(2) Any person who by himself, or by or in conjunction with any other person, corruptly gives, promises or offers any gratification to any public officer, whether for the benefit of that public officer or of any other public officer, as an inducement or reward for doing or forbearing to do, anything in relation to any matter or transaction, actual or proposed, with which any public body is or may be concerned, shall be guilty of an offence.

For more information on anti-corruption, contact:

The Anti-Corruption Commission of Zambia  
Anti-Corruption House  
Cha Cha Cha Road, South End  
P.O. Box 50486  
Lusaka  
Infor@acc.gov.zm

Transparency International Zambia  
Stand No. 3880, Kwacha Road  
Olympia Park  
P.O. Box 37475  
Lusaka  
[www.tizambia.org.zm](http://www.tizambia.org.zm)



**JESUIT CENTRE FOR THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION**

*"Promoting Faith and Justice"*

P.O. Box 37774

Tel: 260-211-290410

E-mail: [jctr@jesuits.org.zm](mailto:jctr@jesuits.org.zm)

10101 Lusaka, Zambia

Fax: 260-211-290759

Web: [www.jctr.org.zm](http://www.jctr.org.zm)

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