

## Lungu's church a joke - Mpundu

By **Fridah Nkonde**, 01 Nov, 2015

ARCHBISHOP of Lusaka Telesphore Mpundu says President Edgar Lungu's construction of the New Tabernacle National House of Prayer is a joke. In an interview, Archbishop Mpundu said the interdenominational church being constructed by the government in Lusaka's Woodlands area would remain a white elephant. From front page



"This is a secular society, not a theocracy. A theocracy means politics and religion are one and the same. Here is a government coming up and trying to build something interdenominational. Now, what about those who are not Christians? Because when you are talking about denomination, you are talking about Christian denominations, so the Hindus, the Muslims, the



non-believers are excluded," he said. "It is a joke for this interdenominational whatever building...It will be a white elephant. We have our own churches. I don't want to go and worship at the Anglican Church, unless I am going there for a function. I am Catholic and I go to the Catholic Church. Now you build something and you say, 'Okay, come to pray here', they have no right to tell us where to pray." Archbishop Mpundu said politicians must stick to their calling and not stray into priestly duties. "This is not their domain, their domain is politics. But let them go ahead, it is their prerogative, although it will be a white elephant and I won't go there anyway, unless there is something like a funeral and then there will be a service of some kind," he said. Archbishop Mpundu said the government could have used the money for other things. "If it is a funeral, for us we take the body to the church and we do not have a service, we have mass, a requiem mass.

Let the government go ahead, they have the money to do that, maybe they could have used the money better but to me, it will be a white elephant. Why are they building it? I don't even know. We just ignore the thing. It doesn't concern us. It will be a white elephant...," he said. Archbishop Mpundu wondered if the government was trying to build a venue for state functions. "I don't know why it is being built but maybe they want something to use for some functions, but they don't need something like that. If the place is not big enough, they can go to the Showgrounds like what we had the other day. And personally, I think it was some kind of a circus for the State to declare when we should be praying and fasting because during lent, we have 40 days of prayer and fasting. Now someone should come and say 'let us pray and fast'? That is not their realm. Even if they had invited me, I wouldn't have gone because that day, I was at St Ignatius praying," he said. Meanwhile, Archbishop Mpundu said the Catholic Church had the right to pass moral judgment on the government. He said if people were poor, not free and did not have enough food, education, the church needed to speak out. "The Catholic Church is free to speak about that. Even though our core business is to proclaim the gospel, we have a duty to speak out on issues that affect the people," Archbishop Mpundu said. And commenting on President Edgar Lungu's statement that the best candidate in the 2016 general elections should win on a clean slate, Archbishop Mpundu said people will be able to make a moral judgment on who to vote for next year. "I wouldn't know what he meant when he said a clean slate. You go there as a presidential candidate and people judge you by your ability, your track record. We do not choose individuals. We are going to elect people we think... because sometimes we think they are going to perform and they don't perform. It is the judgment of the people. I can make moral judgment myself that comes from policies which a particular administration makes. I am obliged to make that kind of judgment myself," said Archbishop Mpundu.