

Hope Beyond Apartheid



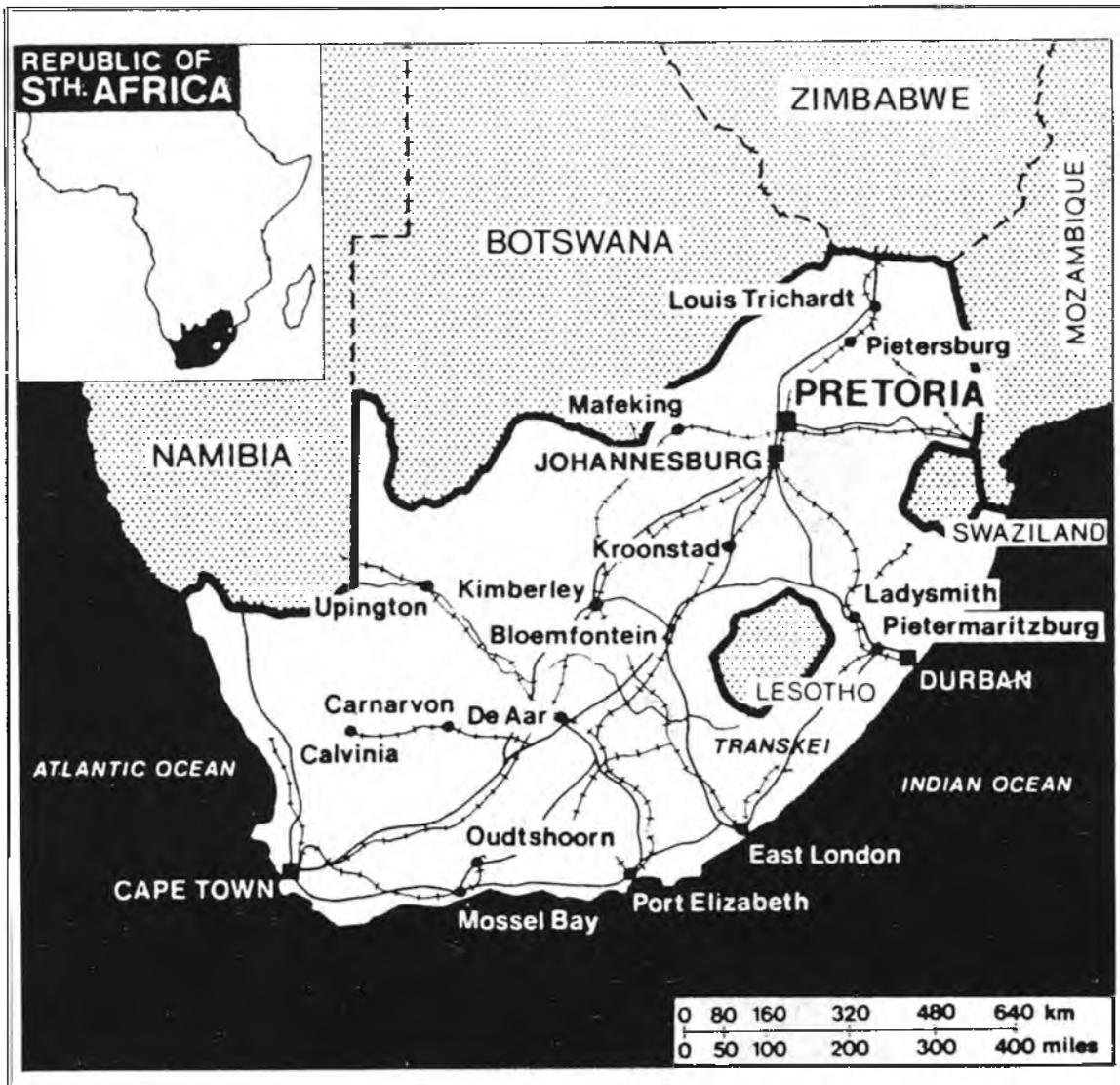
Report on the Visit to South Africa
at the invitation of the
Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference
by a delegation representing the
Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference
and its agencies

26 July — 10 August 1990



ACSJC OCCASIONAL PAPER

No. 6



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The official visit to the Church in South Africa by a delegation representing the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference and its agencies was a unique and important event. Responding to an invitation from the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, the four delegates, including two Bishops and two lay people, were in South Africa at a momentous time. Their hosts gave them every chance to learn at first hand about the changes taking place in a society which the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace described as an "extreme case of a vision of racial inequality" (*The Church and Racism: Towards a More Fraternal Society*, 3 November 1988, St Paul Publications).

After returning to Australia in August 1990, the delegation prepared a report on their visit for presentation to the December 1990 plenary meeting of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference. Several recommendations emerging from the report received the Conference's approval, while some further suggestions were noted. Since it was agreed that the report could be made available to anyone interested in the situation in South Africa, the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council has undertaken to publish it in this form, as an Occasional Paper.

Although much has happened in South Africa since the visit of the delegation, the report should be helpful to the large number of people in Australia who are concerned about justice and human rights in that country. It is a useful aid to understanding events as they unfold and to an appreciation of the role of the Church in South Africa today.

One event which aroused intense interest in Australia was the visit to our country of the Deputy Leader of the African National Congress, Mr Nelson Mandela, in October 1990. All who pray and work for peace and justice in South Africa hope that the long-awaited meeting between Mr Mandela and the Zulu leader Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi which took place in late January 1991 will be seen as a landmark on the way to inter-racial and inter-tribal harmony in their land.

At the beginning of February 1991, President F.W. De Klerk announced that his Government would repeal three remaining legislative "pillars" of apartheid — the Group Areas Act, the Population Registration Act and the Land Act. This was another important step towards justice in South Africa. It had to be remembered, however, that political equity could not be achieved while the black majority remained voteless; and that the economic plight of so many black South Africans could still deprive them of the capacity to own land, even if legal obstacles are removed.

Another significant event, mentioned briefly in the report, was the unprecedented meeting at Rustenberg in November 1990 of representatives of the Churches, to discuss their role in the new South Africa. We note with interest that another four-member Australian delegation, from the Australian Council of Churches, had the opportunity to attend part of this gathering during a November visit to South Africa. In their report, the ACC delegates stated that they saw Rustenberg "as a major step and a sign of hope for blacks and the whole of society".

The Catholic delegation's report is titled "*Hope Beyond Apartheid*". This phrase was used by the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness (PACSA) as the theme of its Tenth Anniversary and Congress in 1989. Many reasons for hope, as well as some reasons for concern, have emerged since PACSA chose the title. In making it our own, we express our solidarity with our sisters and brothers in South Africa as they work and plan for a peaceful, just and well integrated society.

Bishop W. Brennan
Chairman, ACSJC

Introduction

The invitation for a delegation from the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference (ACBC) to visit South Africa came in a letter dated 6 October 1989 to the President of the ACBC from the Most Rev. W.F. Napier OFM, Bishop of Kokstad and President of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC). The Australian Bishops agreed at their plenary meeting in December 1989 to accept the invitation.

It was decided that a delegation of four, to be chosen by the Bishops' Committee for Justice, Development and Peace (BCJDP), and to include at least two Bishops, would participate in the visit. The Bishops' Conference also gave a favourable reception to a wish expressed by the National Committee of Australian Catholic Relief (ACR) and by the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council (ACSJC) to be represented in the group making the visit.

The suggestion that such a visit might occur had, in fact, originated in a discussion in Canberra on 8 August 1989 between the Secretary of the ACBC, Monsignor Kevin Manning, the National Director of ACR, Mr Michael Whiteley, and the former Secretary-General of the SACBC and present Director of the Institute for Contextual Theology in Johannesburg, Father Smangaliso Mkhathshwa.

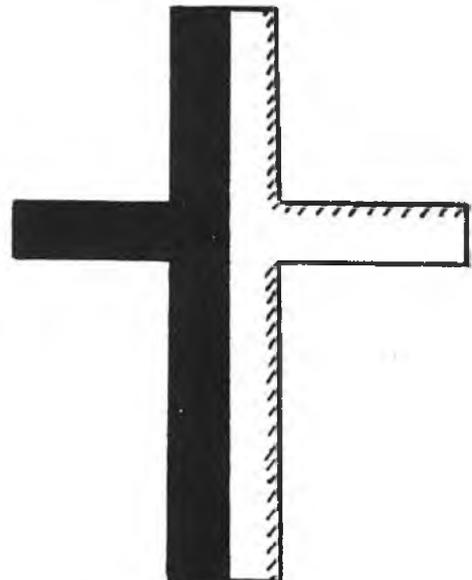
The formal invitation from one Bishops' Conference to the other marked the beginning of a new stage in the development of relations between the Churches in the two regions.

As Bishop Napier pointed out in his letter of invitation, the SACBC had for some years been inviting the representatives of other episcopal conferences to visit Southern Africa (the Conference includes Bishops from Namibia, Botswana, Swaziland and Lesotho as well as South Africa) "to acquaint themselves at first hand with the situation in our region".

Such a visit by an Australian delegation seemed especially appropriate, given the already existing links, historical and otherwise, between the Churches in the two regions. The Church in Australia was officially founded when Dom Edward Slater OSB was appointed vicar apostolic of the Cape of Good Hope with jurisdiction over Madagascar, Mauritius and New Holland (as Australia was then known) in 1819, the year before Fathers Therry and Conolly arrived in Sydney. The canonical link survived for fifteen years, until New Holland became a vicariate in its own right in 1834.

The South Africa we visited is a country with an unofficially estimated population of over 37 million people, of whom close to 87 per cent are categorised, in terms of the Population Registration Act, as non-white (African, Coloured or Indian).

Many contacts have been maintained over the succeeding century and a half, through travel, immigration, study and missionary work. South Africa's first Cardinal, Owen McCann, had an Australian mother. The former President of the SACBC, Archbishop Denis Hurley of Durban, has close relatives living in Australia, which he has visited a number of times. When the greatly admired Archbishop faced prosecution for alleged treason in 1985, because of his criticisms of the South African police in Namibia, the Australian Episcopal Conference sent the Vice-President of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP), Bishop William Brennan of Wagga Wagga, to South Africa to observe the trial. Bishop Napier himself undertook an extensive speaking tour of Australia in 1986, at the invitation of the CCJP and the Australian Council of Churches. We also note that Australian Catholic Relief has for some years been allocating a block grant to the SACBC for development projects in the country. The present level of the grant is \$50,000.



The formal invitation from one Bishops' Conference to the other marked the beginning of a new stage in the development of relations between the Churches in the two regions. The Australian Bishops accepted readily the suggestion by Bishop Napier that the visit might commence a week or two before one of the plenary meetings of the SACBC, thus enabling the guests to meet the members of the Conference towards the end of their tour. Since a plenary meeting was planned for the week commencing Monday 6 August 1990, it was decided that an appropriate time of arrival in South Africa was around Thursday 26 July.

The delegation chosen by the BCJDP consisted of the following four members: Archbishop Leonard Faulkner of Adelaide, Chairman of the Bishops' Committee for the Laity and a former Chairman of the Episcopal Committee for Development and Peace; Auxiliary Bishop Joseph O'Connell of Melbourne, member of the BCJDP and Deputy Chairman of ACR; Ms Monica

Harris, clinic sister with the Royal Flying Doctor Service at Broken Hill and member of the ACSJC; and Dr Michael Costigan, executive secretary of the BCJDP and ex-officio member of the ACR National Committee and of the ACSJC.

Although the official visit was limited to South Africa itself, each delegate took the opportunity before arriving or after departure to see something of nearby countries. For example, Archbishop Faulkner had a few days in Mauritius in transit. Bishop O'Connell, who spent nearly two weeks in South Africa before the beginning of the official visit, also visited Zimbabwe briefly. Monica Harris travelled to Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Kenya after leaving South Africa. Before returning to Australia Michael Costigan spent ten days inspecting development projects in Zimbabwe on behalf of ACR. All found that this additional travel in the region gave them a wider perspective on the South African experience.



The delegation (left to right): Dr Michael Costigan, Archbishop Leonard Faulkner, Bishop Joseph O'Connell and Ms Monica Harris

Report of the Delegation

We are greatly indebted to the Secretariat of the SACBC, to the Conference's Commission for Justice and Peace and to the Commissions for Justice and Peace in several dioceses for the excellent program arranged for us and for the time and effort which their members and staff gave to our needs. We are grateful to many individuals and the representatives of numerous organisations who were so welcoming and willing to share with us the fruits of their knowledge and experience.

We also thank, among others, the religious and lay staff at the Lumko Missiological Centre in Germiston, the Pallottine Sisters at Vincent Pallotti Hospital in Cape Town, a number of Irish missionary priests working in the East London area and the Ciskei, the Dominican Sisters at the Sacred Heart Convent in King Williams Town, the Mariannahill Fathers at the Mariannahill Monastery in Natal and the staff of Khanyisa House, Mariannahill, for their generous hospitality during our visit.

We are especially grateful to Bishop Wilfrid Napier and the other members of the SACBC for the welcome extended to us at the Conference's plenary meeting and for the valuable opportunity to meet the members of the Conference both formally and informally.

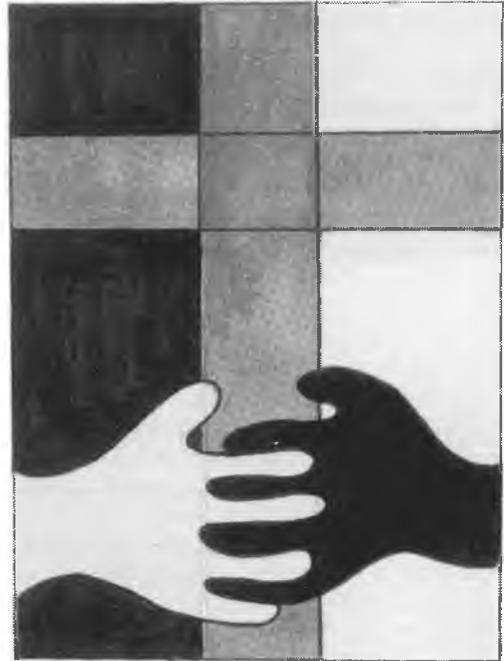
Our group could hardly have found a better moment than mid-1990 to go to South Africa in search of understanding of the momentous events unfolding virtually before our eyes.

South Africa 1990

Few countries figured as prominently in the news during 1990 as South Africa. A fascinated and at times apprehensive world watched as President F.W. De Klerk bravely set about dismantling the apartheid system; as Nelson Mandela, the Deputy President of the African National Congress (ANC), regained his freedom after 27 years in prison and returned with remarkable poise and dignity to his role as the most prominent and charismatic black leader in the country; as bans were lifted on anti-apartheid organisations; as the ANC suspended its armed struggle; as steps were taken to release political prisoners; as exiles returned; and, tragically, as violence escalated in black townships and elsewhere.

Our group could hardly have found a better moment than mid-1990 to go to South Africa in search of understanding of the momentous events unfolding virtually before our eyes. Not long before our arrival, the

Government lifted the State of Emergency everywhere except in the Province of Natal. While we were in the country, the Government and the ANC reached the agreement known as the "Pretoria Minute", steps were being taken day by day to integrate public amenities, the previously banned South African Communist Party was re-launched and the ANC's Women's League was re-born.



The South Africa we visited is a country with an unofficially estimated population of over 37 million people, of whom close to 87 per cent are categorised, in terms of the Population Registration Act, as non-white (African, Coloured or Indian). These are estimates for 1988 and the population figure includes the four "independent" and six non-independent or "self-governing" homelands, whose total population is somewhere in the region of 12 million. The average population density in the homelands is about 150 people per square kilometre, compared with 19 people per square kilometre in the rest of South Africa. About 56 per cent of the country's population was urbanised in 1988.

If current growths are maintained, the population of South Africa, including the homelands, at the end of this century will be about 47 million, of whom nearly 90 per cent will be black. (Although we abhor the way in which the laws of South Africa require that citizens be classified according to colour, it is difficult to describe the composition of the population or the link between injustice and race without reference to the statistical data resulting from this classification.)

Forty years of apartheid have left a legacy of immense poverty and deprivation.

A great deal of internal migration has occurred in South Africa in recent decades. Much of it has been involuntary — the forced removal of large groups of people from one location to another, to conform with legislation concerning group areas and homelands. In other cases, large numbers of workers find it necessary to spend much of their lives in hostels within reach of their place of employment but often hundreds of kilometres from their homes and families. Many others come into the country legally or illegally from neighbouring states to work in mines or other industries. Another recent phenomenon, following the relaxation of the Government's attitude to the opponents of apartheid, has been the return of political exiles, many of whom had taken up residence years ago in other African countries.

The average population density in the homelands is about 150 people per square kilometre, compared with 19 people per square kilometre in the rest of South Africa.

The proximity of male workers' hostels to townships has been a factor in the outbreaks of violence this year and in the past. This is especially the case when the political or tribal allegiance of the hostel-dwellers differs from that of the residents of a township. The most publicised inter-black rivalry is that which exists between supporters of the ANC and the mainly Zulu members of the Inkatha movement, whose power base is in the KwaZulu homeland in Natal.

The majority of South Africans (about 70 per cent) describe themselves as Christians. The membership of the Catholic Church is estimated as a little below three million, of whom nearly two and a half million are black or coloured. About half of the Bishops, including the President of the SACBC, the Archbishop of Bloemfontein and (like his predecessor) the recently appointed Archbishop of Cape Town, are black or coloured.

Large numbers of workers find it necessary to spend much of their lives in hostels within reach of their place of employment but often hundreds of kilometres from their homes and families.

Itinerary

Our carefully arranged itinerary took us on an anti-clockwise circuit of South Africa: from the Johannesburg-Pretoria region to Cape Town-Stellenbosch to East London-King Williams Town-Bisho to Durban-Mariannhill-Pietermaritzburg and back to Johannesburg.

More than fifty per cent of the population is functionally illiterate. Unemployment is rife and too runs into millions.

The program included a well conceived mixture of meetings with individuals and members of Church, community and anti-apartheid groups, as well as the opportunity to visit cities, black townships, rural areas and homelands before meeting with the members of the Bishops' Conference. We heard more than once that many white South Africans go through life without seeing some of the things that we were given the opportunity to see, especially in the black townships and homelands.

Our formal and informal meetings with many individuals gave us an idea of the diversity of opinions, even among people with similar backgrounds, about the future of South Africa.

Among the townships visited at some length or at least glimpsed were Soweto, Alexandra, Soshanguve, Khayelitsha, Crossroads, Duncan Village, Mdantsane, Zwelitsha, Ndevana and Inanda, as well as the housing settlements around Mariannhill and the notorious "killing fields" near Pietermaritzburg. We saw that living conditions in the townships vary a good deal, even within each township, but at the worst they are appalling. On the whole they present the most dramatic possible contrast with the comfortable lifestyles enjoyed by many of the people living in nearby white neighbourhoods.

We spent some time in the "independent" homelands of Bophuthatswana and Ciskei and the "self-governing" homeland of KwaZulu. During the visit to Bophuthatswana, north-west of Pretoria, we toured the Winterveld, a dry and socially deprived area inhabited by blacks from different parts of Southern Africa, including "squatters", refugees and illegal immigrants.



East Peelson Homes

In the same region is the notorious "Sun City", playground for gamblers and seekers after pornography.

In Ciskei, we spent several hours in the village of East Peelson, many of whose inhabitants now live in tents or shacks because their humble homes were bulldozed when they protested against their forced incorporation in the homeland. We were received into the corrugated iron shed which an elderly couple, the victims of destructive action by the homeland police, now live. Not far away is Bisho, the Ciskei capital, with its elaborate government buildings, stadium, residences and casino.

Another perspective on the effects of the forced uprooting of people was gained from a visit to Cape Town's District Six, at the foot of Table Mountain. Many of the residences destroyed in this beautifully situated suburb after the coloured residents were compelled to leave a number of years ago have yet to be replaced. Most of those who were evicted had to look for other accommodation many miles away, in townships outside Cape Town.

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Before leaving Australia, three members of our group were helped to a better understanding of the present

government's policies as the result of a meeting with the South African Consul in Sydney. This was complemented by a number of contacts made during our stay in the Republic.

At the same time, our appreciation of the pluralism of viewpoints within the black and coloured communities was helped by meetings with representatives of such organisations as the African National Congress, the Pan African Congress (including its President, Mr Zeph Mothopeng, now deceased) and the United Democratic Front, as well as with some people who supported the approach of the Inkatha movement, led by Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi.

Among the other Church and community organisations contacted during our visit were: the Catholic Institute of Education; the Movement of Christian Workers; the Catholic Welfare Bureau of the Archdiocese of Cape Town; the Institute for Contextual Theology; the Lumko Missiological Centre; the Ecumenical Advice Service; Actstop (which attempts to prevent or remedy the unjust evictions of housing tenants); the Detainees Aid Centre; the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness (PACSA); and several of the organisations located within Durban's impressive Ecumenical Centre, including Black Sash, Diakonia, the Legal Resources Centre and the South African Domestic Workers' Union (SADWU).

Conclusions Reached

We are conscious that a visit of two or three weeks did not turn us into instant experts on the very complex situation existing in South Africa. Nevertheless, we were given a unique opportunity to gain some insight into the country and its problems — and to test our reflections in conversations with many of the people, including members of the Bishops' Conference, whom we met in the course of our visit.

We went to South Africa to learn and to contribute to the development of closer communication between the Church in Australia and the Church in South Africa.

We were also anxious to make it clear that we did not wish to appear judgemental. We went to South Africa to learn and to contribute to the development of closer communication between the Church in Australia and the Church in South Africa. A number of the people whom we met reminded us courteously that Australia's own record in the field of race relations is not beyond reproach. We were questioned a number of times about the treatment of Aboriginal people in our own country.

We were also well aware that injustice exists in many other parts of the world. It may exist in a particularly notorious way in South Africa, but equally bad or worse forms can be found elsewhere. Developments in South Africa are so widely publicised, however, that they give the rest of the world an opportunity to learn much about the principles of social justice and how they can be applied to overcome the evil effects of racism. Our visit, therefore, had a pedagogical dimension, in the sense that it provided us and the organisations which we represent within the Church in Australia with some lessons which could be usefully applied in our own society.

We went to South Africa knowing, as the world at large knows, that the majority of the people living there suffer huge disadvantages in such areas as health, education, employment, land ownership, housing, legal protection and human rights in general as a direct result of the policy of apartheid. Everything we saw and heard confirmed that knowledge.

We were told that a child dies of hunger every 15 minutes in South Africa and that about a third of the non-white children under the age of 14 are underweight and stunted for their age.

Our visits to some of the homelands were particularly instructive. We saw very clearly how the homelands policy has increased the deprivation of the millions of black people forced to live in those areas, where employment and adequate housing are hard to find, where resources and amenities are lacking and where the people often have to endure corrupt and autocratic governments and police forces.

It is true, of course, that many black people suffered from poverty and discrimination in South Africa before apartheid became official government policy in 1948. Since then, however, numerous laws have placed draconian restrictions on the movements, activities and rights of the blacks. Resistance to these injustices was violently repressed for many years. The voteless black majority became little more than a source of cheap domestic and industrial labour for the prosperous white minority.

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We were told that a child dies of hunger every 15 minutes in South Africa and that about a third of the non-white children under the age of 14 are underweight and stunted for their age. We saw evidence of this in some of the townships, where sanitation is often a problem and where adequate food and water supplies are lacking. According to one estimate, South Africa has one doctor for every 400 whites and one for every 90,000 blacks.

In the words of Brother Jude Pieterse, Secretary-General of the SACBC: "Forty years of apartheid have left a legacy of immense poverty and deprivation. An economy that was geared to meet the aspirations of a few million whites by its very nature excluded many millions of black people. No wonder then that some seven million people (one in five South Africans) can be classified as homeless. There are as well close on one million high school drop-outs with several more millions who fell by the wayside during the years of primary school. More than fifty per cent of the population is functionally illiterate. Unemployment is rife and also runs into millions."

Brother Jude wrote these words in late August 1990, when commenting on the increasing violence in a number of black townships. He was arguing against those who dismissed these tragic events as no more than a manifestation of traditional ethnic or inter-tribal conflict. According to Brother Jude, "Any explanation that attempts to exclude the massive marginalisation of the majority of South Africa's inhabitants from even the basic necessities of life is false, as it overlooks what is a major factor in the discontent."

Sanctions have helped to create a situation where hope now exists.

It has also been claimed that trade sanctions and other measures taken by foreign governments against South Africa have caused or at least contributed significantly to the impoverishment of the black population. Some of the people whom we met during our visit confirmed that sanctions had indeed caused some hardship. A few believed that the time has come for them to be abandoned, but most thought that such a move would be premature while such "great pillars of apartheid" as the Population Registration Act, the Group Areas Act, the Land Act and the laws that provide for separate education remain in place.

While negotiations take place, a healing process must occur.

This was the view expressed to us at the plenary meeting of the SACBC. It was pointed out that sanctions have helped to create a situation where hope now exists where before there was only despair and that they should be maintained until the process towards fundamental change by the Government has become irreversible. Most people were convinced that the great change in the Government's policy over the past year would not have taken place without sanctions.

Some people were having trouble coming to terms with that change. They hesitated to accept that President F.W. De Klerk or his Government could be trusted to bring the dismantling of the apartheid system to a successful conclusion. We saw no reason to doubt the President's sincerity and we believe that he deserves praise and support for what he has achieved so far. We recognise, of course, that future events could change our opinions about his performance.

Many white South Africans go through life without seeing some of the things that we were given the opportunity to see, especially in the black townships and homelands.

Our conclusions about the situation in South Africa are necessarily tentative and subject to revision. It was strongly impressed on us that it is a fluid and rapidly changing situation. We saw clearly enough for ourselves even in a fortnight that dramatic changes could take place in a short space of time.

The best form of support we could give to the work of the Church in South Africa is to "tell the facts" to the people in our own countries.



Recently married couple in Alexandra.

The mood of euphoria and optimism which followed the concessions made by both the Government and the ANC on 6 August gave way only a few days later to a feeling of deep concern and apprehension as violence began to escalate not only in Natal but in the East Cape and the Transvaal. As we have already suggested, no analysis of the causes of this violence should overlook the apartheid system itself and in a special way the practice of separating male migrant workers from their families and accommodating them together in hostels close to townships inhabited by people from other tribes. There are also strong grounds for believing that extremist white defenders of the apartheid system have contributed to the disturbances, which are so damaging to the process of reconciliation.

The Church in South Africa

Our itinerary brought us into six South African dioceses, where we had the opportunity to experience something of the diversity and vitality of Church life in the country. We visited a number of Catholic parishes, schools, hospitals, religious houses, welfare centres, institutions and organisations. We met many people who are active in Church work either full-time or part-time. We were deeply impressed by the quality and commitment of these people.

The majority of South Africans (about 70 per cent) describe themselves as Christians.

We also much appreciated the opportunity to experience and participate in some wonderful parish liturgies. One of the features of every public Mass we attended was the participation of the people and their incomparable singing.

Because the organisation of our visit was largely in the hands of national and diocesan Commissions for Justice and Peace, we were made aware of the high place which work for social justice occupies on the agenda of the Church in South Africa. This was also brought home to us at a Cape Town gathering of parish representatives involved in justice and peace issues. It is true that we were told a number of times that much more needs to be done to educate members of the Church in the principles of Catholic social teaching, but the impression we had is that South African Catholics are further down this track at this stage than we are in Australia.

We were made aware of the high place which work for social justice occupies on the agenda of the Church in South Africa.

We noted, however, that some well qualified and committed Catholics in moderately affluent white parishes are so apprehensive about the future of the country that they are talking seriously about emigrating. Unfortunately, an exodus of this kind will deprive the Church in South Africa of some excellent members. At the same time, the Church is trying to find ways of developing a more fruitful ministry to immigrants and returnees.

We especially welcomed the opportunity to have a number of contacts with two groups of people — the young and the survivors of harassment.

We found a spirit of hope in the youth, although many of them are impatient for change in their society. In the black townships, young people have very limited opportunities to improve their situation or to use their free time constructively. Social problems abound. If the country's journey towards justice is to be peaceful, ways must be found of persuading the young that the right track to follow is sign-posted "non-violence".

Archbishop Faulkner was able to visit the youth training centre which Father Lionel Sham, episcopal vicar for youth, is developing in the Diocese of Johannesburg in an attempt to help young people from many different backgrounds to know each other, to develop skills and to overcome the disadvantages which society's existing structures have created for them. Some financial assistance has been given to this impressive project through ACR's block grant to the SACBC.

We found a spirit of hope in the youth, although many of them are impatient for change in their society.

Among the many people we met who had suffered in different ways because of their opposition to apartheid we found a remarkably peaceful attitude. Some had experienced imprisonment, torture, detention and interrogation or had faced tear gas, truncheons, rubber bullets or German Shepherd dogs. We did not discern in them the kind of bitterness or desire for revenge which one might have expected. Instead, we found a spirit of tranquillity coupled with a firm desire to work for peace and reconciliation.

We glimpsed something of the Church's pastoral programs at places like the Lumko Missiological Centre in Germiston, the Institute for Contextual Theology in Johannesburg and Khanyisa House, Mariannhill. We noted that the Renew program is operating in a number of dioceses and that there is a strong move towards the building of small communities. We saw in all of this an attempt to relate pastoral programs more closely with the struggle for justice. For example, the work of the Institute for Contextual Theology is a serious attempt to integrate theology with the social, economic and political situation of the country.

Our group had a good opportunity to see some of the work being done by priests and religious in the cities and the rural areas. Special mention should be made of a group of Irish priests who helped to make our time in the East London area and the Ciskei one of the highlights of the visit. They are doing wonderful work in parishes and missions in a region where the population, mostly members of the Xhosa tribe, suffer many social and economic disadvantages. (We were saddened to learn that one of these priests, Father Hugh Magorrian, was murdered on All Souls' Day 1990, apparently after disturbing burglars in his house at Mdantsane.)

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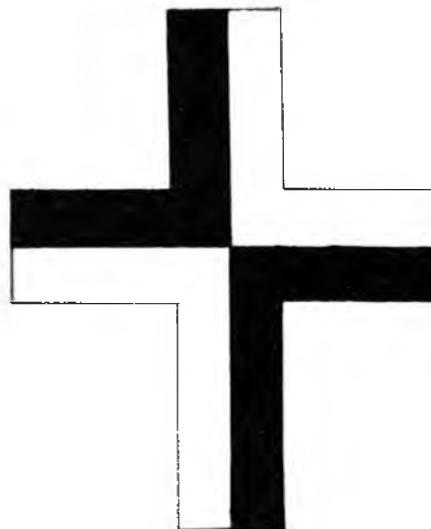
We met a number of religious sisters and brothers, many of them elderly, whose orders or congregations have done wonderful work in South Africa for over a century, as teachers, medical workers and in many other ways. While their numbers are now declining, they have an inspiring record of achievement. They commented to us on the situation in South Africa with a wisdom born of great experience — their own and that of those who had gone before them.

We were interested to learn more about the Church's work in schools. A large number of people in South Africa have been denied a proper education — and indeed the present state of education in the country was described to us as "chaotic". We knew that Catholic schools had been among those which had defied and thereby helped to break down the official separatist policies. At the Catholic Institute of Education, a national body, we were told that some of the credit for this should go to Brother Jude Pieterse, the former director of the Institute and the present secretary-general of the SACBC. The Institute was established by the SACBC with the intention of assisting the development of a national approach by the Church to Catholic schools.



Fr Smangaliso Mkhathshwa, former Secretary General of S.A.B.C., himself a victim of torture.

As we travelled around, we met a number of other distinguished Church figures. They included Cardinal McCann, who has now retired from the Bishops' Conference but at 83 is still editing the *Southern Cross* in Cape Town, as he did when he was a young priest; Archbishop Denis Hurley, also approaching retirement after many years of outstanding leadership, who received us in his home in Durban; Archbishop Laurence Henry of Cape Town, recently appointed to that position; Auxiliary Bishop Zithulele Mvemve of Johannesburg; Father Oswin McGrath, the celebrated teacher and writer; the Dominican theologian Father Albert Nolan; and Father Smangaliso Mkhathshwa, theologian, pastor, former detainee and predecessor of Brother Jude as secretary-general of the SACBC.



We also met some leading figures in other Churches. Archbishop Desmond Tutu welcomed us into his Cape Town home. In Johannesburg, we were received by the Reverend Dr Wolfram Kistner of the Lutheran Church and the Ecumenical Advice Centre. Their messages to us about developments in South Africa were complementary: each stressed that "negotiation" and "reconciliation" are not identical concepts. While negotiations take place, a healing process must occur. This should include an acknowledgement of past wrongs, which cannot simply be ignored.

While we were in the country, the Catholic Church was cooperating with other Churches in preparing for an unprecedented November meeting in Rustenberg to discuss the role of the Churches in "the new South Africa". The meeting was attended by representatives of the member Churches of the South African Council of Churches, several evangelical and charismatic Churches and the Dutch Reformed Church. A prominent Afrikaaner theologian, Willie Jonker, delivered a speech in which he asked blacks to forgive him and other Dutch Reformed Church members for having condoned apartheid.

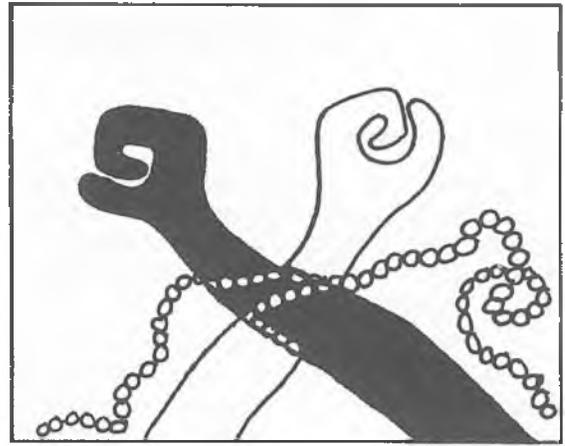
This should include an acknowledgement of past wrongs, which cannot simply be ignored.

It was obvious from our discussions with the Bishops at Mariannhill that the Catholic Church in South Africa sees itself as having a key role in the healing and reconciling process.

The Bishops invited the members of our delegation to listen to their discussions throughout the plenary meeting. We found it extremely interesting to hear the reports coming from various Commissions and the subsequent discussions. One afternoon session (on 7 August) was devoted to visitors, who included representatives from three other Bishops' Conferences besides ourselves: Bishop Henri Derouet of Arras (France); Bishop David Konstant of Leeds and Bishop Cormac Murphy-O'Connor of Arundel and Brighton (England); and seven delegates from Austria, led by Dr Helmut Ornauer and including two Bishops.

On behalf of our delegation, Archbishop Faulkner and Dr Costigan gave brief reports to the meeting before open discussion took place.

While the Bishops acknowledged that great opportunities for progress towards peace and justice had been opened up in South Africa, they noted that many obstacles ("the legislative pillars of apartheid") remained. These include a Constitution which still denies voting rights to the great majority of the population; laws which give over 85 per cent of the land to the white minority and which regulate the ownership and occupancy of properties in built-up areas; serious educational discrimination; and a multitude of other pieces of legislation disadvantaging the black majority.



We were told by the Bishops, as we had been by many other people in the course of our visit, that the moral pressure brought to bear on the South African Government in the form of sanctions and boycotts had been invaluable. The SACBC's position was reiterated on the need to maintain sanctions until the process towards fundamental change has become irreversible.

We were also advised that the best form of support we could give to the work of the Church in South Africa is to "tell the facts" to the people in our own countries.

We left the Bishops meeting and South Africa with some optimism and hope for the country's future, tempered by an awareness of the gravity and complexity of the problems yet to be overcome.



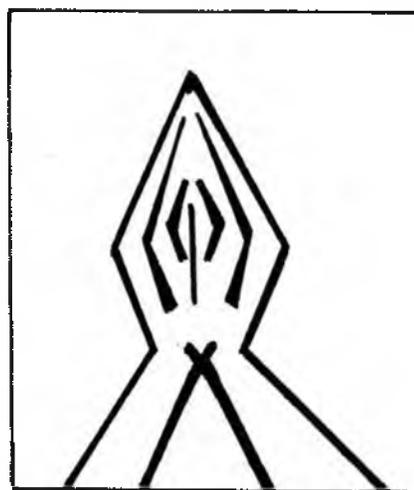
Children of Khayelitsha.

Recommendations and Suggestions

Recommendations

After reflecting on their experiences in South Africa, the delegation offered a number of recommendations to the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference. At its plenary meeting in December 1990, the Conference approved the following recommendations.

1. Lines of communication between the SACBC and the ACBC and between the agencies of the two Conferences, especially those working in the areas of justice, development and peace, should be strengthened and developed, and a delegation from SACBC should be invited to visit Australia.
2. The ACBC and the BCJDP, with the assistance of the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council and Australian Catholic Relief, should continue to monitor closely the situation in South Africa and to determine, in consultation with the SACBC, the most appropriate ways of supporting the movement for social justice in that country.
3. The ACBC should support the policy of the SACBC regarding the need for continuing moral pressure and selective economic pressure on the South African Government until the process towards fundamental change has become irreversible.
4. Australian Catholics should be encouraged to remember the needs of all the people of South Africa in their prayers and to pray that the country's problems will be solved justly and peacefully.
5. A copy of this report should be sent to the SACBC and it should also be made available to interested parties.



Suggestions

At the same plenary meeting, the ACBC noted the following suggestions offered by the delegation in addition to its formal recommendations.

1. Where possible and as opportunities arise, other visits to Australia by individuals or groups should be encouraged.
2. Further visits by Australian Catholics to South Africans should be encouraged. It could be suggested to Church agencies and organisations that they seek ways of sponsoring such visits, bearing in mind that our delegation was especially asked to consider ways of enabling young Australians to meet young South Africans. It should be remembered that air travel to Europe can be routed through Southern Africa as an alternative to Asia and the Middle East or Northern America.
3. Catholic school teachers, adult educators and media workers should be encouraged to give due emphasis to Southern Africa in their programs.
4. Ways of assisting the training of theology students in South Africa (for example, by the secondment of lecturers or by visiting lectureships) should be investigated. The possibility of student exchanges could also be examined.
5. Support from the Church in Australia should continue to be given to activities and projects which contribute to the evolution of a non-racial, democratic and unitary society, in which freedom and human rights are fully respected.
6. Special attention should be given to requests from South Africa in such areas as: health, education, skills training, leadership formation, community development, information and documentation.
7. In forming or amending its policy on South Africa, the Australian Government should be encouraged to give due attention to views expressed publicly by the SACBC and by other responsible agencies of the Churches in South Africa.
8. Everything that we Australians learn from what is happening in South Africa should lead to our looking into our own hearts and consciences and examining our own society's structure's.



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