

CATHOLIC LAY LEADER'S STATEMENT ON TRICAMERAL ELECTIONS

The leadership of the catholic Groups made public (29/8/89) their joint discernment concerning the elections in line with the Bishops' Conference. In accordance with their more particular mandate as the people of God, they draw from the gospel practical implications for social life.

We appeal to you, brothers and sisters in Christ, to pause in prayer at this moment in our country's history and recognise what poor instruments we have been in witnessing to Jesus' simple command to "love one another as I have loved you".

It is a sign of failure:

When those in power have lost credibility in the eyes of the people to the extent that they rely upon repression (through the security management system) rather than consent to govern;

When government and its allies hide the truth about censorship and silence the opposition, preferring to hear only their own voices;

When the cries of the growing numbers of unemployed, homeless and hungry cannot be answered by an economy which is blind to the value of our most precious resource, our people.

We who have sat by idly and watched, all share some responsibility for having allowed this government to drift so far from the task of all legitimate authority, that of promoting the common good.

And yet, there are signs that God is alive in so many South Africans of all shades of opinion who daily make incarnate our Lord's prayer, through their courageous attempts to build His "Kingdom on earth, as it is in Heaven".

Signs of change

We are filled with hope when through the struggle of the people:

The prison doors are flung open after detainees have brought the injustices they have suffered to the attention of the entire world;

The SADF begins to return from foreign soil;

The workers' movement grows in strength through united action;

When the doors of segregated institutions (which have so long been under-utilised) are pushed wide open to all the people of God;

When those in power begin to realise that the desire of millions of South Africans to live in a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa is non-negotiable.

While the fundamental goal of ending apartheid is still to be attained, we take heart in the spirit of repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation that extra-parliamentary people's organisations are ushering in. These are the instruments that bring closer the possibility of real negotiations, which with God's guidance, may lead to government based on the will of all the people. This is the foundation of justice which is vitally necessary for true peace.

Preparation and reconciliation

We are called to be among the social forces that in preparing the ground for negotiations, call for:

The ending of the state of emergency and all repressive laws such as the labour relations act and capital punishment;

The release of all political prisoners and the return of exiles; and

The unbanning of all anti-apartheid organisations.

Since the present tricameral parliament excludes the African majority, there are serious questions raised concerning its legitimacy.

While the white parliament has a degree of power which gives it a certain amount of credibility within the white community, the same cannot be said for the other two houses which have no real power or legitimacy. For this reason we call on:

All "Coloured and Indian" Christians not to vote in the forthcoming apartheid elections;

Our White brothers and sisters to seriously consider whether their voting or not voting will do more to bring the changes God encourages us to bring; and

All Christians to join and participate in peoples' organisations that struggle for a united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa.

Signed by:

Young Christian Students

Young Christian Workers

Catholic Students' Association

National Catholic Federation of Students

Chiro Youth Movement