

IV

SOUTHERN AFRICAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

PASTORAL LETTER

**THE ARCHBISHOPS AND BISHOPS OF THE UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA,
SOUTH WEST AFRICA AND THE PROTECTRATES ADDRESS THE
FOLLOWING PASTORAL LETTER TO ALL CATHOLICS IN THE
TWENTY-EIGHT DIOCESES, VICARIATES AND PREFECTURES OF THIS
COUNTRY.**

Dearly Beloved in Christ,

We are gravely concerned about the future of our country and all its people. Charged with the mission of Christ "to preach the Gospel" and to teach the observance of all that He commanded, we are obliged not only to set out the truths of Christ, but also to seek to have them practised. It is in the discharge of that sacred mandate that we write to you particularly about human relationships, which are called "race relations", as between individuals, as between groups of people, as between nations, in the various spheres of human activity.

We have already spoken about this question in our previous statements, published in 1952 and 1957, but the urgency of the matter requires that we speak about it again. This problem must be solved soon, and in the light of Christian principles. Otherwise there is little hope for peace and order, as antagonisms will grow, prejudices harden into intolerances, and frustration lead to outbursts of disorder and violence.

We cannot close our eyes to the continuing upsurge of Nationalistic movements on the continent in which we are placed, and the consequent reactions that will emerge in our country. Nationalistic aspirations cannot be the final criterion by which men determine their ends and actions. It is the Gospel of Jesus Christ which must be their guide and director.

A RELIGIOUS AND MORAL QUESTION

In speaking of this problem we proceed on moral and religious grounds, proclaiming the Christian teaching and explaining the demands of that doctrine. Where we deal with social, economic and political questions, it is without reference to rank, or class, or party affiliations, setting out the moral implications that must guide and direct social, economic and political life. The principles of the Gospel apply to man in all aspects of his life, for it is the whole man who is to be saved. The human person cannot be divided against himself, so that his social, economic and political activities cannot be considered apart from his moral obligations. All man's activities must be directed in the light of the Gospel which is given that he might live as God requires and thus reach his great destiny.

If man would reach his true perfection and fulfil his purpose here on earth, morality which is religion in practise must be at the basis of his efforts, individual and

communal. Where this not so, then irreligion guides him, and the fruits of irreligion guides are misery and oppression through greed and pride. The Apostle warns us: "For all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, which is not of the father." (John 2,16).

THE WILL OF GOD.

It is the will of our Father in Heaven, made manifest in His Son Jesus Christ, God made man, our Redeemer, that all men should live in peace with one another. "And on earth peace to men of goodwill" (Luke 2.14) – "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God" (Mat.5, 9). God knows what is in man, and particularly in his weakened human nature as a result of original sin, and so His grace is available to overcome man's darkness of intellect, and feebleness of will, to enable man to put down his pride and follow the path of humility before God.

It is the plan of God for man, God's mind for us, that we must follow in our conduct whether as individuals, whether as members of a family, whether as citizens, whether as persons wielding authority. This plan has been made known to us in the revelation of Jesus Christ.

NEED FOR PRAYER.

It is in the light of this revelation that we must see, and judge, and act. "We have not here a lasting city, but look for one that is to come." Our first duty then is that of prayer invoking Almighty God and beseeching Him by the light of His Holy Spirit to enlighten men's minds, and by the strength of that same Spirit to lead them along the path of righteousness. We cannot insist strongly enough upon this need for an obligation of prayer, because it is the grace of God which must overcome the human ignorance and frailty which stand in the way of the proper solution of our problems. We would stress this need all the more, because of the patent temptation of man to rely entirely upon his own resources, to give way to his own selfish considerations and desires, and to have recourse to force and violence to gain his ends

Let us pray daily, hourly, for the infusion of God's grace that will bring men to see the right and do it nobly.

POLITICS SUBJECT TO GOD'S LAW.

We recognise the legitimacy of political aspirations and the use of such means to bring benefits to the individual and the community, but we must demand that these be subject to the law of God. We have to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, but to God the things that are God's". "For there is no power but from God and those that are, are ordained of God" (Rom. 13,1) We demand that all peaceful means and methods be tried and tried again, and condemn the unlawful use of force and violence.

The State as the authority charged to achieve the common good has the right to use force to protect the common good, to maintain peace and order, and to "put down malefactors", but within those limits only.

People are justified in striving for their legitimate rights, but they must use peaceful means. However a sense of exasperation can lead to outbursts of violence. While we

do not condone such acts, we would demand that their root cause in the way of injustices and oppressive measures be removed.

We would remind those who are impatient that they must be on their guard lest they be misled by men who do not desire the real and true good of the people, but only selfish and destructive ends.

GOD'S PROVIDENCE STILL OPERATES.

The people of South Africa must see in their history The Providence of God, which has brought them together as one community, though of differing origins and stages of social development. In that Providence they have lived together for a long period, and have already been associated in all spheres of life. In the light of the same Providence they have been called to a unique task, that of achieving a way of life whereby all can live together in peace and mutual assistance.

That we form one community should be patent because it is the authority of the State under which all sections are ruled that signifies the unity of the community. There are differences of origin, of development, but these are secondary, especially in the light of the fundamental unity of the human personality and of the fundamental rights of each member of the community.

And it is the acceptance of that transcendental unity and justice which must provide the path to a harmonious communal living.

THE UNITY OF ALL MEN.

All human beings are one. It is the practise to speak of different races, but there is truly only one race, the human race. We are all children of Adam, and we all share the same human nature. We are all made in the image and likeness of God possessing each of us an immortal soul, with its faculties of mind, and will, and sense, and we have all an eternal destiny. God planned that we should all be united to Him and to one another, in this world, as well as the in the next. This unity overrides all differences and makes us one family, the human family, all ultimately related to one another.

This unity is strengthened by the truth that we are all brothers in Christ, for Christ took to Himself the same nature that He redeemed us by His Death on the Cross. Each one of us has been purchased by the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ.

DIGNITY OF EACH MAN.

The essential unity shows us the value of each human person, and the great dignity he possesses. It is to be appraised from the fact that we are made by God, that we have a soul that will never die, that we have a purpose beyond this world. The value of each human being is the price paid by Christ, His Own life.

It is in the light of this unity and dignity that all of man's life on earth must be directed, in whatever phase it may be considered – social, cultural, economic, political. It is the whole man who has this value, and all affairs must be subordinate to man's nature and purpose.

It is true that men gather together in groups with loyalties that arise from the bond of relationship or association, but these too must be subordinate to the great overriding fact of the human person's dignity and his unity with all fellow men. It is true likewise that there are social distinctions and conventions, which have their purpose in the perfection of man and the ordering of society, but they are transitory and changing, and they cannot be allowed to oppose the unity and dignity of which we are speaking.

It is a fact also that man differs from man in talents he possesses, in the heritage of the past that he carries with him, in the ability he has to contribute to the common good. All of these must be taken into account in the ordering of social life, but they must be looked upon as imposing greater responsibility upon the more gifted, rather than as simply bringing with them positions of privilege. These inequalities, these accidents of birth and origin, do not and cannot deny the fundamental unity of the human race and of all persons who belong to it.

THE RIGHTS OF EACH MAN.

Nor do these differences render less forceful the fundamental rights, which each man possesses. The rights arise precisely from the obligations each man has to fulfil his nature and reach his destiny, and they transcend other claims and desires.

Thus we find that each of us has the following rights:

The right to life.

The right to maintain and develop our physical, intellectual, and moral life, and in particular the right to a religious training and education.

The right to worship God both in private and in public, including the right to engage in the religious works of charity.

The right in principle to marriage and the attainment of the purpose of marriage, the right to wedded society and home life.

The right to work as an indispensable means for the maintenance of family life.

The right to a use of material good, subject to its duties and its social limitations.

(Pius XIII: The rights of man).

These fundamental rights include also the right to the proper ordering of the social and communal life, with equality of all before the law, and the rule of law enforced, including the right of trial, with justice being the criterion of legislation. This proper ordering of society requires that in the sphere of industry and commerce, the labour of each be accorded its proper dignity, and that a just wage adequate to the needs of the man and his family be paid, that the development of the social order should render it possible for each man to secure a portion of private property, and favour higher educational facilities for those children who are intelligent and well disposed.

We recognise that in the conduct of public affairs the State has the right to impose restrictions on its members for the common good, but we deplore the tendency to multiply restrictions until they constitute an intolerable and exasperative burden, amounting almost to complete suppression of the right of free movement, and seriously affecting the right to work and earn a living.

Likewise the just social order condemns the migratory labour system, and demands that the family be allowed to fulfil its proper function with the husband and father joined to his wife and children in a genuine home life.

The same Christian conception seeks the promotion of a practical social spirit in the neighbourhood, the district and over the whole nation, thus bringing about a cessation of hostility between classes and interests, between groups and loyalties. Only in this society can the human person experience that feeling of truly human solidarity and Christian brotherhood which should be his.

THE COMMUNITY SUBJECT TO GOD.

The community it must be understood has come into existence precisely that those rights may be safeguarded and developed, that each human person, and each family, may live according to its dignity, and that each person may be accorded the opportunity of perfecting his nature by the mutual provision of assistance. The authority the State holds exists to ensure that man's fundamental rights may be exercised as well as to promote the general welfare, the temporal prosperity of all, and the tranquillity of order of the whole community.

National groups may well exist within the community, and they have their legitimate claims, but they must be subordinate to the good of the whole community. They arise from reasons of history and custom, but they are not unchangeable, and in the course of time they alter or even disappear through merging into other groups that must be left to the Providence of God, who certainly rules destiny of nations as well as of men. Much as the loyalty felt to one's own group draws one to work for it and its advantages, yet this loyalty must yield priority to a greater loyalty, loyalty to God's will, loyalty to the transcendent unity of all men.

It is precisely this loyalty and the claim of the group on its members which creates the present problem of human relationships. Yet it is only the light of the Gospel which can harmonise the apparently conflicting claims of group and community as a whole.

THE COMMANDMENT OF LOVE.

Christ teaches us that we have to seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice, and tells that then all things shall be added to us. We pray "Thy Kingdom come", "Thy will be done" in the "Our Father". In other words we have to carry out the Commandments and leave the rest to God. We have to love God above everything and our neighbour as ourselves for God's sake. To bring home to us who is our neighbour Christ told us the parable of the Good Samaritan. He was indeed neighbour to a stranger, to someone outside his group. He surmounted the national division that existed, and associated himself with a human being with whom the Providence of God had brought him into contact.

The justice of the Kingdom of God must exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, those intensely exclusive sects of the times. It must go the length of loving those who are our enemies, of doing good to those who persecute and calumniate us (Matt. 5, 44). It carries us therefore beyond the bounds of strict justice to act towards every human person as we would towards ourselves.

The essential unity of the human race, and the fundamental rights that follow from it, are expressed more concretely in this implementation of justice and love. Justice is giving our neighbour what is his due, love is going beyond that, seeking understanding of one another, rendering aid, tolerating injuries, associating in a spirit of friendship and human solidarity with those with whom our particular circumstances bring us in contact. Love alone can drive out the blindness of prejudice, and bring us to see Christ, Our Brother, in all men.

CHANGES NECESSARY.

It is necessary that changes must come about in our communal life, but they must begin above all in the individual. There must be a change of mentality so that we see our fellow human beings as human persons, not thinking of the colour of their skin, nor of where they come from. There must be a change of heart which will bring about a readiness to go out and meet our fellow man as a human person, bearing with all the faults that as a human person he has just as we have. There must be a change of policy which aims at uniting all who form the South African community, through love. There must be change from fear to mutual trust, from disdain or contempt to appreciation of the qualities that our fellowman possesses, from pride of origin to a feeling of responsibility for the welfare of others, from resentment to patience and tolerance. All this is but the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount, which is the Magna Carta of the Christian. Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall have their fill. They are called blessed by the Saviour of mankind.

There is a strong tendency on the part of many to see our country as permanently composed of different communities based on racial origin or colour. While we acknowledge the natural instinct to associate with those who are akin to us, yet the proper tendency must be towards unity and not disunity. That is God's plan. It is man's weakness which has taken the opposite path.

NEW VISION OF SOCIETY.

For good rather than bad, the differing sections of our country are economically interdependent. This interdependence must be strengthened and not lessened, or abolished, for this economic solidarity is but a concrete expression of Christian love.

There are many persons of goodwill in the South African community who realise that the basis of a solution is to be found in the transcending of the colour-bar, and in the treating of their fellowmen as human persons, essentially the same as themselves.

There are many restrictions which could be done away with, much prejudice to be overcome, much fear to be allayed. This can only be gained through a new vision of society, one in which charity and justice are paramount, in which the gospel is the foundation of life.

There are many fears and frustrations that beset our country. There is the fear on the part of some that they will be swamped politically and economically, and this has resulted in legislation which has deprived others of an effective voice in the councils of government. While we concede that it would be wrong to allow those with a more

advanced culture to be deprived at this stage of an effective part in government, and to have their economic status reduced, yet this protection need not and must not operate oppressively on the other sections.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION.

In the political field this can be achieved by the operation of a franchise based on justice. It does not follow that the giving of the vote directly to all qualified members of the community will result in the domination of one section over another.

The first point to be made is that colour should not be the criterion; the qualification should be the ability to exercise the vote in a truly responsible manner.

It is universally recognised that conditions must be laid down for participation by citizens in the political life of their country. In a country like South Africa with its special problems it is undoubtedly difficult to arrive at a satisfactory determination of these conditions, but it should not be beyond the ability of men motivated by the spirit of justice and concern for the common good.

As persons emerge from a less developed state, and show that they have these qualifications, they must be admitted to participation. The form that participation takes must be such that it is genuine and effective, and provides an opening for the highest possible participation, that is the top level as well as at lower levels. Mere political advantage cannot be the criterion for determining this participation in government. There are higher considerations which must come into play.

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES.

Similarly, in the economic sphere, while the common good requires that the conditions of industry and trade, management, employment and labour should not be suddenly and abruptly disturbed and changed, yet nevertheless, the common good demands that those who have the skill and ability, the sense of application and patience, the desire to advance, should not be deprived of the opportunity of such advancement and progress in their economic position.

In this country there is an economic unity by and large in the sense that all are contributing to the general material well-being. There is a mutual interdependence between different sections. This fact requires in justice the payment of proper wages and the provision of decent living conditions in the form of housing and amenities, but it also demands that the opportunity should be open to all to acquire technical skills, and to dispose of their use without consideration of colour. The equilibrium of production and distribution must, of course, be safeguarded, as well as the advantages already gained by the worker, and the security he has obtained for his economic position protected. Adjustments that may be required through the adoption of this principle should be framed to cushion any ill effects that may arise for those who hold protected positions and, of course, responsibilities with that position. Nevertheless, such protection cannot be allowed to operate solely to maintain a privileged position for them in the economic order.

SOCIAL INTERCOURSE.

In the social sphere the same essential unity on which the foregoing pronouncements have been based, holds. The opportunity must be provided for those who attain to the recognised standard of education, whether formal or informal, and have a community of interest, to associate with others. Nor may a person refuse to associate with other persons of equal educational standing solely on the grounds of colour, for such a refusal is a denial of human dignity and man's essential unity. The introduction of legislation limiting this free association and social intercourse is a contradiction of Christian principles, as well as a refusal to acknowledge the essential unity of the human person.

Such legislation has in fact gone to the extent of denying certain fundamental rights as in the case of the Mixed Marriages Act, which has deprived individuals of the free choice of their partner in marriage solely on the grounds of colour, a prohibition which the divine law and the natural moral law does not impose. Likewise the Group Areas Act is a denial of fundamental rights in this that it lessens the right of ownership for individuals of certain groups by the limitation it imposes.

APPEAL TO ALL.

We appeal therefore to you, as faithful members of the Church, to heed our statements and teaching, and to ensure that you in your approach to these problems are fully in accord with the teaching of Christ. We view the situation with gravity. We would have a truly Christian mentality prevail not only in yourselves but in all. We must insist on these principles, and in order that they may be brought home, it is proposed that sermons be preached on the aspects we have covered in this letter. We have no doubt that you will welcome them, as they will enable you to clarify your ideas on this vital problem, direct your consciences in these matters which affect each and every one of us, and enable you to act in accordance with the teaching of Our Lord, who is the Master that we must hear and follow, in order to attain that for which we so earnestly long, to do His will, to seek His Kingdom, and gain His approval for all our life here in this world.

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