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### SOUTHERN AFRICAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

## PASTORAL LETTER

### **THE ARCHBISHOPS AND BISHOPS OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA, SOUTH WEST AFRICA AND THE PROTECTORATES ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING PASTORAL LETTER TO ALL CATHOLICS IN THE TWENTY-NINE VICARIATES AND PREFECTURES OF THIS COUNTRY.**

Dearly beloved in Christ,

When he announced that the General Council of the Church will meet during 1962, His Holiness Pope John XXIII declared: "The Bishops of the world, in union with Peter, will come here (to the Vatican) to talk about that one holy thing, the only necessary thing – that is, the love of men as brethren in the adoration of the Father." The Holy Father commented at the same time that while on all sides and in most countries there has been great material progress, there has not, however, been a corresponding advance on the moral plane. People are better off, he said, but unfortunately that prosperity has not made them better people. On the contrary it is most disturbing, observes the Pope, to discover that militant atheism is on the march in many parts of the world.

#### THE ANTI-GOD FORCES AT WORK

Under pretext of bringing freedom, progress and plenty of the peoples of the world, the aggressive anti-God forces spare no effort in their determination to subvert the Christian order of things, and to undermine religious convictions wherever they can. They are masters of persuasion and distortion. Without scruple, their propaganda machine takes instant advantage of every circumstance and opportunity to insinuate its godless influence into unsuspecting minds. Their aim is to sow discontent, to spread suspicion and to fan the flame of hatred. With devilish ingenuity, they exploit every grievance against injustice. They aggravate every symptom of unrest. They promote disorder, now in one part of the world, and then again in another. They profess to be apostles of peace but, in fact, there is no obstacle they do not use to block every honest effort after peace.

#### HOPE GROWS FROM OUR FAITH

It is against this sombre background of world events that our Sovereign Pontiff has decided to convoke the Second Vatican Council.

In times of stress, such as these, when human preoccupations are tinged with fear or disappointment or deep uncertainty, we find ourselves compelled once again to assess and to formulate the basic principles according to which we must live. Saint Paul gives the reminder that "Hope was the lesson you learned from the truth-giving

message of the Gospel, which has reached you and thrives in you...may you be inspired, as His glorious power can inspire you, with full strength to be patient and to endure.” Pope John now gives expression to his unshaken hope, of prayer for the Blessing of God on this General Council of the Church.

## WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

We firmly believe that the Church is the kingdom of the Son of God, which He established on earth for the salvation and the perfect happiness of mankind. “In the Son of God, in His Blood, we find Redemption that sets us free from our sins...in Him, all created things took their being. He, too, is that Head, whose body is the Church. It was God’s good pleasure to let all completeness dwell in Him, and through Him to win back all things, whether on earth or in Heaven, into union with Himself.” Saint Paul teaches that God put everything under Christ’s rule and “made Him the Head to which the whole Church is joined, so that the Church is His Body, the completion of Him, Who everywhere and in all things is complete.”

## THE UNITY WHICH THE SPIRIT GIVES

From the very early days of the Church, Christian people were exhorted to live according to the Gift of the Holy Spirit which they had received. Listen to voice of Saint Paul: “You must always be humble, always gentle, patient too in bearing with another’s faults as charity bids; eager to preserve that unity the Spirit gives you, whose bond is peace. You are one Body with a single Spirit; each of you, when he has called, called in the same Hope, with the same Lord, the same Faith, the same Baptism... Follow the Truth, in a spirit of Charity, and so grow up, in everything, into a due proportion with Christ, Who is our Head. This is my message to you. I call on you in the Lord’s Name not to live like the Gentiles, who make vain fancies their rule of life.” Saint Paul does not hesitate to call this teaching about Christ and His Church – “a high mystery.” It is indeed the glorious mystery of our Faith.

## THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST’S LOVE

Let us consider shortly what we believe. The great Mystery of our Redemption begins to unfold itself when Jesus Christ becomes Man. God the Son comes and enters into mankind. He wills to belong to the family of the human race. He wants to have a human body like ours, to see and hear and speak and to have the feelings which belong to human nature. He wills, also to taste human experience and to endure all our sorrows.

There is a mystery too in the way Jesus wishes to deal with us. See how He chooses that small body of men, His Apostles, and tells them: “All authority in heaven and on earth is given to Me. You must, therefore, go out, making disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all the Commandments which I have given you. And behold, I am with you all the days that are coming until the end of the world.”

## THE CHURCH OF CHRIST MUST ENDURE

Who can doubt Christ's enduring purpose when He gave us to His Church! His coming among men was not for the sake of a few people in that generation. If we believe that the Incarnation had its meaning and if God willed to speak in human accents; if we believe that He willed that something of His Divine Life, something of His Grace, should come to men through Christ's Body and the shedding of His Blood, then it is equally true that Christ wants to continue to be present with mankind in every generation to the end of time, by means of this mysterious bodily presence, His Church. He wants the Divine Life to be given to us through our association with this body.

If God had so willed, He could have decreed our forgiveness and our adoption into His Divine Life by an act as immediate and as instantaneous as creation itself. He could have linked mankind with Himself in some invisible way, without the mysterious fact of the Incarnation and of everything else which flows from the fact that the Word was made Flesh and dwelt amongst us. But if that had happened, then Jesus would simply have not been there. The Word Incarnate would not be with us. In that case, there would be no meaning in all the teaching of Saint Paul which we have quoted, and there would be no question of any mandate being given to the Apostles. Indeed there would be no Apostles either. But we need not continue with such suppositions. Everything we know and believe from Christian teaching makes it clear that Divine Providence deals with us, not as isolated individuals, but in the Church and through the Church.

The gifts of Grace which God bestows on mankind are spiritual realities, which raise us up to share by adoption in the Divine Life of God Himself. They are not only spiritual, they are also supernatural realities. These Gifts of the Holy Spirit come to men living in the ordinary conditions of the world, to men who have their homes; men who live and work; men who have their joys and sorrows, their dreams and their hopes, their disillusionments and their failures.

These supernatural gifts of the Christian Faith are given to man, not in the isolation of his lonely uncertainties, but in the visible abiding presence and in the constant divinely-guaranteed authority of the Church.

#### THE CHURCH LIVES VISIBLY

We believe that this church, wondrously instituted by Christ our Saviour for the sake of mankind, is a society in the full sense of the word. It has an external and visible character and is constituted with a living, teaching authority, and it administers the Sacraments "which are the source of heavenly grace" to all men without distinction of time or place. Of its very nature this Church must still exist today and continue to exist until the end of time, always exactly the same as it was in the days of the Apostles.

#### THE CHURCH IS THE FOUNT OF CHARITY

Christ our Saviour is God made Man. He is the Head and the Life of the Church. He is One, and the Divine and Human Natures have their Unity in Him. We do not see Christ as He is if we consider only His divine invisible nature or only his human visible nature. So too it is with His Mystical Body, the Church. "The Word of God

took unto Himself a human nature, subject to sufferings, so that He might consecrate, in His Blood, the visible society founded by Him, the Church, and thus lead man back to things invisible under a visible rule.” (Encyclical on the Mystical Body of Christ – Pius XII.)

Because of this, says Pope Pius XII, we deplore and condemn the pernicious error of those who dream of an imaginary Church, a kind of society that finds its origin and growth in charity alone apart from any sort of constituted authority. What they fail to appreciate is that our Divine Redeemer has given to the ‘community of men’, a Church that has been founded by Him. This Church has been given the constitution and character of a society in which full authority is made to reside, for the proper rule and guidance of souls passing through this world on their way to eternity. For this reason, He willed His Church to be enriched with the heavenly gifts of the Paraclete.

There can thus be no opposition or conflict between the invisible pouring forth of the gifts of the Holy Spirit into the souls of men, and the Church’s authority to rule and teach, which has been given to it by Christ Himself. In fact, the visible authority of the Church on the one side, and the invisible working of the Holy Spirit, mutually complement and perfect each other (as do the body and soul in man). Together they both come from our one Redeemer, Who not only said, as He breathed on His Apostles, “Receive ye the Holy Spirit”, but also clearly commanded, “as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” “He that heareth you, heareth Me.” The foundation of Charity is faith, pure and inviolate. So it chiefly by the bond of one faith that the followers of Christ are to be united.

#### THE CHURCH SHOWS A WAY OF LIFE ALWAYS UP-TO-DATE

Pope John XXIII, in his recent Encyclical “Mater et Magistra” has reminded us that a solution for all human problems can best and most harmoniously be sought for under the protection and guidance of the Catholic Church which is “the standard-bearer and the herald of a way of life which is always up-to-date.” Catholics should not withdraw themselves from the affairs of the world in which they live, nor should they in any way lessen their appreciation for, or their interest in, those who do not consciously share with them the possession of the Catholic Faith. Our Holy Father says emphatically that “it would be wrong for Catholics to lessen their Christian activities in the world. They should rather renew them and intensify them.” No one should artificially separate his striving for personal salvation from the work he has to do and the part he has to play in the affairs of the world. It is a clear duty for all Catholics to co-operate in giving a human and Christian note to modern civilisation. When men and events are controlled by a supernatural awareness, they grow stronger in their power to achieve their goal. “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His Justice, and all these things shall be added to you.”

When we remind our Catholics of the necessity of viewing the problems of life within the context of their Catholic Faith and under guidance and authority of the Church, it is not our intention either to deprive them of their personal initiative or to curb their exercise of civic responsibility. On the contrary, it is our intense desire to cultivate among our Catholic people a growing spirit of respect and of love for all our fellow-citizens, and an ever-increasing desire to co-operate with them in working for the glory of God and the well-being of every member of society.

## NO NEED TO SEEK DISGUISE

We sincerely believe that the Catholics can work more effectively and more surely when they approach every problem in life in accordance with the basic principles of their Catholic profession of Faith. Our reply to those who would prefer, in the interests of possible unity, not to emphasise this catholic distinctiveness, is a simple declaration that Catholics who have an unselfish and unequivocal attachment to the Church and her Teachings will more readily dedicate themselves to their fellow men.

Our respect and our concern for our fellow men also makes it a duty for us to acknowledge with clear vision and in all humility that there are many obstacles which lie in the way of that unity among Christians, for which all honourable men seek.

Our way of life in all its aspects – in social planning, in economics and in politics - should always be illuminated by the teachings of the Catholic Church. We firmly believe that it is Christian principle, not temporal expediency, which basically decides the relationship of tolerance, justice and charity between men, irrespective of differences in race, nationality, culture or language.

## CHRISTIANITY IS A PRACTICAL WAY OF LIFE

Catholic teaching is not merely a statement of theory. It is a way of life – a way of Supernatural Life. It is not simply the product of human ingenuity, nor is it concerned only with the temporal problems of human history. It is a practical way of life given by God to His children, to bear them safely across the shifting sands of time to the Eternal possession of Infinite Truth, Unity and Happiness.

We believe that by divine adoption we receive the power to become the children of God. It is in terms of this Power of Grace and of Charity that we work out our destiny, not by trying to escape from the problems of the world but by facing them in accordance with the Faith which we profess. Saint Augustine's challenge fifteen hundred years ago applies also to us with undiminished force today. "Spread your Charity over all the world. If you do not love one part of it, then it is YOU who are separated. If you are separated, you are not in the Body. If you are not in the Body, you are not under one Head."

The charity of Christ makes us eager and restless for the cause of God, of Christ, of the Church, of souls. With Pius XII we declare that "for a Christian who is conscious of his responsibilities even towards the least of his brethren, there is no question of slothful tranquillity; nor is there question of flight from danger, but of struggle. There must be action and dedication in the face of inaction and desertion, for this is a great spiritual combat in which the rebuilding, indeed the very soul of the society of tomorrow is at stake." If men are to decide clearly what is right or wrong, lawful or unlawful before God, they can only do so by reference to the higher principles enshrined in our Faith.

Taking mankind as it is, with all its faults and failings, its prejudices, its jealousies and its greeds, we have no doubt that only through the inspiration of genuine Christian Charity can there be any effective move towards mutual respect and justice

for all sections of our complex society in South Africa. It is Christian Charity which gives meaning and life to the statement that all men, no matter what their race or colour, are equal in the sight of God. The Christian attitude is based on the belief that they have all been created by God and redeemed by His Divine Son, and destined by Him to be friends and co-heirs with Him in eternal glory.

## WE DARE NOT REMAIN SILENT

Since we are people of diverse racial and national origins, it seems inevitable that human weakness will express itself in colour prejudice and in national misunderstandings. The fact of human frailty should not however constitute an insurmountable barrier to the building up of mutual trust and co-operation, if we remain faithful to the moral principles which are the foundation of Christian tradition 'where Justice joins hands with charity'.

As Christian people we dare not remain silent and passive in face of the injustices inflicted on members of the unprivileged racial groups. Colour must never be permitted to offer an excuse or a pretext for justice. "We must use every lawful means suggested by our Christian conscience in order to counteract and overcome the injustices pressing down on unprivileged groups through the toleration of a starvation level of wages, of job-reservation, of the evils which flow from compulsory migratory labour, particularly when people who belong to these groups are denied the elementary right to organise in defence of their legitimate interests."

Let there be no doubt among us that it is a Christian duty to use every lawful means to bring about a more equitable and harmonious relationship between all the different groups of people who together form our Southern African society.

## LORD, WHEN DID WE SEE THEE?

Some people tend to let themselves be overawed by the immensity and complexity of the problems of our times. They lose heart and sink back into passive inactivity at the thought that they lack both the numbers and the power to influence national policy. Because they cannot perform great deeds, they sit back and do nothing. They forget Our Lord's assurance that 'the cup of cold water given in His Name will have its reward before God.'

Christian Charity always begins with little things, just as God the Son took the form of a little Child to bring divine Love to the world. Christian Charity is concerned with human beings – with men and women of any and every kind. It is the Love of God reflected in men's dealings with each other.

The ordinary and seemingly insignificant kindly deeds and gentle courtesies of daily life are signs that men love God above all else, and their neighbour as themselves for God's sake. It is these simple acts, multiplied a million times each day, which most certainly bring the healing influence of Christ's presence and of His teachings to bear upon the disorders and injustices which afflict us.

If charity grows cold among men, it is because they do not want to take to heart all that is meant by seeing Christ in their neighbour. How can Christ be there in someone

poor or needy or distressed? “Lord, when was it that we saw Thee hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick or in prison, and did not minister to Thee?” And the King will answer: “Believe me, when you refused it to one of the least of my brethren, you refused it to Me.”

Here then is the Christian test which must be applied to racial prejudice. As long as we have acted like that towards anyone who differs from us in colour, so it is that we have acted towards Christ Himself.

By our Faith we should be led on to a ever-deepening love of God which shows itself in our dedicated service to our most needy neighbour. If this charity is absent, we must stand condemned by our profession of Faith. Then Faith itself will begin to wilt and droop and die. “If a man claims to have faith, and has no deeds to show for it, can faith save him then?” Faith separated from good works is a dead faith. God’s love alone can give it life. It is a love that always overflows into action. It is a love as wide as the world. It is a love that counts no cost and does not flinch in face of sacrifice. And where does it lead? There is only one answer. It leads no doubt to Calvary, where Christ died and conquered, but also to the glory of His Resurrection. That is where we meet Him, Our Saviour and our King, we whose privilege it is to have received the gift of His Faith.

GIVEN AT PRETORIA ON THE OCCASION OF THE PLENARY SESSION, 30<sup>th</sup> January-2<sup>nd</sup> February, 1962.