

**PASTORAL LETTER OF THE DIOCESE OF WITBANK
LET US HALT THE TERRIBLE KILLINGS (MARCH 1990)**

Dear people of God in the Eastern Transvaal: Greetings!

I greet you in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I wish to address you as the leader and bishop of the Catholic Church in this area.

You all know how deeply over the years the Catholic Church has been concerned and spoken out on **justice** and **human rights** and **condemned injustices** brought about by apartheid policy. We, as a Church have been involved and sympathetic to the cause of the oppressed of our land.

The struggle for **liberation** has now reached a crucial point in our history as oppressed people. The understanding of present leaders, President De Klerk and his cabinet, has opened new and most welcome avenues: The release of our leaders, the promise of dialogue and negotiations: All are aimed at the total abolition and destruction of apartheid. The hopes of everybody are high. This is the time for everyone of us to sit down to discuss and plan so that we may assist our leaders in the forthcoming debates and negotiations with the present government.

We are aware that many things in black areas and towns are not what they should be. The backlog in many areas of life is such that it is impossible to remedy in a short time, but there is **hope**. Leaders will meet face to face with the ruling minority regime to start, what we believe and hope, will change the entire face of South Africa and our leaders, Mandela & Co appeal to us for calm and restraint in order to give them a chance to engage in negotiations. This is a golden opportunity. Riots, killings and maiming of our brothers and sisters are certainly going to prejudice forthcoming negotiations and place our leaders at a disadvantageous position at the negotiation table. Are we not playing into the dangerous hands of conservative white racist groups?

As a Church we advocate and promote respect and dignity for the human person, who is created in God's image and for whom Christ came into this world to save and liberate through his death and resurrection. Human life is therefore sacred.

We are really shocked by the violent deaths of so many. I am told that in Witbank alone, eleven people were killed, and hundreds injured, five of them very seriously. Surely the violence and the loss of human life and property at this most crucial time will not contribute towards the future new South Africa. It goes without saying that the Catholic Church condemns outright killing human beings, no matter who the perpetrators are.

I wish to express my deepest sympathy to the relatives and friends of the deceased. I pray that the God of all consolation will console and support them in this time of sorrow.

I appeal to all of you: Let us halt these terrible killings.

Students, please, return to classes. The forthcoming negotiations are surely going to address the education problem too!

An atmosphere of calm and peace is very necessary during this time of great hope.

Yours sincerely

Signed:

+ MOGALE P NKHUMISHE

Bishop of Witbank