

PASTORAL LETTER

On

DETENTION AND BANNING

From Archbishop – Bishop of Johannesburg – 19 October 1977

As your bishop I feel it is necessary to let you know that I protested against the arbitrary detention and banning of persons without recourse to courts, and extend my sympathy and solidarity to those banned and detained and their families.

In a statement made by the Bishops' Conference in February 1975, as regards detentions and bannings, we said: "Countries with just laws based on the consent of the citizens do not need to use such means" and I wish to state this again, and regard it as my duty to go on stating it.

The silencing of voices like those of Qoboza and "The World" with a circulation of over 140 000, of Motlana, Beyers Naude, Manas Buthelezi, Woods, Mkhathshwa and other persons of moderation and relevance, sounds like the death-knell of freedom of expression and dialogue in our country. This suppression can only add to the terrible sense of frustration at present experienced by so many in our land, and push the growth of Marxism among people. The most detached observer can only see in all this a course of political suicide.

Many will be tempted to give up trying by peaceful means to bring about change. It would be a disaster for all of us to give in to this temptation. Violence still only breeds violence. The only way is that of Christian peace; of brotherhood and sisterhood in Christ. All is not lost. We must give each other hope; stand by each other; stand with each other in a combined effort to build up a living Christian Community of peace in South Africa. Seen in this light, there is a chance that present events may provide us all with the catalyst that could end in bringing us more closely together.

It is my earnest and humble appeal to all people of goodwill in our country to double their efforts and prayers that this hour of reconciliation and acceptance may strike now – it is the only way to keep Christian hope and love alight in our lives.