

Pastoral Letter of the Archdiocese of Durban
Republic Day Festival (May 1981)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I addressed this pastoral letter to you in response to many requests that there should be a clear indication of the attitude of the Catholic Church to the Republic Festival. This attitude is simple and clear. The Catholic Church is taking no part in the Festival. Consequently, Catholic institutions are refrained from participation.

To some people this decision of Church authority may sound very hurtful. It is not a pleasant decision to take because it seems to show hostility towards South Africa instead of the love that should be shown by the Church towards a national community.

If indeed the whole national community were rejoicing in this festival, the Church would be happy to participate by publicly demonstrating its love for all the people of South Africa and by offering prayers of thanksgiving, blessing and petition.

But the great majority of people in South Africa see no reason for participation in the festival. In fact, as far as the majority is concerned, to participate in the festival means showing approval of what takes place in the Republic of South Africa in terms of its policies and laws, and this they could never do.

When the great majority of the people of South Africa reflect on the policy and laws of the country here some of the images that arise in their minds.