

SACBC STATEMENT

ON

FATHER MKHATSHWA'S ACQUITTAL AND DESTRUCTION OF RULE OF LAW (9/3/84)

As had been anticipated all along by the administrative board of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, the evidence brought forward during the trial clearly indicated that there was absolutely nothing to sustain the charges proffered against Father Smangalis Mkhathswa – Charges of subversion, incitement to public violence and holding an unlawful meeting.

This gives rise to the question: How is it that a person, in regard to whom such flimsy suspicions are entertained, can be held in solitary confinement for three months and, as an awaiting trial prisoner, for a further six-and-a-half weeks without bail?

We appreciate the fact that finally the trial was held in the open court and conducted according to the best rules of procedure. But this only emphasised the unfounded nature of the charges and the cruelty imposed on Father Mkhathswa on the basis of such groundless charges.

We contemplate with profound sadness the consequences of the grave destruction of the rule of law in Ciskei and in the country that has given it its present status, and the deplorable example in the matter of human rights. We pray that God, the source of all true law, may grant to those responsible a better appreciation of law and the rule of law.