

SACBC STATEMENTS

ON

NAMIBIA AND PRAYER DAY FOR PEACE (14/11/82)

In 1981 at the end of a special plenary session devoted to the situation in Namibia, the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference published a brief statement assuring the "Namibian people that it gives its full support to their hopes and aspirations to become an independent nation" and agreeing "that this should come about by a ceasefire and the holding of free and fair elections as envisaged in United Nations Resolution 435 which had been accepted by all the parties involved.

"Out of its deep solidarity with the Churches in Namibia, the Southern African Catholic Bishops' conference intends to study and observe closely the situation in Namibia and to seek ways of closer cooperation with these Churches".

Effect was given to study and closer cooperation through a fact-finding visit to Namibia by a delegation of six members of the Conference in September 1981, in the course of which the delegation discussed the Namibian situation with a great number of Church representatives and many other people. (The report drawn up on this visit and published in May was banned on 4/10/82).

In November, two members of the Conference visited church and political personalities in the five countries of the western Contact Group and delivered copies of the report to them and to the Vatican. The report was sent to the Prime Minister, Mr. P. W. Botha, who expressed himself willing to meet the delegation that visited Namibia and advised that the delegation should meet the administrator of the territory.

In the meantime, we (the South African Catholic Bishops) share with all those who long for peace, the hope that the negotiations will prove successful. For the achievement of peace we pray unceasingly. We know that countless other believers, both religious leaders and members, are doing the same.

We hope that prayers will increase in volume and intensify that God may direct the negotiators to a successful outcome. For it is indeed time that an end was reached to the agony of Namibia and of its neighbour Angola, and of all those who are involved in the violence of war or concerned about loved ones so involved.

We hope and pray that the action that still lies before us in our humble endeavour to contribute to the pursuit of peace may be guided by God's wisdom and inspired by his love.

Thereafter the Catholic bishops of Southern Africa declared a Namibia Prayer Day and called on all people of goodwill to join them in praying for peace in Namibia.

In the declarations, a further step in the bishops' attempts to help bring about peace in Namibia, the bishops appealed to all churches, parishes and concerned organisations and groupings to pray especially for a ceasefire to end all killings and suffering endured by the people of Namibia, for South African soldiers to leave the territory,

and for a spirit of peace and friendship in which Namibia can become a truly independent territory.