

STATEMENT

On

THE CAPE TOWN RIOTS

19 June 1980

I am appalled and saddened by the tragedy of the past week, by the loss of life, the number of injured, the wanton destruction and the overall violence. I extend my sympathy to all who suffered through this tragedy.

I feel a sense of shame at the whole situation, that this should happen in our midst. Those who have been guilty of violence, of arson, of looting are members of our community of Cape Town. We should feel a collective responsibility, and ask: "Where have we failed?"

It is a tragedy, which has its roots deep in the life situation of so many of our people, and we cannot just shrug our shoulders.

I therefore, ask that Wednesday June 25 be kept as a day of prayer, fasting and penance in a spirit of reparation for all the sinfulness involved, and of reconciliation in the charity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This day of prayer should be concluded with a Holy Hour in all parishes in the evening at a time when most parishioners can attend.

This tragedy should bring us to think on the whole situation not only here in Cape Town, but in the whole country.

There are many who do not concern themselves with the quality of life of others, closely associated with them in their work or other situations, who are in a deprived position as regards citizenship and other spheres of life. On the other hand there are the deprived among whom feeling of rejection, of not being wanted has arisen leading to further feelings of frustration and resentment. I am not condoning violence, but am trying to find the ultimate reason for it.

I cannot condone hatred or such feelings. I know too that the "ordinary" people have generally not been involved. They have given a good example of Christian love and living.

We must be reconciled to each other. I am my brother's keeper, even of the most despised. This applies to all of us, and it is in Christ that reconciliation is to be effected. As Mother Teresa of Calcutta said recently – "Christ makes Himself available to us in the sufferings of deprived people".

It is our Christian duty to pray always but especially in this time, for it is the grace of God alone that can bring the peace of Christ. In His will is our peace, and that will is to love one another, to do good to one another, to forgive one another, to help one another, to live as befits the dignity of each person, created in the image of God and redeemed by the precious Blood of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Owen Cardinal McCann
Archbishop of Cape Town