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Inside

Church tackles xenophobia

The Church in South Africa has taken action on violence against foreign nationals through education and solidarity programmes, while Archbishop Buti Thahalage of Johannesburg said that foreigners “were more likely to create employment opportunities than take away employment for locals.”

Zim not ready for 2011 poll

Zimbabwe might not be ready for elections in 2011, but the Catholic Church has begun work on the first step in preparation for elections: reconciliation and reparation.

A JUDEO-ROMAN CATHERATIC ARGUMENT

Base leadership in love

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Join the pope in prayer

Fr Chris Chatteris SJ looks at the pope’s prayer intentions for August, dealing with family life and suffering.

What do you think?

In their Letters to the Editor this week, readers discuss coerced abortions, building plans and support for the situation of refugees.

Parish volunteers from hell

Parish volunteers can range from the truly humble to control freaks, writes Chris Moeryck.

This week’s editorial: Why xenophobia?

The German Catholic Church is the recipient of this year’s Locked Oyster, an award given in recognition of journalists to mark the most notable examples of blockage of information.

Parish of the Month from KZN

Church locks up unwanted media award

RECEIVING the relics of St Thérèse of Lisieux, also known as the “Little Flower”, at the Cathedral of Christ the King in Johannesburg, Archbishop Buti Tlhagale blessed the saint’s intercession for the archdiocese and the country.

“In South Africa we are endeared with wise and caring leaders,” he said, expressing hope “for renewal in our faith and commitment, for inspiration, for healing in body and mind, for strength, for protection.”

The archbishop prayed: “Allow us to experience the change of heart, which has been experienced by the thousands of pilgrims who have made the journey to venerate you.”

The relics of the French saint are traveling throughout South Africa—from Tzaneen in the north to Cape Town in the south—until September.

Housed in an ornate 130kg reliquary, or casket, made in Brazil from jacaranda wood and silver, the relics have traveled to more than 50 countries around the world.

The veneration of St Thérèse’s relics started in France around 1947. In 1994 the ecclesiastical authorities of Lisieux agreed that they could travel the world.

The relics came to South Africa as part of the initiative of Fr Vuji Sokhela CMM of Yeoville and Fr Shaun Von Lilliefeldt, administrator of Christ the King Cathedral.

In Johannesburg, the relics were carried in procession into the cathedral led by children from the parish of St Francis of Assisi in Yeoville, who were dressed as Carmelites, and were accompanied by Mother Teresa’s Missionaries of Charity, who serve the parish and minister to its children. They will host the relics in their hospice on August 23.

Surrounded by flowers and rose petals—in tribute to St Thérèse’s lifelong fondness for nature—the relics were at the Johannesburg cathedral for veneration until they departed for Tzaneen diocese.

Before going to the cathedral, the relics visited the small parish of St Martin de Porres in Gelukdal in the East Rand.

Sacred Heart Father Joseph Wilson, parish priest of St Martin de Porres, saw the coming of the relics as a little opportunity for the youth. He said despite knowing very little about St Thérèse before she came, the youth seemed to be attracted to her instinctively.

“To be honest” said Fr Wilson, “not a lot of parishioners knew very much about St Thérèse before she arrived. By the time she left, in the space of two short days, many parishioners were moved by [St Thérèse’s] holiness and drawing power of people of all ages.”

He said preparation was important. “In order to maximise the spiritual impact of such a visit, it is vital to prepare the parish for her visit. There is tons of information on YouTube which a parish can easily access.”

Fr Wilson said they made exhibitions of her images and writings and had prayer cards printed, activities that served to bring them even closer to her.

He said many of them and many adults were moved to tears by a film show on her life by filmmaker Leonardo Delfippi, Ordinary Gilt, Extraordinary Soul.

“We found a great spiritual pay-off for the efforts outlaid. Many people who had been afraid to make Consecration in years, were moved by [St Thérèse’s] holiness and came forward to experience the love and mercy of Jesus, some ‘lapsed’ Catholics, came out to see her and she won for them.”

The priest said the church was packed, attributing the turn-out to “her magnetism and drawing power of people of all ages”. He believed that all who came to venerate the saint’s relics drew something from the experience.

“It is true, she is showering down the grace of her charity and mercy on all. All you have to do is turn up and bend down,” Fr Wilson said.

Archbishop Buti Tlhagale welcomed the relics to Johannesburg. “It is fitting that South Africa should be blessed by the Little Flower’s relics, to remind us of the necessity of the centrality of loving Jesus in our lives at a time when it seems that the worship of false gods, the soccer ball and sport have first place in the lives of so many.”

Mr Lee said: “St Thérèse will surely remind us of the first commandment: ‘Thou shalt not have false gods before me’.”

The relics are due to leave Tzaneen to arrive in Aliwal North on July 22, and then are scheduled to go to Kokstad (July 26-28), Port Shepstone in Umzimkhulu (July 29), Zimbezi (July 30), the convention of the Capuchin Poor Clare Sisters in Marianhill (August 3), and Morningside parish in Durban (August 5-8).

The relics will come to Cape Town on August 11 for two weeks. The Carmelite Sisters of Retreat will host their fellow Carmelites’ relics on August 20, as will three parishes—Welcome Estate (August 9-12), Camps Bay (August 13-15) and Breevet (August 16-19 and 21)—before they return to Johannesburg.

In Johannesburg archdiocese the relics will be displayed at Christ the King cathedral (August 22), Regina Mundi in Moroka (August 26), Alberton (August 27-29), Nazareth House in Yeoville (August 30), Northriding (September 1-2), Kriel (September 3-5), Victory Park (September 9-13), Schoenkopp (September 17-20), Craighall Park (September 24-27), and Yeoville (September 28-30).

In Pretoria, the relics will be hosted by Queenswood parish (September 6-9). They will be in Queensport, Eastern Cape from September 13-16.

They will leave South Africa on October 5 after returning to Yeoville parish, which will celebrate its patronal feast, that of St Francis of Assisi, in a special way with St Thérèse’s relics.

For more information, visit the website www.sttheresesouthafrica2010.com or contact Fr Sokhela on 072 149 8703 or vsokela@telkomsa.net, or Fr Von Lilliefeldt at 083 761 0807.

Left: Catholics, especially youths, from the Far East Rand Diocese of Johannesburg locked the relics of St Thérèse of Lisieux, which are currently touring South Africa.

Right: The relics, contained in a 133kg wood and silver reliquary, are carried in procession (front right) Fr Duncan Tseke, vicar-general of Johannesburg, Tony Mahlangu of the diocese, Justice and Peace Commission; (back right) Fr Shaun Von Lilliefeldt, (back left) Archbishop Buti Tlhagale; (front left) Fr Petrus Shyina and Rev John Rahime.

Tears as St Thérèse’s relics left parish
Scalabrini Day, Fr Garcia said, continues to be what the late Pope John Paul II described as “one of the most complex and dramatic events of history”.

The Scalabrinian missionaries, who work in the Americas, Europe, Asia and Africa, have just under 800 members, with 275 apostolic positions in 31 countries, continuing the tradition set by their founder according to “the signs of the times”.

In South Africa, they minister to largely French, Italian and Portuguese-speaking people, many of whom are refugees and asylum seekers, and have also established the beginnings of a Scalabrinian seminary.

Seminarian Day, Fr Garcia said, gives the missionaries and their lay helpers an opportunity to take stock of the founder’s special mission and the values of service that speak directly to Gospel teaching, and how the Scalabrinian charism is understood as “a missionary outreach, which edify each other. Others find spiritual nourishment travelling to St James’ tomb for at least 800 years.

Fr Tully will commence his walk on August 17 and reach Santiago de Compostela on September 19.

He explained that some people do the Camino for spiritual reasons, while others find spiritual reasons along the way while meeting other pilgrims, attending pilgrim Masses in churches, monasteries and cathedrals, and seeing the large infrastructure of buildings built over many centuries.

Regardless of their own “Camino for the Homeless”, the cathedral administrator said: “I hope my walking will help us all not only to pray for our brothers and sisters who are less fortunate than our selves, but to be part of righting the wrongs suffered by the innocent victims in a world of greed and injustice.”

He said Emmanuel cathedral parish believes God is calling it to develop the Hurley centre, named after the late Archbishop Denis Hurley, long-time fighter for justice and human rights, and who founded some of the projects already operating in the existing centre, which will be demolished to make way for a new, more serviceable one.

Those interested in contributing can do so via the centre’s bank account: First National Bank; account holder, Denis Hurley Centre; account number, 6220 4261 002; account type, cheque; branch name, Durban; branch code, 221426; swift code, FBNZ ZAJJ 659.

Contributions can also be handed in personally at the parish office in clearly marked envelopes at the parish centre office or in the Sunday collection, or parishioners can do so via the centre’s bank account: First National Bank; account holder, Denis Hurley Centre; account number, 6220 4261 002; account type, cheque; branch name, Durban; branch code, 221426; swift code, FBNZ ZAJJ 659.

Three thousand of us have been walking the Camino to Santiago de Compostela in north-west Spain over the last 800 years. It continues to be popular with pilgrims of all ages, who travel 900 to 1000 kilometres in reverse, acknowledging the tradition set by their founder according to “the signs of the times”.

The Scalabrinian mission in Cape Town, Scalabrinian Father Gerardo Garcia said he responded accordingly, founding his Mission-

The priest, however, is calling on individuals and companies to help him raise funds for his pilgrimage.

“So many homeless people walk from all over Africa to Emmanuel cathedral seeking refuge, help and love. I believe our Lord wants me to follow his heroic example by raising awareness of their pain, suffering and the many injustices they have endured. The funds raised will go towards building the Denis Hurley Centre as a new home for existing projects seeing to their needs,” said Fr Tully.

The Camino is a large network of ancient pilgrim routes stretching across Europe and coming together at the tomb of St James (or Santiago in Spanish) in Santiago de Compostela in north-west Spain.

The most popular route, which Fr Tully will take, is the Camino Francés, which stretches 780km from St Jean Pied du Port near Biarritz in France to Santiago. It has had large numbers of pilgrims travelling to St James’ tomb for at least 800 years.

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He explained that some people do the Camino for spiritual reasons, while others find spiritual reasons along the way while meeting other pilgrims, attending pilgrim Masses in churches, monasteries and cathedrals, and seeing the large infrastructure of buildings built over many centuries.

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South Africa was once a "refugee-producing" country

BY STAFF REPORTER

WITH refugees in South Africa living in fear of more attacks, youth from the central deanery at the Cathedral of Christ the King in Johannesburg gathered to show their support to refugees and asylum-seekers through prayer.

With the theme, “We are one in Christ, praying for refugees and asylum-seekers, human trafficking”, the youth and refugee community prepared various activities, including testimonial, presentations on refugees and xenophobia, music, dances and poetry, which they showcased after Mass.

Fr Rampe Hlobo of the Jesuit Refugees Service and the former dean of central deanery youth, delivered the keynote address. He told the youth that while South Africa had hosted “the most prestigious tournament of all”, the Fifa World Cup, his ministry had taken him back to the same London where “I was somberly involved when a fellow Jesuit from Zambia came to me and said, ‘Rampe, are we still welcome in South Africa?’”

“Why he asked me this question I hadn’t yet read the newspaper. But what was in the newspaper on the front page? A gruesome picture of somebody somewhere in Johannesburg who was beheaded. Newspapers were saying that this is what South Africans are doing, ‘killing foreigners’.”

“Needless to say, I was so embarrassed knowing that for two years I lived with the same man in Zambia and he took very good care of me. He showed me all around, he taught me how to get there where they were, my own black South Africans killing other blacks from other African countries,” said Fr Hlobo.

“My worry is, we as South Africans, especially the young people, but also in general, do not remember that South Africa was once a refugee producing country since after the Sharpeville massacre. Our leaders who are in parliament and cabinet today were once refugees in African countries. These countries even made sure that our leaders got the necessary education.

“Look at many of our ministers in cabinet today, those who were in exile, those university degrees are not university degrees from South African universities. They are degrees from University of Dar-es-Salam, the University of Nairobi, the University of Zimbabwe and the University of Botswana. They were given the opportunity to develop themselves while they were in exile, so that when they come back to South Africa they would be able to rule and lead the people of South Africa. This is the hospitality and treatment that any refugee would expect from a host country,” he said.

Fr Hlobo said that as South Africans we have received so much support from other African countries and “I think it is only fair that we reciprocate what our leaders received from these African nations”.

These African nations were much poorer than South Africa, but even so they did accord us our leaders the treatment needed, he said.

He said that as Christians we cannot continue to allow this kind of horrible, horrific and barbaric attack to continue.

“As the youth of South Africa we are faced with this challenge, to face this xenophobia monster and to teach others that refugees are human beings like you and me, who also possess the human dignity that we all possess and that they should be treated as such. We cannot allow xenophobia to continue. Remember evil will always flourish when people do nothing,” he added.

Local

Church acts to educate people on how to respond to xenophobia

BY BRONWEN DACHS

The Catholic Church is taking action to address violence against foreign nationals in South Africa.

Archbishop Buti Tlhagale of Johannesburg, president of the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference (SACBC), has issued a statement in which he said those tempted to commit violence must find other means of expressing their grievances.

He said the previous attacks had been against foreigners living legally in South Africa.

“It is commonly said that these people take away the jobs of South Africans and that they bring criminal behaviour into the country,” the archbishop said.

“However, current evidence suggests that the foreign-born are no more likely to be involved in crime as any other part of the population and that they are generally more likely to create employment opportunities rather than take away employment.”

The archbishop said it was important that the South African government manage the flow of people in and out of the country in a way that is equal to the interest of our own nationals, our development priorities, our openness to those who are fleeing persecution and the breakdown of the economy of our own countries through no fault of their own.

South Africa’s own recent history clearly demonstrates how such movement can be of long-term benefit to all the countries and people involved.

Dominican Father Mike Deo, director of the bishops’ justice and peace department, said his department would run training workshops in dioceses around the country “on how to respond to xenophobia”.

He said he hoped the Peace Cup, a Catholic-inspired tournament that gives football players from different social classes, ethnicities and national origins the chance to play together, would help prevent xenophobia as people got to know each other.

Earlier this month, a delegation of religious leaders, led by Archbishop Tlhagale, raised concerns about the possibility of a resurgence in violence against foreign nationals in a meeting with President Jacob Zuma.

“While we are confident that the security services will act very swiftly if there are outbreaks of violence,” Fr Chris Townsend, SACBC communications officer, said.

The National Religious Leaders’ Forum, which includes Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu and Bahai leaders as well as officials of Christian churches, met with Mr Zuma and other government officials in Pretoria to discuss the possibility of xenophobic attacks after the World Cup.

The leaders also discussed sustaining the spirit of unity generated by the tournament, moral regeneration, relationships between religious leaders and the government, and other issues.

More than 60 people were killed and thousands of people were displaced in attacks on foreigners during the World Cup in South Africa in May 2008. —CN

Reaping the benefits of mentoring young people

BY MICHAEL RASSOUL

Claireen Arendse is leaving the Church-based Rural Education Access Programme (REAP), after two years as its director. An associate body of the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference, REAP was formed when the conference’s Educational Assistance Scheme amalgamated with the archdiocese of Cape Town’s Catholic Educational Access Programme.

By 2001 a national vision was realised to provide tertiary education to South Africa’s most disadvantaged students. The year her term as director began, REAP had implemented two community mentorship programmes. “Through formalising the mentorship programme,” she explained, “we have been able to broker relationships with the institutions for training REAP mentors in the quality of good mentoring, facilitation and presentation skills, and to refer challenging cases and how to deal with them.”

Students also do community service, and last year almost 80% of students undertook at least three days of community service. “As with any volunteer system performance varies, but we firmly believe that REAP’s recruitment and selection process is effective.”

Cardinal salutes World Cup players

CARDINAL Wilfrid Napier, archbishop of Durban, our leader in the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference, congratulated the government and all stakeholders involved in making Football World Cup in South Africa a successful and fruitful congress. He addressed the Southern African football team and said “we are the true sons of all capable people.”

“South Africa has shown the capacities to work, to build, to coordinate, manage and to protect. We must use our considerable skill and learning to tackle the most pressing issues in our country—education, healthcare, criminology and service delivery. It’s time. We have proven that we can do it!”

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Remember: SA was also a "refugee-producing" country

J.M.J

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Church acts to educate people on how to respond to xenophobia
**International**

**Women bishops may spark Anglican exodus**

BY SIMON CALDWELL

The largest Anglo-Catholic group in the Church of England is expecting an exodus of thousands of Anglicans to Catholicism after a decision to ordain women as bishops without sufficient concessions to traditionalists.

Stephen Parkinson, director of Forward in Faith—a group that has about 10,000 members, including more than 1,000 clergy—said that a large number of Anglo-Catholics are considering conversion to the Catholic faith.

His comments came after the General Synod, the national assembly of the Church of England, voted at a meeting in York to approve the creation of women bishops by 2014 without meeting the demands of objectors.

A statement from Forward in Faith advised members against hasty action, saying now was “not the time for precipitate action”.

“This draft measure does nothing for us at all,” said Mr Parkinson.

“We explained very carefully why we could not accept women bishops theologically.

“We explained what would enable us to stay in the Church of England, but the General Synod has decided to get rid of us by giving us a provision that does not meet our needs. They are saying either put up or shut up and accept innovations, however unscriptural or heretical, or get out.”

Mr Parkinson said he expected thousands of members of Forward in Faith to consider accepting Pope Benedict’s offer of a personal ordinariate, issued last November in the apostolic constitution Anglicanorum coetibus, in which a group of Anglicans can be received into the Catholic Church while retaining their distinctive patrimony and liturgical practices.

“Many, I expect, will be exploring the provisions of Pope Benedict’s apostolic constitution. We have got 10,000 members, so clearly we are talking about thousands,” he added.

A number of breakaway national Anglican churches, in communion with the Traditional Anglican Communion rather than the much larger Worldwide Anglican Communion, have already written to the Vatican to accept the pope’s offer.

The defection of thousands of mainstream Anglican traditionalists from the Church of England would represent one of the largest single block.

Mr Parkinson said developments were unlikely within the next six months, however, until women bishops are ordained, Anglican traditionalists had a “couple of months” to decide what to do.

The Forward in Faith statement said the proposals must be considered by provincial synods in September and the Synod’s national body could be debated a month later when Forward in Faith holds its annual meeting.

The decision by the General Synod came after nearly 12 hours of debate on a compromise proposed by the Archbishop Rowan Williams of Canterbury and Archbishop John Sentamu of York was narrowly defeated.

The diocesan synods have now been asked to scrutinise a scheme where women bishops would have the ability to ordain but not consecrate, and make arrangements for objectors through a statutory code of practice. The Anglo-Catholic group of the synod had wanted episopal visitors, or “flying bishops”, to minister to their members instead, but their requests were rejected.

If the resolution is supported by a majority of the diocesan synods, it will be returned to the General Synod for ratification in 2012.

Archbishop Williams told the General Synod that the Church of England had decided to get rid of us by giving us a provision that does not meet our needs. They are saying either put up or shut up and accept innovations, however unscriptural or heretical, or get out.”

**Zim ‘not ready for 2011 poll’**

BY BRONWEN DACHS

ZIMBABWE might not be ready for elections in 2011, much less in 2014, the Catholic Church has begun work on the first step in its proposal for elections: healing and reconciliation, said a justice and peace official.

“Efforts are being made by the Zimbabwean government to create the conditions for free and fair elections, we need an end to violence and a full return to the rule of law.”

Harare’s Justice and Peace Commission said it has started this work by holding workshops in schools and churches to counsel organised organisations to help traumatised people. “We are going to wait for a national process that might never happen,” the commission said in its July newsletter.

The nationwide collection of public submissions for a new constitution through a new wave of intimidation and harassment, largely because the constitution-making process is linked to elections, which in Zimbabwe are times of violence, Mr Chaumba said.

Brutal state-sponsored violence targeting the opposition after disputed March 2008 elections killed at least 80 people dead and 200,000 displaced, human rights groups said.

The long-delayed programme to amend a constitution adopted in 1980 is behind schedule under an agreement that formed a coalition government between President Robert Mugabe and his former opponent, Prime Minis-

er Morgan Tsvangirai. The agreement calls for a new constitution ahead of a foreign-moni-

tored election planned for 2011.

Almost all elections in Zim- babwe have been marred by violence, Fr Kenneth Makamure of Chinhwawo major seminary wrote in the J&P newsletter.

“This violence has left people polarised and in need of reconciliation,” he said. While “efforts are being made by the inclusive government to get people reconciled”, it has become apparent that the link between reconciliation and jus-

tice “has been forgotten or ignored.”

Mr Makamure said “the first thing is to establish the truth of what actually happened—who died, who disappeared, who was maimed, what about deaths and disappearances, who carried out the orders”.

Victims of violence during Zim-

babwe’s 2008 election campaign.

A Church observer has said the country is “not sufficiently healed” for the mandated elec-

tions next year.

“People have to come to terms with the past in order to make peace with the future,” Fr Makamure said.

A Church observer has said that “if perpetrators are not called to account for their evil actions” they are likely to continue being violent.

Mr Chaumba said that besides pushing for presidential term limits and strengthening parlia-

dament in a new constitution, the Church in Zimbabwe advocates that the majority of local people “have a say in how the government is run”.

A Church observer said that the government “is making significant progress in its process so that people believe that their rights are being protected”.

In efforts to help Zimbabweans overcome the fears of involvement in politics, the government and Justice and Peace Com-

mission has held countrywide “meet your leader” discussion forums aimed at increasing engagement between citizens and government representa-

tives, such as members of parlia-

ment and local councillors, and indeed.”

Mr Gutu said that “the elec-

torate realise that they are an important stakeholder in develop-

ment of their areas” and that “their active participation is indispensable”, Mr Gutu said.

CNS

China frees bishop after 15 months detention

CHINESE Bishop Julius Ju Zhiqiu of Zhengding was released on July 7 after 15 months in detention.

The bishop celebrated an evening Mass for his flock immediately after his return to Christ the King cathedral in Wuqiu village, near Shijiazhuang, the capital of Hebei province.

He also made a point of stat-

ing that he had not accepted the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, not the authority of the Bishops’ Conference of the Catholic Church in China, which are government-approved Church bodies.

In a press release issued by the US-based Cardinal Kung Foundation, Bishop Ju emphasi-

sed that he was and always would be firmly adhered to the leadership of the Holy Father.

Bishop Ju was removed by government officials on March 30, 2009, the day the Vatican’s China Commission began its plenary meeting in Rome.

Throughout his detention, his family had campaigned vig-

erously for his release.

Two other Hebei prelates—Bishops James Su Zhemin of Baoding and Cosmas Shi Enxiang of Xingtai—have been held in detention since 1997 and 2001, respectively. Their where-

bouts had been unknown for years—CNS

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Director of Vocations

BY LUCAS PARISH

A nun watches a charity tennis match between veteran stars Goran Ivani- vijev (who has family in South Africa) and John McEnroe in the British Open. More than £20,000 was donated to a local children’s hospital.

**Po Box 11363, Mariannhill, 3601**

Director of Vocations

BY LUCAS PARISH

**Po Box 11363, Mariannhill, 3601**

Director of Vocations
Vatican budget in red again

BY CAROL GLATZ

The papal message will be especially focused on interreligious dialogue, the Vatican said in its statement for the upcoming celebration of World Peace Day.

Police video footage showed that the rioting was well organized: Youths had stones, bricks and bottles stashed in rolling garbage bins and were armed with petrol bombs.

“People cannot be divorced from their beliefs, because those beliefs affect their lives and themselves,” the pope said.

Pope Benedict also warned against the “division of people,” which he said is “the result of manipulation or exploitation of people.”

Several parishes in the Ardoyne area have been affected by sectarian violence.

Police, political and community leaders have noted that the recent increase in sectarian violence was organised by dissident Republicans, members of the bitterly Catholic nationalist community, who are unhappy with the power-sharing arrangement agreed to in the 1998 Good Friday Peace Agreement.

Police video footage showed that the rioting was well organized: Youths had stones, bricks and bottles stashed in rolling garbage bins and were armed with petrol bombs.

“They were well organized already here yes-
terday and the day before whom I had never seen in Ardoyne before, and I have been living here for ten years—they must have been bussed in,” said Pas- sionist Father Gary Donegan of Holy Cross Catholic church in Ardoyne.

“Who started it, it quickly developed into recre- ational rioting,” said F Donegan.

“Terrorism is about terrorizing the communities. People cannot be divorced from their beliefs, because those beliefs affect their lives and themselves,” the pope said.

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Over 25 members of St Matthew’s parish in Bonteheuwel, Cape Town, received their First Communion. Pictured with the candidates are (front) Glenda Hendricks, Rev Andrew Siljeur, Fr Gavin Butler, Cathy Collins, Magda Meiring and (back) Monica Barnett. 

Deacon Isaac Thomas, who has been working at San Salvador parish in Leondale, Boksburg, celebrated his silver jubilee this year after being ordained in 1985. Pictured with Deacon Thomas is Johannesburg Archbishop Bulli Thlagale.

Sharon van der Sandt (left) and Yvonne Mthembu (right) hand over money that was collected by the Little Flower School in Eshowe, to Bishop Xolele Kumalo.

Colin Northmore, principal of Sacred Heart College, Johannesburg at Soccer City, Soweto, with 86 pupils of the Three2Six School, which he had founded for children of refugees whose education was disrupted by family displacement. Thanks to sponsorship by motor vehicle company Hyundai, they were able to attend the FIFA Football World Cup match in which Argentina beat Korea 4-1.

Fr Titus Garneco, priest at Blessed Teresa of Calcutta parish in Gingindlovu, Eshowe, received his masters degree in Canon Law, Specialisation: Income Tax Law.
FOR 24 years St Francis parish in Richards Bay in Eshowe diocese, KwaZulu-Natal, has been dedicated to selling The Southern Cross.

The sale of the newspaper has been an ongoing activity for Parishioner Barbara Walters who has made it her mission to market and sell the newspaper for all of these 24 years.

Mrs Walters, also fondly known to parishioners as Aunty Barbara and Ms Southern Cross, is also the coordinator of the Thursday catechism.

We are ever so grateful to The Southern Cross business manager Pamela Davids who supplies us with the upcoming week’s edition highlights, which we put into our bulletin every week to encourage the people to buy their copies.

We have set a number of people to pay monthly for their copies of The Southern Cross. More than that we have both Barbara and her husband Grant, who actively encourage all who walk out of our parish doors to “buy your copy of The Southern Cross today, one copy for the family”.

“All credit goes to her for her time and effort. As the parish priest I am not sure if I must call her ‘Mrs Southern Cross or Mrs catechism’,” said Fr Bheki Thungo.

St Francis of Assisi started around 1977 as a community. At that time the church was sharing its priest, Fr Godfrey Siebert OSB, with St Patrick’s church in Empangeni. At that stage the parish had no building “and they were using one of the halls in Richards Bay and then they moved on to the chapel of St Francis convent,” said Fr Thungo.

A church was later built in the Veld en Vlei in Richards Bay, and was officially opened by the late Bishop Munant Dela Biause. Even though the church is only 24 years old, the parish community is more than 30 years old, the priest added.

Fr Thungo told The Southern Cross that the parish has a large multicultural dynamic congregation, with approximately 198 registered families and more than 500 parishioners.

“The parish, he said, has grown tremendously over the years and continues to grow year by year.

“We have a proud history of priests who have been instrumental in the growth of our wonderful congregation, namely Fr Abbot Godfrey Sieber, Fathers Plus Paul, Peter Blue and Maximilian Kolbe Jacobs, to name but a few. Fr Jacobs worked very hard to put the parish where it is today. Bringing changes to any parish is not easy, but Fr Jacobs worked very hard and may God bless him in his new parish and his ministry,” said Fr Thungo.

Fr Thungo highlighted one of the things that have brought growth in the parish is the openness of all the parishioners.

“They are open to change and without them the parish wouldn’t be what it is today. The Sisters under the leadership of St Carmelina Zinkl contribute tremendously to the growth of both young and old, with their pastoral duties. The contribution of the members of the parish council also helps a lot in bringing growth in the parish.”

As a parish, St Francis has various sodalities, including the Knights of Da Gama, the Catholic Women’s League, Sacred Heart of Jesus and Couples for Christ, who contribute to the way of life within the parish.

“We also have a Junior Youth group which meets every Thursday before catechism for Grades 1-4. On Fridays we have our youth group, which starts with Mass at 6pm and then their meeting that ends at 20:30pm. During these meetings they discuss issues which cover spirituality, personal growth, skills developments and not forgetting the social part of evening.”

The parish presently has only 20 active youth members, a challenge, said Fr Thungo, they will overcome.

The parish can also boast taking second place in Eshowe’s diocesan challenge, said Fr Thungo, they will continue to do well.

“On that day we plan to add and announce how much we have put into our Thanksgiving collection for all our big projects such as needed renovations. Our target is R150 000 and I trust that parishioners will reach and exceed this target,” Fr Thungo said.

The parish will also be “putting together a parish magazine and our website will be up and running in the very near future”.

There are many projects that the parishioners need to assist with.

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Why xenophobia?

I t is encouraging that the South African Police Services and government are taking appropriate action on violence against foreign nationals, even deploying the military to troubled hotspots. While no amount of engagement will preclude isolated outbreaks, the violence spreading country-wide as xenophobia—what we commonly label “xenophobia”—has been a feature of South African life since the 1990s. It will not disappear until living conditions in areas where such attacks occur are markedly improved.

It serves no purpose for politicians to downplay threats of violence with references to rumours, never mind making paranoid statements about the government “being prepared to defend” the country.activate. We must therefore approach attacks on foreign nationals as criminal acts of violence and respond accordingly. The government must act in the face of xenophobia with the same vigour it met East and West in May 2008.

We must expect the threat to remain ever-present. Indeed, violence against foreigners—what we commonly label “xenophobia”—has been a feature of South African life since the 1990s. It will not disappear until living conditions in areas where such attacks occur are markedly improved.

It serves no purpose for politicians to downplay threats of violence with references to rumours, never mind making paranoid statements about the government “being prepared to defend” the country. Instead, we must approach attacks on foreign nationals as criminal acts of violence and respond accordingly. The government must act in the face of xenophobia with the same vigour it met East and West in May 2008.

Threats to the rule of law

The excess of violence in the displacement of foreign nationals (and in the commission of other crimes, including vigilantism) needs to be understood and addressed. In the meantime, government and civil society must be aware of the condemnable nature of mob violence against foreigners, and proactive in engaging with the community. The Catholic Church has done admirable work in that field.

Aside from appealing to the maintenance of the law and order, public safety, values, the Church must turn its attention to target foreign nationals must be performed, but its pretext for doing so are irrelevant.

Archbishop Buti Tlhagale of Johannesburg has rightly pointed out that current violence suggests that the foreign-born are no more likely to be involved in crime as any other part of the population, and that they are generally less likely to create employment opportunities than to take away employment.

There can be no justification or mitigation of mob violence against foreigners, irrespective of whatever the context. Our solidarity must be with the victims of xenophobic violence and those who stand with them.

We may be spared a reprise of the 2008 pogroms, but every threat of xenophobia must be taken as a call for vigilance on our part.

New chancer an indulgence


As I work for one of the world’s largest and most established organisations and travel the world, I am fully aware of the millions of people as a result of hunger and violence against foreigners—what we commonly label “xenophobia”—have suffered, and indeed suffered, suffering dying from HIV/Aids.

It seems for them it is better for it to remain a secret, a taboo. In the United States which links violent preaching to enforced abortions.

Let the Catholic Church do what it does best: Be humble in their service to the poor, be vigilant, be proactive in its mission, and rebuild from within.

Financial support in the current crisis of a modern monstrosity going up in its place.

Details please

While I am not at all opposed to the new chancery in Johannesburg chancery and the demolition and re-building of Durban’s cathedral parish centre when we are fully aware of the plight of millions of our fellow south africans, I find the announcement embarrassing. It seems that the Catholic Church in South Africa has money to burn. About what some of the others are doing, I do not know. It seems for them it is better for it to remain a secret, a taboo. In the United States which links violent preaching to enforced abortions.

The Roman Catholic Church is an institution that has an excess of violence against foreign nationals. It is an institution that has been called a “black eye” for the Catholic Church in South Africa.

I have a mental picture of a church that is large in size to St Peter’s in Rome, but imprecise shorthand of the Church. It is made of thousands of people who are homeless in South Africa. A simple calculation translates to R30m.

successive projected cost for it, namely, R50m.

If so, it seems to be an essential injury to the fabric of the Church. The excess of violence in the displacement of foreign nationals (and in the commission of other crimes, including vigilantism) needs to be understood and addressed. In the meantime, government and civil society must be aware of the condemnable nature of mob violence against foreigners, and proactive in engaging with the community. The Catholic Church has done admirable work in that field.

Keep façade

The demolition of Durban’s cathedral centre seems a severe move (June 30). As it is of historical value, retain the façade. The facade is much too important. We have to make do with what we can know, for example, we can draw back the fires of distraction.

We must just find a way.

André Duchene, Johannesburg

Money to burn?

I find it impossible to appreciate what kind of financial projections were made about what seems to be an excessive projected cost for it, namely, R50m.

A simple calculation translates this to R15 000 000 per square metre, given the construction of the cathedral building. By any standards this money would buy fairly “luxury” finishing. Having the chance to provide detailed information at my disposal, I ask the question is this the intention?

It would be very helpful to know how this money is going to be spent and whether or not it is justified.

It would be interesting to get Chris Moerdyk’s take on this issue, given his article in the same edition about the destruction of pomp and ceremony by the Vaticans. He does not state the reason; that our clergy in high office have become humble in their service to the people.

While there seems to be an air of knowledge from the Church leaders about this development, it would be of interest to know those who are going to foot the bill (all parishioners) to know if this chanceracy in keeping with the humility of Archdiocese of Johannesburg.

The editor has acknowledged the real threat of the United States which links violent preaching to enforced abortions.

I am also greatly pleased to see how much the Church is being able to do as a comeback. The Church has brought forceful, imaginative and incisive criticism in the recent decades. Men need to return to their place of leadership in the family and the Church. 

Allan Moss OMT, Durban

Book on roles of men and women

Recently I bought a book titled Theology of the Body by Jason Evert, based on Pope John Paul II’s Theology of the Body. It is an absolutely wonderful book, aimed mostly at young people. It explains the Church’s authority and leadership, in fact, it is the Church’s life force. It is held in Rome to be vetted by the curia or the pope?

Should the curia become the curia and nothing more?

Aidan Moss OMT, Durban

The Editor reserves the right to shorten or edit all published letters. Letters below 300 words receive preference. Pseudonyms are acceptable only under special circumstances. The Editor’s address of the writer must be supplied. No anonymous letter will be considered.
I am going to take a break from writing articles for The Southern Cross and will be back again in January. Before I take my columnist's sabbatical, I thought it would be appropriate to reflect a little on the term "leadership in the Church" column with some food for thought about the importance of the Bible to the Christian view of leadership.

We live in a world that is so dominated by secular practices that we Christians sometimes have to choose to be loved. This flies in between being loved and being feared, one Bible—Christian leaders have followed the most Christian denominations. A careful reading of the Bible reveals that Jesus did not want to leave his followers without a clear understanding of his teaching on leadership, and that the cornerstone of that teaching is the concept of servant leadership. A look at a number of passages from the Gospels, including John 13, in which we see Jesus wiping His earliest followers are called disciples, a name that we hopefully have kept alive and own for ourselves as Christians. A select group of Jesus' disciples were named by him as apostles. An apostle is someone (one of 12) Jesus personally chose and sent out with a special message, the good news of God's coming reign over human affairs being the content of their message (Mt10:1-11). While only disciples were chosen to become apostles, it is clear that whoever every disciple was also one of the 12 apostles depends on the gospel you are reading.

In Matthew 11:1-3, the disciples are called the 12 disciples. This limits the term “disciple” to those apostles who Matthew names as apostles (10:2). In Luke, however, there are at least 70 others who are considered disciples (Lk10:1-11). This is an infilling of the 12 apostles of Matthew (19). The Sadducees consider themselves disciples without fear of being confused with being an apostle, we owe it to them.

Among the religious leaders of Jesus' time, the most frequently mentioned are scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees. The scribes were the Bible scholars of Jesus' time. They were responsible for interpreting the Law of Moses (see Mt 23:2) and they often did so by recording the valued opinions of predecessors and carefully weighing and balancing their opinions on any disputed matter of the Law. It might be that the exaggeration of their sophistication, culminating in the interpretation of cultic law that it was the Roman governor Pontius Pilate that sentenced him to death by crucifixion.

Clifford M Yeary
Hearing the Good News

In considering the roles of different groups in the Church such as priests, sisters, lay people and so on, we often do not see how these complement one another. We might think, for instance, that the work of religious people is more important than the work of lay people. However, in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul reminds us that no part of the body can work effectively on its own, nor can the body work effectively if one part is not doing its work properly. The same is true of our ministries. The parents who raise Christians to be as important as the theologians who teach priests in seminaries. The Bread of the Body of Christ entails a concerted effort: parents bringing up children, the 1st century model of those who taught, schools and parishes training the leaders of tomorrow, seminaries and convents developing the leaders for tomorrow, the labour laws of the state.

An examination of the teaching of Jesus (Mt 18 and Parables) show that before we take brothers and sisters to the secular courts, we are expected to follow a process in the community of believers first.

Who's who in the gospels

Russian novelists of Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and others can be a great but very long read. They are filled with so many characters that it is sometimes difficult for readers to tell them apart, or to remember who is who in the story. For someone who has not been a regular student of the gospels, it can pose a challenge. Who and what are the disciples? Are they the same as the apostles? What about these scribes and Pharisees, and who are the Sadducees?

Jesus was very controversial. He attracted adherent followers, but there were many who opposed him. His opponents tried to identify him by their association with a certain group or parties. Except for key political and religious opponents, most individuals named in the gospels tend to be followers of Jesus.

The scriptures often tended to be associated with another party, the Pharisees, but not all Pharisees were so-called. Not all scriptures would have been Pharisees. The Pharisees were Jews who were strong in personal holiness by careful observance of Moses Law.

The scriptures had serious problems with Jesus forgiving sins (Mt 9:3-6) and the Pharisees were shocked at his willingness to associate with known sinners (Mt 11:19). The priests of the Temple, their families and supporters had their own religious party, the Sadducees, and they had their own problems with Jesus. The scribes and the Pharisees interpreted the Law of Moses for daily life human society, and struggled with how to respond to the Roman occupation of Israel. The Sadducees, however, had compromised with the Roman authorities in order to be left free to conduct their priestly duties in the Temple.

The Sadducees, unlike the scribes and the Pharisees, did not accept as inspired much of the prophetic or the Psalms. It was from these writings that they drew their expectation of a political liberator, a messiah. The Sadducees apparently feared theMessiah and Jesus, if all events eventually draw the attention of the Roman authorities, as they started his ministry as the Messiah—especially if the scribes and the Pharisees only looked at discrete entities, as the whole is more than the sum of its parts.
Ancient devotions in Roman catacombs

Archaeologists have found what they believe to be the oldest depictions of Saints Peter, Paul, Andrew and John in a Roman catacomb which throws a light on the devotions of Rome’s early Christians. CINDY WOODEN

In the basement of an Italian insurance company’s modern office building, Vatican archaeologists—armed with lasers—discovered important historical evidence about the development of Christian devotion to the apostles.

At Rome’s Catacombs of St Thecla, in the burial chamber of a Roman noblewoman, they have discovered what they said are the oldest existing paintings of St Paul, Andrew and John.

Technicians working for the Pontifical Commission for Sacred Archaeology discovered the painting of St Paul in June 2009 just as the Year of St Paul was ending.

Barbara Mazzei, who was in charge of the restoration work, said that she and her team members knew there were more images under the crust of calcium carbonate, but excitement over the discovery of St Paul in June 2009 dissipated just as the Year of St Paul was ending.

Ms Mazzei said that when the team decided to return to the tomb to announce the discovery even before the rest of the work was completed. Presenting the complete restoration of the burial chamber to reporters a year later, Mgr Giovanni Pietro Bisconti, the archbishop of Rome, said that the paintings of the apostles on the ceiling of the chamber are believed to be the oldest existing depictions of Saints Peter, Paul, Andrew and John in a Roman catacomb, which throws light on the devotions of Rome’s early Christians.

The walls of the tombs of the wealthy were decorated with Christian symbols, biblical scenes and references to the martyrs.

At the Catacombs of St Thecla, the noblewoman’s burial chamber—now referred to as the Cubicle of the Apostles—dates from late 4th century. The arch over the vestibule features a fresco of a group of figures the Vatican experts described as “The College of the Apostles”.

The ceiling of the burial chamber itself features the most typical icon found in the catacombs—Christ the Good Shepherd—but the four corners of the ceiling are decorated with medallions featuring the four apostles, said Ms Mazzei.

Fabrizio Bisconti, the commission’s archaeological superintendent, said that in the decorations of the catacombs one can see “the genesis, the seeds of Christian iconography”, with designs from the very simple fish as a symbol of Christ to the resurrection image of Christ raising Lazarus from the dead.

The discovery of so much attention to the apostles in the Catacombs of St Thecla documents the fact that widespread devotion to the apostles began earlier than what most Church historians believed, he said. “This is the time when the veneration of the apostles was just being born and developed,” he said, and the art in the catacombs no longer presents just the martyrs or biblical scenes.

The burial chamber also features frescoes of Daniel in the lion’s den, the Three Wise Men bringing gifts to Jesus, Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac and a very large wall painting of the noblewoman herself—jewelled, veiled and with “an important hairstyle”, a symbol of status in ancient Rome.

Ms Mazzei said that when restorers first went into the burial chamber in 2008, all the walls were white—completely covered under the crust of calcium carbonate that ranged from a millimetre thick to 4-5cm deep. The Vatican, however, had water-colours and a diary of descriptions from the 1800s testifying that there were paintings on the walls.

In the past, she said, restorers would use tiny scalpels and brushes to remove the white crust, but some of the paint always came away with it. Restorers were left trying to find the right balance between removing enough to see a faint image of a catacomb fresco and destroying it. “Then along came the laser. After attending an art restoration conference and listening to presentations on how lasers were being used on frescoes in buildings above ground, she said she suggested to the Vatican that they gather a team of experts to see how lasers would work in the extremely humid catacombs where almost no air circulates.

“We went slowly and basically set up an experimental laboratory in the catacombs, she said. The restoration project was just as painstaking as the scalpel- and-brush method because it involved firing the laser pinpoint by pinpoint across the surface of the cubicle, “but the result is totally different”, Ms Mazzei said.

She said the two-year project to restore the tiny cubicle cost only about $72,000 (about R550,000) because many of the restorers had a college education, worked for free and volunteered their time and the laser company gave the Vatican a steep discount.

Mr Bisconti said the Vatican has no plans to open the Catacombs of St Thecla to the public, although the pontifical commission occasionally gives permission for groups to visit as long as they are willing to pay a licensed guide and escort.

Fourth-century paintings of (clockwise from top left) Sts Peter, John, Paul and Andrew on the ceiling in the Catacombs of St Thecla. The paintings of the apostles on the ceiling of the chamber are believed to be the oldest of them in existence. PHOTO: NICOLA FORENZA, PONTIFICAL COMMISSION FOR SACRED ARCHAEOLOGY

Focus

Fifth-century wall paintings (clockwise from top left) Sts Peter, Paul, John and Andrew in the Catacombs of St Thecla. The paintings of the apostles on the ceiling of the chamber are believed to be the oldest of them in existence. PHOTO: NICOLA FORENZA, PONTIFICAL COMMISSION FOR SACRED ARCHAEOLOGY

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Religious orders: please support Durban’s Denis Hurley Centre

The Marit Mariots in South Africa have pledged to give R12 000 to the Denis Hurley Centre which is being established at Emmanuel cathedral, Durban. The cathedral has about 4 000 beneficiaries already: refugees, homeless and unemployed people as well as people living with HIV/AIDS.

The help we are able to provide will be much more substantial when the new Centre is built.

I wonder whether other religious orders and congregations with which Archbishop Hurley was closely associated, would like to emulate this splendid gesture of the Marit Mariots?

For more information about the Denis Hurley Centre, please visit the website www.denis hurleycentre.co.za or phone me on 031 201 3812, 072 806 4417, or e-pukarney@xol.co.za.

Kerry Kearney
Coordinator Denis Hurley Centre Project

ANANNIVERSARIES

BOONZAIER—Aubrey and Polly. Congratulations on your 50th Wedding Anniver- sary, God Bless you. From your family, friends and the members of Holy Family, to our Lady of Fatima Parish, Pinhele.

STRETTON—50th Wedding Anniversary, July 23, 2010. Kevin and Martha giving thanks to God for a wonderful married life, blessed with our daughters Kim, Sheri, Pamela, in-law Mike, Walter, Rob, grandchildren Dino, Kyle, Fabio, Nicole, Blaide, Sant, Jonathan, Gary, Savannah, Nicholas, and family. 

DEATH

CASEY—Kevin. Died tragically in a car accident in East London, on June 26, 2010. We are mourning a loss and you will always be in our Thoughts and Prayers. Forever missed by Val, Sean, Michelle, Dave, Mary, Jenny and his six grandchildren. Rest in Peace.

IN MEMORIAM


EDDIE—Doran. Four years today 27 July 2004. We do not lose you, we simply miss you. We treasured all the wonderful times we shared together.

PEACE IN REACH. Love you forever.

Remembered by family and grandchild Sherele, Charles, Sheri, Tim, Stacey, Justin and Quinten, Freda and family.

EMPLOYMENT OFFERED

EARN R720 in your first week and guaranteed up to R440 par day with a full data entry worker.

You will need to be available to work full time.

To place your event, call Claire Allen at 021 465 5007, or e-mail c.allen@scross.co.za

忍者恋爱情在爱中

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The point here is that by surrendering all our authorities in matters of conflict in seeking God’s guidance we are abandoning the Christian principle of love, compassion and forgiveness.

I have been told about a case where a religious congregation was given the extent of beingarrisoned to try to justi-ty their case against a group of employees.

May we know the Bible well so that all our decisions are informed by the faith we propely.

Watch catch up with rev. Jonathan @ Emmanuel Nyasa columns at www.scross.co.za/category/na- gara/.

MASS readings for the week

Sunday C, Weekdays cycle 2


Wed July 28, Wednesday: Ps 15:9-10,12-17,18: Mt 13:44-46


Sat July 31, St. Ignatius Loyola: Lk 26:11-14,16: Ps 69:1,5,10,3:30-33: Mt 14:1-12

Sun August 1, 1st Sunday of the Year: G/23:1-23: Ps 90:6,3:12,14-17: Jn 3:1-5,9:11,1-12,3-31

COMMUNION CALENDAR

BETHLEHEM

“Home for Lady of Bethlehem at Tsholokh, Limpopo.

Brenhilda: Tel: 079 095 3601: Fax: 071 247 3289: E-mail: brendil@ne.co.za

HELENBURGH

First Friday Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament 10:30am: Devotions Monday and Thursday. Devotions of the Blessed Sacrament and Rosary. 15:00-16:00: Special devotion to Our Blessed Lady for her petals. One Lady of the Angels, Little Eden, Edendale: Tel: 011 909 7246

First Saturday of each month rosary prayed 10:30-12:00 outside Marie Stopes abortion clinic, Police, Bryanston, Joanne Beyrooti, 011 782 4331

RUGERDOHR

Culture of Life Anti-Abortion campaign fund raiser, Sun 22 August 15:00h, ACM Church Noordheuwel Kragers- kops. Also Celine Fruhst Sing along with “One Accord” singers and musicians. Tickets R20 (senior citizens R80), 011 485 3507, 011 483 1607

PRETORIA

First Saturday: Devotion to Divine Mercy, St Martin de Porro, Sunnyside, 16:30. Thu-Sat 8am-4pm: St. Joseph’s. Tel: 012 872 1484 or 028 360 4813

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REMEMBERING OUR DEAD

“It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins”

Holy Mass will be celebrated on the first Sunday of each month in the All Souls’ chapel, Maitland, Cape Town at 2:30pm for all souls in purgatory and for all those buried in the Woltemade cemetery.

For further information, please contact

Nita Noyes
Box 22230, Fish Hoek, 7975
Telephone (021) 552 3850

meaningful by the Lord is Jesus that is.

In the Spirit of God Incarnate, we follow the way of the Gospel. We have dedicated ourselves to the service of disadvantaged women and children and to the education of the young.

Is God calling you to be a witness to the Light that is Jesus?

If so, please contact: Sr Gregoria, G. Bag 553, Eshowe 3815, Tel: 076 349 2077

Be a light to others

Servants of the Holy Childhood of Jesus.
WICKEDNESS. “Put in the effort. This is also vanity and great foolishness.” (Second reading to us, perhaps for some reason), this deep and radical thinker offers an example of this “vanity.”

A few decades of serving on parish councils and committees has left me with the conclusion that in wealthy parishes particularly, there are three kinds of parishioners. There are those who genuinely do God’s work without speaking of the Almighty, and the task of the Parish is to expose the footwork of such survival but inevitably also involved in regional and diocesan work along with serving on myriad other committees, advisory boards and charities.

Which is why the Southern African bishops have been calling on the laity to pitch in and help wherever they can to try and take some of the load off busy priests.

The problem here, of course, is that far too many lay Catholics seem to con-fuse simple helping out with staging a hoity-toity hoe down.

This type of attitude is a kind of observance that attests that God is not far short of full-blown religious fanaticism. These are the parishioners that give the priests the biggest challenge of all. Not only because they are volunteers, who are by their very nature difficult to discipline, but also because by a by-product of their often innocent over-enthusiasm is a combination of pettiness and one-upmanship.

Calling for volunteers among parishioners unfortunately also tends to draw out control freaks who usually end up going well beyond the original notion of having a bit of fun a week like a like a band doing the flowers and working in the soup kitchen or at the Bring-and-buy tables.

These are the zealots who take the parish priest under their wings, some-times pretty forcibly, and appoint them- selves as their de facto father, mother, elder brother, spiritual adviser, financial counsellor and moral guardian. Scripture writer—or worst of all—have delu-sions about becoming his concubine-mistress or even wife.

Another kind are those who genuinely

knuckle down and quietly get on with doing whatever they can to help. And there are those who involve themselves in parish life with such intensity and love that it is not far short of full-blown religious fanaticism. These are the kinds of parishioners who actually do God’s work in the garden, at school, wondering at the serenity of all those priests who were pacing slowly about the parish rose garden in peaceful contemplation.

Then, of course, there are those few pillars of the Church who indulge in something from rumour-mongering and frenetic gossip to seriously advocating changes to the Ten Commandments—or worse, adding a few of their own.

There is no question that being a priest in South Africa is far more challenging and stressful than it was for a kid who would have past the church on my way to and from school. But still, among the sentiments of those priests who were pacing slowly about the parish rose garden in peaceful contemplation.

There will be those who will accuse me of painting such a terrible picture of the modern priesthood that the voca-tions campaign will take a nosedive. That is not at all my intention. I believe that one of the things that puts a lot of priests off the priesthood these days is the perception of a lonely, boring lifestyle bereft of any social interaction or physical challenges.

But the priesthood is not like that. This priest, along with many who work at diocesan level or in the seminary, has everything and more that the average corporate chief executive has—with the possible exception of the fact that his storage space is not big enough, so he is going to pull it all down tomorrow and divide it among all his children and friends. And then I shall come together there all my grain and all my property. And then I shall say to my soul or “life,”

Soul (or “life”), you have many things stored up for a number of years: chill out, eat, drink, party. But there is a chiding sequel to this apparently harmless tale of materialist con-sumption which is to the point: “And if God should come to him, ‘You Fool! This very night, your life, or ‘soul’ is being demanded of you. And all the stuff that you have got ready—who will it belong to?’ And, just in case we had not quite got it, Jesus draws the moral: “So it is with all those who build up their property portfolio and are not wealthy with regard to God.”

The difficulty is that God never forces us to do what we know we have to do, and the voice of God can seem very muted indeed, while the various alternative gods that we choose to offer do appear extraordinarily attractive: the healthy bank-balance, the impressive house, the fancy car, the private jet. And when we come face to face with all these things, we then have to ask ourselves whether we are looking for the happiness that God offers or whether we are simply muddling through without any sense of God’s presence.

Only God can provide that. So, this week, what really matters in your life?

CONRAD

**Volunteers from H.E.**

**Chris Moerdyk**

The Last Word

These are the same self-appointed custodians of Catholicism who act as com-pelled policemen or secret service agents for the Vatican, making notes of what they consider to be breaches of the Vatican code, order of the Mass and any vaguely blasphemous hushed of stories that might be hidden away between the lines of a homily or sermon.

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