

Why justice trumps charity

Page 9



Could a man be a priest with children?

Page 7



Of Gods And Men film: review and interview

Page 10

Bishops: Prepare well for May poll

BY CLAIRE MATHIESON

IN a pastoral letter addressed to the Catholic community and people of good will, the bishops have called for responsible preparation for South Africa's municipal elections on May 18.

The letter, issued by the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC), was signed by its president, Archbishop Buti Tlhagale of Johannesburg. It said the local elections present South Africans with an opportunity to influence the direction South Africa is taking.

"Every [adult] citizen has the right to vote, to participate in the choosing of public representatives, and to give a mandate to those entrusted with governance," the letter said. "But it is more than simply a right—it is a duty which rests on every eligible voter."

The bishops said the country's electorate must use their vote wisely and thoughtfully, "in order to help ensure that our cities, towns and districts are run by honest and competent people, to the benefit of all, especially the poor and the vulnerable".

Eligible voters were given three weekends during which to register. Fr Mike Deeb OP of the SACBC's Justice and Peace department said there had been a positive response to the voter registration weekends, but noted that it remains a challenge to get young people to participate.

Fr Deeb said that it was important for those who have registered to use their vote responsibly and proactively. He said to not vote is "a statement that there is only one legitimate candidate—who is not worth voting for! And not to vote is a vote for the status quo".

The bishops said that the voters' level of satisfaction with current basic services can help one to decide whether to vote for the same party, or whether it is time to give different candidates a chance. Archbishop Tlhagale referred to the bishops' call before the national elections in 2009 when they said "our first loyalty must be to our fellow citizens, and to the good of our country as a whole, not to a specific party or leader".

Fr Deeb said the Justice and Peace department was interested in whether peo-

ple simply vote loyally for their traditional party, their religious, racial, ethnic or tribal candidates, or whether they can break out of predictable choices.

"I think we are experiencing a growing number of people capable of breaking with tradition. This is fuelled by harsh experiences of corruption and abuse of power," the Dominican said.

However, Fr Deeb said the country still has a long way to go, as too many people who are frustrated with those they have previously elected choose not to vote at all. "This implies that their traditional candidate or party is still regarded as the only legitimate one. When people feel free to make a new choice, then we know that a culture of democracy is being born."

The bishops' letter said that one's vote must go beyond party loyalty. Voters, the bishops warned, must be wary of the many public representatives who are interested only in power, wealth and status, which can lead to corruption at the cost of basic service delivery.

"Such people do not deserve our support. If we continue to vote for them, we will have only ourselves to blame if our municipal services crumble and our neighbourhoods are not properly maintained," the bishops said.

The bishops said voters need to ask questions to help find the right choice in voting. "Has your existing ward councillor held a public meeting in your area? Were you invited to it? Has he or she ever explained to the community what work they have done to benefit the neighbourhood? Have things improved or got worse in your area since the last municipal election?"

They said it is important to vote for parties that have made an effort to hear the voices of the people they represent.

Candidates should be known in the community for their good will and positive actions and not be surrounded by rumours and negative movements.

"The answers to these questions will tell us which candidates genuinely want to serve us, and which ones only want to

Continued on page 2



A picnic gathering of more than 1 000 parishioners of St Charles Borromeo parish in Victory Park, Johannesburg, said farewell to Fr Ignatius Fidgeon, their parish priest of 28 years, Paul Pereira reports. Among the entertainment was an Irish dance performance (above). Fr Fidgeon, who is credited with building St Charles' into one of the archdiocese's biggest parishes, has been transferred to Krugersdorp. Parishioners credited the priest's faith and management skills for the community's growth. "I was careful to correct things that went too far, one way or the other," Fr Fidgeon noted in his farewell. His successor is Fr James Ralston OMI, a businessman-turned-priest. (Photo: Valentina Nicol)

Bishop who wrote SA best-seller dies at 81

STAFF REPORTER

BISHOP Oswald Hirmer (pictured), the retired bishop of Mthatha and author of the bestselling catechetical book *Our Joy In Being Catholic*, died on March 5 after a short illness at the age of 81.

Born in Amberg, Germany on February 24, 1930, the future bishop grew up in a deeply Catholic environment, according to Bishop Fritz Lobinger, retired of Aliwal North.

"His active involvement in Catholic youth movements led to his vocation to the priesthood and he therefore entered the diocesan seminary of Regensburg" in Bavaria, Bishop Lobinger said at Bishop Hirmer's funeral Mass in Mthatha's cathedral on March 11.

During his seminary formation, the young Oswald became aware that he was not called to work in his home diocese but in the wider mission field. Together with two other seminarians, Fritz Lobinger and Hubert Bucher, he asked for permission to work as *fidei donum* missionaries. Soon after their ordination in

1955, the three young priests went to work as missionaries in South Africa.

They worked in three neighbouring parishes in the diocese of Aliwal North, with Fr Hirmer serving the parish of Indwe from 1958-69. All three priests would eventually become bishops—with Bishop Bucher heading the diocese of Bethlehem—and retire eventually at the Mater Dolorosa Home in Mariannhill.

In 1971 the bishops of the Xhosa region of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference asked Fr Hirmer to be director of the newly established minor seminary in Umtata. Five years later he joined Fr Lobinger at the pastoral department of Lumko Missiological Institute, then in Queenstown diocese.

He and Fr Lobinger conducted more than a hundred courses in Southern African dioceses on community building and the training for lay ministries.

"During that time Fr Hirmer developed the Seven Steps method of gospel-sharing



The late Bishop Oswald Hirmer of Mthatha with his fellow Bavarian, Pope Benedict.

which soon became known worldwide," Bishop Lobinger said. From 1987-97 Fr Hirmer also taught courses on Small Christian Communities in Asian countries such as South Korea, Malaysia, Japan, Singapore, the

Philippines, India, and Indonesia.

In 1997 he was appointed bishop of Mthatha (then known as Umtata), which he led according to his motto of the "Three Stars": personal relation with Christ, community-building, continuing the mission of Christ.

Bishop Hirmer retired in May 2008, succeeded by Bishop Sithembele Sipuka.

"It was not an inactive retirement," Bishop Lobinger said. "He continued to conduct courses and write books."

Our Joy In Being Catholic, which has been translated into several languages, sold more than 50 000 copies within just over a year of its publication in March 2008.

Early this year Bishop Hirmer's strength diminished rapidly. On February 20 he was admitted at Westville hospital. When it became clear that doctors could no longer help him, Bishop Hirmer was transferred to Doone Village Care centre where he died peacefully the following day.

Ellen May Homewood of St Pius X parish in Plumstead, Cape Town, celebrated her 104th birthday. Born in 1907 in Cape Town, she married Edgar Homewood with whom she had a son and two daughters. Today Mrs Homewood, more popularly known as Nellie, has many grandchildren and great-grandchildren, including two sets of twins. St Pius X parish marked Mrs Homewood's birthday at Sunday Mass with a special blessing by Fr Frank Conlisk SPS, and parishioners presented her with flowers and sang a rousing happy birthday. (Photo: Sr Marian Keyzers)



Community NPO restructures

BY CLAIRE MATHIESON

HOPE Cape Town, a non-profit organisation that provides outreach, education and counselling at a community level, and focusing on HIV/Aids and tuberculosis in the Western Cape, has restructured to expand with partnerships with academic institutions.

Fr Stefan Hippler, the organisation's co-founder, said local and international academic institutions are now associated with Hope Cape Town: the University of Stellenbosch's department of Health Studies, and the German institutes of Hochschule Niederrhein, and the Technical University of Munich and Missionsärztliches Institut Würzburg.

Fr Hippler said this was to accommodate the growing scope of the work the organisation was dealing with. Hope Cape Town also provides an elective

student programme for medical students.

"Hope Cape Town's area of operations in the Western Cape Province meanwhile covers a wide variety of initiatives, ranging from grassroots projects in the communities to e-learning and high profile academic research," he said. He added that the organisation was now operated by full-time employees because of an increase in the volume of work.

The organisation is currently seeking to appoint a director, who will be responsible for the overall management of the organisation.

Meanwhile, various fundraisers will take place during the year, including a golf day on April 1 and the annual Ball of Hope on May 28.

■ For more information visit www.hopecapetown.com or contact 021 938 6660.

Bishops on local elections

Continued from page 1

serve themselves and advance their own political careers. The answers will also help us to see which political parties truly have our interests at heart," the bishops said.

Fr Deeb said parishes can participate in the elections by referring to the bishops' pastoral letter, and by engaging with candidates and parishioners.

He said these would help the community understand the meaning of

democracy and aid the voters to make a responsible decision.

The bishops said the elections, the eighth in the country's 17 years of democracy, are an opportunity to make South Africa a better country, adding that many in Africa are still denied the right to vote freely and fairly.

"Finally, let us place these elections, and the well-being of our nation, in God's hands," the bishops said.

Over R2 million water bill: Not the council's problem

BY CLAIRE MATHIESON

SERVICE delivery has come under the spotlight in the Johannesburg area where abnormally high water and electricity bills have been issued and services cut off to those who could not pay.

One Bryanston resident was recently shocked when he received a bill for R202 841 609 from the City of Johannesburg.

The amount allegedly owed was enough water to fill 5 439 Olympic-sized swimming pools, and makes up 8% of Johannesburg Water's budget. This was later established to be a computer error from the city's debt collection agency which has since rectified the issue.

A Johannesburg man is now pressing criminal charges against Johannesburg mayor Amos Maseko and his finance chief, Parks Tau, for failing to respond to his questions about the municipal services billing fiasco.

Mr Maseko told a press conference that in December 8 333 people who collectively owed the city R320 million had to be cut off from services, but this figure represented only 1% of the customers billed.

He warned residents that the city will continue cutting the services of people who did not pay their bills—despite his admission of errors on about 30 000 accounts which were affected by a "billing glitch caused by an IT problem".

Fr Anthony Egan SJ of the Johannesburg-based Jesuit Institute South Africa added: "Clearly something has gone

horribly wrong. It's impossible even for the most wasteful person to run up monthly water and electricity bills in the hundreds of millions."

He said it was obvious that the system was in a mess. "To make matters worse, City Power and the Water crew and their ilk won't admit it's their mistake, so they 'punish' the victim."

"When you try to complain you get answering machines at 11am or get shunted around until you give up. One person I met told me that she spent over R100 on her cellphone trying to get through, with no results."

The Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference's Justice and Peace department said the issues were clearly due to bad management and system failures.

Kabelo Selema, researcher at the office, said there were many incidents of faulty accounts and that the archdiocesan Justice and Peace office in Johannesburg was offering advice where possible.

The office is also monitoring the city's progress.

"A committee has been appointed to deal with the matter because the billing company that won the bid is accused of this mess."

David Makhura, ANC Gauteng provincial secretary, said both the municipality office and the billing company will be investigated.

Even the minister of local government, Richard Baloyi, is querying his account", said Mr Selema.

He added the issue of faulty accounts was not new in municipalities and "that's the reason why rates payers' associations are gaining more members".

Such glitches and billing errors have not just affected the man on the street.

Cooperative Governance Minister Sicelo Shiceka received a R35 000 electricity bill for his Midrand home, which he had not lived in for some time. It was unclear if his electricity would be cut.

Fr Egan said similar stories have appeared across the city. He called the response of the city "unethical".

"The Council has messed up and is trying to save face by 'blaming the victim'," he said.

When asked whether the city's actions were unethical, Shaka Dzebu, also from the SACBC's Justice and Peace office, said he felt the city was moving too quickly to cut services.

"They should have done a thorough investigation before taking action," he said pointing out that an abnormally high bill should have alerted city officials to a potential error.

Mr Dzebu said full investigations were underway but that the solution was a long way off.

The City of Johannesburg has since set up a hotline for people with billing issues and has encouraged people to act immediately upon receiving incorrect bills, instead of waiting for their services to be cut off.

Rally 'draws attention to abortion'

BY CLAIRE MATHIESON

A CALL has been made to Christians to join in the Right to Life Rally and Mass in Johannesburg on March 26.

De La Salle Brother George Whyte said the rally will draw attention to the number of abortions performed in the country.

He said it was hoped the pro-life message would be heard by those considering an

abortion, and also to remind others of its seriousness.

The day's events will include a Mass celebrated by Archbishop Buti Tlhagale of Johannesburg in the cathedral of Christ the King.

Speakers from across the archdiocese are expected to address the rally including a family whose family member had an abortion, local politicians and international pro-life activists.

Br Whyte said the cathedral will also house tables and stalls offering alternatives to abortion, including advertising adoption, the Mater Homes, Birthright and the Theology of the Body.

Participants are encouraged to bring banners, posters and flags and to meet at the cathedral in the city centre at 09:30 on March 26.

■ For more information contact the cathedral on 011 402 6342.

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Pallottine sister bids farewell to South Africa

BY CLAIRE MATHIESON

PALLOTTINE Sister Vera Altemeyer is returning to Germany after servings, and working at St Joseph's home for chronically ill children in Cape Town for the past six years.

Sr Altemeyer was the Pallottine Provincial Superior during much of her tenure in the country.

International volunteer Sabine Stockhausen said Sr Altemeyer has taken to heart the Pallottine mission of love, humility, and service as well as patience and mercy.

"As a young girl she knew she wanted a life committed to Christ. For close on 48 years Sr Vera worked far from her home and her family to help people and teach children in different parts of the world," Ms Stockhausen said.

Chantal Cooper, the home's Resource Development Manager, said Sr Altemeyer was a woman of strength and her natural leadership abilities stood her in good stead time and again.

"As the provincial superior, Sr Vera was often faced with situations where difficult decisions had to be made and some of those decisions included the closing of the seven of nine houses where the Pallottine Sisters worked and resided," Ms Cooper said.

Current provincial superior Sr Boscona Schämänn said Sr Altemeyer was not concerned about buildings, but about "the different apostolate we were engaged in, the contact with the people, the children and the involvement in the well-being of so many people".

"She was a teacher herself, but it was not only the formal educa-



Pallottine Sister Vera Altemeyer

tion in school but the education of the heart, the relationship of people with their creator, which was her great concern."

Ms Stockhausen said Sr Altemeyer had a special love for God's children and had worked with children all her life.

"Although a chapter has been closed in her life, a new chapter starts, where she will embark on a different journey close to her heart. We shall miss Sr Vera's formidable spirit and her complete love and devotion to our children and she shall always remain in our memories," Ms Stockhausen said.

St Joseph's Home is a partly state funded home for children in Montana, outside of Cape Town. It was founded by the Pallottine Sisters more than 75 years ago and today provides needed medical services for up to 145 chronically ill children mostly from challenging socio-economic environments.

DVD on new missal for sale

STAFF REPORTER

THE Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC) has reproduced a DVD containing the catechetical programme for the preparation of the introduction of the new English translations of the missal.

The new translations, some of which have been introduced in Southern Africa since November 2008, will take effect with the new liturgical year, which starts on November 26, 2011.

The DVD, titled *Becoming One Body One Spirit in Christ*, was produced by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL). A copy of the DVD was presented to Pope Benedict.

"The contents of the DVD gets people riveted, and reports up to now have been not only of praise, but also indicated that people really learn a lot about the meaning of the Mass, the symbols involved in the celebration of the Mass, and the spirituality of living the Mass once one is sent out into the world from the Mass," said Bishop Edward Risi, vice-chairman of the SACBC's Department of Liturgy, Culture and Catechetics.

He said that the SACBC had already sold some 2 500 copies of the DVD, which costs R130.

Bishop Risi recently travelled to Nairobi, Kenya, as part of a



committee to finalise the publication of the new altar missal and missals for people's use in Africa. Taking part were: (from left) Fr Emmanuel Ojaje Idoku from Nigeria; Sr Mariuccia of Pauline Publications in Nairobi; Fr Januarius of Kenya; Fr Fessio SJ of Ignatius Press in the United States; Sr Teresa, project manager of Pauline Publications; Fr Rinaldo Ronzani MCCJ, project manager; Bishop Edward Risi of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference; Bishop Wainaina Kungu of Muranga in Kenya; Sr Gladys of Pauline Publications Nigeria. Sr Teresa and Fr Ronzani previously produced the African edition of the Liturgy of the Hours and are now spearheading this venture.

committee to finalise the publication of the new altar missal and missals for use in Africa.

Members of the committee included the Pauline Sisters in Nairobi (publishers of the missal) and US Father Joseph Fessio SJ of Ignatius Press, who will co-publish the new edition

of the Lectionary for the English-speaking part of Africa with the Pauline Sisters.

■ *Becoming One Body One Spirit in Christ DVDs can be ordered from the SACBC's Department of Liturgy, Culture and Catechetics at 012 323 6458 or jma her@sacbc.org.za*

What's new with you?

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Fr Yves La Fontaine CMM, a former superior-general of the Congregation of Missionaries of Mariannahill, has been appointed postulator of the cause for the beatification of Abbot Francis Pfanner. He succeeds the late Fr Georg Lautenschlager CMM. Here Fr La Fontaine takes the oath of office, witnessed by, (from left), Fr Michael Nadaraju, notary; Mgr Paul Nadal, episcopal delegate; and Fr Christopher Richmond OMI, promoter of justice. Fr La Fontaine, a Canadian from Quebec, was sworn in before the historical commission met at the Retreat House, Mariannahill, earlier this month. (Photo: Sydney Duval)

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New 'generation' of Catholic-Jewish talks

CATHOLIC and Jewish leaders have denounced persecution and violence against religious minorities and expressed support for pro-democracy movements across North Africa and the Middle East.

The comments came in a statement by the International Catholic Jewish Liaison Committee after a four-day meeting in Paris.

Participants expressed "a profound sadness at repeated instances of violence or terrorism 'in the name of God', including the increased attacks against Christians, and calls for the destruction of the State of Israel", the statement said.

The Catholic and Jewish leaders said they deplored "every act of violence perpetrated in the name of religion as a complete corruption of the very nature of a genuine relationship with God".

The committee's meeting reflected on 40 years of formal Catholic-Jewish dialogue. The com-

mittee is formed of Catholics named by the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews and of the representatives of 11 Jewish organisations, including the World Jewish Congress and the Israel Jewish Council for Inter-religious Relations.

Dialogue participants said they felt an obligation to listen to and support their younger members as they face new concerns and prepare to continue the dialogue. Before the meeting, a three-day conference was held for young Catholics and Jews to discuss the challenges of the future and help expand the dialogue to involve more young people around the world.

Members of the dialogue commission acknowledged "a common religious duty to help relieve the global consequences of poverty, injustice, discrimination and the denial of universal human rights", the statement said.

"Participants were especially sensitive to the call of the younger

generation for true freedom and full participation in their societies."

Welcoming delegates, Cardinal Andre Vingt-Trois of Paris said that in the years since the Second Vatican Council, Catholics and Jews have moved from contempt and suspicion to getting to know one another and, finally, to committing themselves to working together to help the world.

"Of course, we must time and time again ensure that anti-Semitism is condemned as a sin against God and humanity, because unfortunately anti-Semitism is not dead," the cardinal said.

Cardinal Vingt-Trois also said that the next step must be an effort to make sure Catholic-Jewish reconciliation is something experienced not just by Catholic and Jewish leaders.

"It must penetrate ever more widely to each of our members. The richness of this work and these lessons must be better known in our parishes and schools," he said.—CNS



Christians are silhouetted as they hold crosses during a protest in Karachi to condemn the assassination of Pakistan's minister for minorities Shahbaz Bhatti. Mr Bhatti, a Catholic and the country's only Christian government minister, was shot and killed when gunmen opened fire on his car on March 2 in Islamabad. He was the second senior official to be killed this year after challenging a blasphemy law that mandates the death penalty for insulting Islam. (Photo: Athar Hussain, Reuters/CNS)

New Irish govt set for clashes with bishops

BY MICHAEL KELLY

IRELAND'S new governing coalition adopted a legislative agenda that looks likely to put it on a collision course with Catholic leaders and other faith groups on gay marriage and plans to reduce Church influence in schools.

However, at least one Catholic leader welcomed the coalition's commitments on social welfare and overseas development aid.

Fine Gael sought the support of the Labour Party after the former won the most seats but not enough to form an overall parliamentary majority in the February 25 general election in which the predominant issue was the country's economic crisis.

The coalition's legislative programme proposes a constitutional convention to introduce same-sex marriage and remove the crime of blasphemy from the statute book.

Commenting on the issue of same-sex marriage, John Murray of the pro-family think-tank the Iona Institute said that the move "would mean there is no longer any social institution aimed at encouraging men and women to raise their children".

"Currently opinion polls indicate substantial support for same-sex marriage, but this support is likely to be soft, and much of it would evaporate when the issue is properly debated," he said.

Catholic bishops have yet to comment on the legislative programme. However, before the election campaign began, Cardinal Sean Brady of Armagh, Northern Ireland, warned that any move to undermine the family based on marriage between a man

and a woman would be likely to face a Supreme Court challenge.

In education, the coalition proposes to "negotiate" the takeover of schools owned by the 18 religious congregations criticised in the 2009 Ryan Report, which investigated abuse into Church-run government institutions, such as orphanages.

A spokesman for the congregations refused to comment but insisted that the congregations retained all their constitutional rights to private property. The schools are owned and operated by the religious congregations but receive 100% state funding.

The coalition's agenda also includes plans to change the current exemption in equality legislation that allows the churches and other faith-based organisations to refuse to employ people whom they think may undermine the ethos of the religious group or institution.

Catholic bishops and their Anglican counterparts successfully fought plans to remove the exemptions in 2008 and would be likely to form an alliance against the move again.

While the Labour Party campaigned on a platform that would see the legislation of abortion in Ireland, Fine Gael, which is opposed to abortion, appears to have prevailed. The abortion issue will be referred to an "expert group" for recommendations.

Missionary of Africa Father Sean Healy, a prominent social justice campaigner, welcomed the coalition's commitments to stop cutting social welfare rates and to reverse the cut in the minimum wage that had been introduced by the outgoing government.—CNS

Pope to answer questions on TV

BY CAROL GLATZ

POPE Benedict will answer people's questions about Jesus Christ in an unusual Good Friday broadcast on the Italian state television network.

A Sua Immagine (In his Image), a Catholic perspectives show that normally airs on Sundays on RaiUno, will present an 80-minute programme on April 22 featuring a pre-recorded interview with the pope.

The Vatican Television Centre

will film the pope from the Apostolic Palace a few days before Good Friday as he answers three questions presented to him beforehand. The questions will be based on what people send by e-mail to the RAI television show's website.

The show's host, Rosario Carello, told Vatican Radio that they will read every e-mail sent in and then make a selection of the most common inquiries, as well as the most interesting questions, including ones that could

"open a stronger debate".

He said they wanted to help programming on Good Friday return to being a time for reflection and spiritual preparation. There had been a show in the past dedicated to questions about Jesus and, he said, producers wanted to revive that idea.

They thought having the pope answer viewers' questions would be "extraordinary" because he "listens so carefully" and is good at expressing complex ideas so simply, Mr Carello said.—CNS

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Like everybody, future priests told

BY CINDY WOODEN

EVEN though it is not easy to like every member of the seminary, the parish or the Church, being part of Christ's body means accepting them all, Pope Benedict told Rome diocesan seminarians.

It is true that God calls each individual into a personal relationship with him, "but at the same time, God's call is a call in community, in the Church community", the pope said during an evening visit to the diocese's major seminary.

In the seminary chapel, the pope led the priesthood candidates in *lectio divina*, a prayerful reading of the Scriptures.

In his reflection, the pope told the students that just as in biblical times, God continues to call people to follow his Son, and he awaits their response in word and deed.

"God, the Lord, has called each one of us, each one of us



Seminarians wait for Pope Benedict to arrive at the Rome diocese's major seminary. (Photo: CNS)

called by name," he said. "God, who is so great, has time for each of us."

But the personal call is also a call that comes within the community of the Church and is a call to serve God in a particular way through the Church.

"At the moment, the seminary is the body in which you concretely realise the call," he told the students. "Then it will be in a parish" where they will be called on "to accept, to support and to animate the whole parish and all the people—those who are nice, and those who are not so nice—who are part of this body".

To love and serve God means to love and serve the Church, the body of Christ, even when "we don't like the body", Pope Benedict said.

The pope told the students that the unity of the Church is not something that God or the Holy Spirit imposes on it, "but it is the fruit of agreement and of a common commitment to behaving like Jesus with the strength of his Spirit".—CNS

Church seeks new ways to evangelise

BY CINDY WOODEN

THE Catholic Church's "new evangelisation" effort is not an attempt to present the Gospel again to people who did not understand it the first time, but to present the Gospel in a way that makes sense and gives hope to modern men and women, said the general secretary of the Synod of Bishops.

At a Vatican news conference, Archbishop Nikola Eterovic, the synod official, presented the *lineamenta*, or outline, for the 2012 general Synod of Bishops.

The 65-page outline is a reflection on various aspects of the theme "new evangelisation" and includes dozens of questions about current needs and practices; bishops' conferences are supposed to answer the questions by November 1 so that their responses can be used as a basis for the synod's working document.

The synod is scheduled to meet at the Vatican from October 7-28, 2012; Pope Benedict chose the theme, which was announced just a few months after he established the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelisation.

The synod outline defines "new evangelisation" as "the courage to forge new paths in

responding to the changing circumstances and conditions facing the Church in her call to proclaim and live the Gospel today".

Archbishop Eterovic said the most immediate aim of new evangelisation is to help people who already are baptised, but do not practise the faith, rediscover the joy of believing and actively living their faith. It also includes reminding them and all Christians of the obligation of witnessing the Gospel and proclaiming it to others.

"Christian witness must be both private and public, embracing one's thoughts and actions, the way of life inside Christian communities and their missionary outreach, their educational action, charitable activities and their presence in contemporary society in order to communicate the gift of Christian hope," the archbishop said.

The document said bringing people back to Christ will be impossible unless there are efforts to evangelise increasingly secular cultures, to evangelise increasingly diverse societies and to evangelise the media, the economy, politics, science and the Church itself.

Although it did not specifically mention the sex abuse crisis, the document said one fruit of evangelisation "is the courage

to speak out against infidelity and scandal which arise in Christian communities as a sign and consequence of moments of fatigue and weariness in the work of proclamation".

A true and lively faith gives individuals and entire church communities the ability to recognise their faults and sins, seek repentance and begin all over again, witnessing to the fact that conversion and salvation are possible in Christ, it said.

By calling for a "new evangelisation", the Church is not criticising the way the faith was initially transmitted, the document said, but rather it is recognising that it needs to find new ways of proclaiming the Gospel that respond to the needs of people who are living in modern societies where anything involving God or faith is considered naive or too private for polite conversation.

The document also said new evangelisation is essential where the media tend to preach instant gratification, where population shifts have meant the disappearance of "Catholic countries", and where science and technology have become so advanced and seemingly able to accomplish anything and everything that science is the god people go to when they're hurting or confused.—CNS

SA priests set for 2012 Dublin congress

BY SARAH MACDONALD

IRISH Catholic leaders have formally announced plans for the 50th International Eucharistic Congress, including efforts to keep the costs affordable.

The congress will be from June 10-17, 2012, at various locations in the Dublin archdiocese, including the Royal Dublin Society. The closing Mass will be held at Dublin's Croke Park and is expected to attract up to 80 000 pilgrims, including 12 000 from overseas.

During the official launch, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin moved to dampen expectations that Pope Benedict will attend the congress.

"There are no plans in place for a visit of the pope at this moment," he said. He added that the pope had been invited.

Anne Griffin, general manager of the congress, told Catholic



News Service the closing ceremony will be ticketed and that international delegates who come on a three- or seven-day registration will have the option to attend.

"Registration is opening in the next month for anybody who wishes to come to the Congress," she said.

"We know that there will be roughly 1 000 people from Canada because they have already expressed an interest; we have approximately 1 200 from the deaf community from

all around the world; we have 100 priests from South Africa who are waiting for registration to open so that they can come; and we have a delegation from Taiwan who are waiting to register."

At least 800 pilgrims from Australia are also expected to attend.

Ms Griffin said the congress' organisational team in Dublin had set the registration fee at 80 euros (about R770). The fee for the last Eucharistic Congress—held in Quebec City, Canada, in 2008—was three times higher.

Those who cannot afford to attend can follow the congress' website (www.iec2012.ie), which provides resources in six languages.

The theme of the congress is "The Eucharist: Communion With Christ and One Another".

Ireland last hosted the congress, held every four years, in 1932.—CNS

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The Southern Cross

Editor: Günther Simmermacher

Church in dialogue

IT was inevitable that before long the traditionalist Society of St Pius X (SSPX) would see an end to its formal talks with the Vatican which started in 2009. The big question is how Pope Benedict will regard future relations with the society.

Since his election to the papacy in 2005, Pope Benedict has gone far in trying to heal the rift with the SSPX, who are often called Lefebvrist (a moniker its supporters dislike), and reintegrate the society in full communion with the chair of Peter.

In 2009, Pope Benedict lifted the excommunications of the four bishops (including that of the Holocaust-denier Bishop William Richardson, which caused the pope immense embarrassment). Also in 2009, the pope relaxed restrictions on the use of Tridentine Mass. All the while, the pope has encouraged the talks which the head of the SSPX, Bishop Bernard Fellay, in February declared to be nearing their unresolved end.

Short of repudiating the current and authentic teachings of the Catholic Church, Pope Benedict has done all he could to effect reconciliation with the SSPX. The authenticity of much of these current teachings is the sticking point. The SSPX demands that the Catholic Church should revoke virtually all of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council.

Bishop Fellay has added further obstacles to the path of healing what increasingly appears to be an irreversible schism, such as the beatification of Pope John Paul II.

Absurd though the notion of the Holy See's total acquiescence with the SSPX's demands might be, it would be unjust to consider the society as having negotiated in bad faith. In his interview on the SSPX website in February, Bishop Fellay restated the society's consistent position: the talks were not intended to seek compromise, but to state the SSPX's position on matters of faith and Church teachings.

In their conscience, the members of the SSPX cannot be in full communion with a Church which they consider to be in error. In that light, the SSPX believes they are rendering the Church a service by challenging these perceived errors.

There never was a chance of the SSPX submitting to the Holy See's demand that it

recognise the authority of the pope and the Second Vatican Council. There presently is, it seems, as much a chance of the Anglican or Lutheran churches returning to full communion with Rome as there is of reconciliation with the SSPX. Perpetuating a dialogue on full unity where positions are so deeply entrenched would appear to be a pointless exercise.

Dialogue with the SSPX will surely continue, but perhaps on a new ecumenical path.

In the meantime, the Catholic Church must remain a welcoming place for traditionalists who seek to live their faith in full communion with the pope. Those Catholics who were drawn to the SSPX solely for reasons of liturgy should now be able to attend Tridentine Mass in churches that are in communion with Rome (though the mechanics whereby such Masses are offered without causing parochial division evidently still require some attention).

While much energy, thought and accommodation has been extended to traditionalists, the Catholic hierarchy seems to be unmindful of the alienation experienced by many other Catholics. It seems the hierarchy is prepared to marginalise progressive Catholics instead of listening to and engaging with their grievances, which we must presume are expressed with love of God and the Church.

Are those whom some Church leaders tend to characterise as "dissidents" or "renegades" less worthy of engagement than those traditionalists who explicitly defy and reject the authority of Holy See with what Cardinal Ratzinger once called "a schismatic mentality"?

The Catholic Church seeks to fulfil Christ's command that all his believers be one, and much progress has been made in dialogue with other denominations. But the Church must also maintain unity within. This means that its leaders must engage in respectful dialogue and seek reciprocal understanding with all Catholics, on an understanding that the Church's true teachings can withstand criticism.

The Holy Spirit blows where it wishes, independent of human command. It must be sought and discerned everywhere, on the left and on the right, and even among those with whom we may disagree.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right to shorten or edit published letters. Letters below 300 words receive preference. Pseudonyms are acceptable only under special circumstances and at the Editor's discretion. Name and address of the writer must be supplied. No anonymous letter will be considered.

X marks the spot of Red Sea parting?

I FOUND the article on the parting of the Red Sea (January 19) very interesting. In 1954 I was in the Royal Air Force and was posted to the Suez Canal for the better part of a year, so I know the geography of the area fairly well.

Anna Maria Basquez has written a good article, but I find one of her statements puzzling. She says: "The spot where the parting took place is 120km north of the most popularly theorised place in Egypt, which has been the Suez Canal."

What does this mean? The Suez

Canal runs almost exactly north to south, with a few bends from Port Said on the Mediterranean to the town of Suez on the Gulf of Suez. It is 168 km long. Qantara, which she mentioned is about 50km south of Port Said and therefore about 120km north of the Suez itself. Perhaps this is what she meant to say or perhaps what the Colorado scientist meant to say.

Pelusium which is also mentioned, is the large area north east of the Suez Canal—originally salt marshes or the Sea of Reeds. This

later became confused with the Red Sea.

As the Catholic News Service graphic showed, the Red Sea is roughly 200km wide or more. But what happened to the Gulf of Aqaba in the graphic? The boundaries of countries are shown accurately apart from those of Israel.

The Gulf of Aquaba is part of the Great Rift Valley, beginning with the River Jordan and the Dead Sea and running down through Africa, as we know. Is there something I am missing here? I do not wish to find fault—the article is still very interesting and worthwhile.

David Sleeman, Johannesburg

Nullifying choice

PRESIDENT Jacob Zuma's recent remarks that when one chooses the African National Congress, one also chooses heaven leave me cold.

Besides the fact that this statement is theologically incorrect, it is also blasphemous, incendiary and dangerous. I believe most South Africans, irrespective of whether they are Christian or not, will find this statement shocking.

The pathetic justification by the ANC's "chaplain general" that Mr Zuma was merely drawing an analogy reinforces exactly how dangerous these comments really are. There was no comparative language and no euphemism.

Just across our borders, Zimbabwe's autocrat Robert Mugabe has previously stated: "Only God, who appointed me, will remove me."

Such statements nullify democracy and its aims and objectives. They remove a voter's democratic choice and delegitimise the very idea of a multiparty democracy.

Consequently, documents that created our democracy in the first place such as the Bill of Rights and, even more importantly, our Constitution, are reduced to secondary, less important papers.

Statements like these are not new for Mr Zuma. He has frequently, usually before an election, claimed that the ANC somehow has a special godly privilege. In March 2005, when addressing a group of celebrities at a restaurant in Cape Town during an election campaign, Mr Zuma said that those who vote for the ANC will be "blessed on earth and heaven [sic]". In an interview in 2006 he stated that he is "like Christ", that the media and his detractors wanted to nail him to the cross like Jesus and that certain newspapers had sought to "crucify him". ("I'm like Christ—Zuma", *The Sowetan*, March 24, 2006).

I have no doubt that Mr Zuma actually believes what he says. Even more distressing for me is the fact that thousands of his supporters actually believe those words too!

It is only when the ANC starts losing its overwhelming support to an alternative that it will start

demonstrating the humility that scriptures of various religions describe.

Manny de Freitas, MP DA

Apostolic succession

TOMMY Hartley (February 2) appears unaware that Jesus himself founded his Church about 2000 years ago (Matthew 16: 13-19). No Seventh Day Adventist discoveries will deny this gift of God.

The Church of course came before the New Testament, a sacred recording of Jesus' life. Through the centuries this was nurtured by monks who copied and wrote the good news which we have today, 2000 years later.

As Jesus informed St Peter, our first leader, he would give him the keys of the kingdom of heaven and requested him to guide his Church with the words: "What you prohibit on earth will be prohibited in Heaven and what you permit on earth will be permitted in Heaven."

One could not consider the above injunction to be anything but precise, boundless and eternal and therefore Mr Hartley's references to unbiblical and paganistic practices eg, Baptism (which Jesus himself undertook), the Sabbath, statues, celibacy etc, are quite inappropriate and are within the scope of God's and his Church's commandments.

Jack Andre, Kloof, Kwa-Zulu Natal

Lesser of two evils morally wrong

FATHER Peter-John Pearson (February 9) states that:

1. The Catholic Parliamentary Liaison office wants higher standards of medical facilities, and

2. If the country is going to allow abortions they should only be performed in specialised areas.

This statement appears to condone the "lesser of two evils" philosophy in terms of which we should sometimes agree to the commission of the lesser of two wrongs, such as in this situation the performance of abortions in medically safe, rather than unsafe areas.

This philosophy is always morally wrong (and has never been part of Catholic teaching) for the following reason: we can never agree to a lesser of two evils (a safer abortion) since we may not agree to any evil at all, no matter how less it may be.

This letter also attempts to answer the following question asked in the same issue by Archbishop Buti Tlhagale of Johannesburg "What is the status of the principle of a lesser evil in Catholic moral theology today?"

Damien McLeish, Johannesburg

The new Mass: a work of man

IN her letter "Bishops should monitor carefully" (February 2), Cate Bompas states that with Vatican II the Church came to realise that the old liturgy was "theologically and pastorally deficient

and out of touch with the spiritual needs of contemporary Catholics". I beg to differ.

It was the liturgy, especially the Tridentine Mass, which sanctified souls for centuries. St John Vianney said: "All good works taken together do not equal the sacrifice of the Mass, since they are human works, while the Holy Mass is the work of God."

The New Mass however, is the work of man, in a particular manner of Mgr Annibale Bugnini, but with the input and observation of six Protestant ministers, representing the World Council of Churches, the Anglican and Lutheran Communions and the Taizé Community (*Le Documentation Catholique*, May 3, 1970).

With the advent of the New Mass in 1969, Cardinals Bacci and Ottaviani (former prefect of the Holy Office, now known as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith) wrote a "Critical Study of the New Order of Mass" (September 3, 1969) to Pope Paul VI, stating that "the *Novus Ordo Missae* [...] represents, as a whole and in detail, a striking departure from the Catholic theology of the Holy Mass as it was formulated in Session XXII of the Council of Trent".

I doubt very much that the Trent Council Fathers found the liturgy to be theologically and pastorally deficient. On the contrary, they were defending the Catholic faith and Catholics at large against the errors of Martin Luther.

Whereas for centuries priestly and religious vocations flourished, the opposite can be seen today. Monasteries, convents and seminaries close down and parishes, especially in Europe, are without priests. Why has this come about?

I can now use the words of Ms Bompas and apply them to the liturgical reforms since Vatican II stating that today there are "theological and pastoral deficiencies leading to contemporary Catholics being out of touch with spiritual needs".

Fr Anthony Esposito, Society of St Pius X, Durban

The need for public speaking training

CATE Bompas raises a very important comment in her letter "Bishops should monitor carefully" (February 2).

To sit Sunday after Sunday listening to an overlong, boring homily must be having an impact on many of the "Sunday" Mass folk who are in need (we all are) of encouragement in their faith.

Public speaking with its many facets does not come easy to many without ongoing training and I do feel our bishops should be aware and take action

Bill Benson, Johannesburg

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Fr Kevin Reynolds

Point of Ministry



THE interesting on-going series of articles on priesthood and ministry by Mgr Paul Nadal got me thinking about a ministry that one hears very little about: that of retired priests.

Canon Law requires bishops and priests to offer their resignation at the age of 75. Some may retire at a younger age, usually owing to health problems. I believe that there are few bishops and priests who ever retire fully. Perhaps "semi-retirement" would be a more accurate description because bishops and priests never seem to stop practising some form of ministry.

One of the best examples of a bishop who retired at 77-years but then continued a formal ministry was the late Archbishop Denis Hurley OMI. After stepping down as archbishop of Durban he became a very effective parish priest of Emmanuel cathedral parish for ten years. When he left that position to live in an Oblate retirement home in Durban he continued to pursue his unique ministry by writing his memoirs and attending functions where he loved to interact warmly with people.

Significantly, Archbishop Hurley died in February 2004 while on his way home from participating in a special function; the golden jubilee celebrations of the Durban North convent school which he had originally opened.

Archbishop George Daniel of Pretoria is another bishop who has been busy in his retirement. Since he retired from the office

he had held for nearly 34 years in January 2009, he has accepted the chaplaincy to the Bapsfontein campus of Little Eden.

However, when his successor, Archbishop Paul Khumalo, resigned ten months later, Archbishop Daniel was invited by Pretoria's apostolic administrator, Mgr Abel Gabuza (now bishop of Kimberley), to assist with confirmations until a new archbishop was appointed. Thus, Archbishop Daniel was kept busy with this ministry virtually every weekend throughout 2010.

Some retired priests continue to practise a particular aspect of the overall priestly ministry in which they excel. This might be ministering to the sick and elderly, giving retreats or writing research papers and articles.

Usually retired priests have rendered several decades to serving God's people. In doing so they have developed sensitive skills in ministering to people and a keen awareness of our fragile human condition. This is something that develops over time and cannot be learned only from books.

Such interaction requires unhurried time that those in the active ministry might not always have. It is also something less formal than how busy parish priests usually serve their parishioners.

Because retired priests tend to be of advanced age they find themselves visiting and being entertained by former parishioners who have known them for many years. These parishioners have often grown old along with such priests who are regarded more as friends than as official

representatives of the Church.

This naturally creates a special bond between them, a closeness that facilitates easy rapport which can be useful when these priest-friends are asked to intervene in problems of the extended family.

Of course, because such priests have been associated with different generations of families they are often requested to officiate at baptisms, weddings and funerals of such families' members.

This can cause tension with some parish priests who assert their "right" to perform these ceremonies. This is an issue requiring delicacy on the part of retired priests who should never trespass on others' areas and affairs. By always respecting parish priests' rights and gently negotiating matters with them, such tension need not exist.

Without a doubt, retired priests play a unique role in the Church's overall ministry.

Once bishops and priests retire, hopefully their former flocks continue to pray for them, particularly that in retirement they still feel valued by God and his people.

Reciprocally, as retired priests enjoy more time for reading, reflection and prayer they, too, should not forget parishioners who enriched and accompanied them on their ministerial life journey.

■ Fr Kevin Reynolds is a retired priest of the archdiocese of Pretoria.

Michael Shackleton

Open Door



Could a man be a priest with children?

I would like to know if the Church permits a priest to have children via in vitro fertilisation (IVF) or naturally before entering the priesthood.

Dmitri Abrahams

A MAN with children is not normally suitable for the priesthood. This presumes that he is unmarried but has children needing his fatherly care and support. The celibate state of the priesthood requires that a priest must be free from the obligations of marriage and parenthood so as to devote all his energies to the service of the People of God.

An exception could be in the case of an unmarried man or widower who has mature children who are off his hands and living independently of him. The local bishop or superior would have to be satisfied that the man has been regularly practising the faith, can live a celibate life and can also conform to all the requirements of canon law and of the diocese or religious order. The children would have to agree to their father's desire for the priesthood so as to avoid any bitterness or disputes in the family later.

The Church will not accept divorced men for seminary training unless they also receive an ecclesiastical decree of nullity, declaring the marriage invalid. Even then, they will not be accepted if they have children still depending on them.

In regard to having children by IVF, the Catechism (2377) says it is morally unacceptable because it dissociates the sexual act from the procreative act. In this way the act is not one by which two persons give themselves to each other, but one that entrusts the life and identity of the embryo into the power of doctors and biologists and establishes the domination of technology over the origin and destiny of the human person.

Although a man who has had children from this method is not automatically excluded from the priesthood, the fact that he did and the reason why he did it could influence the decision whether to accept him or not, depending on the circumstances of the case. It would be asked, for example, if he had any continuing relationship with the woman who bore the children, and if so, how this could affect his future as a priest.

An unmarried man with children who feels called to be a priest, is free to ask his parish priest or bishop how his particular case might be considered.

■ Send your queries to Open Door, Box 2372, Cape Town, 8000; or e-mail: opendoor@scross.co.za; or fax (021) 465 3850. Anonymity can be preserved by arrangement, but questions must be signed, and may be edited for clarity. Only published questions will be answered.

It's good to know I'm mortal

Henry Makori

Letter from Nairobi



I THINK I had excellent preparation for Lent this year. My sister rang me up the other day to find out if I was alive.

Well, I hadn't been sick. I hadn't traveled on Kenya's notorious killer highways. And there hadn't been an Al Shabab terrorist attack in Nairobi.

Rather, my sister had dreamt that I was dead. She woke up with her face drenched in tears. I was very much alive, I assured her. We laughed. Our people believe that when you dream that someone has died, it means he or she enjoyed a great meal that night. We laughed again.

But the issue of my own death hasn't left me since. For sure, one day I will die. I will close my eyes for the last time and never open them again. I will leave many people behind in sorrow. I will leave a lot undone. But elsewhere life will continue pretty much as if I never lived.

There are times I have looked at the pictures on the obituary pages of newspapers and wondered how people would feel about me when I am dead. How will they take it? How will my close relatives and friends cope? It is all so sad.

I have sometimes recalled relatives and friends who died and wondered how things would be if they were still here with us. Sometimes I have actually asked myself where exactly they could be. Are they completely dead (non-existent) or are they alive in another form some-

where? Doing what?

One of the interesting responses to these questions is to be found in African religion. Death does not mean one absolutely ceases to exist. If one was morally upright, he or she transits into the world of the ancestors and continues living there.

The dead petition God on behalf of the living. They receive sacrifices and offerings and in return bless and protect the living. They are close to God who shares with them some of his power.

The dead can always come back to the world of the living as good or evil spirits, depending on their moral condition at the time of their demise. But most importantly, they continue living here through "nominal reincarnation".

That concept means after I die I will return when my relatives name children after me. It means that, because I am named after certain relatives who died, their life continues in me. Thus in African faith, human life never ends at physical death.

I like this idea. It is consoling. But now that people in my village no longer offer sacrifices or pour libations to the ancestors, haven't we lost touch with the spirit world? Will I not get a hostile reception from angry spirits upon arrival in the ancestral world when I die?

I honestly have no answers to these questions.

Lent gives me a different perspective. On Ash Wednesday the priest marked my forehead with ash saying: "Remember man that thou art dust and unto dust thou shalt return." It is a sobering message. But it is the truth. My death is certain.

For 40 days, I am invited to keep that in mind and to strive to be reconciled with God and neighbour. I am also offered an opportunity for inner renewal through prayer, fasting and sharing what I have with those who are in need.

The gloom of Lent ends with the bright joy of Easter. Jesus Christ assures all who believe in him that he will raise them from the dead at the end of time. And they will live in a perfect world with God forever. He offers as a guarantee his own resurrection.

In fact the Bible presents resurrection of Christians as a certainty: "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep" (1 Thes 13-14).

I want to grow in this faith this Lent. And I have my sister to thank for reminding me of my own mortality.



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Bishop Joe Sandri with priests from the Witbank diocese and the national team of the Neocatechumenal Way at Lydenburg Maria Trost Centre.



St Francis Xavier Ordination Seminary students from Crawford, Cape Town, went on a walkabout tour of the CBD. Here they are pictured outside the Cape Town Chancery. (Submitted by Chris Chatteris SJ)



Fr Albertus Josephs says a prayer for the elderly residents of Andries Snyman Home for the Aged. A dinner was organised by the Catholic Women's League, Eersterust branch. (Photo: Eric Bruce)



Fr Malcolm McLaren was ordained to the priesthood by Archbishop Buti Tlhagale of Johannesburg, at Our Lady of the Wayside parish in Maryvale. The ordination Mass was concelebrated by 39 priests, including Mgr Hugh Connolly rector of St Patrick's College in Maynooth, Ireland. In the background are Rev Dick Descroizilles and Fr Russell Pollitt SJ. (Photo: Kirstin Kwan)



Richard Opperman from England and Grace Cooke from Ireland exchanged vows on their wedding day at Holy Redeemer in Quigney, East London. (Submitted by Mervyn Gatcke)



Fr Donovan Wheatley (left) has been appointed assistant parish priest to Fr Joe Money at the parish of the Blessed Sacrament and Star of the Sea in Virginia, Durban. "Fr Joe was one of the priests that played an important role in helping me to realise the call of God in my life. He was also my parish priest at St Anne's when I was younger. I am close friends with his family as well," said Fr Wheatley. (Submitted by Maggie Fuller)



Catholics from across South Africa descended on Rabbuni Centre in Klerksdorp for a retreat organised by Fr Don Bohé. Pictured are members of various churches across the country.

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Edited by: Nadine Christians

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Jesus commands our conversion to justice

If we want peace, we need justice, Pope Paul VI once said—but there is a lack of justice in South Africa. The Church therefore must lead a conversion, argues Bishop BARRY WOOD OMI.

NOW Saul, breathing murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord, was making his way to Damascus to capture those who belonged to the Way and bring them in chains to Jerusalem. Nearing Damascus, a light from the sky flashed around him and he fell to the ground. A voice said: "Saul, Saul why are you persecuting me?" "Who are you, sir?" The voice replied: "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting."

Paul was a good, devoted Pharisee who one commentary says "knew his catechism but did not know God". After this encounter with Jesus he began his journey of conversion.

Conversion is about transformation; to transcend one's narrow mental constructs, which include our pre-conditioning, prejudices, strongly-held opinions and stubborn beliefs. Moving beyond the mind opens us to the dimension of mystery which is beyond definition and mental categories.

There is a word for that: metanoia. *Meta* means "beyond", *noia* means "mind". So metanoia means to go beyond one's way of thinking and behaving, being transformed.

Every year the Church celebrates the feast of the Conversion of St Paul, on January 25. In this feast the Church calls us to look back at Paul's conversion and calls us to a similar conversion of mind, heart and being.

The Church calls us to be aware of the signs of the times through the African synods and meetings of regional Church bodies; it calls us to work for economic justice, to work

with all our energy to do away with the huge gap between rich and poor.

A businessman throws a party for hundreds of thousands of rands and serves sushi on the bodies of half-naked women while nearby is an informal settlement where people do not have the necessities of life and are angry because there is no service delivery. Decadence and impoverishment do not lead to a stable just society. We need to see Jesus in the suffering of the economically deprived majority of our people.

"Saul, Saul why are you persecuting me?"

I am Jesus in the unemployed, in the informal settlements, in those demanding service delivery, in the street people.

We hear the communists and the trade unions calling loudly and clearly and passionately for economic justice. Where is our prophetic voice?

All the prophets, in their different ways, attest to one truth: the quality of our faith is measured by the justice found in our society, and that justice is to be measured by how we treat those with the least status, the most vulnerable.

Jesus affirms this. He tells us that our relationship with God is intimately connected to our relationships with the weakest members of our society. Over and over the gospels show him standing with those who are outcasts, poor and marginalised. He teaches us that in the end, when we stand before God, we will be asked about the hungry, the impoverished, the sick, the imprisoned, the stranger, and what we did for them.

Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these you did it to me. Just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.

Few of us would intentionally turn our backs on those in need. We care for the orphans and vulnerable children, we have hospices, encourage home-based care-givers, the St Vincent de Paul Society, develop-



Residents move wheelbarrows loaded with containers of water in an informal settlement near Johannesburg. In his reflection, Bishop Barry Wood calls for a conversion towards justice. (Photo: Siphiwe Sibeko, Reuters/CNS)

ment projects and so on. But what Jesus and the prophets were talking about was not simply charity—they were talking about justice.

A short parable may help explain the difference. Once there was a town built beyond the bend of a river. One day some children noticed three bodies floating in the river, one was dead, one sick, and one a healthy child. They rushed to tell the adults who buried the dead, brought the sick one to hospital and found a family to care for the child.

This went on repeatedly for years. The good townsfolk would take care of all who floated down the river to them. Over time they developed efficient and elaborate systems of care and took pride in their generosity. However, during all these years, nobody thought to go up the river beyond the bend and discover why all these wounded bodies came floating down.

Charity attends to the injured; justice tries to go up the river to

find out why there are injured, and then tries to change the situation that created the river of homeless, wounded and dead bodies in the first place.

Justice requires that the world be organised so as to create a playing field in which *all* can participate with dignity. Charity provides needed relief from suffering, but it does not address the deeper causes of suffering.

For us Christians, engagement in radical change is not first and foremost a question of politics and economics, although these may be involved. Rather, the prime motivation for seeking to change the world must be the furtherance of the idea of the kingdom proclaimed by Jesus—a kingdom of justice, peace and reconciliation.

Our Catholic tradition offers us a rich heritage for thinking and acting justly. It requires that we learn to think about morality not simply in personal terms but in communal

terms. To follow Christ we must not only be personally moral, we must ensure that structures and institutions we live with are just, that they protect and allow for the flourishing of the most vulnerable in our society.

Pope Benedict reminds us in his 2006 encyclical *Deus caritas* (God Is Love) that the Church cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice. He continues: "She has to play her part through rational argument and she has to awaken the spiritual energy with which justice, which always demands sacrifice can prevail and prosper."

To practise justice is to examine, challenge and try to reform economic, social, cultural and religious systems that unjustly penalise some. We may not always know what strategy to take, but we can always know that Jesus stands with us in the midst of brokenness, among those who are poor, marginalised, forgotten.

So the conversion of Paul challenges us, as Pope Benedict does, "to awaken the spiritual energy in the Church to confront economic and social injustice".

Pope Paul VI said: "If you want peace, work for justice."

Mohandas Gandhi said there are seven social sins: politics without principle; wealth without work; commerce without morality; pleasure without conscience; education without character; science without humanity; and worship without sacrifice.

In the letters to *The Southern Cross* we hear debate about in-house challenges of the Church in South Africa: language of the liturgy, music, celibacy, ordination, authority, implementation of Vatican II, and sexual issues—but very little about social and economic injustice. How do we "awaken the spiritual energy" to confront the issues that affect the poor, the unemployed, the destitute? Are we fiddling while our Rome—South Africa—is burning?

■ Bishop Barry Wood is the auxiliary bishop of Durban.

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Cannes film festival winner had monastic advisor on set

When a movie director wanted to film the story of monks martyred in Algeria in 1996, he roped in the the services of Henry Quinson, a lay Cistercian. MARK PATTISON spoke to him.

Of *Gods and Men*, the Cannes Film Festival grand prize-winning feature currently shown in Ster Kinekor's arthouse cinemas, had a "monastic adviser" on the set to help faithfully depict the lives of the French monks whose story is at the heart of the movie.

Henry Quinson, who lived for six years at a Cistercian monastery in France, knew two of the monks portrayed in the film.

The subject matter is not typical for a movie: the lives of seven Trappist monks in turmoil-ridden Algeria in the mid-1990s. All seven were kidnapped in 1996 and ultimately beheaded.

"It's very difficult for me to make a movie that would be cheap—the kind of movie that would only be about blood," Mr Quinson said in a telephone interview from Marseille, France, where he lives. "It would be very far away from the spirit of the people I knew."

Xavier Beauvois, who directed and co-wrote *Of Gods and Men*,

approached Mr Quinson after seeing his memoir on monastic life; Mr Quinson had earlier translated into French an English-language book on the murdered monks.

Mr Quinson said Mr Beauvois emailed him asking: "I need someone to be with me on this movie. ... When it's written [in the script] 'the monks pray', how are they dressed? What do they do? Do they sing? I need someone who knows the monastic life from the inside."

Mr Quinson, who had been considering making a movie himself on the French Trappists, agreed to help the director.

"My little job," Mr Quinson said, "was to tell their story, be faithful to the brothers, and reach out to as many people as we can".

Mr Quinson said Algeria in the mid-1990s was struggling through many of the same issues today roiling Muslim-majority nations in north Africa and the Middle East.

"The murder of the monks was a turning point in Algeria. That doesn't mean there's no violence in Algeria today. Things are shaking up in Algeria right now," he said.

"What is true is that no Christians were murdered after '96, and I think that Algerian people started to come to terms with the idea that violence is not going to beget any bright future and another way to solve the problems would not be terrorising people, not only for their religious faith—most people who were murdered in Algeria were Muslims themselves—but questions



Twenty years ago, Henry Quinson walked away from a comfortable life as an international banker to join the monastery. (Photo Christophe Lefebvre)

were raised about who murders whom."

Mr Quinson said: "For the two months when we shot the movie in Morocco, I was there every day. Mr Beauvois would have me very close to him—'Henry, are you sure this is right?'—to re-create the atmosphere of the monastery."

Then came the bombshell from Mr Beauvois when it came to the chapel scenes: "Henry, for these parts you are the film director. I cannot direct something I know nothing about. What are they going to do? What are they going to think?"

"I found all the songs, and all the dialogue, which makes up about 15% of the movie. I rewrote one of the speeches about being a martyr, which was a very important part of the movie," Mr Quinson said. "We spent several days in a monastery" coaching the actors, working with Mr Beauvois on the setting, and re-creating the monastery in Morocco for filming.

Mr Quinson, the son of a banker, was born in New York City but has lived in Europe, primarily



The cast of *Of Gods and Men*: (top row from left): Lambert Wilson as Christian, Jacques Herlin as Amédée, Loïc Pichon as Jean-Pierre, Michael Lonsdale as Luc, and Philippe Laudenbach as Célestin. (Bottom row): Olivier Rabourdin as Christophe, Jean-Marie Frin as Paul and Xavier Maly as Michel. (Photo: Alice Cambournac/Why Not Productions/Sony Pictures Classics)

France and Belgium, since he was five.

"I'm not a real monk in the sense that I'm not a part of a monastic order. But I'm celibate, working within the Church," said Mr Quinson, who turned 50 on March 8.

"I worked as teacher here in Marseille. I managed to have part-time jobs so I would have a lot of time to help out the neighbours" in a Muslim enclave in Marseille with

"a lot of educational help and now a lot of financial help."

"A lot of these kids were considered not very able to go far in their studies" for academic or financial reasons, he said.

Before filming, he got advice from "a big French film producer" that "this story with seven monks being killed is not going to sell". Cannes awards and international acclaim later, the producer's opinion is being debunked.—CNS

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Testimony of sacrifice

Of Gods and Men: A witness to non-violence

Reviewed by John Mulderig

A BRILLIANT dramatisation of real events, *Of Gods and Men* is a restrained religious masterpiece and a memorable viewing experience from which every adult—as well as many mature teens—can expect to profit.

The film recounts the fate of a small community of French Trappists living in Algeria during that nation's civil war in the 1990s.

Targeted by violent Muslim extremists—the Algerian conflict pitted militant Islamists against a secularly oriented military government—the monks must decide whether to continue their medical and social work for the vulnerable local population or abandon them by fleeing to safety.

From the first, their headstrong prior, Br Christian (Lambert Wilson), is resolved to stay. He also refuses the military guard that civic officials offer to put in place to protect the monastery, regarding such a measure as out of keeping with his order's commitment to peace.

Br Christian's confreres, however, forcefully point out to him that, with all their lives at stake, the decision on whether to remain must ultimately be a collective one. As each individual struggles with the issue, weighing his own welfare against his sense of commitment to his vocation and to those he serves, their varied personalities are subtly but strikingly profiled.

By contrast to the tightly wound Br Christian, for example, Br Luc (Michael Lonsdale) emerges as an avuncular, unflappable character whose faith endows him with a courageous good humour that nothing, it seems, can disturb.

Using the tools of the monastic life itself, director Xavier Beauvois finds a path to the heart of the Gospel through simplicity, a compassionate sense of brotherhood and an atmosphere of prayer enriched by sacred music and potent silence. The result is a profound meditation on



Lambert Wilson and Jean-Marie Frin star in a scene from the movie *Of Gods and Men*. (Photo: Sony Pictures Classics/CNS)

what Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer famously termed the cost of discipleship.

While thoroughly measured in its portrayal of Muslim characters—the monks are shown to be on good terms with their sympathetic neighbours, and even one of the area's militia leaders ultimately demonstrates his respect for other faiths—*Of Gods and Men* presents a timely and artistically adept testimony to the power of non-violence in the face of anti-Christian fanaticism.

Viewers of faith will also welcome the lyrical, though not unrealistic, image of religious life presented here, conveyed most powerfully in the climactic scene of a shared meal that movingly evokes the Last Supper. Indeed, in addition to its success on so many other levels, *Of Gods and Men* could serve as a highly effective tool for the vocation directors of various religious orders.

If that seems ironic, given the life-threatening peril that forms the dark backdrop for this masterful piece of cinema, it's an irony—or, perhaps more accurately, a divine paradox—as old as the Church itself.

The film, in French with subtitles, contains brief gory violence, some unsettling images and a single instance each of rough and crass language.—CNS

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Sr Donegan HC

HOLY cross sister Carmel 'Bridie' Donegan was born the sixth of 13 brothers and sisters on February 2, 1944, in a rural area of County Fermanagh near Newtownbutler, Northern Ireland, to devout Catholic parents Patrick and Kathleen Donegan. The Donegan boys and girls used to walk five km each way to the local Catholic primary school.

Bridie, according to her family, was a bit of a tomboy, high spirited and contributed willingly to her share of the work at home and with the farming chores.

After Bridie left school she worked for some years in clothing establishments and enjoyed earning her own living. But God was calling her to religious life and, at the age of 21 she entered Holy Cross Convent in Belfast, on the feast of the Triumph of the Cross, September 14, 1965.

It was in Belfast that she made her first profession on August 17, 1967. She then trained as a nurse at the Royal Victoria Hospital on Falls Road amidst escalating tension and violence in Belfast.

Sr Carmel lived, trained and worked, along with her sister companions, in one of the most troubled areas of Belfast.

Many of the victims of violence were admitted to the Royal Hospital. In 1976 she was transferred to the Holy Cross convent in Dublin and served as a nurse at a nearby hospice. She found she had a great gift for nursing terminally ill patients—some of whom were young—and for comforting their families and friends.

In 1987, a new chapter in her life began, when she was transferred to South Africa. Sr Carmel was assigned to nurse frail and aged Holy Cross Sisters in Aliwal North, and transferred to the Holy Cross Home in Pretoria a year later.

For the next 23 years she devoted herself to the care of sisters, priests, brothers and laypeople who were admitted to the home. In addition to nursing, Sr Carmel got involved in other activities such as teaching and mentoring health-carers and nursing assistants, fundraising and looking after visitors. Whatever was going on Sr

Carmel wanted to know about and be involved in it.

In January, Sr Carmel underwent major surgery, after which there were complications. She accepted and faced her situation, entrusting her life to the Lord and his will for her. Just as she had been an instrument for bringing peace and acceptance to many a terminally ill person, the Lord seemed to grant her a special grace of peace and acceptance. She died in the early hours of January 30.

Her funeral took place on February 2—her 67th birthday. Archbishops William Slattery and George Daniel together with 18 priests concelebrated her funeral Mass which was attended by many religious, the nursing staff, friends from Pretoria and beyond.

The Donegan family, provincial superior Sr Francis Grogan, Mr Du Plooy from the boards, and nursing sister, Elizabeth Mokoena, paid tribute to a loving sister, a friend, a colleague, a woman of faith, a faithful Holy Cross Sister.

Sr Maureen Rooney HC

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LOPES—Daniel Augustine. Passed away 14/3/2009 in Australia. A loving friend gone to rest. Always lovingly remembered by family, friends, in Cape Town and the Legion of Mary (Bellville)

you I have recourse from the depth of my heart and humbly beg you to come to my assistance. Help me now in my urgent need and grant my petitions. In return I promise to make your name known. Amen. Gilbert.

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Editor: Günther Simmermacher (editor@scross.co.za)

Advisory Editor: Michael Shackleton

Editorial staff: Claire Mathieson (c.mathieson@scross.co.za)

Claire Allen (c.allen@scross.co.za)

Nadine Christians (n.christians@scross.co.za)

Manager: Pamela Davids (admin@scross.co.za)

Advertising: Elizabeth Hutton (advertising@scross.co.za)

Subscriptions: Avril Hanslo (subscriptions@scross.co.za)

Dispatch: Joan King (dispatch@scross.co.za)

Accounts: Desirée Chanquin (accounts@scross.co.za)

Published independently by the Catholic Newspaper & Publishing Company Ltd, Cape Town

Opinions expressed in this newspaper do not necessarily reflect those of the editor, staff or directors of The Southern Cross.

The Southern Cross is a member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations of South Africa. Printed by Paarl Post, 8 Jan van Riebeeck Drive, Paarl.

Published by the proprietors, The Catholic Newspaper & Publishing Co Ltd, at the company's registered office, 10 Tuin Plein, Cape Town, 8001.

Family Reflections

2011 FAMILY THEME: PEACE ON EARTH BEGINS AT HOME"

MARCH—IF YOU WANT PEACE WORK FOR JUSTICE. —Pope Paul VI

17th St Patrick. Because of the strong influence of the Irish missionaries in South Africa we still celebrate St Patrick's Day as a call to being missionary and as thanksgiving for their generosity. Greet and thank any Irish people especially missionary priests, brothers or sisters.

19th St Joseph. On this day he is honoured as the husband of Mary and the foster father of Jesus. He is seen as a just man who tried to do the best he could for the family entrusted to him. Discuss his role as husband and father.

20th 2nd Sunday of Lent. Our Transfigured Christ. Life is a journey that is sometimes difficult but God gives us hope and courage too as in the transfiguration where the apostles were given a vision of a glorious future. The apostles said: "Lord it is good for us to be here." Consider what transfiguration experiences you have had and when have you been able to say: "Lord it is good for us to be here" to give you courage for the journey.

21st Human Rights Day SA. Pope Paul VI's words, "If you want peace work for justice", are particularly applicable on this day. Peace is not the absence of war, or of violence or an imposed suppressed calm but of true order. Speak with one another, especially with children about the events commemorated on this day in our country. How just is our present situation and will it lead to true peace built on love of neighbour?

Liturgical Calendar

Year A, Week 1

Sunday, March 20, Second Sunday of Lent
Gen 12:1-4, Ps 33:4-5, 18-20, 22, 2 Tim 1:8-10, Mt 17:1-9

Monday, March 21, feria
Dan 9:4-10, Ps 79:8-9, 11, 13, Lk 6:36-38

Tuesday, March 22, feria
Is 1:10, 16-20, Ps 50:8-9, 16-17, 21, 23, Mt 23:1-12

Wednesday, March 23, feria
Jer 18:18-20, Ps 31:5-6, 14-16, Mt 20:17-28

Thursday, March 24, feria
Jer 17:5-10, Ps 1:1-4, 6, Lk 16:19-31

Friday, March 25, The Annunciation of the Lord
Is 7:10-14; 8:10, Ps 40:7-11, Heb 10:4-10, Lk 1:26-38

Saturday, March 26, feria
Mic 7:14-15, 18-20, Ps 103:1-4, 9-12, Lk 15:1-3, 11-32

Sunday, March 27, Third Sunday of Lent
Ex 17:3-7, Ps 95:1-2, 6-9, Ro 5:1-2, 5-8, Jn 4:5-42 or 4:5-15, 19-26, 39-42



St Anthony of Padua

HOLY St Jude, apostle and martyr, great in virtue and rich in miracles, kinsman of Jesus Christ, faithful intercessor of all who invoke you, special patron in time of need. To

Southern CrossWord solutions

SOLUTIONS TO #436.
ACROSS: 5 Ajax, 7 Holy Father, 8 Toll, 10 Deviants, 11 Silver, 12 Decent, 14 Mellow, 16 Ailing, 17 Prepared, 19 Blew, 21 Uneventful, 22 Peal.

DOWN: 1 Whit, 2 Eye-level, 3 Wander, 4 Shaved, 5 Area, 6 Abstinence, 9 Olive grove, 13 Celibate, 15 Warned, 16 Andrew, 18 Paul, 20 Wild.

OMI Stamps
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can help in the education of young men for the OMI priesthood at St. Joseph's Scholasticate (www.scholasticate.org.za) KwaZulu-Natal

Please send them to: OMI Stamps, Box 131202, Scottsville, 2009
Thank you!
Due to the cost, we cannot thank everyone who sends stamps

Community Calendar

To place your event, call Claire Allen at 021 465 5007 or e-mail c.allen@scross.co.za, (publication subject to space)

BETHLEHEM:

Shrine of Our Lady of Bethlehem at Tsheseng, Maluti mountains; Thursdays 09:30, Mass, then exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. 058 721 0532.

CAPE TOWN:

Holy Hour to pray for priests of the archdiocese, 2nd Saturday monthly at Villa Maria shrine Kloof Nek Rd, 16:00-17:00.

Good Shepherd, Bothasig. Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration in our chapel. All hours. All welcome.

Day of Prayer held at Springfield Convent starting at 10:00 ending 15:30 last Saturday of every month—all welcome. For more information contact Jane Hulley 021 790 1668 or 082 783 0331.

Shrine festival Schoenstatt, Constantia, Human Rights Day March 21 10:00 am to 13:00 pm. Theme: Reflection on the Stations of the Cross in the context of Human Rights Day. All welcome

DURBAN:

St Anthony's, Durban Central: Tuesday 09:00am Mass with novena to St Anthony. First Friday 17:30pm Mass—Divine Mercy novena prayers. Tel: 031 309 3496.

JOHANNESBURG:

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament: first Friday of the month at 09:20 followed by Holy Mass at 10:30. Holy Hour: first Saturday of each month at 15:00. At Our Lady of the Angels, Little Eden, Edenvale. Tel: 011 609 7246.

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

PRETORIA:

First Saturday: Devotion to Divine Mercy. St Martin de Porres, Sunnyside, 16:30. Tel Shirley-Anne 012 361 4545.

ST FRANCIS CARE CENTRE
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CHARITY GOLF DAY
In aid of **St Francis Care Centre**
Venue **E.R.P.M. GOLF CLUB**
Date **~ WEDNESDAY - 13 APRIL 2011 ~**

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** Fourball only - R1 200,00 **
SPONSORSHIP OF PRIME HOLES - R1000,00

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The Southern Cross

Box 2372, Cape Town, 8000 • 10 Tuin Plein, Cape Town, 8001

Tel: (021) 465 5007 • Fax: (021) 465 3850

Editorial: editor@scross.co.za • Business manager: admin@scross.co.za

Advertising: advertising@scross.co.za • Subscriptions: subscriptions@scross.co.za

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**MIRACULOUS
MEDAL**



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3rd Sunday in Lent – Year A (March 27)
Readings: Exodus 17:3-7, Psalm 95:1-2, 6-9
Romans 5:1-2, 5-8, John 4:5-42

Delve into the mystery of God

ONE of the things that happen to us in the course of Lent is that we journey deeper into the mystery of God. And we have a long way to go.

Look at the **first reading** for next Sunday; the people have been rescued from slavery in Egypt, and get thirsty in the desert (it happens, in such a climate). So they did what you and I do, and “grumbled against Moses” (and, of course, against God, though they do not say so): “Why did you bring us up from Egypt” (and the answer is, of course, because they wanted to be free!). So Moses turns to God, who effortlessly produces water from a rock; but the freed slaves have to travel further into the mystery, and so the place gets called “Temptation” and “Disputation”—a hint of trouble that lies ahead. Have you been complaining about God this last week?

The **psalm** reflects on that episode in the desert, even calling God the “Rock”, and invites us to go deeper into the mystery: “Come—let us bow down in worship; let us kneel before the God who made us.” Then he remembers the story about “Temptation” and “Disputation”, and urgently begs those who are gathering to praise God: “If only you would listen to his voice today. Don’t harden your hearts.” This week let us remember what God has done for us.

In the **second reading**, Paul is telling the

Nicholas King SJ
Sunday Reflections



Christians in Rome, after some mind-bogglingly difficult argumentation, why they have grounds for confidence, and that is something that lies deep in the mystery of God, because: “We have access to this free gift, in which we have our standing, and boast in the hope of the glory of God...the love of God is poured out in our hearts, through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.”

The **gospel** for next Sunday is one very long pilgrimage into the mystery of God and, especially, of Jesus. It might be good if you would have a good read of it in the few days before you attend Mass at the weekend.

We start with two references to Jacob, the donor of the well at Shechem. We then discover that Jesus was “weary from the journey”, and “sits on the well”, and that it is midday. At that point, a woman comes to the well to draw water, and all South Africans know that midday is just the time when you

do not come to draw water, so this good lady is on the outside. Jesus draws her in, first by rather abruptly asking her for a drink (rather like the children of Israel in the first reading, we may feel). The woman knows that it is odd, because “Judeans and Samaritans do not have dealings with each other” (there are several possible translations of this sentence, it must be said). Slowly, Jesus gets her interested, by speaking of “living water”, which in turn makes her wonder if Jesus could possibly be “greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well” (answer: yes, as a matter of fact).

Then, as Jesus speaks a little more about the water, “a spring of water that bubbles upwards into eternal life”, the woman starts to get it, for she calls him “Lord”, and asks for that kind of water, “so that I may not be thirsty, nor come here to draw water”. Then, very gently (and you will have to read this bit for yourself), Jesus shows an accurate knowledge of her somewhat irregular domestic arrangements; this leads her to go a bit deeper. Once more she calls him “Lord”, and adds: “I see that you are a prophet.”

We give her full marks for this insight, and that means she can receive some further teaching, about the “Spirit” and “Truth”. This in turn enables her to raise the question of “Messiah” (or “Christ”), and takes her deeper still, as Jesus responds: “I AM, the One who is

talking to you.” At this moment of revelation, Jesus’ dim-witted disciples turn up, and can hardly conceal their prudish astonishment that he is talking to a woman, so they too have to be educated.

They urge him to eat (they have gone to buy a picnic), but that never happens any more than he gets the drink that he had asked the woman for. Instead, they are (gently) confronted with their lack of understanding (“Who brought him something to eat?”), with an invitation to go deeper into the mystery of who he is: “I have food to eat that you have no idea about...my food is to do the will of the One who sent me.”

That takes him naturally into a parable about harvest-time, and “the fields white for the harvest”. He tells them that “I have sent you to harvest that over which you have not toiled”—and the word for “toil” appears three times in this verse.

Meanwhile, the woman has, significantly, left her bucket (the very reason that she appeared on the scene at all!), and instead of a lonely water-carrier has become an apostle to her fellow-Samaritans, who in turn go beyond her witness to the astonishing discovery that not only is Jesus “the Christ”, but also “the Saviour of the World”.

May this week take you deeper into that mystery.

Remember the bad old days

REMEMBER Sundays in the old South Africa with no TV, no sport, shops all closed, minds all closed and the only thing to stop you contemplating suicide was the prospect of Monday morning’s newspapers to see how many of the *volk* had been caught breaking the Immorality Act.

Those were the days when you could set your watch by those four o’clock in the afternoon thunderstorms that used to roll in over the highveld, drop their loads and disappear by half past four, leaving brilliant, good-and-clean-and-fresh evenings in which to enjoy sundowners.

That doesn’t happen anymore, because there’s a newfangled climatic thing called tropical air that comes in from over Zambia, Zimbabwe and the erstwhile Zaire to produce continuous cloud cover and rain at all hours of the day.

Sundowners have been replaced by midsummer bowls of hot soup in front of the television set.

Everything has changed, hasn’t it? Especially television. Quite apart from having access to about 80 channels, we can now watch sport on a Sunday without being struck by lightning, and we can even watch the BBC news without fear of the devil or a communist infecting us with information. We even get Catholic Mass celebrated by the pope, broadcast live from the Vatican (and not from behind a bush). It’s all a far cry from that apartheid era minister of communication

Chris Moerdyk
The Last Word



calling TV the work of the devil and the Catholic Church a lot worse than that.

And unlike 30 years ago, when we had a foreign white person presenting the news in impeccable Oxbridge English, we now have a foreign black person presenting the news in impeccable Oxbridge English.

And talking about the news on the telly, remember those days of yore when, after two solid hours of a *Lewe Onder Die See* documentary, we’d get that lavatory seat SABC symbol and the only news bulletin of the day with poker-faced presenters telling us with all the solemnity usually accorded to the outbreak of a world war that South Africa had lost a cricket test against a rebel Australian eleven and that subsequently “a Bantu” had been detained?

No matter what happened in South Africa in those days, somehow the upshot was “a Bantu” being detained. From blowing up an electricity pylon to Gary Player missing a putt at the British Open, the consequence was always the same.

At one stage South Africa held the world record for detaining people at the

drop of a hat. In fact, if anyone did drop a hat, somewhere, someplace, somebody would pay the price with instant detention.

Remember the SABC news then: “The price of gold dropped by one dollar an ounce yesterday and as a result the petrol price will increase by 80 cents and SAA domestic air fares by a further 25%. The minister was not available for comment. A Bantu has been detained.”

Well, except for petrol price hikes, things are very different these days. “Bantu”, thank God, are no longer being detained on principle and ministers (or at least their spokespeople) are often known to be available for comment.

SABC news now: “In a cash-in-transit heist outside Boksburg today, 15 armed men in stolen bakkies forced a security vehicle off the road, shot and killed the five guards and sprayed passing motorists with AK-47 gunfire, causing a further 12 deaths, before escaping with R80 million. No-one has been arrested and the minister said that cash-in-transit heists were unacceptable and that the whole issue of crime needed to be addressed.”

South Africa now holds the world record for addressing issues without actually doing anything about them.

And remember all those years ago when just about every second news bulletin would carry an item about a Putco bus crashing and killing all 50 passengers?

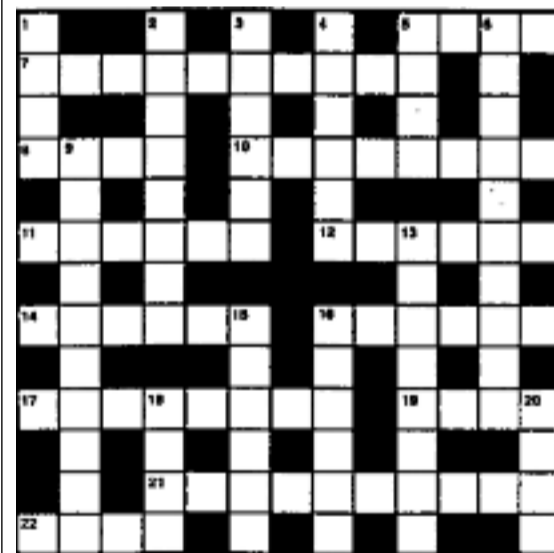
Nothing has changed. Only nowadays it’s a minibus taxi crashing and killing all 50 passengers. No-one is ever arrested of course.

Weather reports all those years ago were a lot more accurate than our modern computer and satellite-assisted boffins. I remember a Zambian TV weatherman standing confidently in front of a completely straight face: “There will be weather all over the country tomorrow...”

But in spite of the fact that the weather has gone berserk, crime is rampant and that the country seems to be run by a petulant kindergarten, it’s still a lot better than it was.

Frankly I’d much rather take my chances with crime and corruption than go back to those boring old days of the SABC and listening to incessant bulletins about people being detained for absolutely no logical reason whatsoever.

Southern Crossword #436



ACROSS

5. Hero of the Trojan War (4)
7. The pope’s conventional address (4,6)
8. Sound church bell slowly (4)
10. Stand I’ve moved for heretics (8)
11. Precious metal for Judas (6)
12. Morally acceptable (6)
14. Carmel lower down holds what’s ripe (6)
16. Gail in a tizz is not well (6)
17. Standing ready (8)
19. Pentecostal wind did it (4)
21. Dull, like a parish where nothing happens (10)
22. Church bells and thunder do it (4)

DOWN

1. The Sunday known as Pentecost (4)
2. At the height of your sight (3,5)
3. Deviate from 16 down (6)
4. Like the head of a Buddhist monk? (6)
5. Region of Caesarean section (4)
6. Fast accompaniment on Good Friday (10)
9. Does the dove of peace dwell here? (5,5)
13. The state of a Catholic priest (8)
15. Cautioned from 16 down (6)
16. St Peter’s brother (Mt 4) (6)
18. Convert on the road to Damascus (4)
20. Bewildered, finding savage inside (4)

Answers on page 11

Conrad



CHURCH CHUCKLE

TWO men considering a religious vocation were having a conversation. “What is *similar* about the Jesuit and Dominican Orders?” the one asked. The second replied, “Well, they were both founded by Spaniards—St Dominic for the Dominicans, and St Ignatius of Loyola for the Jesuits. They were also both founded to combat heresy—the Dominicans to fight the Albigensians, and the Jesuits to fight the Protestants.”

“What is *different* about the Jesuit and Dominican Orders?” “Met any Albigensians lately?”

Send us your favourite Catholic joke, preferably clean and brief, to The Southern Cross, Church Chuckle, PO Box 2372, Cape Town, 8000.