



## Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference

### He Is Risen!

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### He is Risen, Risen Indeed!

As we journey through the next season of the Church – Eastertide – we exult in the resurrection of Christ and ask grace and guidance to live this in our daily lives. On behalf of the Bishops, Secretary General and staff of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, the Office for Communication and Media wishes you the gentle presence of the Risen Saviour.

### Radio Veritas – Accessible at last!

One of the Easter gifts to the Church in Southern Africa has been the granting of a Medium Wave Licence to Radio Veritas, the only Catholic Radio Station in our Conference Territory. We congratulate Fr Emil Blaser and his team for their tenacity over the 12 year struggle to realise this dream.

Radio Veritas is available on 576Mw, live streaming on [www.radioveritas.co.za](http://www.radioveritas.co.za) or on channel 170 on the DSTV Audio Channels. As this is our Catholic Station, we are going to have to show our ownership by calling in, contributing and by giving financial aid to the running costs. See [www.radioveritas.co.za](http://www.radioveritas.co.za) for more details of how you can own your Catholic Station.

You can listen to Fr Chris as he discusses the 'Working Church' – showcasing the work of the Church in Southern Africa – every Thursday from 9 to 10am.

Follow @workingchurch on twitter or email your questions to [workingchurch@radioveritas.co.za](mailto:workingchurch@radioveritas.co.za).

### Bishops' Conference Youtube feed

We're proud to announce the inclusion of the Conference YouTube feed on the website – have a look at some of our projects.

Our latest addition is a short video on building homes for Orphans and vulnerable children.

Launch of the newly revised Afrikaans Order of Mass congregational parts

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## DIE HEILIGE MISORDE IN AFRIKAANS

Greetings from the Afrikaans Language Pastoral Region of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference.

At the January 2012 Plenary of the SACBC the newly revised Afrikaans dialogue texts between the celebrant and the congregation [the first phase] was approved for implementation throughout the SACBC-area with effect 27 May 2012, Pentecost Sunday. The second phase will see the new translations of the collects, prayer over the gifts, concluding prayers, prefaces and Eucharistic prayers come into use. A date is yet to be finalised.

To assist the Afrikaans speaking communities with the transition a 24-page pocket booklet containing the updated congregational parts will be available for order as from Monday 23 April 2012 [see order form below].

The recommended retail price of these will be R 2.00 each. A discount of 20% will apply to orders of 100 or more. Don't delay, place your order today!

[Download Order Form Here.](#)

## Chrism Mass – Human Suffering

*- Archbishop Buti Tlhagale's address on Thursday 5 April, Chrism Mass, Cathedral of Christ the King, Johannesburg*

I take the opportunity, on the anniversary of the celebration of the Sacrament of the Priesthood, to congratulate and to express on behalf of the diocese our indebtedness to the priests of the Archdiocese for their availability, their generosity and their selfless dedication to serving the Catholics of the diocese. The Priesthood entails self-sacrifice, self-denial, perseverance and a compassionate heart. The Priesthood is not a thankless job. It is a conscious response to the great commissioning of our Lord Jesus Christ: "Go forth therefore and make all nations my disciples and teach them to observe all that I have commanded you. And be assured, I am with you always, to the end of time" (Mt. 28.19). At a deeper spiritual level, Priests, even though they appear to lead a lonely life, they are not alone. Living in the presence of Christ and bringing Christ to others is a source of fulfilment in the life of the Priest.

I thank the Religious, the Sisters and the Brothers who are equally committed to the work of evangelization. A word of gratitude to the many men and women, co-workers with the Priests, who have intentionally, consciously chosen to become missionaries in their own communities.

The blessing of the oils, especially the oil of the sick and the celebration of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, invite us to focus on human suffering, on pain and conflict, on unfulfilled promises, and on sheer human drudgery. There is deep-seated aspiration to escape the bondage of poverty. Poverty has never been a blessing. There's the strong desire to escape the pain of a crippling terminal disease such as cancer or AIDS.

Pain and suffering is also brought about by conflicts in the family, by the divorce of spouses. The dread of untimely death at the hands of heartless criminals and unacceptably high levels of deaths on our roads are a constant threat. The inability to provide for one's family diminishes one's sense of dignity. A people's dignity is taken away when they are forced to live in shacks like animals, without any privacy. The scandalous unequal distribution of wealth causes pain and suffering and weakens the very fabric of society. When one's family suffers pangs of hunger or sleeps in a tin shack, exposed to the elements, it is difficult to understand the prophet Amos who says God employs suffering as a medicine to bring sinners to their senses and to obedience (Amos, 4). It is difficult to believe that God tests people in order to reward them for their fidelity. It is even more difficult to believe with Job that human suffering belongs to the mystery of God (Job, 38).

It is however true that human pain and suffering can, and does open the hearts of people to compassion and to collaboration. This is borne out by the many organizations such as St. Vincent de Paul, Retrouvaille, Doctors Without Boundaries, Care-givers, orphanages; the many institutions run by religious congregations, health workers, philanthropists etc., But there is more. Human suffering reminds us that we are each other's keeper, that we share each other's fate. The Gospel of Matthew reminds us of the King's answer: "I tell you this: anything you did for one of my brothers here, however humble, you did for me" (Mt. 25.40). We all have a duty, an obligation to eliminate pain and suffering; a duty to stamp out the cancerous greed amongst ourselves; we have a duty to lift ourselves out of poverty and not always to look to others to provide for us. If profits made by companies were destined to eliminate poverty and raise the standards of living, our communities would have a different look. Unfortunately we still live in a world where we succumb to temptation that "each one for himself and God for us all". The nobler aspirations in us are simply compromised.

The church on the other hand, seeks to remind the communities which suffer because of neglect, short-sightedness and greed, that suffering for what is right can enhance the dignity of those who so suffer. Suffering for a cause, ennobles the spirit. Suffering should also be seen as part of our mortality. At times, sacrifices bring the best out of people. It points to deeply rooted moral values of those who endure pain. We must take courage from the fact that God the Father, Christ's Abba, so loved the world that He did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for the redemption of all. Christ died in order to restore humanity's unity. Through being baptised into His death we have become God's adopted children. We too can cry: Abba. We are children of the same Father. But alas, the scandalous divisions in our midst, in our communities, in our Nation. We either pay lip-service to this unity or our stubborn hearts simply refuse to accept that we belong together. Because of this refusal we suffer. St. Paul enjoins us to share in the suffering of Christ so that we may fill up what is lacking to Christ's afflictions for the sake of His body, that is, the Church (Col. 1.24). In light of Christ's suffering, our small Lenten sacrifice should be extended to benefit others. There is an open invitation to trim our lifestyle especially those of us who lead a decadent lifestyle, who live and spend excessively, who are completely oblivious of the needs of others. We are invited to join in Christ's work of redemption by sharing meaningfully and deeply in His self-sacrificial love. The symbol of the Passion Week seeks to evoke feelings of our collective responsibility. In sharing in Christ's suffering we are also promised to share in His victory over sin, suffering and death. In Christ's death and resurrection, the unity of humanity has been restored. And yet, the grasp in faith, of this unity, eludes us.

We focus on human suffering because God's Word became flesh. God's Word is inextricably joined to our human world. The tragedy of religion is that we allow others to push religion to the periphery of society.

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In this situation of human suffering, the priest, the shepherd, has a special mission modelled on that of Christ, the good shepherd. The mission of the priest-shepherd is spelled out in the book of the prophet Ezekiel: “I myself will pasture my sheep. I myself will show them where to rest. I shall look for the lost one, bring back the stray, bind up the wounded, and strengthen the weak” (Ezek. 34.15). The good shepherd is one who lays down his life for his sheep (Jn. 10.11). Would the meaning of these words sink deep into our hearts and become the charter of our ministry, our job-description if you wish. How can we speak of human suffering and not take courage from Blessed Mother Theresa and the many founders of religious congregations? How can we speak of compassion and not remember St. Francis of Assisi

The priest is yet a shepherd of another kind. There are believers, who, having undergone a conversion like St. Francis of Assisi, have this burning desire to become a channel of God’s love. There are Christians who have stood on the very “edge of the infinite” (Taylor 728). Christians who have experienced closeness to God, who have had a direct and personal experience of God’s grace, God’s love, God’s presence, Christians who have sensed God’s presence like Moses who saw God’s face in a burning bush.

This spiritual energy ought to be tapped in order to give life to the community. These “life-changing experiences” are to be harnessed, as it were, for the spiritual benefit of many. It is good to eliminate human suffering. It is equally good to accompany people to the very edge where they sense and experience God’s powerful presence.

+ Buti Thagale

7/04/2012

Chrism Mass, Cathedral of Christ the King

