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## NEWSLETTER - December 2021

### **Thank you for the ending year**

By most accounts, the ending year of 2021 was not an easy one, yet by the grace of God, though dented in many ways, we have pulled through it. One of those dents was the loss of a priest, Fr. Bakajika and a trusted staff member, Sis'Khuthala. As we end the year without them, we renew our gratitude to God for their life and contribution to the Diocese.

As we end the year, I wish to express gratitude to all in the Diocese, the laity, priests and religious who despite these difficult times did their best to live out their faith and to carry out their mission. I particularly thank you for taking seriously the invitation to engage in the synod and other ministries that are helping the Diocese to develop. I am grateful for the good cooperation between the diocese and religious congregations, particularly for the visibility of women religious and work in the parishes.

One manifestation of cooperation among priests, religious and the laity was our ability to raise just over R700.000 this year for the bishop's fund. Considering the hard economic times in which we live, this is laudable, and I thank all who contributed to this successful fundraising. The full list indicating detailed contributions by various entities will be sent to all and the report of the use of the fund as usual will be given at the next MDPC. Thank you once more.

### **Continued reflection on vocation**

In the last newsletter we attempted to explain two distinct but mutually enhancing vocations, namely lay and ordained vocation. I wish to add and clarify a third element about Christian vocation, namely the personal vocation. The three related aspects of Christian vocation are *Self-identity*, *State of life* and *Particular or Personal vocation*. In the second part I will end by commenting on the recent municipal elections.

### ***Who we are called to be, (Identity)***

Our first level of vocation is the universal or common call to holiness which comes from the sacrament of baptism and is strengthened in the sacrament of confirmation. It is the vocation to love and serve God and neighbour and to cooperate with God's redemptive work of others as well as ourselves. This vocation applies to all. "Therefore, all in the church, whether they belong to

hierarchy or are cared for by it, are called to holiness” (Lumen Gentium 39) which is “the perfection of charity (love)” (Lumen Gentium 40) because God is love.

***How we are called to live (different states of life)***

The second level comes through different states of life, the clergy, by engaging in sacred ministry (church altar), laity by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will (world altar) and the religious by giving outstanding and striking testimony for the kingdom. (See Lumen Gentium 31). States of life are the ways of living out the common Christian vocation in particular ways.

***What God calls us to do (Personal vocation)***

The third level is the personal vocation, which consists in an individual, considering the need, the circumstances, his/her skills and passion taking up a particular task or ministry after discernment with the Church as a concrete way of living out the common Christian vocation and state of life. It is what may be called “a vocation within a vocation”. This concretization of common and state of life vocation can take the form of a ministry in the Church or a service in society or a good cause. St. John Paul II (Pope) in his encyclical on the laity affirms personal vocation thus:

Formation leading to the discernment and acceptance of one’s personal vocation is fundamental in the formation of lay people... Discerning and accepting a personal vocation should continue throughout one’s life. To see and accept God’s will is a task for a sincere Christian each day of his or her life (Christifideles laici 58).

The Pope is emphatic about the importance of discernment and states that personal vocation “requires attending carefully to the Word of God and the teaching of the Church, regular prayer, spiritual direction, assessment of one’s gifts along with the circumstances of one’s life” (ibid). Thus, personal vocation requires deepening of personal relationship with Christ and being established in faith, particularly about the area of one’s ministry or service.

***Holding elected leaders accountable***

We have just elected representatives for local government, we need to make sure that they do their job by monitoring and making them accountable. It is true that when a person has been elected, he/she must get on with the job, just as we also have our jobs and daily tasks to worry about. Given the past experiences of dysfunctional municipalities, however, it is not working to let “these guys” continue without our supervision. For further on the issue of dysfunctional municipalities, please see the attached SACBC statement on Elections.

The often resorted to alternative of violence is not effective because it serves only to express a frustration with no positive results towards their grievance. It only serves to destroy and making things worse for the very aggrieved people while those they complain against continue to earn their living and mocking them for “being stupid” in destroying their own facilities. The other alternative of apathy and despair when elected leaders fail and blunder is equally unacceptable because it is only natural disasters about which we can say “there is nothing we can do” and not man-made disasters.

There is a need for us to learn about what democracy means, which is holding leaders accountable **during and after election**. While as individuals we may have voted for different parties, when monitoring delivery service, we must transcend political affiliation and be concerned with the common good. When we begin the new year of 2022, I invite us to think about practical ways in which we can hold the **public servants** that we elected accountable.

Let us keep in mind that these last elections saw the number of independent candidates doubling compared to the 2016 elections. This is a sign that there is growing paradigm shift in society from allowing our future to be determined by party bureaucrats to a system where those elected are held accountable by the constituencies that voted for them. Realizing this accountability trajectory, the ANC, which has always been sure of winning was for the first (in my view) very afraid and made accountability a key feature of its election manifesto, let us hold them to that promise.

Such holding accountable may include obtaining the year plan of the municipality and to have the PPC checking if planned projects are on target. It may include attending some of the municipal meetings where the public is allowed. It may include a joint delegation of various churches to challenge municipalities when it is failing to deliver. What else can it include? Let us think about this and table it in the first PPC meeting of January 2022.

Please note that the possibility of collective action by churches to hold municipality accountable is more viable than when we try to do it on our own. This once more raises the need to be proactive in the efforts to establish ecumenical structures and to strengthen them where they exist. As isolated churches we cannot make any impact in calling public servants to account, certainly not as a Catholic Church because though worldwide we have a clout, locally we are few and not known.

### **Ourselves too!!**

Each time I propose a challenge to public leaders, I always remind myself that I am not immune of the challenge I am posing and so in challenging others, I am challenging myself too. Put differently, in challenging others, I am inviting others to challenge me on the

similar point in the context of my life and work. As we challenge, it is good to ask “yaz’ba mna!! and in this way we can challenge effectively.

### **Christmas Vigil Mass**

Once again, I invite parish Priests, religious and the faithful of the Central and Eastern deanery to join me for the Christmas Vigil Mass at the Cathedral at 17:30 on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

### **Departures, Sabbaticals and Transfers**

As this year ends, we bid farewell to Frs. Kudzai and Alfonse, who will be returning home in the month of December. We thank their Diocese of Gweru for availing them to serve in our Diocese. Their willingness to come and the value that they added to the Diocese in these past five years is greatly appreciated. We wish them well in their new ministries back at home.

Fr. Richard is seconded to the diocese of his birth Outshoorn and will serve there for a number of years and so, he will also be leaving this month. We wish him well in his ministry at home. Two priests, Frs. Potlako and Jean Claude will be going for a 3-months Sabbatical, we wish them a restful and refreshing period.

The following priests, Fr. Eric, Fr. Kasule and Fr. Makoro are transferred to Libode, Cwele and Landsend respectively. We wish them well in the new parishes.

### **Welcome**

We welcome Sr. Hermenegild who will be taking over from Fr. Eric as Administrative Financial assistant to the bishop. She will begin this task after the completion of the Sabbatical for Priests and religious that she is directing.

We also welcome Fr. Mubanga Chikwanda CMM who will succeed Fr. Masuna in St. Paul and Fr. Raphael Arop who will succeed Fr. Kasule in Bedford.

I wish you all a joyful Christmas and a blessed Happy New Year.



+Sithembele Sipuka  
Bishop of Mthatha