

TO HIS LORDSHIP BISHOP P.J. BUTHELEZIOPEN LETTER: ON DAY OF CONSECRATION, OCTOBER 22nd, 1972.

The occasion of your consecration as Black Auxilliary Bishop of the second largest city in Africa, and pace-setter city of South Africa, Johannesburg, is of great importance, not only to the Catholic Church, but also to the Black millions in this country.

Black people regard your achievement and appointment to this position in a Church seething with racial discrimination and prejudice, as a breakthrough in this racist setup where the Black man's inferiority, by virtue of his colour, is accepted for a gospel. The myth is blown up by your appointment and acceptance of this position. For this we thank His Holiness Pope Paul VI.

Black Catholics all over the country welcome your appointment and expect Whites to do the same.

We are aware that, conveniently, White parishes in the Diocese of your domain and all over the country, proclaim that they belong to a non-racial Catholic Church. Yet, at the same time, we are fully aware of the lie and hypocrisy of this non-racialism of the White dominated Catholic Church in South Africa.

Is it not in this country and in the very Church in which you are now appointed Auxilliary Bishop, dear Black Brother, that our Black Catholic school teachers are paid far below poverty-datum-line? They earn less than teachers in Government schools (who also live below breadline). The budget for the entire Black education in the Church is far less than cost of renovating a White Catholic school.

Is it not in this country and in your Diocese that White Catholic employers are among those exploiters of Black labourers - disregarding that these are men with families to look after? The economic conditions of Black workers should sting and prick the conscience of any Christian in this country. Justice and fairplay must be done to the Black workers in all sectors of labour.

It is in this very Church that we observe Black priests generally treated like altarboys by some White priests. It is in this Diocese that Black leadership is labelled "political" and stooges are appointed - against the will of the people - to serve on the Justice and Peace Commission and on Parish Councils because the White Bishop resents articulate Blacks.

We find disparity between Black and White facilities in the Church really shocking. The very Church buildings in which your humble congregations - your Black brothers and sisters pray, compared to white ones, are "modernised catacombs." This goes for our schools and seminaries. These are a few conditions into which you are appointed

auxilliary Bishop.

Having pointed out just these few anomalies in the Church, we wish to point out that your presence, to the Blacks at least, in the hierarchy, should serve to eradicate them all and that this should be done immediately.

We call for complete change of racist attitudes and revision of values in the Catholic Church and other Christian Institutions in this country. Bishops and clergy should pay more attention and interest in the socio-economic conditions of the Black man. A general denunciation of privileges, wealth and comfort enjoyed by White bishops and priests in the Church. And, we warn our Black Bishop and priests not to fall into the comfortable seats of their White predecessors to the expense of their own down-trodden Black brothers and sisters.

We, the Black Catholics, will watch developments in these areas where we are still regarded as "things" and finally, take a stand that will oppose White racism and fascism in the Church. We are, nevertheless prepared, with you at the helm, to participate fully in the restoration of justice and racial harmony in the Church. But, we are reluctant to, or will never accept the perpetuation of White minority domination at all levels of our activity within the Church as shown at this very occasion of your consecration.

We are, at this stage not fully conversant with your status, but we trust that you will be a true spiritual leader, able to meet us at all levels, able to consider our feelings, respect our dignity, have time for us and not just appear at our parishes for hasty confirmation ceremonies and then disappear into your own ecclesiastical world.

We also hope that you will bring sense into some White priests to stop planting seeds of resentment and hostility into the hearts of our Black mothers and fathers by influencing them to write letters to disown us, their very sons and daughters, reject some Black priests and dissociate themselves from Black leadership. The Black community shall have no vacancies for such priests. We do not want their service. They are apostles of racism, hatred and evil. Their continued presence and uncontrolled activity shall mislead and corrupt the thinking Black community.

It is not our desire to use public and secular channels to voice our grievances in the Church, but since Catholic channels are white controlled and shut to us, we find ourselves left with no alternative but to wash our dirty linen and hang it in public. Dialogue must be opened between hierarchy and Black leaders in the Church. Black opinion must lead and give direction to the Church - for the Church must fall into the hands of the indigenous.

Our fervent wish at this moment is that you should feel heartily welcomed and accepted by us Blacks

in particular. We need your spiritual guidance and leadership in various spheres of our lives. We call upon your complete identification with us, with our struggle and aspirations. Pray for us to regain our faith in the Church. Help us to bring Christ and Christian values back into the Catholic Church in South Africa.

You, perhaps, are the only voice we can listen to as others have already made up their minds to ignore us. We assure you of our allegiance and respect for authority. But we cannot tolerate and shall vigorously reject authoritarianism.

We resent to be referred to as a "pressure group". We are just frank Catholics, baptised in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost and expressing their Christian faith.

Our purpose is to see justice done and peace restored to all peoples in the Church and country.

May God bless you in this your new position.