

**An African Theological Assessment of the Pastoral  
Response of the Roman Catholic Church to the Socio-  
economic Impact of the Emerging Covid-19 Pandemic in  
South Africa**

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## DECLARATION

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Theology in the Graduate Programme, Theology and Development, in the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

I, Gilbert KAMTA TATSI, declare that,

The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.

This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

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## ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic has created unprecedented socio-economic hardships globally. The austerities brought about by Covid-19 has affected all sectors of society. Religious, economic, and political sectors have felt the ordeal of the humanitarian crisis. The emergence of the pandemic in South Africa in March 2020 has had a huge socio-economic impact, mostly on the poor and the less privileged in society. The pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated pre-existing socio-economic inequalities in South Africa. These aggravated inequalities include corruption, unemployment, gender-based violence, and access to public healthcare. This study is an appraisal of the pastoral response of the Roman Catholic Church to the socio-economic impact of the emerging pandemic in South Africa. Central to this study is the contribution that African liberation theology offers, with particular emphasis on the philosophy of *Ujamaa* and the theology of *Ubuntu*, in strengthening the pastoral response of the Roman Catholic Church to the socio-economic impact of the emerging Covid-19 pandemic in the country. The methodology of See-Judge-Act is used in the study. The ‘see’ corresponds to the critical analysis of the socio-economic context of the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa. Conceptually, ‘judge’ uses the guiding categories of the philosophy of *Ujamaa* and the theology of *Ubuntu* to thematically analyse various pastoral documents published by the Roman Catholic Church in South Africa in its response to the emerging pandemic during the period March 2020 – March 2021. The ‘act’ elaborates the potential socially transformative actions from the principles of *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* that would render a more effective the pastoral response of the Roman Catholic Church to the socio-economic impact of the continuing Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ATOR	African Theology of Reconstruction
AUC-WGDD	African Union Commission - Women, Gender and Development Directorate
CANs	Community Action Networks
CCC	Catholic Caritas Confederation
CDWS	Colonial Development and Welfare Scheme
CI	Caritas International
CoGTA	Co-operative Government and Traditional Affairs
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease – 2019
CTT	Covid-19 Task Team
CTT	Cape Town Together
CSA	<i>Caritas</i> South Africa
DNSD	Declaration of National State of Disaster
ECDC	European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control
GAA	Group Areas Act
GBVF-NSP	Gender-based Violence and Femicide National Strategic Plan
IA	International Amnesty
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
KZNCC	KwaZulu-Natal Christian Council
NACS	National Anti-Corruption Strategy
NCCC	National Covid-19 Command Council
NCCTT	National Covid-19 Communication Task Team
NCDs	Non-Communicable Diseases
NDP	National Development Plan
NFSD	National Framework for Sustainable Development
NICD	National Institute for Communicable Diseases
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OXFAM	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief
PCC	President's Coordinating Council

PCJP	Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RT-PCR	Real Time Polymerase Chain Reaction
SACBC	Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference
SACBC-JPC	Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference Justice and Peace Commission
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SCIS	Southern Centre for Inequality Studies
Stats SA	Statistics South Africa
TAA	Tanganyika African Association
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UN	United Nations
UNCTD	United Nations Conference on Trade Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
WCC	World Council of Churches
WHO	World Health Organization.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introducing the Study

#### 1.1. Background to the Study

The Covid-19 pandemic has created unprecedented socio-economic hardship globally. This study is an appraisal of the pastoral response of the Roman Catholic Church in South Africa to the socio-economic impact of the emerging pandemic. The study is limited to the time period between March 2020 and February 2021, which focuses on the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic and its socio-economic impact. This is also a period during which the pastoral letters and statements of the Roman Catholic bishops in South Africa were issued. In order to analyse this response, the methodology of the Pastoral Circle of See-Judge-Act (Holland and Henriot 1981; Brackley 2006) will be used. Brackley (2006:241-242) proposes the See-Judge-Act methodology as an efficient pastoral approach to analyse a given social reality leading to an effective response. According to Brackley (2006:241-244), See-Judge-Act corresponds to different analytical steps that overlap and complement each other. To 'see' means to do social analysis through studying a concrete social reality including their causes; to 'judge' refers to an integrated social and theological of a given social reality and; to 'act' results in liberating and transformative actions that are aligned to an appropriate pastoral response.

In addition, central to this study is the contribution that African liberation theology offers, with particular emphasis on the philosophy of *Ujamaa* and the theology of *Ubuntu*, in strengthening the pastoral response of the Roman Catholic Church to the socio-economic impact of the emerging Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa. In this study, the 'see' will correspond to the critical analysis of the socio-economic context of the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa. The 'judge' will be the using of the guiding categories of the philosophy of *Ujamaa* and the theology of *Ubuntu* to thematically analyse pastoral documents published by the Roman Catholic Church in South Africa in its response to the emergence of the pandemic. The 'act' will elaborate the potential socially transformative actions from the principles of *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* that would render more effective the pastoral response of the Roman

Catholic Church to socio-economic impact of the emerging Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa.

This study is important because the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted corruption and socio-economic inequalities in South Africa (Paganini *et al* 2020:6-8; Strauss *et al* 2020:2). Too often, only a few people have benefited from the current health crisis to the detriment of poorer households. Allegations of corruption over the R500 billion Covid-19 relief package have been levied on some government officials (Medical Brief 2020:1-7). Prices of basic commodities have risen and weighed heavily on disadvantaged communities. Furthermore, the pandemic greatly limited relationships between people as a result of lockdown restrictions. In its early stage, the pandemic took a toll on the educational system with the closing down of schools at various levels (SACC 2020:3-4). Gender based violence and oppression against women and children has been on the rise partly due to early lockdown restrictions (Mittal & Singh 2020:3-5). At the time, President Cyril Ramaphosa (2020:6) suggested that gender-based violence was “another pandemic that is raging in our country – the killing of women and children by the men of our country”. Millions of women who work in the informal sector such as hairdressers and street vendors saw their businesses closed down. This consequently put them and their families in a destitute situation. Moreover, the fear of being infected by the virus and of dying as well as the extent of mortality from the virus left families and communities disheartened. It is also worth mentioning that access to healthcare system during the harsh lockdown became an ordeal for poor communities and people living with comorbidities (Mbunge 2020:1809-1814).

At the religious level, the Roman Catholic Church was not able to meet for the Eucharist and other liturgical celebrations due to the public health protocols put in place to curb the spread of the virus. This consequently limited regular contact between parishioners and the opportunity to provide pastoral care, even during bereavement and funerals. As in other sectors of society, the church’s preparedness and adaptation to the restricted situation of the pandemic was inadequate. The shift to digital space did not totally solved the problem because the aspect of human physical contact and interaction has been lacking. The aforementioned situation posed serious pastoral challenges to the Roman Catholic Church in South Africa.

From the time that President Cyril Ramaphosa announced the first lockdown to the time Pope Francis published the encyclical letter, *Fratelli Tutti* (on universal fraternity) (2020), there

was a clear sign that the Roman Catholic Church was getting involved in addressing the Covid-19 pandemic. Pope Francis (2020: n.1) urged humanity in general and the Roman Catholic Church in particular to come together in a borderless fraternity and in solidarity in order to address the Covid-19 crisis. Pope Francis's argument is a motivation for the Roman Catholic Church in South Africa to do a thorough social analysis in order to respond pastorally to the emergence of the socio-economic impact of the pandemic. In 2021, the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC) (2021) issued a document in which it detailed the pastoral actions undertaken thus far. This response included relief services to people affected by the socio-economic impact of Covid-19 in various parishes and other church's organisations. However, this study will argue that the Roman Catholic Church's response to the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa requires a greater recognition communitarian and family approaches to pastoral care. It needs to find ways of encouraging solidarity with the poor as a way of overcoming the isolation and despair that people have continued to feel.

## **1.2. Rationale of the Study**

A number of facts motivated this study at the early stage of the pandemic. When the first positive case of coronavirus was declared in South Africa on 5 March 2020, there was general anxiety. Knowing the impact of virus globally, people were generally gripped with fear and started asking what will happen to them as individuals and to the nation if the outbreak reach the level of other countries around the world such as Spain, Italy, France, United States of America, Brazil, just to mention a few. From 26 March to the end May 2020 (during the most severe lockdown in South Africa), I moved around the Pietermaritzburg City Business Centre and observed that most shops were shutdown, including hairdressing salons. I also noticed desperation in people who were self-employed such as street vendors and other shop owners who were not only unable to earn a living but were harassed by their landlords to pay their rent. Individuals and families, I knew were experiencing difficult times by not having food to eat and "stay-at-home fatigue". As churches were completely shut and pastoral visits to people prohibited, there was no way one could offer pastoral assistance to distressed and bereaved families through counselling. My reading at the time confirmed what I was seeing and hearing. It was from there that I started thinking and exploring the response of the church to the socio-economic hardships of the emerging pandemic, especially in the South African context where the poor communities were the most affected. I realized that there was little

obvious evidence concerning how the church was responding. This was the major reason I decided to explore the issue further.

### **1.3. Theoretical Framework of the Study**

This study will draw on aspects of African liberation theology that chooses the preferential option for the poor and the oppressed (*Kairos Document* 1985; Frostin 1988). African liberation theology considers people's experience of poverty and oppression as the source of theological reflection (Frostin 1988:6). Frostin (1988:89-94), a key theorist in this study, argues for the African philosophy of Julius Nyerere's *Ujamaa* as liberation theology together with South African theologian, Desmond Tutu. While some scholars debate whether Tutu could be considered a "liberation theologian", Tutu (1983 & 1999) is a pivotal African theologian who has emphasised that the African philosophy of *Ubuntu* is a useful theological category because it stresses solidarity with the poor through practising values such as caring, sharing, reciprocity, co-operation, compassion and empathy. Both these African philosophies imbed themes such as faith in God and human liberation from oppression, poverty, marginalisation and economic justice, which are crucial to Latin American liberation theology (Gutiérrez 1974: 34-36, 168-175).

For Frostin, Nyerere's (1968) *Ujamaa* and Tutu's (1983) *Ubuntu* contribute to an African liberation theology through four identified categories (Frostin 1988:49-50, 137-138). These four categories include first, life in community; second, conversion from mammon to God; third, wholeness of life; and fourth, economic self-reliance. In the first instance, the African liberation theological category of "life in community" is emphasised both in Nyerere's *Ujamaa* and in Tutu's *Ubuntu*. While *Ujamaa* is discussed as a community-oriented theology, which implies the participation of all in the life of the church and of the nation, *Ubuntu* is articulated by Tutu as the fundamental vocation of human beings to live together in hospitality and in caring for one another as family of God (Tutu 1999:264-265).

In the second instance, the conversion from "mammon to God" is highlighted in *Ujamaa* philosophy and in *Ubuntu* theology through a critique of capitalism. While Nyerere (1968:2) addresses capitalism as a doctrine of making money as an idol because it is valued over God and the dignity of human beings, Tutu (1999:264) assesses the apartheid system in South Africa as exploitive and against human dignity. A major concern of African liberation theology is to put God at the centre of the struggle for human dignity and human salvation.



This is the *metanoia* (spiritual conversion / repentance), which is necessary for forgiveness and reconciliation (Frostin 1988:170). African liberation theologically critiques Western capitalism because of its exploitative and money centred nature.

The theology of the wholeness of life is highlighted in *Ujamaa* and in *Ubuntu* as “the source and purpose of human life” as created by God (Frostin 1988:137; Buthelezi 1968:29). This theological emphasis shows the fundamental difference between African theology and Western dualistic theology (Frostin 1988: 49-50). As pointed out by Nyamiti (1978:58), Western theology is mostly drawn from the Aristotelean, Thomist and Cartesian dualistic conceptions of body-soul, individual-society, earthly-heavenly. However, for African theology the whole of the created order, including humanity, are bound together before God, their Creator (Frostin 1988:138-139). In this perspective, Ela (2003:75-77) argues that God came to save the whole human person and that it is necessary to put an end to the theology of the salvation of souls which wants to lead souls to heaven as if the earth did not exist. Related to the wholeness of life is self-reliance.

Mukhungulu et al (2017:178) define self-reliance in the category of *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* as a person’s capacity to realise themselves, not only physically, materially and mentally but also morally, socially and emotionally. Self-reliance is achieved through change of attitude in order to be in tandem with the society’s motion of development. Nyerere (1968:104-105) maintains that *Ujamaa* was *ujamaa na Kujitegemea* (*Ujamaa* and Self-Reliance). As Pali (2019:279) argues, Tutu believed in the prophetic impulse of *Ubuntu*, which consists in transforming people socio-economic lives through helping them confront “the evil structures, the powers and principalities that oppress, exploit and wound all who are created in God’s image. This is further framed in Gutierrez’s (1974:109-111) conception of development and liberation that which he considers as expressions of people’s deepest aspiration for freedom from a situation of dependence and “neo-colonial capitalism”. An accomplished self-reliance is “the *sine-qua-non* condition [for] freedom from economic and cultural dependencies on other people [as well as] equal cooperation with other nations” (Mukhungulu et al 2017:180).

An African theology of liberation is useful in responding pastorally to the socio-economic impact of the emerging Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa because it is not only siding with the poor and the oppressed, but also working towards eliminating poverty, inequalities and

marginalisation. It is also about involving the poor and the oppressed in the fight against injustices of which they are victims.

#### **1.4. Key Research Questions and Objectives of the Study**

This study is anchored on the key research question: How can the African philosophy of *Ujamaa* and the theology of *Ubuntu* guide the Roman Catholic Church in South Africa to pastorally respond more effectively to the emergence of the socio-economic impact of Covid-19?

In order to answer this key question, the following research sub-questions are considered to guide the study:

-What are the structural factors that have exacerbated the emergence of the socio- economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa?

-What are the guiding principles from the philosophy of *Ujamaa* and the theology of *Ubuntu* that could be used to strengthen the pastoral response of the Roman Catholic Church in South Africa to the emergence of the socio-economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic?

-In light of these principles, what socially transformative actions could be developed by the Roman Catholic Church in order to offer a more effective pastoral response to the emergence of the socio-economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa?

From these research questions, the following objectives of the study have been formulated:

-To analyse the structural factors that have exacerbated the emergence of the socio-economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa.

-To understand the guiding principles found in the philosophy of *Ujamaa* and the theology of *Ubuntu* that can strengthen the pastoral response of the Roman Catholic Church to the emergence of the socio-economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa.

-To develop socially transformative actions from these principles that would enable a more effective pastoral response by the Roman Catholic Church to the emergence of the socio-economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa.

## 1.5. Research Methodology

This study is a qualitative non-empirical study. According to Hancock *et al* (2009:6), a qualitative study seeks to systematically answer research questions by focusing on description and interpretation of concepts or theories that have already been theorised. Non-empirical research, is defined by Viorela (2017:4) as that which is based on “reflection, personal observation, and authority/experience [that] are just as valuable for knowledge acquisition as empirical data”.

To achieve the study objectives, a research methodology of document analysis will be employed. According to Gross (2018:546), “Document analysis is a form of qualitative research that uses a systematic procedure to analyse documentary evidence and answer specific research questions”. Bryman (2012:542) considers documents as sources of data or “sources that have been or can be used in qualitative research”. The choice of the document analysis research methodology is motivated by the range of advantages it displays for this study. As Bowen (2009:31-32) points out, these advantages include the availability of documents that are easily found in the public domain on the worldwide web.

In assessing the pastoral response of the Roman Catholic Church to the emergence of the socio-economic impact of Covid-19 in South Africa, a number of pastoral documents will be analysed. First, the pastoral letters from two bishops of SACBC, Bishop Victor Hlolo Phalana of the diocese of Klerksdorp and Archbishop Tlhagale of the Archdiocese of Johannesburg. These two bishops were some of the first to respond to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa. Second, the KwaZulu-Natal Council of Churches (KZNCC) statement signed by Cardinal Wilfred Napier in his capacity as chairperson of this ecumenical network. Third, Pope Francis’ encyclical letter, *Fratelli Tutti* that was disseminated in South Africa in the context of Covid-19.

In undertaking this document analysis, each of these four categories of documents will be dealt with in turn, using the method of thematic analysis. Bryman (2012:579) describes the process of thematic analysis as the search for themes through “an activity that can be discerned in most approaches to qualitative data analysis”. In undertaking the document analysis in this study, I have “closely examine[d] the data to identify common themes –topics, ideas and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly” (Caulfield 2020:3). I began by first

familiarising myself with the text of each document; second, I proceeded to code the documents thematically using different coloured highlighters; third, I wrote up my analysis while cross-referencing the themes in the different sets of documents so as to be able to discuss each of their strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, while carrying out the thematic analysis, I used the inductive approach, which “involves allowing the data to determine (my) themes” (Caulfield 2020:6). It should be noted that the inductive approach is different from the deductive approach, which implies coming to data with already preconceived themes that are expected to be found, grounded on theory, or on existing knowledge (Reference).

In addition to this document analysis, this study used additional secondary data. Bryan (2012:312) defines secondary data as that which is analysed “by researchers who will probably not have been involved in the collection of those data, for purposes that in all likelihood were not envisaged by those responsible for the data collection”. Gross (2018:547) relays Bryan’s definition by considering secondary data as academic material that is published for the purpose of sharing interpretation with a wider audience. In other words, the secondary data are those that have been gathered and even analysed for a purpose somehow different from that of the second researcher. The collection of data will be guided by the key research question and sub-questions. These secondary data include sources such as books, journal articles, academic theses and dissertations that are available in libraries and on electronic databases.

## **1.6. Anticipated Problems, Limitations and Scope of Study**

The scope of the study is limited to the time-frame of March 2020 to February 2021. This one year period deals explicitly with the emergence of the socio-economic impact of Covid-19 in South Africa.

The focus of the study is on the emergence of the socio-economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic due to the constraints of the dissertation. It does not deal with the issue of vaccines as these were not available during the time period of the study.

The pastoral response to the Covid-19 pandemic also has individual dimensions such as dealing with distress, loss and bereavement. This study is however, specifically limited to the structural inequality that the pandemic has highlighted.

Furthermore, the scope of this study is limited to five documents that South African Catholic bishops made publicly and were available online. Any form of field work or visits to diocesan offices were not possible given that the research was carried out in the first year of the pandemic during which there were substantial lockdowns. There may well have been other statements issued by Roman Catholic leadership but they were not readily available. This means that the study cannot purport to assess the full extent of the pastoral response of the Roman Catholic Church in South Africa to the emergence of Covid-19.

Furthermore, the study is not addressing the impact of the statements, as important as this is, but rather is only focusing on an analysis of the engagement with the socio-economic impact of the pandemic due to the constraints of this study.

In addition, the study does not investigate the pastoral actions of the Roman Catholic Church in countries such as Botswana and eSwatini, which are part of the SACBC.

## **1.7. Structure of the Study**

### **Chapter Two**

The second chapter discusses the global emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic. It particularly focuses on the context and emergence of the pandemic in South Africa and explores the socio-economic impact. It also discusses how the pandemic has exacerbated socio-economic inequalities in South Africa.

### **Chapter Three**

The third chapter offers a critical theological reflection on African liberation theology. Special emphasis is placed on Julius Nyerere's philosophy of *Ujamaa* and Desmond Tutu's theology of *Ubuntu*. It also seeks to show how these two aspects of African liberation theology intersect and offer a theoretical framework for the study.

### **Chapter Four**

The fourth chapter focuses on a critical thematic analysis of some pastoral statements of the Roman Catholic Church to the socio-economic impact in the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa. The *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* categories of "community life", of "conversion from mammon to God", of "fullness of life", and of "self-reliance" are used as a theoretical lens to critically analyse salient themes in the pastoral documents under discussion.

## **Chapter Five**

The fifth chapter deals with socially transformative actions from the guiding principles of the philosophy of *Ujamaa* and the theology of *Ubuntu* that would enable a more effective pastoral response by the Roman Catholic Church to the socio-economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa.

## **Chapter Six**

The sixth chapter concludes the study and makes recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Emergence of the Covid-19 Pandemic and the Socio-economic Impact in South Africa

#### 2.1. Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the study outlining the background, theoretical framework, key research question, objectives, and the research methodology. This chapter focuses on the context of the Covid-19 pandemic globally and particularly in South Africa. It further explores the socio-economic dimensions of the emergence of the pandemic and the exacerbation of the existing inequalities in the country.

Covid-19 is a disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus (Shereen *et al* 2020:91). It is a compilation of the following acronyms ‘Co’, which stands for corona, ‘Vi’ for virus, ‘D’ for disease and ‘19’ which are the last two digits stands for the year in which the virus or the disease appeared. Chhikara *et al* (2020:64) and Buhle Mpofu (2021:1) thus hold that this new virus can also be called “coronavirus disease 2019” or Covid-19. This virus, as documented, first appeared in the city of Wuhan in China on 17 November 2019 (WHO 2020:2; Kumar *et al* 2020:8, 10). At this time, there was not yet any scientific definition of the virus. Over the course of time, epidemiologists referred to the virus using keywords such as “2019-nCoV”, COVID-19, and the “novel coronavirus-infected pneumonia” (Tsang *et al* 2020:290). In the early stage of the pandemic, scientists in the medical field attempted to give a specific name to the virus. They first gave it the name “corona virus (CoV)” to mean one of the viruses of the *Orthocoronavirinae* subfamily or simply “*corona* (crown) virus” due to the appearance of series of crown-like spikes on its surface under an electronic microscope (Chhikara *et al* 2020:64). These crown-like spikes “are responsible for the attachment and entry of the virus into human cells” (Shereen *et al* 2020:93). On 7 January 2020 it was given the temporary scientific name of “corona virus 19” (2019-nCoV) (Chhikara *et al* (2020:63-64)).

Most Covid-19 patients “met clinical criteria and had radiological evidence of pneumonia with or without a certain epidemiological links but did not need to have a virological confirmation of infection” (Tsang *et al* 2020:292-293). This implies that in the first phase of the appearance of the virus, there was no distinction between suspected and confirmed cases and it was considered and treated as simple pneumonia. This may be one of the reasons for

the rapid spread of the virus, first in Asia, and then to the rest of the world (Chhikara *et al* 2020:63). The incubation period of Covid-19 was evidenced by scientists to be 4 to 5 days. The diagnostic of Covid-19 is now demonstrated to be more reliable with real time polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) which is a technique for rapidly producing copies of a fragment of DNA for diagnostic or research purposes (Velavan *et al* 2021:279).

When the virus that is known today as Covid-19 first appeared in November 2019, specialists in respiratory diseases classified it in the category of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). From December 2019, epidemiologists then established it as “a highly transmittable and pathogenic viral infection caused by SARS type 2 (SARS-CoV-2)” (Shereen *et al* 2020:91; Velavan *et al* 2021:279). It is worth noting that SARS-CoV-2 is the name of the virus while the disease itself is called Covid-19. This classification was informed by history that identified SARS Type 1 (SARS-Cov-1) from 2002-2004 that was transmitted from bats to humans who in turn infected other humans (WHO 2020:3).

Coronavirus is known to be an airborne infectious disease. Current research indicates that the primary mode of transmission of COVID-19 is through direct contact with respiratory droplets that are projected at distances of between 1-2 metres (Delikhoon *et al* 2021:2-3). Research further demonstrates that many infections occur within households in circumstances where physical distancing is not possible, and that secondary infection rate is 10 times higher in households than in situations of occasional contact. In a nutshell, Covid-19 transmission occurs through three main trajectories (Delikhoon *et al* 2021:10-11 and WHO 2021:9): (1) contaminated material where the virus is transmitted through objects contaminated by microorganisms that become vectors; (2) airborne transmission through the inhaling aerosols that remain suspended for a long period of time or carried by air currents over long but undetermined distances; (3) enclosed interior spaces that are crowded or insufficiently ventilated spaces in which infected people (symptomatic or asymptomatic) stay in the presence of other people for a certain period of time. These indoor spaces include restaurants, choir sessions, fitness classes, nightclubs, offices and venues of worship. In the early stage of the pandemic, the incubation time of Covid-19 was thought to be anytime from 2 to 14 days. Later scientific research has shown that this incubation period is probably between 2 to 10 days. Within this period, infected persons who are not displaying symptoms and are unaware of their infection are nevertheless active carriers for transmission to others (Delikhoon *et al* 2021:2-4). Clinical symptoms of Covid-19 include acute or mild respiratory distress, loss of



taste and smell, cough, runny nose, sore throat, dizziness, and fever with an increase in body temperature mostly in the night among others (WHO 2021:36-41).

Covid-19 health protocols provided by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC 2020: 4, 8-9) in collaboration with the World Health Organisation (WHO) set guidelines for protection of oneself and others include the following: (1) frequent washing of hands with water and soap or using alcohol based hand-sanitizer; (2) social distancing of at least 1.5 metres between oneself and other people; (3) avoiding touching eyes, nose and mouth; (4) wearing a face mask that covers one's mouth and nose, especially when in the public place; (5) keeping places of gathering well ventilated; (6) following respiratory hygiene (covering your mouth and nose with your folded elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze, then disposing of the used tissue immediately); (7) seeking medical care early if one has a fever, cough and breathing difficulty; and (8) to stay informed and follow advice given by one's health care provider, national and local public health authorities or employer on how to protect oneself and others from Covid-19.

While the world was dominated in 2020 by the scientific and medical communities as well as national governments trying to understand the Covid-19 pandemic and find a vaccine, in 2021 the year was characterised by the ongoing crisis of severe illness and deaths as well as the beginning of the global vaccine roll-out. The global scientific efforts to study the virus and to develop various vaccines that offer protection against severe illness and death deserve to be lauded. However, the concern related to the fair and equitable distribution of vaccines in the global community has been a concern, where developing nations struggled to access supply. From the early development of Covid-19 vaccine trials, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC 2020:3-7) worried about risks of corruption in vaccines procurement and policy, weak or non-existent distribution systems of vaccines, falsified vaccines, as well as nepotism / favouritism in terms of access to vaccines. It goes further to set short and long-term watchdog measures aim at mitigating the abovementioned risks. Short term measures include, the creation of specialized committee to oversee emergency funds and vaccine deployment; transparent and accountable vaccine procurement; transparent criteria for priority vaccine recipients and public information about vaccine programmes; secure storage and distribution systems to mitigate corruption risks; encouragement and strengthening of civil society participation; and protection of journalists and whistle-blowers (UNDOC 2020:7-11). Long term measures include, the strengthening of anti-corruption laws and policies;

comprehensive auditing, oversight, accountability and reporting mechanisms to monitor the disbursement process and verify appropriate receipt; the identification and protection of vulnerable individuals and communities (UNDOC 2020:11-12).

Despite these measures, it increasingly became clear that vaccines reached nations of the world, far quicker than in the developing world. The first shots in the United Kingdom were on 4 January 2021 of the AstraZeneca vaccine. The first shots of the Pfizer and BioNTech vaccines were administered in the United States of America on 8 January, 2021 as reported by *American Journal of Managed Care* (AJMC 2021:1). By 8 April 2021, it was established that less than 2% of the world's 690 million COVID-19 vaccines had been administered in Africa (WHO-Africa 2021:1). This clearly indicates that Africa remained one of the world's most disadvantaged continents when it comes to the distribution of vaccines against the Covid-19 pandemic (WHO-Africa 2021:1). This is why, addressing the World Health Assembly on 24 May 2021, President Cyril Ramaphosa called on world leaders to urgently address the huge divide in the provision of vaccines (SA News 2021).

Having described the Covid-19 pandemic, its origins, its mode of transmission, and the health protocols needed to curtail the global pandemic, the global impact of the pandemic will be discussed in the next section.

## **2.2. The Global Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic**

Covid-19 has caused acute humanitarian distress globally. The Director-General of the WHO, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, declared Covid-19 a global pandemic on 11 March 2020 (WHO 2020b:1). The outbreak of the novel coronavirus infected seventy thousand individuals and killed more than eighteen hundred within the first fifty days of the pandemic in China and other countries in Asia. Towards the end of 2020, the WHO established that the most vulnerable to Covid-19 infection are people of advanced age (over 60years old), cigarette smokers, and people living with underlying non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, chronic lung disease and cancer. Those with these underlying comorbidities are described as being at high risk for severe disease and death (WHO 2020b:2-4). When the declaration of Covid-19 as a pandemic by the WHO occurred, a considerable number of countries were already being affected by the disease. This included 20 in Asia, 11 in Africa, 15 in the Americas, 11 in the Eastern Mediterranean region, and almost

all European countries with Italy, Spain and Iran being the most affected in terms of human fatalities (WHO 2020b:3-6). The mutation of the virus into different variants involving genetic changes in the spike protein has added to the complications in managing this global pandemic. Initially the mutating variants also impacted the development of vaccines. By the end of 2020, three SARS-CoV-2 new variants were detected in three different countries: Denmark (September), United Kingdom and South Africa (December), Brazil, Japan and Nigeria (December) (WHO 2020b:9). The variants presented changes in transmissibility and clinical severity.

In some countries at this time, there was considerable distress in the health infrastructure such as hospitals with a shortage of beds, oxygen, and even spaces in mortuaries, cemeteries and crematoria. As the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (Oxfam) indicated, health and other essential workers (overwhelmingly women and people of colour) in most of developing countries experienced the distress of overworking, being underpaid and undervalued, and often not sufficiently protected in the midst of the deadly pandemic (Oxfam 2021:3).

The psychological trauma as a result of the pandemic has been considerable. Maughan-Brown *et al* (2021:6, 9) argue that it has been more than two years since the global community have had a “normal” day in which there is no mask wearing, social distancing, and hand-sanitising as well as checking the media for reports about the number of infections, the number of recoveries, and of deaths. The first twelve months of the pandemic were the most trying, but the pandemic is ubiquitous and continues to take its toll on the mental and psychological health of communities. Daily life was severely hampered by endless lockdowns, infection with Covid-19 and subsequent quarantine periods, deaths in the family, anxiety and depression, and many have developed post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Alshehri *et al* 2020:2-3).

Adding to this psychological distress is the socio-economic impact, which has been the concern of many humanitarian organisations around the globe. Global unemployment rates have skyrocketed (Alshehri *et al* 2020:2). The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed inequalities and injustices at different levels highlighted in the extent of socio-economic distress experienced unequally within nations and across nations. As the United Nations Conference on Trade Development (UNCTD 2020:8) emphasised,

Millions of jobs have already been lost, millions of livelihoods are at risk, and an estimated additional 130 million people will be living in extreme poverty if the crisis persists. These grim figures reflect the immense challenges and human suffering caused by this pandemic.

The Covid-19's social and economic upheavals have been of concern to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) as indicated in a study by Oxfam (2021:8). Many countries across the globe, particularly small island nations that are heavily dependent on tourism, have faced empty hotels and deserted beaches. Global trade has been severely affected by the isolation measures adopted by most countries of the world, causing the prices of several export products such as petroleum, minerals and some agricultural products to fall sharply (UNCTD 2020:12-17). The World Bank projected a drop of \$ 110 billion in remittances in 2021, which would mean that 800 million people would not be able to meet their basic needs (UNDP 2020:3-5). Millions of people were pushed to the brink of poverty and destitution (Oxfam 2021:7). The paradox, however, is that the pandemic has created new billionaires on the sweat of the poor. It took only nine months for 1000 billionaires to recover their fortunes formerly hit by the early days of Covid-19 while "the world's poorest people recovery could take 14 times longer, more than a decade" (Oxfam 2021:6-8). This situation has widened the already existing gap between the rich and the poor (Mbandiwa 2020:9). As the Oxfam report points out, the "inequalities and injustices are obviously not new, they are based on the patriarchal racism that is the foundation of world capitalism, which for decades exploited, expropriated, and claimed lives (Oxfam 2021:4). Mbandiwa (2020:8) argues that more than 1.6 billion workers around the globe are in vulnerable state while living in the fear of the unknown. According to him,

The mitigation plans to save the global economy have not assisted the vulnerable and poor people. Lack of proper infrastructure for poor people makes it difficult to stop the spread of the pandemic. More than 1 billion slum dwellers globally are at risk from the effects of the pandemic because of the lack of adequate housing, running water, shared toilets, and overcrowding (Mbandiwa 2020:9).

Another social distress of Covid-19 has been felt at the educational level. As reported by the United Nations (UN) (2020:5-6), the pandemic crisis has exacerbated the existing educational disparities. A large number of children including the most vulnerable young people and adults

(inhabitants of poor or rural communities, girls, refugees, people with disabilities and the displaced) were placed at risk of not returning to school. The same report further points out that lost learning time experienced by the current generation could wipe out decades of progress made in the education sector, especially with regard to the access of girls and young women to education (UN 2020:8-9). Another report by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2021:23) suggests that some 23.8 million children and young people from preschool to tertiary could also drop out of school or be deprived of access to education between 2021 and 2022 due to the economic impact of the pandemic. UNESCO further reports that 72.9% of 1.25 billion learners enrolled worldwide in various educational institutions have been seriously affected by the Covid-19 pandemic with lockdowns and school closures (UNESCO 2021:24). The concern is mostly directed towards schools in developing countries. These schools are overcrowded, the need to practice social distancing is unrealistic, and both government and private bodies were unable to provide online teaching and learning with the additional costs that this entailed (Mbamdiwa 2020:9-10).

A further social impact of the pandemic has been on churches and other religious organisations around the world. Mpofu (2021:1-2) argues that religious believers around the world have been deprived of religious activities since the declaration of Covid-19 as a pandemic. The measures to contain the spread of the virus and the various levels of lockdowns have meant that religious communities did not meet physically on a regular basis. Yet, for most religious communities, meeting to worship and pray together is fundamental to their belief and spiritual well-being. As Pillay (2020:267) contends that in the early stage of the pandemic,

All religious gatherings were banned. Holy Week, Easter and Pentecost could not be celebrated in the churches. Initially there was huge resistance, since for congregating to pray, to worship and celebrate is an integral part of the Christian faith.

Faced with this situation, communities had to adapt their religious practices by migrating mainly to the online space (Gauxachs *et al* 2021:3). These communities had to adapt and reflect on new ways of “being a missional church and to continue with pastoral ministry without exposing members to infections through face-to-face meetings” (Mpofu 2021:2-3). As a result, both leaders and members of religious communities have initiated new and

creative social media networks to generate content applicable to their congregants. Pillay (2020:268) advocates that electronic platforms have the advantage of providing “an opportunity for Christians to be exposed to other forms of worship, liturgical practices and preaching than they are usually accustomed to”. Videos, podcasts, WhatsApp groups, Facebook, YouTube and other online electronic platforms had to become the preferred channels for developing a sense of “community” and for communication (Afolaranmi 2020:17-18; Pillay 2020:268). This alternative virtual platform has been a means of connecting with one another in order to provide ministerial services such as sermons, psychological and pastoral counselling, Eucharistic celebrations and other forms of prayer (Gauxachs *et al* 2021:2-4). Social media platforms have helped believers to continue to have the sense of community by communing with each other in order to withstand the predicaments of the pandemic. As Notebaart (2021:302) asserts,

The virtual community arises from a fundamental understanding of community itself. Church leadership nurtures it beyond merely supplying information or religious programming; they use its tools to involve the whole person and give people a way to understand their dilemma in the context of faith.

However, it should be decried that little attention has been paid to the fact that the poor and marginalised have been left out in the new forms of digital pastoral ministry. Mehra *et al* (2004:795) posit that there is a need for greater integration of the internet into everyday life and practice of marginalised members of society (the low and/or no income) in Africa to empower these communities spiritually as well as materially. While advocating that mobile broadband coverage to rural and remote areas must play a key role in poverty reduction, the World Bank (2020:5-7) is working for policies that address inequalities in access to internet connectivity by gender, age disparity, education and people with or without disabilities. Given the above, it is clear that the virtual mode of operation has disadvantaged a portion of religious communities in less technologically advanced countries or areas that do not have access to a smart phone, computer or internet connection due to socio-economic circumstances. Elderly and unemployed people and some rural dwellers have not been able to access the spiritual services offered by their pastors through social media.

Having explored the humanitarian impact of Covid-19 with special focus on its socio-economic and religious effects globally, the next section will evaluate the management and impact of the pandemic in South Africa.

### **2.3. The Socio-economic Impact of the Emerging Covid-19 Pandemic in South Africa**

The South African Government has been grappling with the reality of Covid-19 since the first case was announced in the country. On 5 March 2020, the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) confirmed to the nation that a person tested positive for COVID-19 in South Africa (NICD 2020:1). From then on, a series of measures to curtail the pandemic were implemented. On 14 March 2020, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced the Declaration of National State of Disaster (DNSD), which was gazetted by Department of Co-operative Government and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) on 15 March 2020. On 17 March 2020, the National Coronavirus Command Council (NCCC) was established with its main objective “to lead the nation’s plan to contain the spread and mitigate the negative impact of the coronavirus” (Blecher 2020:2). President Cyril Ramaphosa also set up the President’s Coordinating Council (PCC). On 26 March 2020, the government initiated a national Level 5 lockdown which was relaxed to level 4 on 1 May and to level 3 on 1 June 2020 (Pillai *et al* 2020:1; Schröder *et al* 2021:2-5). During Levels 5, 4 and 3 lockdowns, the prohibition of alcohol and cigarette sales was introduced as well as other non-pharmaceutical health protocols such as the wearing of a facemask in public, social distancing, hand sanitizing or washing with water and soap. These measures aimed not only at minimizing intoxication and trauma cases in hospitals to prevent the health system from collapsing, but also to curb the spread of the deadly virus (Mbandiwa 2020:11-12). The restrictions were lowered to alert level 2 on 17 August 2020 and to alert level 1 from 21 September 2020. During this period, the National Covid-19 Communication Task Team (NCCTT) worked relentlessly “to ensure that accurate and timely information is passed to the population” (Blecher 2020:2). Various levels of lockdowns continued to be re-introduced through the different waves of infection in 2021.

Despite these efforts, criticism has been levelled against the government with political opposition parties and others denouncing the lack of proper preparedness for the pandemic. As Mbandiwa (2020:6-7) argues, the pandemic has exposed the country’s lack of readiness to equip workers with digital gadgets and good internet connection which could enable them to work efficiently from home. This has resulted in unnecessarily backlogs and delay in service delivery, particularly in the early stages of the pandemic. The country’s deficiency in Information Communication Technology (ICT) has also impacted the educational sector whereby not all learners were able to access online classes. Mbandiwa (2020:9-10) further

states that, “Only private schools were able to offer online teaching and sometimes used different social media networks. The main aim of most private schools to teach online was to save the academic year”.

During Level 5 lockdown,

Strict regulations included restriction of population mobility and interaction, international and domestic travel restrictions, restriction of commercial and business activity, cancellation of events and gatherings, and closure of schools and universities. Essential services such as security, health and food distribution were permitted (Pillai *et al* 2020:2).

Pillai *et al* (2020:2) further assert that “by 1 July 2020, 159 333 cases of COVID-19 had been reported in South Africa”.

The government and nationwide efforts to respond to Covid-19 and thus mitigate its spread have been considerable. The healthcare system in South Africa has generally enabled the country to respond to the pandemic. As Schröder *et al* (2021:2) points out,

South Africa offers a comparatively high capacity of intensive care units (ICUs) to respond to outbreaks, with estimates ranging from maximally 7195 ICU beds theoretically in existence to 2926 practically available nationwide across both public and private sectors.

However, it is important to note that the country’s health system was overwhelmed during the second and the third waves of the pandemic when more than 16 000 daily cases were reported (NICD 2021:1).

South Africa made progress in its efforts to acquire and administer vaccines against Covid-19. The first doses of vaccines arrived in the country on 1 February 2021 and the national Covid-19 vaccination programme was rolled out on 17 February 2021.

The impact of Covid-19 in South Africa has been asymmetric at various levels (Nwosu & Oyenubi 2021:4-5). The *apartheid* history laid the ground for much socio-economic distress in the country and Mphambukeli (2019:3-4) argues that *apartheid* is an abstract term which implies “racial separation,” “segregation,” or “discrimination” with a “more rigorous system of segregation which accelerated the racial polarization of the country”. As Mphambukeli



(2019:2-3) points out, *apartheid* “was a system of oppression that predominantly produced race and class inequalities in South Africa, mainly from 1948 to 1993”. Significantly,

In its classic form, *apartheid* excluded the vast majority of the black population from the benefits of capitalist growth. Traditionally, this majority could not benefit from the ‘normal’ social, educational and health services available only to the white minority. The reminiscence of apartheid shows that even today, poverty remains with the vast majority of the black population. The white minority, for instance, owns eighty-seven percent of the country’s land (Beaudet 1991:8-9).

One of the effects of inequality is the unfair distribution of wealth. Crook (2013:271) describes such distribution as a complex problem in the sense that it does not only concern inequality in income (where many people are rarely remunerated based on what they deserve). The unfair distribution of wealth goes beyond the matter of wages; it also entails the accumulation of immense wealth by a relatively small number of South Africans and legal entities. Therefore, wealthy people *ipso facto* are inclined to control the lives of others, especially the poor and the marginalised (Crook 2013:271). This situation can lead to the oppression and exploitation of the masses and the impoverishment of many.

Socio-economic inequalities are observable while touring shantytowns in South Africa. The growing economic gap between various social groups in South Africa is phenomenal. From the perspective of the economy, poverty can be understood as a situation of material deprivation or lack of money/means to lead a decent life. As Swanepoel and De Beer (2007:1) and Odekon (2006:260) observe, in South Africa not all people are economically poor to the same degree. The level of poverty varies between individuals, communities, social and cultural groups. In this regard, poverty can be classified as absolute or relative (Swanepoel and De Beer 2007:2-3). The former describes poverty in terms of basic needs such as food, clothing, and housing (Odekon 2006:261), while the latter refers to people whose basic needs are met, but they are still experiencing disadvantages as compared to other people or groups of people (Swanepoel and De Beer 2007:3). The former (no food, clothing, or housing) does exist in South Africa but sporadically, the latter is becoming the most common every day. In his inaugural speech in May 25, 2019, Mr. Cyril Ramaphosa (the newly elected South African President) gave an overview of the socio-economic landscape of the country:

Many South Africans still go to bed hungry; many succumb to diseases that can be treated, many live in an intolerable deprivation. Too many of our people do not work, especially the youth. In recent times, our people have watched as some of those in whom they had invested their trust have surrendered to the temptation of power and riches. They have seen some of the very institutions of our democracy eroded and resources squandered (Ramaphosa 2019).

From this excerpt of President Ramaphosa's speech, it follows that the country cannot be free as long as so many of its citizens are still living in abject poverty, do not have enough food to eat, have no roof worthy of that name, do not have access to quality health services and education, and cannot afford to earn a living.

The pandemic has created another "socio-economic *apartheid*" (Mphambukeli 2019:5), which needs to be carefully and constantly addressed. Structural inequalities have been accentuated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite relief measures announced by the government, many businesses were financially stranded during the strict lockdown and confinement from 26 March to 1 June 2020. On 21 April 2020, R500 billion was announced by the President of the Republic as *stimulus* packet in response to Covid-19 (Lameez & Magubane 2020:6). Near the beginning of the pandemic, the Solidarity Fund was established by the government with contributions from the public and private sector that eased some financial burden faced by the government (Blecher 2020:3). When the lockdowns were eased and downgraded to Levels 4 and 3, many businesses were allowed to resume their operations with well-defined health protocols. As highlighted by Francis *et al* (2020: 342-343, 345-346), social and economic restrictions implemented in the country by the Covid-19 National Command Council (CNCC) in an attempt to mitigate the spread of the virus have exacerbated the already existing socio-economic inequalities. These inequalities mainly affect certain key sectors of society with greater impact on the poor: children, elderly people, women, and people living with disabilities, migrants, and refugees (Mbandiwa 2020:8-9).

Covid-19 has had a major impact on the employment sector in South Africa. This sector was already suffering following the global financial recession of 2019. Studies show that 1.6 million jobs were lost in the country in 2020 and, like in other countries of the world, it would still take many years for the nation to recover and set itself on a good footing in terms of employment (Mbandiwa 2020:5). According to 2020 government statistics highlighted by Caritas, a department of the South African Bishops Conference (SACBC), "more than 3

million people in South Africa have lost their jobs” (SACBC 2020:12). While this pandemic has affected all South Africans, the poor are disproportionately affected and the aftermath is even going to be more worrying with rising unemployment rate from 27.6% in 2019 to 35.3% in 2021 (Stats SA 2021:3), and many businesses have closed. The early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic took a heavy toll on individuals, families, and communities. Some companies had to close their businesses completely or had to reduce the number of employees that placed thousands of people and households out of work. People who were self-employed have also been affected because lockdowns reduced their number of hours to be spent at work physically as a result of only certain businesses allowed to operate in during levels 5 and 4 (Maluleke 2020:14-15). According to the research conducted by the Southern Centre for Inequality Studies (SCIS) and quoted by Francis *et al* (2020:346-347), nearly 18 million South Africans live in the poorest 20 per cent of households, almost half of these poorest households are found in rural and remote areas. This situation has been exacerbated during the current pandemic. Paganini *et al* (2020:6-18) point further to the fact that the severe national lockdowns had a significant effect on food systems and the flow of commodities, “Hunger and unemployment has become the daily lot during the Covid-19 pandemic and that in May 2020, 34 percent of South Africans went to bed hungry”.

Financial corruption remains one of the social scourges plaguing the socio-economic fabric of South Africa and was also exacerbated during the Covid-19 pandemic. Corruption can be defined as “any form of unethical behaviour linked to a particular motivation, namely that of private gain at public expense” (Ganahl 2013:58). Corrupt behaviour entails violating the established rules for personal gain. Corruption is practised in different forms such as fraud, illegal payments, money laundering, or tax evasion and amongst others (Murray 2016:104). It is true to say that the democratic government in South Africa has established laws and regulations to curb corrupt activities as stipulated and promoted in the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS) 2020-2030 published in 2021. Corruption has always been labelled as one of the socio-economic plagues of South Africa, especially in the post-*apartheid* era.

[This is reflected in the way] successive governments post-1994 have spent R187bn bailing out and recapitalising state-owned enterprises plagued by governance issues and corruption while service delivery has become more and more fragmented. [...] in the 2018- 19 financial year, municipalities lost R32bn to corruption and irregular expenditure (Mlambo 2020:549-550).

The acts of corruption have worsened during the stress caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and its severe lockdown. Mlambo & Masuku (2020:550) contend that the health pressure of the emergence of the pandemic prompted the government to relax the control measures on the procurement of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and that this relaxation has exacerbated corruption from the highest sphere of the state.

The increase of corruption in South Africa in recent years can be an indication that people have failed at various levels. As citizens, they failed to follow the laws implemented by the governing body that regulate people's private gains and assets (NACS 2020:44). This is triggered either by some people's ignorance (unawareness of the laws) or by a deliberate rejection of moral and social norms. Humans can influence their fellow human beings to practice corruption or people can deceive themselves to fall into such a procedure (Erickson 2013:517). An alarming majority of South Africans are materially impoverished by the greed of the minority who uses government institutions to build their personal wealth, forgetting the people whom they are called to serve. Corruption practitioners thus trample on the noble notion of the common good. "A government package of relief measures, amounting to over R500 billion was announced on 21 April 2020 by President Ramaphosa" (Burger and Mchenga 2021:5). However, allegations of corruption over the R500 billion Covid-19 relief package have been levied on some government officials (Medical Brief 2020:1-7). That is why this fund has not benefit South African poorer households for whom it has been initially allocated. This has obviously further exacerbated the socio-economic inequalities in the country.

The rise in prices of necessities due to declining demand and supply disruptions linked to the pandemic has been significant. As Francis *et al* (2020:345-346) and Paganini *et al* (2020:6-7) argue, the government allocated billions of Rand to the Covid-19 relief fund. However, the management of these funds was inadequate. Due to rampant mismanagement and inequalities, the budget apportioned to the pandemic did not always benefit poorer South African households.

Much of the aforementioned data has been collected in 2020, but the socio-economic situation of the majority of the poor population of South Africa did not change much in 2021. Nwosu *et al* (2021:2) analysed the Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey conducted under the

supervision of the National Income Dynamics Study (N.I.D.S). They argue that there is clear indication that,

Workers who were able to work from home [during lockdowns] significantly earned more than those who could not work from home, [and that the] ability to work from home was pro-rich. In other words, it was concentrated more on those in higher socioeconomic categories irrespective of the measure of socioeconomic measure used to rank workers (years of education, monthly wages, or per capita household income) (Nwosu *et al* 2021:3)

This is clear evidence that adversity of the coronavirus pandemic in South Africa has affected the poor and vulnerable more than the well off. As further posited by Nwosu *et al* (2021:5), the possibility of retrenchment during lockdowns is eight times higher for workers who earned below R3,000 as compared to top earners (who earned more than R24,001 per month.

The Covid-19 also led to greater levels of Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV). This was due to the fact that work had to be done in the home for many families and as a result, women were in ‘lockdown’ at home with their abusers while being cut off from normal support services” (United Nation Development Programme [UNDP] 2020:2). The South African Council of Churches (SACC) lamented over the rise of gruesome domestic violence in South Africa in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic (SACC 2020:3). The ecumenical body equally denounced the patriarchal interpretation of the Bible, which in some cases, leads to the violation of women’s rights and dignity. The SACC thus described SGBV in the following terms,

South Africa has earned the unwelcome notoriety as the home of gender based violence, gruesome rape, and killing of women in what has been dubbed the Republic of Sexual Abuse (RSA). Such domestic abuse has increased frighteningly now with victims trapped in lockdown with abusers. We recognise that often our Scriptures are interpreted in favour of the patriarchal attitude that violates women and children. God in Christ made women the primary channels of his saving incarnation, both at his birth by Mary of Nazareth, and at the proclamation of his resurrection by Mary of Magdala (SACC 2020:4).

Sinko *et al.* (2021:1-2) assert that GBV has many repercussions on the physical, social and psychological health of the victims, as well as on the children, their loved ones and society as a whole. These repercussions range from emotional suffering to post-traumatic stress,

deterioration of the state of physical and mental health and the deterioration of the relationship with the children in the home and in society. The consequences of domestic violence take time to heal. This is why Sinko *et al.* (2021:4) further insist that GBV victims need continued support and practical help to assist them in regaining power over their lives, until they find safety and peace. A study conducted by the African Union Commission - Women, Gender and Development Directorate and other related agencies (AUC-WGDD *et al* 2020:5) shows that domestic violence, whether physical or verbal, increased in Africa from 40.6% before the COVID-19 crisis to 52.2% during the pandemic crisis. The same study shows that the first week of level five lockdown in South Africa saw a 37% increase from the weekly average of GBV cases reported for 2019. Mittal & Singh (2020:3-5) also posited that gender-based violence and oppression against women and children was on the rise partly due to lockdowns. President Ramaphosa (2020:6) himself asserted that gender-based violence is “another pandemic that is raging in our country – the killing of women and children by the men of our country”.

As International Amnesty (IA) warns,

The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the risk and exposure of women and girls to sexual and gender-based violence. Confinement due to stay-at-home orders or lockdowns has increased the risk of women and girls to domestic, sexual, economic, psychological and other forms of gender-based violence by abusive partners and family members (IA 2020:4).

The same report ascertains that the South African government’s Department of Social Development received 2,300 complaints related to gender-based violence during the first five days of lockdown that is from March 26 to 30, 2020 (IA 2020:4). IA therefore urges the government to ensure that the prevention and the protection of women and girls from GBV and domestic violence is given a paramount priority during and after the period of Covid-19 lockdown in South Africa. Some of the measures proposed by the IA include: access to sexual and reproductive health services for women, girls, and people at risk of becoming pregnant; re-prioritization of support systems such as protection services, shelter and counselling for GBV survivors (IA 2020:4-5). Gender-based violence has always been high in South Africa. However, the phenomenon gained momentum during this period of the pandemic. It is thus an imperative duty for government, members of civil society and non-governmental organizations to address this scourge in an efficacious manner. The Covid-19 pandemic also affected the access of the vulnerable and the poor to the healthcare system in South Africa.

The challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic in the field of health have been felt globally and in South Africa in particular. As Burger and Mchenga (2021:1, 3) maintain, the polarized health system in South Africa gives “reason to believe that the Covid-19 pandemic [has amplified] existing inequalities” [...]. The health system mirrors existing inequalities, which are marked by deep divides and polarization following fractures in the social landscape”. Before the emergence of Covid-19, the visibility of the disparity between public and private hospitals in South Africa was already an evidence. As Burger and Christian (2018:8) observe, unlike private hospitals, in public health services, first health care is free, the price of major interventions is low, there is a long waiting time, rude health staff and there is a shortage of drugs. Only poor and low-income people can access public health facilities. However, during the period between 2020 and 2021, people found it difficult to access the health system for their existing medical conditions. For a period, there were those who live with HIV and tuberculosis that were unable to access their medication, even those who have other health issues and needed medical intervention had to have it postponed because the attention was given to Covid-19 patients (Burger and Mchenga 2021:4-5). Dorward *et al.* (2021:158) assert that in South Africa “where 1.7 million people are living with HIV”, the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic has had a remarkable impact of the lives of the “low-income and middle-income” people living with HIV. Covid-19 lockdowns have affected HIV “prevention, testing and treatment” (Dorward *et al.* (2021:158). In the South African province of KwaZulu-Natal, for instance, statistics by Dorward *et al.* (2021:161) show a decrease of 47.6% in HIV testing “in the first month of lockdown (April 2020)” as compared with 82.7% increase per month in pre-lockdown period and 375 initiation of antiretroviral therapy (ART) weekly during lockdowns compared with 571 before Covid-19.

## **2.4. Conclusion**

The Covid-19 pandemic emerged in South Africa in March 2020. Its impact was mostly felt during the early stages of the pandemic, but continues to have significant impact, particularly on poorer households. This is as a result of a number of unequal structural factors that existed in society that were exacerbated by the emergence of the pandemic. These structural factors include the division and the widening of the gap between the rich and the poor leading to higher rates of unemployment, greater corruption, and the exacerbation of GBV and difficulty in accessing healthcare.

The growing socio-economic distress as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa needs an effective theological and pastoral response. The next chapter attempts to offer a theological reflection employing the perspective of African liberation theology with specific attention to the philosophy of *Ujamaa* and the theology of *Ubuntu*.



## CHAPTER THREE

### An African Liberation Theological Reflection on Covid-19

#### 3.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed the context of the emerging Covid-19 globally and in South Africa. I argued that the pandemic has caused unprecedented humanitarian distress and that its socio-economic impact on South Africa is evident. The socio-economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in the context of South Africa is the exacerbation of existing social inequalities, which include issues of unemployment, corruption, gender-based violence, and access to the healthcare system.

This chapter seeks to offer a theological response to the Covid-19 pandemic employing an African liberation perspective with a particular focus on Julius Nyerere's philosophy of *Ujamaa* and on Desmond Tutu's theology of *Ubuntu*. I have chosen Nyerere's *Ujamaa* and Tutu's *Ubuntu* in this chapter of the study because of their focus on community and the structural dimensions of societies that need to be addressed in order to reach the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. The chapter will begin by situating the philosophy of *Ujamaa* and the theology of *Ubuntu* in the broader context of African liberation theologies with a particular focus on Mugambi (1995) and Bediako (1999). I will proceed to provide brief biographies of Nyerere and Tutu that reveal not only the socio-economic and political context in which they lived and worked, but also the transformative values of society that they stood for. I argue that these values are imperative for an appropriate pastoral response to the socio-impact of the pandemic. *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* will be defined, followed by an intersectional discussion of the concepts.

#### 3.2. Contextual Background to African Liberation Theology

Liberation Theology was initiated in Latin America in the 1960s and developed further in the 1970s (Kleeb 2015:1). The term was used for the first time by Gustavo Gutierrez in 1973. It continued in the 1980s despite the opposition of the Roman Catholic Church's hierarchy under Pope John-Paul II who qualified it as "Marxist ideology" that opposes "material liberation" to "spiritual salvation" (Kleeb 2015:2-3). Liberation theology specifically referred

to the socio-economic and political oppression of the poor, using Marxist tools in a broad way for a reinterpretation of the Bible and of the Christian message. The “preferential option for the poor and the oppressed” (Kleeb 2015:1) is the main tenet of liberation theology. De Rooij and Burity (2015:2, 4) highlight this precept by defining liberation theology as

A movement in (Roman Catholic) theology that aims to liberate people from unjust economic, political, or social contexts. In doing so, it primarily interprets the teachings of Christianity in relation to suffering. Christian faith is interpreted through the experiences of the poor (especially suffering), and their struggles to attain their strategic goals and aims.

Liberation theology advocates that the evangelical mission of the church is precisely to side with the poor and the oppressed and to fight poverty through “bringing justice to this world” (Rooij and Burity 2015:3). Latin American liberation theologians include, “Gustavo Gutierrez, [...], Leonardo Boff and his brother Clodovis Boff, Jon Sobrino, Oscar Romero and Juan Luis Segundo” (Rooij and Burity 2015:2). Latin American liberation theology has emerged and been embraced by other Christian denominations and religions throughout the world. It emerged on the African continent in the 1980s and was articulated as “taking sides with the God of life against the forces of death. The task of Christians was to ‘read the signs of the times,’ discerning where God was already at work bringing life in the midst of death, and then to become co-workers with God” (Hinkelammert quoted in West 2015:3). The context of African liberation theology is the huge economic gap between the rich and the poor, marginalisation and exploitation of the poor, patriarchy and discrimination, oppression and, the incompatibility of the capitalistic economic-profit system with faith in God (West: 2015:9, 11).

There are several forms of African theological liberation discourse. West (2015:2) identifies “four main stands” namely: first, inculturation or contextual liberation theology that stands against the derogation of African cultural and religious identity; second, Black theology that underscores the fight against colonialism, racial discrimination and capitalistic economic oppression; third, African feminist theology whose “emphasis” is on gender; and fourth, post-colonial theologies that focus on God in the post-colonial African context. Siding for and working with the poor, African liberation theology is considered as “a ‘Prophetic Theology’, a theology that ‘speaks to the particular circumstances of [the] crisis, a response that does not give the impression of sitting on the fence but is clearly and unambiguously taking a stand’”

(*The Kairos Document* quoted in West 2010:13). Some of the key African liberation theologians on the continent are Allan Boesak (1984), Albert Nolan (1986), Mercy Amba Oduyoye (1995), Tinyiko Samuel Maluleke (quoted in West: 2010: 9, 11-12), Mugambi (1995) and Bediako (1999).

Even though Jesse Mugambi and Kwami Bediako are not always recognised as African liberation theologians, I argue that Mugambi's reconstruction theology and Bediako's African contextual translation theology are forms of African liberation theology. There is a strong focus in their work on "the option for the poor" and African developmental wellbeing, including the promotion of human rights and dignity, social justice, and peace and reconciliation.

Moulded by the political and economic struggles of the tussle between the two ideological, economic, and political forces, namely capitalism and communism, Mugambi (1995:5) articulates his reconstruction theological axiom towards African developmental wellbeing. He comprehensively frames his reconstruction theological project around eleven characteristics that contrast with each other when he asserts that an African theology of reconstruction is,

...proactive rather than reactive; complementary rather than competitive; integrative rather than disintegrative; programme-driven rather than project-driven; people centred rather than institution-centred; deed-oriented rather than word-oriented; participatory rather than autocratic; regenerative rather than degenerative; future-sensitive rather than past-sensitive; co-operative rather than confrontational; consultative rather than impositional (Mugambi 1995:xv)

Reconstruction theology advocates the development of Africa based on African identity and unity "without having to rely on external tutelage" Tarus and Lowery (2017:315). Mugambi's theology "challenges the church in Africa to actively promote human rights, social justice, peace, and reconciliation in the midst of the atrocities bedeviling the African continent" (Tarus and Lowery 2017:315). Mugambi (1995:203) situates his theological reflection on four different levels. The first is personal reconstruction defined as the individual readiness for the tasks and the challenges that are still to come. To explain this first level, Mugambi refers to the Gospel of Luke 12-13; 18:9-14 and Mathew 23:1-13, which speak of sincere change of heart in view of building a new life. The second level is cultural reconstruction, which deals with making people feel at home in their culture as well as in their religious identity,

especially when it comes to evangelization and mission in the African context where, for Mbiti, suggests Mugambi (quoted in 1995:204) people are “notoriously religious”. The third level is ecclesial reconstruction. At this level, Mugambi (2008:359) argues that the church should not take people away from their religiosity but should rather let the Gospel meet them in the land of their religious and cultural ground. For Kinoti (quoted in Gathogo 2008:5), reconstruction theology is an invitation to the church in Africa to more purposefully and decisively rise up and move forward. The fourth level is socio-economic reconstruction. Mugambi (1995:72, 162) holds that the church in Africa should not be relying only on relief programmes to alleviate socio-economic and intellectual crises that are plaguing the continent but must go beyond so as to “discern the causes and the context” of these crises. Mugambi (1995:86) ironically and yet lamentably wonders why it is possible that the African continent, so vast, so diverse, and so rich in terms of the natural resources has the largest food deficit in the world.

Mugambi’s theology of reconstruction gained mitigated support among African theologians in the 1990s. While some lauded it as prophetic for Africa, others viewed it as “a castle in the air”. African theologians that were protagonists of Mugambi such as Charles Villa-Vincencio (1992), Brigalia H. Bam (1995), and Godefroid Mana Kagudie (2001) argue that after colonialism and *apartheid*, the new challenges faced by Africa in general and, South Africa in particular, was to move from a theology of liberation to a “theology of nation-building”. Those that critique Mugambi are African scholars such as Wilson Niwagilia (1997), Tinyko Maluleke (1997), and Valentin Dedji (2003) who evaluate reconstruction theology as “false hope for the people of Africa” and hence not relevant for the current context (Tarus and Lowery 2017:317). Niwagilia (1997:171), for instance, argues that liberation is an ongoing dynamic and that Africa needs to be constantly and continuously liberated from oppressive systems, colonialism, racism and ideological propaganda such as nepotism, sexism, patriarchy, xenophobia, conflicts and wars that keep Africa in constant poverty. Tarus and Lowery (2017:317) cite the example of Yoweri Museveni, the current President of Uganda who, during his first years in power, was lauded as a liberator and compared to Moses in the Bible. Yet, this same Museveni later on turned out to be a fearful dictator, tirelessly defrauding elections and oppressing his political opponents.

Kwame Bediako (1999) considers that theological contextualization needs to be situated in the perspective and dynamics of Christian identity. He argues that contextualisation has

emerged as a response to the negation and denigration of African traditional religion by missionaries (Bediako 1999:226). From this perspective, contextualisation is important because of the sensitivity to the crisis of dehumanization in Africa and appears as one of the remedies to the “failure of evangelisation in Africa” (Bediako 1999:227). Bediako (1999:247) further argues that,

Because of the modern missionary misapprehension on this specific point universality, fundamental questions on the possible meaning of Christ for the pre-Christian religious past could hardly surface or be taken with sufficient seriousness in the missionary era.

Moreover, central to Bediako’s argument is that Christian identity cannot be clearly defined without a rediscovery of traditional African religious past, which was precursory to Christianity.

Bediako (1999:245-247) identifies three approaches in analysing African traditional religion and the Christian faith. First, the exclusivist approach, which maintains that salvation is found only through explicit knowledge and confession of Christ. In this sense, non-Christian religions or philosophy are merely means to reach the truth found in Christ. Second, the pluralistic approach, which holds that Christ is one of the means of salvation. Third, the inclusivist approach according to which the truth found in the Christian gospel was already known particularly in the pre-Christian worship of African traditional religion. Bediako’s theological inclination is for the inclusivist approach. In his theological discourse, the God proclaimed by missionaries was already present and worshipped in African traditional religion. He holds that the inclusivist approach was fundamental in the work of early Christian theologians such as Justine the Martyr and Clement of Alexandria who found in Greek philosophy the constitutive truth for the meeting with the Christian gospel. For this reason, Bediako (1999:147) goes on to affirm that Africans are not “heathens” nor are they “pagans” or “ungodly”. As Tarus and Lowery (2017:313) comment, Bediako’s theological endeavour consists in “continuously exploring the relationship of African cultural identities with the Christian gospel and Christian identity”.

Amidst broad range of African liberation theologians, I will be focusing on Julius Nyerere and Desmond Tutu with their different philosophy because not only do they take an option for the poor, but they also show how this option needs to be taken communally. This emphasis on the

communal is important precisely because when there is a public health emergency such as the Covid-19 pandemic, individuals cannot be making decisions on their own. The Covid-19 pandemic needs a communal response for the welfare of the entire nation. Both Nyerere and Tutu reflect clearly that it is important not just to take an option for the poor, but that this option is a communal one.

### **3.3. Biographies of Julius Nyerere and Desmond Tutu**

Born on 13 April 1922 in Mwitongo, Tanganyika (now Tanzania), Julius Kambarage Nyerere<sup>1</sup> obtained a diploma in education in 1947 in Makerere College in Kampala (Dunheved 1961:7). He was offered teaching posts both in government and in a Catholic College on his return to Zanaki, his home village in Tanganyika. For this reason, he was fondly called *Mwalimu* (teacher in Swahili) (Mwijage 2017:15). He later completed his Master of Arts Degree at the University of Edinburgh's Faculty of Arts in Scotland from 1949 to 1952 (Dunheved 1961:5-8). In 1953, Nyerere was elected president of the Tanganyika African Association (TAA) that worked tirelessly for the independence of Tanganyika from the British Empire. He greatly admired Mahatma Gandhi and endorsed his non-violent philosophy to attaining independence (Dunheved 1961:7). From 1955 to 1959, Nyerere toured the whole country, promoting independence ideas and campaigning for a non-racist Tanganyika and encouraging people to fight, and "even to die for [the achievement of] the cardinal principles of individual and national" birth right, which is freedom from oppression (Dunheved 1961:5-7).

Tanganyika became independent on 9 December 1961 but with the British Monarch as its Queen and Julius Nyerere as the Prime Minister (Msaki 1964:72). On 9 December 1962, the constitution of the Republic was implemented and Nyerere became the first President of the newly independent Tanganyika (Msaki 1964:73-74). On the night of the independent day and at the wish of Nyerere, a candle was lit "and put on top of Mount Kilimanjaro, to shine beyond our borders giving hope where there was despair, love where there was hate and dignity where before there was only humiliation" (Msaky 1964:74). In order to protest against the oppressive apartheid regime, he decided to stop Tanganyika from supplying labourers to South African mines. Still in that same vein, Nyerere declared in March 1961 that his country would not join the Common Wealth if South Africa remained a member (Dunheved 1961:15

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<sup>1</sup> Nyerere means "caterpillar" in Zanaki local language.

and Mmari 1995:177). Under his auspices, Tanganyika joined Zanzibar in 1964 to form the United Republic of Tanzania. In December 1966, Nyerere toured the whole country once more, articulating and explaining the principles of *Ujamaa* to the people (Shivji *et al* 2020:5). This political tour was anchored in the Arusha Declaration on 5 February 1967. Nyerere's leadership was framed by his developmental and socialist philosophy of *Ujamaa*. He died on 14 October 1999.

As Shivji *et al* (2020:1) assert,

As the first President of Tanzania, a Pan-Africanist leader, and a theorist of African socialism, Nyerere spent his long political career consciously occupied by the age-old struggles Socrates posed between the individual and community, rulers and ruled, and development and decadence.

They further hold that Nyerere spent his political life addressing challenges created by the systemic colonial and capitalistic world constructed around disordered separations of antagonistic classes, races, sexes, religions, and ideologies (Shivji *et al* 2020:1-2).

Nyerere was for Tanzania what Desmond Tutu was for black South Africans.

Desmond Mpilo Tutu was born on 7 October 1931 in Klerksdorp in Transvaal, South Africa, to Zachariah and Aletha Tutu. He grew up in a multi-ethnic household, speaking at least three languages: isiXhosa from his father's Eastern Cape Province, Setswana from his seSotho-speaking mother and his grandmother who lived with the family, and isiZulu from the neighbours (Mungazi 2000:61). As Mungazi (2000:87) explains, Tutu was born in a context where the philosophy of black South African education as instituted by Kruger was essentially aimed at making him believe that he was made to be inferior to whites so as to never aspire to be equal to the latter. His family moved many times because of his father's profession as a teacher and as a result, Tutu became more aware of racial prejudices in the South African society as he grew up. Crompton (2007:10) asserts that,

One of his most painful experiences was watching several white South African boys taunting his middle-aged father. They called the school teacher 'boy', and showed their disrespect in every way they could. There was nothing Zachariah Tutu could do in this situation; all black South Africans had to put up with such behaviour.

In 1946, Desmond Tutu contracted tuberculosis. After spending almost 20 months in hospital, he fully recovered in 1948, the year in which the National Party won the general election and began implementing the system of *apartheid* in South Africa. In 1949, Tutu entered the Bantu Normal School in Pretoria<sup>2</sup> with the aim of following in his father's footsteps in the teaching profession. He later studied at St. Peter's Theological College in Johannesburg and in 1958 was ordained an Anglican priest in 1961 (Mungazi 2000:90). He moved to England that same year to further his studies. He returned to South Africa from England in 1966 and began teaching at Alice College, a theological institution for black clergy. In 1970, Tutu became a lecturer at the University of Botswana and was appointed director of the World Theological Fund in 1972 (Mungazi 2000:90). In 1975, he was appointed "Dean of St Mary's Cathedral in Johannesburg, the first black South African to hold such a high post in his church in South Africa's major metropolitan area" (Allan 1994:4). He was then nominated Bishop of Lesotho in 1976. As Mungazi (2000:90-91) recalls, it was the same year of the Soweto uprising on 16 June 1976. On this day hundreds of young people protested against the education system imposed by then Prime Minister, P.W. Botha. Tutu was in the spotlight because he sought to bring a peaceful resolution to this increasingly deteriorating situation.

In 1978, Tutu was elected the first African secretary-general of the South African Council of Churches (SACC), South Africa's official contact organization with the World Council of Churches (WCC), which represented millions of Christians around the world and whose major functions include seeking resolutions to problems of social injustice in the world (Mungazi 2000:91, 94-95).

This office strengthened Tutu and the SACC's position of siding with the oppressed and fighting for liberation. Importantly, it propelled Tutu to meet the South African Prime Minister P.W. Botha for the first time in 1980. The purpose of the meeting was to challenge "the enactment of the new Group Areas Act" of 1950<sup>3</sup>, which enforced the concentration of black South Africans into racially segregated townships and to warn Botha against the continuous arrest and torture of protesters by the apartheid military and political regime

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<sup>2</sup> This was the only college in South Africa that trained black teachers.

<sup>3</sup> As Mungazi (2000:92-93) points out, it should be remembered that this law was passed and enacted by the National Party in 1950 authorizing the South African government of that time to remove Africans from urban areas and place them in arid and unproductive tribal rural areas. The aim of this law was to better control, exploit and oppress black people.



(Mungazi 2000:91-92). For Tutu, “any arrest of protesters would trigger a new riot worse than that of June 16, 1976” (Mungazi 2000:92).

Tutu exacerbated Botha and his administration’s anger when, during an interview in Denmark, he pleaded for the withdrawal of foreign investment (including Denmark) from South Africa in support of the fight against *apartheid* (Mungazi 2000:92). This anger led to the withdrawal and confiscation of his passport upon his return to the country. When his passport was returned to him in January 1981, Tutu toured European countries and the United States of America to call on the international community and world church leaders to support the fight against apartheid in South Africa through imposing economic sanctions and with the aim to ensure a peaceful transition in South Africa (Mungazi 2000:92). It is worth mentioning that, for Tutu, it was perspicuous that a peaceful transitional change in South Africa was to be achieved through “political, diplomatic and economic means” (Mungazi 2000:92). The state of emergency was established in South Africa in 1984 and in that same year, Tutu won the Nobel Peace Prize, which was celebrated neither by the government nor the state television because he was ever termed a “troublemaker” (Battle 2021:95). Tutu became bishop of Johannesburg in 1985 and Archbishop of the Anglican Province of Southern Africa a year later in 1986.

Tutu cast his first vote in a democratic presidential election on 27 April 1994. As he emphasizes, he performed his civic, constitutional and democratic right in Gugulethu township in Cape Town as a sign of “solidarity with those who for so long had been disenfranchised, living daily in the deprivation and squalor of apartheid’s racial segregated ghetto townships” (Tutu 1999:5). In 1995, President Nelson Mandela appointed Tutu chairperson of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), together with 16 other commissioners (Crompton 2007:101). Tutu died on 26 December 2021.

### **3.4. Defining *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu***

As aforementioned, *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* are identified in this study as two important philosophical and theological contributions to African liberation theology that chooses the preferential option for the poor and the oppressed (*Kairos Document* 1985; Frostin 1988), and considers people’s experience of poverty and oppression as the source of theological reflection (Frostin 1988:6).

*Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* are two distinct African philosophical and theological concepts coined by Nyerere and Tutu respectively. While *Ujamaa* emerges from the Swahili word *jamaa* (family) and is defined as “familiness” or “familyhood” or “brotherhood” or “sisterhood” (Mukhungulu *et al* 2017:183), *Ubuntu* draws its etymology from the languages and dialects of the Bantu peoples living in 27 sub-Saharan Africa countries (Mojola 2019:21). *Ubuntu* is conceptualised as “personhood, humanness, humanity and morality” (Nzimakwe (2014:2) and is used “to describe African traditional way of life” (Kijanga 1978:3). *Ujamaa* “had as its core the emphasis on familyhood and communalism of traditional African societies” (Ibhawoh and Dibua 2003:46) whereas *Ubuntu* is primarily a concept about “persons” whose self-identity is understood in light of their interdependence and interconnectedness within the community and with God (Battle 2015:5). As Michael Battle (2009:1-2) observes, both words *ubuntu* and *Bantu* are rooted in the word *-ntu* (human or being or human head or human being) while the prefix *ba* is the mark of the plural and means people or humanity. Mojola (2021:22) assesses that the stem *-ntu* has variants with the same meaning in other Bantu languages such as *-ndu*, *-tu*, *-to* and, *nto*. The singular of *Bantu* (people) is *muntu* (a person). Mojola (2019:21-22) holds that the term *Bantu* was coined for the first time in 1862 by the German scholar and linguist Wilhelm Heinrich Immanuel Bleek to “refer to the entire group of languages that use the term *Bantu* or share significant grammatical, morphological, phonological, lexical, and semantic features”.

### 3.5. *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* as African Liberation Theologies

The term *Ujamaa* was coined by Nyerere to spearhead an African political and socio-economic philosophy that is “opposed to capitalism, which seeks to build a happy society on the basis of the exploitation of man by man [*sic*]; and it is equally opposed to doctrinaire socialism which seeks to build its happy society on a philosophy of inevitable conflict between man and man[*sic*]” (Nyerere 1968:2). Mittelman (2018:259-260) further holds that *Ujamaa* is opposed to the capitalistic and colonialist culture of master-slave relationships that are underpinned by the *laissez-faire*<sup>4</sup> and the survival of the fittest. As already discussed in section 1.5, Frostin (1988:89-94) examines the African philosophy of Nyerere’s *Ujamaa* as

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<sup>4</sup> In French, the expression “Laissez-faire” refers to the policy of leaving things to take their own course, without any interference.

liberation theology together with South African black theology. The rationale behind this consideration is that the African philosophy of *Ujamaa* imbeds themes such as faith in God and human liberation from oppression, poverty, marginalisation and economic justice, which are crucial to Latin American liberation theology (Gutiérrez 1974: 34-36, 168-175). Nyerere is consistent with Gustavo Gutiérrez's view that conceptions of development and liberation are expressions of people's deepest aspiration for freedom from a situation of dependence and "neo-colonial capitalism" (Gutiérrez 1974:109-111).

With regard to *Ubuntu*, it is important to mention from the onset that Tutu was not the first scholar to discuss this notion theologically. Gade (2011:1) argues, "The term has frequently appeared in the writing since at least 1947". Gade (2011:4) further asserts that the term *Ubuntu* was first used in South Africa in 1960 during a conference held in Durban. *Ubuntu* is described both as a moral quality of a person and as a phenomenal interconnection between a person and their fellow humans (Gade 2011:309 and Mojola 2019:28-30). The concept of *Ubuntu* is summarised in the societal context of South Africa "as the act of being human, caring, sympathy, empathy, forgiveness or any values of humanness towards others" (Louw 2015:5). In the African culture in general and in the South African culture in particular, *Ubuntu* is a concept that expresses compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony and humanity in the interests of building and maintaining a community with justice and mutual caring. According to Tutu, suggests Battle (2009:2), the following qualities characterise an *Ubuntu* person:

...availability to others, affirmation of others' existence, appreciation of others' talents and goodness, self-assurance from the awareness of belonging to the broader community, absence of anger resentment and nursing of grudges, and the feeling of being diminished when others are humiliated, tortured and oppressed.

*Ubuntu* means being a person is always in reference to others, hence the *isiZulu* popular proverbial expression of *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (a person is a person because of other people). Menkiti (1984:171-175) elaborates on this African idiom by arguing that for Africans, community supersedes the reality of the individual.

Tutu (1999:264-265) emphasises that the theology of *Ubuntu* is strengthened by the following maxim: "we are meant for better and great things when we hold ourselves together and share our oneness with each other". *Ubuntu* thus highlights communal solidarity. As Battle

(2009:28) points out, for Tutu, “*Ubuntu* recognizes that human beings are called to be persons in the community because we are made in the image of the triune God”. *Ubuntu* theology finds its foundational root in the African cultural notion of living together in community and theologically in *koinonia* (the communion of people of faith). According to the *Ubuntu* concept, it is inconceivable that a person exists exclusively for oneself. It is being in community that one finds identity. Manda (2007: v) holds that “the values espoused in *Ubuntu* emphasize caring, sharing, reciprocity, co-operation, compassion and empathy”. Anything that tramples down people’s rights and dignity is contrary to the supreme value of *Ubuntu*.

Both *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* hold the ethical values of people’s sovereignty, human freedom, equality and unity in communal living (Osabu-Kle 2000:171). As already mentioned in the introductory chapter of this study the African liberation theological category of life in community is emphasised both in Nyerere’s *Ujamaa* and in Tutu’s *Ubuntu*. While *Ujamaa* is a community-oriented philosophy that implies the participation of all in the life of the nation (and by implication the church), *Ubuntu* is articulated by Tutu as the fundamental vocation of human beings to live together in hospitality and in caring for one another as in one family of God. (Tutu 1999:264-265). The communal dimension of African liberation theology is underpinned by the notion that Africans live and share life not as single individuals, but as a communal people in relationship with both the living and the dead and with the cosmos (Nyambiti 1978:60). Life in community is the catalyst for sharing in solidarity with the poor and the oppressed. For Nyerere (1968), it is inconceivable that a minority of citizens arrogate to themselves the privilege of amassing more wealth than they need while an alarming majority of people are being oppressed, exploited, and are dying in dire poverty and abject misery. The communitarian dimension of life implies that nobody should starve for food, lack of basic health services, education and decent housing (Kijanga 1978:1). This is affirmed by Menkiti (1984:171-174) who sees *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* as a twofold concept of community when considered in the perspective of the global village.

Both *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* advocate an African cultural attitude of mind, which aims at ensuring that each member of society works hard in order to care for one’s welfare and that of others. Even though *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* go together like two sides of the same coin they do, however, have their particular specificity. The specificity of *Ujamaa* is based on its following threefold emphasis. First, the intrinsic value of education as “one of the most important instruments of liberation” (Kijanga 1978:9) and fundamental to shaping individuals and the

nation (Mukhungulu *et al* 2017:181). Second, socio-economic development that aims at bringing about social transformation for a decent and peaceful life in a free society (Nyerere 1968:107-109). Third, self-reliance with the objective of empowering people to realise themselves, not only physically, materially and mentally, but also morally, socially and emotionally (Nyerere 1968:104-105).

The discourse on *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* have not always had the same reception amongst African scholars. For some critics, *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* are idealistic (Ibhawoh and Dibua 2003) and are obsolete (Matolino and Kwingingwi 2013; Praeg 2014). Those that see these two concepts as idealist, view the idealistic single mindedness of Nyerere's *Ujamaa* as detrimental to his country's economy (Ibhawoh and Dibua 2003). They further argue that the nationalization process caused the failure of *Ujamaa* in its implementation (Ibhawoh and Dibua 2003: 65). Scholars such as Ibhawoh and Dibua (2003:62) hold that, the "former Tanzanian dictator, Julius Nyerere, was single-handedly responsible for the economic destruction of his potentially wealthy nation". Ibhawoh and Dibua (2003: 64-67) detect in *Ujamaa* a few socio-political and economic challenges that include, 1) some contradictions in the industrial sector regarding the state control of the economy as a guarantee of a more effective self-reliance and; 2) the structural over-bureaucratization and centralization which engendered opportunities for increased corruption, inefficiency and dissipation of country's resources. Furthermore, the ideology of *Ujamaa* lacked the principle of consensus. It did not meet the agreement of all citizens and therefore created a divorce between the ideal and the reality on the ground. In other words, there was a disconnection between the idealistic project and the realization of the dreamed welfare broadcasted by Nyerere's philosophy of *Ujamaa* (Kijanga 1978:27). This is why Nyerere was arguably termed as a totalitarian and autocratic leader (Mwijage 2017:34-35; Dunheved 1961:14).

Similarly, the African theology of *Ubuntu* has had its critics. Criticisms range from *Ubuntu* praxis to its universal or global value. Praeg (2014:36) argues that much of the confusion and disagreement with the *Ubuntu* discourse point to the functional failure of a clear distinction between "the precolonial praxis of *Ubuntu* on the one hand, and the contemporary philosophical expression of that praxis on the other hand" (2014:161). Furthermore, *Ubuntu* needs to cross from the particular to the universal as Praeg (2014:162) suggests, that is to be "retrodictive", meaning to return to precolonial Africa in order to answer exactly what *Ubuntu* means by "being" and "belonging". In this perspective, *Ubuntu* will then move from being a

political utopia and slogan to being able to better speak the language of a contemporary global ideology. Other critics such as Matolino and Kwindigwi (2013) question the practical and theoretical dimensions of *Ubuntu* in the current context. Grounding their arguments on the conditions that an *Ubuntu* person needs to meet in order to be part of the community, including having mutual support and having a sense of mutual feeling amongst members, Matolino and Kwindigwi (2013:197) raise two challenges. First, the ambiguity of the conditions under which *Ubuntu* (as an ideology) is obtained and second, the difficulty of assessing whether the said conditions have materialised and are being practised in most Africans daily life. They argue that it is difficult to see how *Ubuntu* as a narrative, can fit into contemporary African society because it is “neither new nor successful” and as such, cannot help in enhancing economic development of its adherent societies (Matolino and Kwindigwi 2013:198). They continue to suggest that *Ubuntu* excelled in small and closely identical traditional societies in the past. However, with globalisation, it is difficult to conceptualise and practise today in an Africa tormented by wars, religious extremism, political dictatorship, corruption, gender-based violence and violence in general. Matolino and Kwindigwi (2013:202) conclude that *Ubuntu* cannot hold any longer because it “is only advanced to serve a certain Africanist agenda when it best suites the elites”.

I would argue that both *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* seem to overlook the consideration of the human person not just communally but as an individual. The two ideologies tend to downplay individuality and could be problematic when the intrinsic question of respect for the dignity of the human person arises. In their essence, both *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* attribute more credit to the community than to the individual. Yet, as Mwoleka and Healey (1976:4) asserts, no one can participate in the collective solidarity effort if they are not free to support themselves materially or if they have reduced possibilities of using their talents in the service of others.

Despite critics, many African scholars argue that Nyerere’s *Ujamaa* and Tutu’s *Ubuntu* and Tutu offer extremely valuable and practical lessons applicable to Africa. Manda and Chirongoma (2008:4) for instance, propose *Ubuntu* as a “valuable ethical tool in our attempts to construct an ethical and holistic health-care package” among the poor, especially amongst Black women living with HIV in South Africa. Chisale (2018) also relies extensively on the notion of *Ubuntu* in her work. She uses the concept of *Ubuntu* to undergird the “significance of engaging community elders” in the context of caregiving with special focus on the elderly who are “regarded as the custodians of indigenous knowledge” Chisale (2018:2). Ibhawoh

and Dibia (2002:76-78) contend that *Ubuntu* remains a key concept for those who want inclusive economic development for Africa, which frees the continent from social structures that continuously keep its people in poverty and oppression. It can be argued that development is a complex and multi-dimensional that does not only involve economics, but also the transformation of human lives. From this perspective, Stiglitz (2017:126-129) argues that development is about transforming people's lives and not just changing economies. For Stiglitz (2017:135), technological and scientific innovations must aim at social transformation that benefits those individuals that are worse off in society.

Critics of *Ubuntu*, for instance, cite its failure to address the issue of the high crime rate in South Africa today. However, *Ubuntu*, can stand as a solution to political and socio-economic predicaments in South Africa. Nelson Mandela is an illustrative example of a leader who refrained from violence, using the principle of *Ubuntu*. As pointed out by Jolley (2011:54),

Nelson Mandela's release from prison, after more than twenty-seven years, could have provoked substantial harm to the nation, but it did not because he applied *Ubuntu*. This profound example of humanism or *Ubuntu*, was never demonstrated to Mandela.

So, I argue that African cultural values promoted by *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* can contribute to a solution vis-à-vis the humanitarian health crisis that South Africa and the world are currently facing. This is particularly true for the Christian faith and it is from this perspective that the response of the Roman Catholic Church to the emergence of Covid-19 and its socio-economic impact in South Africa is evaluated in light of the categories highlighted in the philosophy of *Ujamaa* and the theology of *Ubuntu*.

### **3.6. Conclusion**

This chapter has situated the concepts of *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* in the wider African liberation theological discourse. From a wide range of African liberation theologians, I have particularly elaborated the work of Mugambi and Bediako because of their preferential option for the poor, which is the basic principle of liberation theology. I have respectively addressed their African theologies of reconstruction and of contextual African translation theology. An intersectional discussion on *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* led to an understanding of the common thread between these two African philosophical and theological concepts. The common thread

in both is the search for the well-being of the human person whose identity is essentially defined in reference to the community and whose vocation is to care not only for oneself, but also for others. However, it is important to note that the concepts of *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* both have their African scholarly critics. While some consider *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* to be too idealistic, others suggest that they belong to the vestiges of the past and therefore are impossible to implement in a globalized Africa that is being influenced by new technologies and digital communication. Nonetheless, because of their focus on the community care that is so essential to public health, the response of the Roman Catholic Church to the socio-economic impact of the emerging Covid-19 pandemic in Africa should be examined in light of the categories found in the concepts of *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu*. This is the focus of the next chapter of this study.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### **The Response of the Roman Catholic Church in South Africa to the Emergence of Covid-19 and its Socio-economic Impact**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

The previous chapter discussed African liberation theology including Mugambi's African theology of reconstruction and Bediako's African contextual theology. The particular focus however was on the contribution of Nyerere's philosophy of *Ujamaa* and Tutu's *Ubuntu* theology. This theoretical framework shows what are the important issues that need to be addressed in the context of the socio-economic impact of the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic. The purpose of the present chapter is to focus on the response of the Roman Catholic Church to Covid-19 globally. The chapter will deal with this response from two perspectives. Firstly, the theological and pastoral response of Roman Catholic Bishops; and secondly, the practical response from the development agency of the Catholic Church, *Caritas*, to the socio-economic impact of the pandemic.

Archival history shows that the presence of Christians of the Roman Catholic Church in South Africa dates from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. On the 31 August 1506 a hermitage was founded in Mossel Bay in the Eastern Cape by the Portuguese navigator Pero Coresma and his fellow citizen João da Nova (Denis 2018:141). For Van der Merwe (quoted in Denis 2018:141), a new era for Catholics in South Africa arrived in 1804 when, for a short period of Batavian Republic rule<sup>5</sup>, Jacob Abraham de Mist signed an Edit proclaiming religious freedom in the Cape Colony. The Catholic Church in South Africa was actually established by Patrick Griffith, an Irish Dominican missionary "who was consecrated bishop in 1837 and arrived at the Cape the following year" (Denis 2018:141).

In 2018, the number of Catholic Christians in South Africa was estimated at 3.8 million, representing 6% of a total population of approximately 57 million (Denis 2018:143). The Roman Catholic Church thus has a significant presence in South Africa and therefore their

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<sup>5</sup> The Batavian Republic was proclaimed in January 19, 1795. As Palmer (1954: 12) explains, "the Netherlands became known as the Batavian Republic and the ruler of the Netherlands, Prince William of Orange, had to flee to England. In England, the prince asked the British to prevent France taking possession of the Dutch colonies. England obliged and, as a result, occupied the Cape colony in South Africa". The Batavian Republic ended on 5 June 1806.

pastoral response to the socio-economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic needs interrogation. As an essentially missionary institution with a preferential option for the poor, it has been working alongside the marginalised and neglected during this time of the Covid-19 pandemic through its national *Caritas* agencies (SACBC 2021).

The focus of this chapter is primarily an analysis of a number of documents published by the Roman Catholic Church and other church bodies in South Africa where Catholic leaders play a role, as well as on the response of *Caritas*, a Roman Catholic relief and development agency. The first document to be analysed are the pastoral letters from the two SABC bishops, namely Bishop Phalana of Klerksdorp and Archbishop Buti Tlhagale of Johannesburg; second, KZNCC statements signed by Cardinal Wilfrid Napier, the Archbishop *Emeritus* of the Catholic Archdiocese of Durban in his capacity as the church leader's group chairperson of the ecumenical network; third, Pope Francis' encyclical letter, *Fratelli Tutti* that was propagated in South Africa in the context of Covid-19. The research methodology involves document analysis using coding in order to ascertain emerging themes in the documents.

In introducing this chapter, the Roman Catholic Church's historical response to human need will be discussed as well as the response to the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic with a special focus on *Caritas* South Africa.

#### **4.2. Roman Catholic Social Teaching on Responding to Human Need**

The Roman Catholic Church has a history of concern for social matters, especially since the industrial revolution of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which accentuated the split of society into the class of the bourgeoisie and the class of the exploited and marginalised proletarians (Althusser 2006:88). In light of this historic socio-economic tumult, the Roman Catholic Church has placed the needs of humanity at the centre of its social teaching for more than a hundred years. It should be mentioned that the Roman Catholic Church's reflection on life in society became more systematic since Pope Leo XIII right through to Pope John Paul II. The encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* (of New Things) by Leo XIII (1891) and *Centisimus Annus* (the Hundredth Year) by John Paul II (1991) are an indication that the doctrine and social commitment of the Roman Catholic Church is inspired by the Christian faith and the values of the Christian gospel. Brugger (2004:1) points out that Catholic social teaching is a "response to the concrete problems facing the Christian community as well as all members of civil

society”. In other words, the aim of this social commitment is to search for an integration of the Christian faith with social issues that revolve around the common good.

The social teaching of the Roman Catholic Church is underpinned by the concept of the “common good” (Pope Francis 2013: n.203) which, according to Lasida (2014:65), is “derived from ancient philosophy and re-elaborated by Christianity”. Pope Francis (2013: n.203) defines the common good as all the “legacies” that belong to all. These legacies includes social unity, inviolable human dignity, food, intellectual property and natural world resources that must be make more accessible to all. The Roman Catholic Church considers the notion of the common good as part of the evangelical perspective of reading and interpreting the signs of the times. Lasida (2014:165-167) argues that the resonance of the concept of the common good in the social thought of the Roman Catholic Church makes recurrent reference to the freedoms, the dignity and rights of the human person that need to be safeguarded, to the preservation of peace and, to the non-idolatrous management of wealth. Through this notion, the Roman Catholic Church aims at being in solidarity with all, especially the poor and the oppressed, the workers and the exploited (Xalxo 2015:174-177).

Other themes underlying the involvement of the Roman Catholic Church in the social and economic life of communities are listed by Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (PCJP) (2006). The PCJP highlights four underlying themes: (1) the evangelising mission of the Church through the promotion of the human person (PCJP 2006: nn.60-68); (2) social doctrine and the signs of the times (PCJP 2006: nn.89-104); (3) the human person created in the image of God (*imago Dei*) and human rights (PCJP 2006: nn.105-123, 132-134, 152-157). It needs to be noted that the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church became more officially and consistently aware of social issues related to international development during the papacy of John XXIII (1961). His papacy undoubtedly led to the convocation and holding of the Second Vatican Council<sup>6</sup> that produced a number of significant documents relating to social issues which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Encyclical letters published by various Popes over decades as well as documents from the Second Vatican Council elaborate on human need by placing development at the centre of the

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<sup>6</sup> The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, commonly known as Vatican II, was held in the Vatican City from 11 October 1962 to 8 December 1965 under the apostolic leadership of Popes John XXIII and then Paul VI. About 2500 bishops and priests and 1000 lay people participated in the Councils. The focus of Vatican II was on the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the modern world. An underlying theme was the concept of the *aggiornamento* (the renewal) of the church.

concern of the Roman Catholic Church. Most of the encyclicals and conciliar documents give “clear guidelines in light of the Gospel teachings on how Christians should respond to poverty, oppression, and injustice” (MacLaren 2017:12). Chronologically, these encyclicals and conciliar documents comprise of *Mater et Magister* (Mother and Teacher) and *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth) by John XXIII (1961 and 1963); Paul VI’s *Dignitatis Humanae* (the dignity of the human person) (1965) and *Gaudium et Spes* (Joy and hope) (1965); *Populorum Progressio* (On the Development of Peoples) by Paul VI (1967); *Sollicitudo rei Socialis* (on the Social Concern) by Jean Paul II (1987); *Caritas in Veritate* (Charity in Truth) by Benedict XVI (2009); and *Laudato Si* (on the Care of our Common Home) by Pope Francis (2015).

Bertina (2013:142-143) argues that the terms “economic development and social progress” were first mentioned in Pope John XXIII’s encyclical *Mater et Magister* (1961: nn.63-64) to denote the role of the Roman Catholic Church in teaching in matters related to society. According to Pope John XXIII, “work” is principally a human act, an activity, which fundamentally constitutes the means of human livelihood in relation to a fair wage (Pope John XXIII 1961: n.18). Pope John XXIII goes further to promote the rights of workers to form Trade Unions in view of defending their rights and the dignity of their work (Pope John XXIII 1961: n.22). With reference to *Pacem in Terris* (1963), it assesses a range of relationships between individuals and their community, and between nations before affirming the inviolability of human rights and dignity. Pope John XXIII argues that genuine peace has to be underpinned by trust and unity, and reinforced by God’s law.

The issue of basic human needs was central during the Second Vatican Council as published by Pope Paul VI in key final conciliar documents such as *Dignitatis Humanae* (1965) and *Gaudium et Spes* (1965). *Dignitatis Humanae* elaborates mostly on the need for governments to enhance individual religious freedom motivated by a sense of right and duty; whereas *Gaudium et Spes* analyses and addresses the joys and hopes, sorrows and anxieties of modern people and especially of the suffering poor (Paul VI 1965: n.1). Unlike other Roman Catholic Church’s documents, *Dignitatis Humanae* does not explicitly address the issue of human suffering and poverty as does *Gaudium et Spes*. Pope Paul VI invites human beings to create social, political and economic institutions, which are at the service of humankind and lay the foundation for the emergence of their dignity (*Gaudium et Spes*, n.19). As an attempt to answer the interrogations of modern people, Pope Paul VI suggests among others, the communitarian nature of the human vocation in God’s plan, the interdependence between the

human person and society, the inalienability of the common good, the respect of all human persons, and social justice (*Gaudium et Spes*, nn. 4-29). The aforementioned encyclicals of the Popes and Second Vatican Council's documents present an elaboration of social concerns of the Roman Catholic Church regarding human needs.

The encyclical *Populorum Progressio* of Pope Paul VI (1967, nn.12-23) proposes to bring a human dimension to the economic perspective of development. *Sollicitudo rei Socialis* (1987) elaborates on the need for a moral regeneration of societies in order to promote "the civilization of love" against "the culture of death" which corrupts human development (1987: n.33). Pope Benedict XVI takes the discussion on human need further when he maintains that integral human development will be possible only if the truth (illuminated by reason and faith) is recognised in every human action and, in this perspective, charity "becomes an intrinsic part of human labour. This truth further humanises the human labour" (*Caritas in Veritate* 2009: nn.30-32).

The current Pope has deliberately focused on the environment. Pope Francis (2015) has dedicated his encyclical letter *Laudato Si* to the awareness and the need to care for mother earth, which he considers as our "common home". He holds that the earth, our mother, is crying because of abuses inflicted on her by those who have selfishly lorded over her as masters (Pope Francis 2015: n.2, 61). While establishing a fundamental relationship between social justice (justice for the poor), universal solidarity and the care for the environment, Pope Francis (2015: nn.10-11, 14, 43, 91-92) invites human beings to have a fraternal and charitable relationship with the earth, a relationship endowed with compassion, love and respect, in harmony with the suffering humanity. Pope Francis further argues that the earth is home, not only for humans but also for nonhuman creatures and includes the whole ecosystem (Pope Francis 2015: nn.23, 32-42, 44-45). Pope Francis always shows a real concern for the poor. For him the global environmental crisis, especially the effect of climate change, impacts the poor most severely (Pope Francis 2015: n.48). He has also written an encyclical in the context Covid-19, which will be discussed in more detail in the section on the analysis of the Roman Catholic Church's documents on the pandemic. After having elaborated on the social teaching of the Roman Catholic Church in matters of human need, I am now going to present the work of *Caritas Internationalis* and its involvement in South Africa, particularly in light of the Coronavirus pandemic.

### 4.3 The Establishment of *Caritas Internationalis* as the Catholic Development Agency

In an attempt to be more effective in mitigating social need, the Roman Catholic Church established the development and humanitarian agency called *Caritas*. A young Roman Catholic Priest, Lorenz Werthmann, founded *Caritas* in Germany in 1897 (*Caritas Internationalis* (CI) (2011:9). It then became an international organisation in 1951 with its extension to other parts of the world, notably in Switzerland and Austria (CI 2011:9). In order to reflect its global mission, *Caritas* became *Caritas Internationalis* (CI) in 1954 under the auspices of Giovanni Battista Montini, the future Pope Paul VI (CI 2017:9-10). From its creation and global expansion its aim was, and still is, to reduce poverty in the world by responding “to the immediate needs of the poor and those facing emergency situations within their own countries” (CI 2017:13).

*Caritas* is the Latin word meaning “charity” or “love and compassion” and expresses the Christian love of the Roman Catholic Church for humanity. It “implies an act of giving by people out of the goodness of their hearts” (CI 2017:1). The headquarters of CI are in Rome. CI incorporates agencies of “Catholic relief, development, and social service” (CI 2017:5). It is “[a] global confederation of 165 Catholic organisations working in humanitarian emergencies and international development... [It works] with the poor, vulnerable and excluded, regardless of race or religion in order to build a world based on justice and fraternal love” (CI 2017:2-3). As a humanitarian organization of the Roman Catholic Church, CI is “working in more than 200 countries and territories. Each *Caritas* agency is established by and accountable to the national Catholic Bishops’ Conference, and is an independent national entity” (CI 2019:2). CI coordinates emergency operations, formulates development policies, and advocates for a better world for all (CI 2017:4). CI’s approach is to listen with respect to the suffering of the poor and provides educational support to help them transform their lives (MacLaren 2017:13-14).

CI is guided by the moral and spiritual principles of dignity, justice, solidarity, and respect for creation (CI 2017: 4-5). These principles are inherent to the Roman Catholic Church’s social teaching following Pope Francis’s invitation in his Apostolic Exhortation “*Evangelii Gaudium* (the Joy of the Gospel)” (2013: n.198). CI works with small groups of volunteers and its strength is the diversity of its members. As indicated in the 2020 Annual Report, the role of *Caritas* organisations is to enable the Roman Catholic Church “to be present to serve,

accompany, defend and empower the poorest. [...] The care for the poorest and their protection must be a priority” (CI 2020:2). After the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Catholic *Caritas* Confederation (CCC) represents the second largest network of national civil society organization working in the world addressing the needs of poorest communities (CI 2020:3-4). It should be emphasized “*Caritas* works on the basis of humanitarian principles by supporting assistance and protection efforts from an impartial and needs-based approach” (CCC 2021:1). Together with other world humanitarian organisations, CI has been at the forefront of addressing the impact of Covid-19.

Since the emergence of Covid-19 and its declaration as a pandemic (see sections 2.1 and 2.2), CI has played and continues to play an important global role in responding to the pandemic. A worldwide emergency charity response to Covid-19 has been established at parish, diocesan, national and continental levels with the aim of mobilising resources and bringing assistance to people, especially to communities of the poor. CI empowers communities to spread awareness regarding the importance of protective measures and undertakes holistic risk communication and community engagement action to mitigate Covid-19 (CI 2020:3, 11-12). The involvement of Pope Francis through *Caritas* has been significant as he “created the Covid-19 taskforce, which has four different groups focused on emergency response, research and reflection, communication and advocacy” (CI 2020:2). In material terms, CI created the Covid-19 Fund to help the poor and vulnerable around the globe survive the adverse effects of the pandemic. The purpose of this fund is to help *Caritas* organizations to act quickly and more efficiently to the humanitarian challenges of the pandemic (CI 2020:8). Thousands of generous people around the globe have supported the *Caritas* appeal. It has been reported that 29 nations have responded effectively and generously to the call of *Caritas* through a solidarity fundraising drive (CI 2020:9). Hence, since the start of this health crisis, the *Caritas* Covid-19 Fund has assisted nearly 9 million people globally in terms of food parcels, hygiene items, medical assistance, just to mention a few (CI 2020:2-3). The number of *Caritas* Covid-19 projects are spread over six regions as follows: Middle East and North Africa: six; Asia: four; Europe: two; Latin America and the Caribbean: six; and Africa: 11 (CI 2020: 5). The report has made no mention of *Caritas* organizations in North America, whereas the region of sub-Saharan Africa has more numbers of *Caritas* organizations. Surprisingly, there seems to be no written text that suggests an explanation for this finding. *Caritas* has been well established in South Africa for more than fifty years and has worked tirelessly for poverty alleviation.

In South Africa, *Caritas* is an important wing of the SACBC with *Caritas* South Africa (CSA) being “the non-profit development agency of the South African Catholic Bishops Conference” (SACBC 2018:1). CSA was founded in 1970 in the context of impoverishment and political oppression that the majority of black South Africans were experiencing. CSA came about as a timely “response to the poverty most people were suffering as a result of apartheid” (CSA 2018:3). The work of CSA is in line with the main objective of CI, namely, “the preferential option for the poor and the marginalised”. The core motivation of its social activities in South Africa remains “the authentic development of every person and of all humanity” (SACBC 2018:2). Its social actions are undergirded by the conviction

...that the weak and oppressed are not objects of pity, but agents of change, leading the struggle to eradicate dehumanizing poverty, unacceptable living and working conditions, and unjust social, political, economic and cultural structures. [It] advocates peace and reconciliation, fighting all forms of poverty and discrimination, and empowering people to live with dignity (CSA 2018:1-2).

As stipulated in its guiding principles,

[CSA] receives its mandate from the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference. [It] forms part of the Department for Catholic Social Action and it is entrusted with the task of coordination and implementation of various *Caritas* activities in the different Dioceses of South Africa (CSA 2018:2).

CSA works on the basis of rejecting all forms of discrimination and abuse of vulnerable people. By combating poverty, which deprives human beings of their dignity and humanity and by being in solidarity with the poor, CSA commits itself to restoring the sense of co-responsibility in every citizen for the establishment of a better world (CSA 2018:2). Like everywhere else, CSA is a watchdog for human freedom, rights, and dignity. It vehemently opposes economic, social, political or cultural systems and structures that marginalise human beings. It does not only stand against unjust socio-economic and political systems and structures, it also works in solidarity and collaboration with other non-governmental organisations and global institutions towards creating “holistic social structures which favour the poor” (CSA 2018:1-2). Cardinal Wilfrid Napier, former archbishop of Durban, is the liaison and president bishop of Caritas CSA (SACBC 2021:1, 8). The Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference and *Caritas* South Africa have not remained indifferent to the Covid-19 pandemic and its devastating socio-economic effects.



#### **4.4. The Southern African Catholic Bishop's Conference Response to the Emergence of Covid-19**

When the Covid-19 pandemic broke out in South Africa in March 2020, the Southern African Catholic Bishop's Conference (SACBC) responded quickly by establishing a communication network with dioceses and parishes to identify the most vulnerable and indigent people in communities and to collect resources from generous donors to meet the pressing needs of the poor. This quick response of SACBC was in keeping with Catholic Social teaching. The SACBC's president, Bishop Sithembele Sipuka, issued a statement in the early days of the pandemic. In this utterance, Bishop Sipuka (2020:1) decried the appalling "cancer of corruption that is eating the soul of our nation" in the context of Covid-19. According to him, this unethical and scandalous behaviour is the result of the "culture of impunity" that has gradually settled in South Africa (Sipuka 2020:1). He further appealed

... to the president and his cabinet to expedite the re-establishment of a specialized anti-corruption unit, equivalent to the Scorpions, and ensure that it is guaranteed sufficient levels of independence and budget allocations. Specialized courts to handle corruption cases should also receive serious consideration to ensure higher conviction rates and to expedite the resolution of corruption cases (Sipuka 2020:1-2).

In another statement, Bishop Sipuka described the advent of Covid-19 as a "global deluge" similar to that of the time of Noah and Lot in the Old Testament (SACBC 2021:5). He further appreciated all the efforts of the Roman Catholic Church in South Africa in responding promptly to the devastating socio-economic effects of the pandemic. Bishop Sipuka argues that the action of Bishops and the Catholic social and development agency such as *Caritas* have been the concretisation of the Gospel of Luke 4:18 in which Jesus speaks of "'justice, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit' as a visible manifestation of the Kingdom of God" (SACBC 2021:5). According to him, the social involvement of the Roman Catholic Church in South Africa in the difficult time of the pandemic demonstrates the perspective of "'good news to the poor, proclaimed liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, and release to the oppressed'" (SACBC 2021:5-6).

A number of bishops then started publishing pastoral letters that will be dealt with in more detail in the subsequent sections of this chapter. The practical response by *Caritas* South Africa will also be discussed in more detail in the next section.

In light of SACBC's social pastoral care for the marginalised and underprivileged, the following threefold actions can be highlighted: (1) the call to witness to the Gospel through resistance to corruption during the Covid-19 pandemic; (2) addressing the issue of gender-based violence and femicide in South Africa during the pandemic through Justice and Peace commission and; (3) setting up of several relief services through *Caritas* to collect and distribute food parcels and other essential items to the most vulnerable people in the country (SACBC 2021:13-26). It should be noted that one of the particularities of the Roman Catholic Church's exercising of the ministry of charity (*diakonia*) in response to Covid-19 is its borderless love and care. The "*Bienvenu* (Welcome) Shelter for migrants and displaced women and their children" in the Archdiocese of Johannesburg can be illustrative (SACBC 2021:72-73).

Having discussed the response of the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference to Covid-19, the next section undertakes a detailed analysis of some of the early pastoral letters and statements on the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa published by two leaders of the Roman Catholic Church, Bishop Victor Palana and Archbishop Buti Tlhagale and another, Cardinal Wilfred Napier in his capacity as Chairperson of the KwaZulu-Natal Christian Council. These were the three key bishops in the SACBC that were at the forefront in responding to the socio-economic impact of the emerging Covid-19 within the first year of the pandemic (SACBC 2021:7-8). In their response, these bishops stood in the tradition of Roman Catholic social teaching in addressing human need as discussed above. Their pastoral letters are in keeping with the role of bishops to bring theological insights into what is happening in society; a vision of encouraging, giving hope and sustaining the spiritual life of the flock. These leaders joined other South African religious leaders in speaking out against allegations of ongoing corrupt practices at the top level of the state, and its impact on the lives of the most vulnerable in times of Covid-19. Pope Francis published an encyclical letter early on in the pandemic in which he dedicates a number of paragraphs to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In analysing these documents, I will assess the theological vision of the bishops, which, as I have already mentioned, encompasses hope, encouragement and sustainability of the spiritual life of the people. The first pastoral letters to be analysed are those of Bishop Victor Phalana.

#### **4.5. Pastoral letters of Bishop Victor Phalana, Klerksdorp**

Victor Hlolo Phalana was ordained Bishop of the Roman Catholic diocese of Klerksdorp on 25 January 2015. He was one of the first bishops to publish a pastoral letter on the Covid-19 pandemic. Bishop Phalana “is mostly known for his passion of the scriptures, evangelisation, music and his fatherly ways of dealing with people, mostly the youth” (Majahe 2015:5). Furthermore, he “is involved in the healing ministry and Africanisation of the Catholic Church” (Mecoamere 2015:1). From the moment of his appointment as Bishop, he pointed out some of the socio-economic challenges to be urgently addressed in South Africa in general and in his diocesan territory in particular. These challenges included: pollution; unemployment and a high crime rate; lack of infrastructure; poverty, HIV/AIDS and chronic illnesses; disintegrating family life; substance abuse and moral decay; nepotism and corruption (Phalana 2015:1). In 2018, he published a pastoral letter to invite all the priests and faithful of his diocese to “be people of encounter”, that is, to encounter God in one another (Phalana 2018:1-2). He is equally known as being outspoken on social issues, specifically against injustice inflicted mostly on women and children in South Africa. This historical background of Bishop Phalana suggests that he could not remain silent or indifferent to the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa and specifically in Klerksdorp. He issued two pastoral letters; first, on 18 March 2020 and second, on 8 May 2020.

Nearly two weeks after the first case of Covid-19 was declared in South Africa and four days after President Cyril Ramaphosa declared the state of National Disaster (See section 2.3), Bishop Phalana issued a Pastoral letter on 18 March 2020 (see Appendix B). The letter outlined six major articulations, namely, 1) the coronavirus itself; 2) measures to be strictly observed by the faithful in parishes of the diocese of Klerksdorp to mitigate the spread of the virus, 3) invitation to go for testing, 4) exclusion and isolation, 5) the need to respond to Covid-19 with faith, and 6) caring for the sick.

By the date of the publication of the pastoral letter of Bishop Phalana, 116 people in South Africa had already tested positive for Covid-19 (Phalana 2020a:1). At the very early stage of

the virus, Bishop Phalana foresaw the complete shutdown of activities in the country if there is failure to comply with Covid-19 regulations that would lead to a high rate of infections (Phalana 2020a:1-2)<sup>7</sup>. Observing the pandemic situation globally, he argued that the virus portrays human frailty as described in the book of Psalms (Ps 103:15-16).

In line with the regulations of 14 March 2020's National State of Disaster, Bishop Phalana invited the clergy and the faithful in his diocese to limit the number of attendees at liturgical celebrations to 100. He encouraged Christians and the clergy to wear facemask and to regularly wash their hands in running water and with soap or to sanitise them with 60-70% alcohol based disinfectant at the church entrance, during church services and at home (Phalana 2020a:2). He further urged the people to avoid being propagators of fake news and of fear around the virus. Other regulations announced by Bishop Phalana include, the prohibition of shaking of hands during the sign of peace at the Eucharist, the reception of Holy Communion in hands only, using of hand gloves to anoint the sick, interdiction to visit people in self-isolation without medical advice, avoiding close contact with sick people from Covid-19, frequent cleaning or disinfection of touched objects such as door handles, toilets and basins (Phalana 2020a:2-3). Bishop Phalana advocated for voluntary compulsory testing for those who fell ill with Covid-19 symptoms, those who had been to countries where there was already an outbreak of the pandemic, and those who had been in contact with people who tested positive for the virus (Phalana 2020a:4).

Bishop Phalana expressed his concern about the social indictment of people who had tested positive for the virus and were obliged to go into isolation. He held that these people "must not feel rejected. [They must be allowed to] practice self-isolation to protect their families and friends from infection" (Phalana 2020a:4). However, he acknowledged that, given that humans are created as social beings, it is a difficult experience to temporarily quarantine oneself. He advised relatives of people who are symptomatic or in isolation due to Covid-19 not to stigmatise and reject them but rather to seek assistance from medical doctors with reference to safely handle them with sympathy and compassion as Jesus would have done (Phalana 2020a:4, 6-7). While understanding the people's aberration during the untimely days of the virus, Bishop Phalana recommended faith and not fear. According to him, through prayer in faith, Jesus Christ who is the Good Shepherd, the Resurrection and the Life will

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<sup>7</sup> As indicated in section 2.3 of this work, President Cyril Ramaphosa initiated the national lockdown Level 5 on 26 March 2020.

undoubtedly see the people through the situation of the pandemic (Phalana 2020a:4-5). Glancing at the history of plagues in church history and learning from the abnegation of the early Christians, Bishop Phalana recommended that priests must take precautionary measures when taking care of the sick through prayers and anointing<sup>8</sup>. Visit to the sick were to be done in strict compliance with the government Covid-19 directives (Phalana 2020a:6).

At this early stage of the pandemic in South Africa, the attention of Bishop Phalana was almost solely on prevention. When he issued this pastoral letter, the socio-economic hardship from the pandemic was not yet being fully felt. This is why in his first pastoral letter, he focused on the urgency of enforcing health measures put in place by the government to mitigate the spread of the virus and so curb the spread in his Diocese of Klerksdorp. As the rate of Covid-19 infections rose rapidly and the outbreak in the country was creating unprecedented distress, Bishop Phalana later issued a second pastoral letter in which he became more serious with regard to addressing the emergency of the socio-economic challenges posed by the pandemic.

On 8 May 2020, Bishop Phalana published a second pastoral letter to the faithful in his ecclesiastical territory (see Appendix C). It should be noted that compared to the first letter, this second pastoral letter by Bishop Phalana was written at a time when South Africa was gripped by the pandemic. The country was economically feeling the drastic effects of Covid-19. In May 2020, the lockdown measures had been slightly relaxed and the country had moved from Level 5 to Level 4 (see Chapter 2, section 2.3). Measures to contain and limit the spread of this deadly virus were still strictly enforced. The number of people infected daily was estimated in the thousands and the deaths numbered in the hundreds.<sup>9</sup> The country's economy was reeling from the "threat of suffocation" (Blecher 2020:2). The National Coronavirus Command Council (NCCC), the Covid-19 Task Team (CTT) and the national scientific community under the leadership of various ministerial departments were all hard at work to update and inform the population daily about the evolution of the pandemic and new health measures that needed to be put in place (SACC 2020:2-3). On all spheres, it was a

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<sup>8</sup> In the Roman Catholic Church, the anointing of the sick is one of the seven sacraments and is considered as the sacrament of healing.

<sup>9</sup> According to Covid-19 Online Resource and News Portal, on 8 May 2020, the total number of confirmed Covid-19 cases in South Africa was 8895 with 178 deaths.

question of mitigating the humanitarian damage caused by the pandemic. It is in this context that Bishop Phalana deemed it appropriate to address a second pastoral letter to the people.

Bishop Phalana commences his second pastoral letter by praying to God for the spirit of serenity and courage to accept the situation that presents itself beyond the control of human beings (Phalana 2020:1). He expresses his solidarity with the people of God who, confused, isolated, and bewildered find themselves in social and religious circumstances where they are unable to come together to worship God according to health regulations (Phalana 2020b:1, 3). Bishop Phalana argues that the coronavirus took the people by surprise and that it arrived and snatched away people's freedom when they least expected it. What people can do is to ask God for the composure to "accept this uncomfortable situation [...] as a period of grace and not just as a time for grievance. [Because] we can experience sorrow and joy at the same time" (Phalana 2020b:1). For him, this is a way of ensuring hope for better life after this time of desolation (Phalana 2020b:2). Bishop Phalana suggests that Christian hope can find its ground in the second Paul's letter to the Corinthians 6:8-10; 12:7-10, which teaches to keep faith and hope in God in trying times and in death (Phalana 2020b:1).

He further contends that this pandemic leads people to see family as a privileged place to find solace in desolation. That is why he defines the Christian family as the domestic church and invites family members to "use prayer time as a way to transmit spiritual values, *Ubuntu* values and our beautiful Church Tradition to the younger generations" (Phalana 2020b:2). He further considers the family as the place par excellence to pray and listen to the word of God, to strengthen the bonds of unity and mutual love and to forgive one another (Phalana 2020b:2). He invites the people in their families to take personal measures to avoid infecting themselves with Covid-19 and consequently contaminating others. He advises that people should "treat every person [they] meet as if they were [Covid-19] positive" (Phalana 2020b:2).

The reality of the Covid-19 pandemic and the resultant social restrictive measures has more than ever awakened the human conscience to the importance of the need to live in solidarity with others especially the poor, the underprivileged and the marginalized in society. Bishop Phalana holds that this duty of conscience is underpinned by the gospel of Matthew 25: 34-40 and 1 John 3:17 (Phalana 2020b:2-3). These biblical passages lay the foundation for Christian charity and human solidarity and generosity because Jesus urges his disciples to take sides

with the poor, the marginalized and the underprivileged by responding to their needs. This is why he calls on the members of *Caritas* and Justice and Peace<sup>10</sup> to redouble the ardour in their efforts to come to the aid of the poorest of the poor (Phalana 2020b:2). From this perspective, he invites all people of goodwill to contribute generously to the diocesan *Caritas* and expresses his satisfaction and his pride to note that nearly 750 packets of good quality food have already been distributed in three deaneries<sup>11</sup> of his diocese (Phalana 2020b:2). The bishop recalls that diocesan *Caritas* relief services are not only intended for Catholic Christians, but for every person in need (Phalana 2020b:2). Communion and solidarity in the context of Covid-19 lockdowns propels people to be creatively open to others through various kinds of social media. That is the reason why Bishop Phalana suggests that the lockdown helps people reinvent themselves by recreating themselves through art, music and writing (Phalana 2020b:3). According to him, the challenge that each parish of the diocese of Klerksdorp must endeavour to address during various levels of lockdown is to have good sanitation and adequate cleanliness, a good sound system, computers and a good internet connectivity in order to maximise communication and virtual contact with everyone, even to hold online parish pastoral council meetings (Phalana 2020b:3).

As far as schools reopening is concerned, Bishop Phalana (2020b:4) argues that all health measures must be scrupulously observed in order to protect the learners and the educational body against the coronavirus contamination. In that same vein, he encourages collaboration between parents and teachers with the aim to ensure that children's lives are not at risk. In terms of the South African economy, he raises concerns over the worsening of the existing bad state of the economy that will take some time to recover after the lockdown. He acknowledges that this is resulting in people losing their jobs and small businesses being shut down, which according to him, will undoubtedly move the country's unemployment rate from 27% to 50% (Phalana 2020b:4). Using statistics from Stats SA and by way of illustration, the Bishop alludes to the 30.4 million South Africans who lived in abject poverty long before the advent of Covid-19 (Stats SA quoted in Phalana 2020b:4). He argues that these poor mainly comprise of the black population. He predicts and warns that the loss of jobs will mean less

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<sup>10</sup> Justice and Peace is a ministry in the Roman Catholic Church whose aim is to build a more peaceful, fairer, and secure world. The work of Justice and Peace is mainly "focused on the promotion of human rights and justice as factors of a sustainable peace and development. The prevention and management of conflict and post-conflict situations are at the heart of [its] work" (Roman Catholic Church: Justice and Peace 2015:1).

<sup>11</sup> In the Roman Catholic Church, the deanery is an administrative district, which brings together several parishes. At the head of a deanery is a senior parish priest or the dean. A set of several deaneries forms a diocese.

income for families and lower contributions to parishes for the upkeep of priests and the church as a whole (Phalana 2020b:4). In this alarming situation, Bishop Phalana invites the people to pray for God's wisdom to guide the government in its efforts to take the country out of the disaster (Phalana 2020b:5).

From an analysis of Bishop Phalana's second pastoral letter, three themes run throughout the statement: first, solidarity and communion with others; second, the family as domestic church; and third, serenity in prayer. The first theme of the solidarity and communion of the church with others appears to be of greatest importance to him because it is referred to thirteen times in the letter, while the theme of the family as domestic church is referred to four times and that of serenity in prayer is referred to three times. This indicates that Bishop Phalana's prime concern is that there is solidarity and communion with the needy and the marginalised in the unprecedented hardship of the Covid-19 pandemic. For him, solidarity and communion mean, "caring for the sick by being socially conscious, considerate, and diligent in practicing personal hygiene" (Phalana 2020b:5). By observing the Covid-19 health restrictions, individuals are caring for themselves and for the lives and wellbeing of others in the family and in the community (Phalana 2020b:6). This caring for one another is the value highlighted by both *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu*. The theme of solidarity that is the predominant theme of Bishop Phalana's second pastoral letter is rooted in Tutu's (1999:264-265) principle of compassion towards the suffering of others in humanity. As Sprecher and Fehr (2005:630-632) point out, compassion is about feeling the humanity of others within oneself and going towards them to bring to light their dignity. In this perspective, the experience of the enduring distress of others becomes one's experience and pushes one towards doing something indiscriminately to alleviate the suffering of fellow human beings. Feeling poor when the fellow human being is poor then moves one to sympathize and empathize with them (Maibom 2009:1-2). For Bishop Phalana (2020b:2-3), it was imperative that everyone had access to basic human needs including food, shelter, education and good health care. This, he argues, emerges from the fundamental right of every human being who is created in the image and likeness of God.

The pastoral letter of Archbishop Tlhagale that was published shortly after the second letter of Bishop Phalana will now be examined in the next section.



#### **4.6. Pastoral letter of Archbishop Buti Tlhagale, Johannesburg**

Buti Joseph Tlhagale has been Bishop of the Roman Catholic Church for 23 years. He was ordained Archbishop of Bloemfontein in 1999 and appointed Bishop of Johannesburg in 2003. He became Archbishop of Johannesburg when the city was raised to the status of a Metropolitan Archdiocese on 5 June 2007. Archbishop Tlhagale has been particularly outspoken against injustices that South Africa is still facing, and often urges the present generation to address these with courage and sincerity.

In 2012 during the celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the inauguration of *Regina Mundi* (Queen of the World) Roman Catholic Church in Soweto, Archbishop Tlhagale reminded the attendees of the role played from the years 1964 “when it opened its doors to anti-apartheid groups and provided shelter to activists” (quoted in Oliver and Erna 2016:1, 3-4). He argued that political and pro-liberation movements that took place in the *Regina Mundi* church from 16 June 1976 to the present day was a challenge to the priests “to participate in the struggle for freedom” (Oliver and Erna 2017:1, 3-4,7). In his homily during the bicentenary celebration of the Roman Catholic Church in South Africa in 2018, he pointed out,

Inequality, divisions, racial prejudice and xenophobia stubbornly persist to this day. They regrettably continue to rip this country apart. These challenges are an unhappy inheritance bequeathed to the present generation of Catholics. These challenges ought to be confronted with an open mind, abundant energy and a sincerity of heart (Tlhagale 2018:5)

This contextual background paves the way to explore Archbishop Tlhagale’s pastoral letter in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The pastoral letter of Archbishop Tlhagale of the Catholic Archdiocese of Johannesburg was published on 10 May 2020 (see Appendix D). The primary recipients of this document were, according to the title, “the faithful of the Archdiocese of Johannesburg.” (Tlhagale 2020:1). It should be recalled that at the time Archbishop Tlhagale published this letter, the Province of Gauteng, of which Johannesburg is the capital city, was one of the regions most affected by

the pandemic in terms of the number of cases<sup>12</sup>. Besides, as already articulated in section 2.3, the country was still in Level 4 lockdown, which meant that only essential services such as pharmacies and hospitals, banks, petrol stations, and super markets were operational. The number of daily infections was growing but the country was not yet at the peak of the pandemic as compared with some European countries (Tlhagale 2020:6). In that particular period, the population of South Africa in general and of Johannesburg in particular, was socio-economically, psychologically and spiritually in despair (Pillai et al 2020:1; Schröder et al 2021:2-5). Johannesburg, the country's economic capital, was experiencing extreme economic distress. As Makhubo (2021:3) pointed out, the health burden and socio-economic impact of the pandemic in Johannesburg was disproportionately borne by the poor, thus exacerbating "inequality, unemployment, poverty, food security", and impelling the city's administration to act urgently and efficiently.

The Archbishop begins by appreciating the health measures put in place by the government to preserve and save lives from Covid-19. He sees in the efforts of the government as having a political will motivated by the gospel (John 10:10) that calls for protection and preservation of life. He terms those who seemingly disregard the wellbeing of the majority of citizens and who agitate for the lifting of the lockdown measures as "rebels" (Tlhagale 2020:5). He argues that empty churches during Holy Week and Easter in 2020 were a symbol of the lamentation for the thousands of lives already lost in South Africa and the world to Covid-19, likening the situation to "Jesus' Gethsemane's experience and painful death" (Tlhagale 2020:2).

According to Archbishop Tlhagale, the human existential questions in the context of this pandemic in relation to one's relationship with God should lead to an understanding and belief that God remains "a God of tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in mercy and faithfulness" (Ex.34:6; Eph.2:4). God, he suggests, would never abandon God's children nor punish them. For Tlhagale (2020:2), sin is the consequence of human action and God's work is to save lives and not to kill. This is what the paschal mystery reveals to humanity with the celebration of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. The Archbishop holds that the celebration of Easter together in our churches and temples would have given certainty of a victory over the terror of the coronavirus and death. However, since the possibility of infection was higher when the congregation was physically gathered, saving lives became the

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<sup>12</sup> Statistics given by National Covid-19 Online Resource and News Portal (2020) indicate that, after the Western Cape (with 5168 cases), Gauteng was the second most affected region in South Africa on 10 May 2020 with a total number of Coronavirus positive cases of 1952. The third was KwaZulu-Natal with 1353 cases.

choicest priority (Tlhagale 2020:2). This rationale justifies the prohibition of gatherings to celebrate Holy Week and Easter as community. In this perspective, the church and our political leaders have opted for protection of life during and after the Easter feasts (Tlhagale 2020:1-2).

According to Archbishop Tlhagale, the National State of Disaster (2020:1) declared by the authorities in the reality of the Covid-19 pandemic not only aggravated certain ills from which the South African society was already suffering but left the population in disarray (Tlhagale 2020:2). These ills are primarily job losses and wage cuts that destabilised family livelihoods and threaten to undermine the dignity and confidence of those with the ability to work (Tlhagale 2020:2). It is well known that unemployment leads to poverty, homelessness, escalation of crimes and other social ills (Tlhagale 2020:3, 5). The Archbishop further invites employers to exercise mercy, which is not only a religious virtue but also a human one. He contends that for employers, mercy would mean working hard to safeguard jobs, while having the well-being of the family and society at heart (Tlhagale 2020:2-3). He calls on government to pay more attention to the less educated and less skilled youths who seem to have no direction and no purpose in life because they feel abandoned by their leaders (Tlhagale 2020:4-5).

The Archbishop applauds the outpouring of generous financial donations from people to help those in need. His appreciation goes to members of the government which he suggests shows magnanimity and has been an example to follow, to industrial companies and to a plethora of individuals and members of civil society who have contributed to the Solidarity Fund set up to alleviate the suffering of the segment of the population most affected by the socio-economic impact of the pandemic (Tlhagale 2020:3-4). He acknowledges the tireless work of nurses and doctors who, moved by compassion, are saving lives even at the risk of their own lives and those of their loved ones (Tlhagale 2020:6).

Archbishop Tlhagale does not overlook the rampant gender-based violence taking place at the time. He vehemently condemns violence inflicted by men against women and children during the lockdown period. He asserts that any act of domestic barbarity directed towards women and children demonstrates that South Africa is still a deeply patriarchal society (Tlhagale 2020:4). According to him (2020:4), this assertion is unfortunately reinforced by the cultural mind-set “that women are subservient to men and the fact that many women regrettably still accept the status quo in spite of the growing opposition to patriarchy”. For this reason, he

calls on men to repent and to respect the inalienable dignity of women and girl children by stopping all acts of violence against them. He suggests that the efforts of all must be geared towards overcoming not only the coronavirus but also the scourge of domestic violence that, as President Ramaphosa (2020:6) pointed out, had become another pandemic in South Africa. The Archbishop further holds the view that part of the Covid-19 financial relief resources be channelled towards fighting gender-based violence in South Africa (Tlhagale 2020:4).

In analysing the pastoral letter of Archbishop Tlhagale, two salient themes are evident: first, wholeness of life; and second, unemployment. In the letter, the theme of wholeness of life is mentioned fifteen times, while the serious issue of unemployment is mentioned ten times. It is evident that while the archbishop speaks of joblessness which leads to heinous crimes such as violence against women, looting, burning of schools and other public property, his prime attention is focused on the integrity of human lives. For him, human lives are priceless and precious and need to be preserved through mitigating the spread of the virus (Tlhagale 2020:6). From this perspective, he urges Christians to patiently respect the health protocols issued by the government authorities because their primary aim is to reduce deaths from Covid-19. Given the mode of transmission of the coronavirus determined by scientists, it would be insensitive and perilous to rush into the lifting of lockdown measures, according to him (Tlhagale 2020:5). Consequently, Archbishop Tlhagale frowned at the rebellious and irresponsible attitude of those who were calling on government to lift up Covid-19 restrictions (Tlhagale 2020:5). This goes along with the view of WHO Director-General, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus (2020:3) when he argued that in the critical context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the thoughts and actions of every citizen of the world should have the promotion and safeguarding of human lives as their maxim. This maxim should constantly challenge people to be aware of the need to stay safe from the virus so as not to contaminate others, especially in our neighbourhood.

The next statement to be analysed was made by the KwaZulu-Natal Christian Council (KZNCC). The reason this analysis has been included in the study, is that at the time Cardinal Wilfred Napier, a prominent Roman Catholic leader, was the Chairperson of KZNCC.

#### **4.7. Statements by the KwaZulu-Natal Christian Council - Cardinal Wilfred Napier**

At the time of the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, Cardinal Wilfred Napier was chairperson and liaison bishop of two significant church bodies. Firstly, the KwaZulu-Natal Christian Council and; secondly, Caritas South Africa. The statements that he signed in his capacity as chairperson and liaison bishop are going to be respectfully discussed in this section.

The KwaZulu-Natal Christian Council (KZNCC) is an ecumenical agency that has been chaired by a variety of church denominational leaders in the past. KZNCC is a provincial fellowship of churches and church-based organisations, established in 1996 and affiliated to the South African Council of Churches (SACC). As Kwizera (2011:9) contends, the “KZNCC’s members and partners’ work is based on values such as integrity, honesty, ecumenical Christian approach, respect of all faiths and creeds, love and compassion, simplicity, open and transparent communication”. Its purpose and mission is to help the churches of KwaZulu-Natal develop a united Christian response to the many challenges of this province. These challenges include, “issues of justice, reconciliation, moral reconstruction, democracy, and health, integrity of creation and eradication of poverty and contribute towards the empowerment of all who are spiritually, socially and economically marginalised” (Kwizera 2011:9). KZNCC thus has a record of addressing issues that directly or indirectly affect people’s economic and social life as it is indicated in its 2018-2019 Annual Report (KZNCC 2019:6-9). In 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic broke out, Cardinal Wilfrid Fox Napier, in his capacity as the Archbishop of the Catholic Archdiocese of Durban, was the Chairperson. The KZNCC issued two statements between March 2020 and March 2021. The first was published in April 2020 and the second on 16 February 2021.

On 16 April 2020, the leaders of KZNCC released a statement entitled “Covid-19 Church Disaster Response: A Call to all KZN Church Leaders”, and signed by Cardinal Napier in his capacity as chairperson of the KZN Church Leader Group (see Appendix E). This statement was made exactly one month and eleven days after the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) announced the first case of Covid-19 infection in South Africa (NICD 2020:1) as indicated in the previous chapter. The socio-economic impact facing communities as the consequence of the pandemic was starting to be felt across South Africa. When the KZNCC statement was published, the country had already been in lockdown Level 5 imposed

by the government for 21 days. Going out, walking or visiting family, gatherings, travelling from one province to another without authorisation were prohibited (Blecher 2020:2).

Throughout the country, only services deemed essential were allowed to operate. The people of KwaZulu-Natal province were still at the beginning of the journey into the hardship of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was in this context of uncertainty, fear, anxiety and confusion that the leaders of the churches in the province felt it paramount to publish the statement with the objective of calling Christians to action.

A close reading of the statement suggests that the ecumenical church leaders showed concern for the hardship and distress experienced by communities. The document consistently discusses the spiritual, psychological, emotional, physical and socio-economic upheavals caused by the emerging pandemic. According to church leaders in KwaZulu-Natal, all of these afflictions contribute to the vulnerability of people and to their living conditions. Thus, the statement calls on ministers fraternal and congregations to connect with each other in order to respond collectively to the humanitarian disaster brought about by the coronavirus (KZNCC 2020:1). While aware of individual responsibility to combat the pandemic, the church leaders argue for the need to introduce and enforce health protocol in communities with the aim of curbing the spread of infection (KZNCC 2020:1). They further raise concern over “the [inevitable] brutal impact of the pandemic” and argue that the structural dimensions of socio-economic inequalities are being exacerbated in the province during the pandemic (KZNCC 2020:1). These inequalities concern primarily the employment sector with an exponential increase in job losses leading, to an escalation of domestic violence and to shortage in food supply (KZNCC 2020:1-2).

The church leaders invite members of the ecumenical body to offer their church premises as “‘Hope Centres’ to complement needs of the health system, as will likely be required [for storage of sanitary equipment, distribution, testing or quarantining and vaccinations]” (KZNCC 2020:2). They equally call on all ministers of the church and other spiritual leaders to actively collaborate with health personnel and other civil authorities to mitigate the spread of the virus. The statement argues that it is by getting together as one family to fight the pandemic that Christians will be following the example of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) and become brothers and sisters to one another (KZNCC 2020:1-2). In addition, the church leaders encourage spiritual exercises such as prayer sessions and fasting at a congregational level for people infected and affected by Covid-19 and for those who have

succumbed to the virus. The statement further suggests that ecumenical ministerial care implies that Christian leaders be prompt to share information and their experiences with all member churches and to be closer to “their faithful” in order to identify families needing emergency relief services (KZNCC 2020:2). The KZNCC statement further urges each leader in their respective church to redouble their efforts in the direction of pastoral creativity in order to listen to the cries of the needs of their faithful and to come to their assistance (KZNCC 2020:1). These church leaders unanimously appeal to all citizens to respect the health measures put in place by the government to mitigate the spread of the covid-19 pandemic (KZNCC 2020:1-2). KZNCC later on issued another statement in response to government planning to reopen schools (see the statement in Appendix F).

Looking critically into the reopening of schools in the context of Covid-19, the KZNCC expressed concern over the measures put in place by the government for the safety of learners and teaching staff, especially “the delay in supplying Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) such as masks and hand sanitizers to schools. (KZNCC 2021:1). Raising their apprehension about most of the schools in rural areas, the KwaZulu-Natal church leaders made their church premises available to the provincial educational authorities “for safe storage of PPE and other materials” (KZNCC 2021:1). They suggested that only schools that are fully supplied with PPE should reopen and called on minibus taxi operators to strictly comply with Covid-19 protocols in order to mitigate the spread of the virus during travelling period to schools (KZNCC 2021:1). They further urged the government department of education to employ interim teachers with the aim of addressing the issue of scarcity of educators who were afraid to report to schools due to their underlying health conditions (KZNCC 2021:1). Other recommendations brought forth by KZNCC included allowing the Covid-19 positive learners to observe the recommended quarantine period, keeping away from victimising and stigmatising those who have been tested positive to the virus, and people’s education to adhere to directives put in place to curb the propagation of the pandemic (KZNCC 2021:1-2). The church leaders entrusted the well-being of learners and their teachers into the hands of Jesus who, in Luke 18:15-17, welcomed and blessed the children (KZNCC 2021:2). They pledged their continuous “pastoral care and counselling upon request” to the needy and their prayerful support to “the Department of Education” and to all schools (KZNCC 2021:2).

In an analysis of the pastoral statements issued by the KZNCC in response to the devastating effects of Covid-19, the following themes can be identified: the first is that of ecumenical

ministerial care and; the second is the safety of learners and teaching staff; and the third, is connectedness in action. The first theme, which talks about ecumenical ministerial care, is clearly the overriding theme as it is mentioned nine times across the document. The other themes on the safety of learners and teaching staff and connectedness in action are mentioned five and three times respectively. This is an indication that the paramount response of KZNCC to Covid-19 in its early months was on ecumenical ministerial care, which meant working together as churches to respond to the emergence of the pandemic. This alludes to the principle of communal life, which implies that one suffers when one's neighbour is suffering. This will be discussed with more details in the next chapter. The invitation to ecumenical solidarity refers to the awareness of Christian humanity and compassionate love which, according to (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 2016:162-165), consists in seeing and feeling oneself in the suffering of the others. In this perspective, generosity and Christian solidarity go beyond the borders of the church and finally embrace everyone in need as brother and sister (Pope Francis 2020).

In the next section, the encyclical letter of Pope Francis addressed to the global Roman Catholic community is analysed. While the content of this encyclical published in October 2020, was not devoted to the Covid-19 pandemic, Pope Francis did address the matter in a number of paragraphs.

#### **4.8. Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter**

Bishop Jorge Mario Bergoglio was appointed Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Argentina on 27 February 1998. "Three years later at the Consistory of 21 February 2001, John Paul II created him Cardinal" (*L'Osservatore Romano* 2013). On 13 March 2013 at the age of 76, he was elected as the 266<sup>th</sup> Pope of the Roman Catholic Church and took the name of Francis, after Saint Francis of Assisi<sup>13</sup> "to reflect a desire for the Catholic Church to be an institution 'of the poor and for the poor'" (Squires 2013:3). Francis became the first pope from the global south having been born in Latin America, the birthplace of theologies of liberation that are ground in the notion of the preferential option for the poor, the marginalised and the oppressed. As

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<sup>13</sup> Francis was born 1181 or 1182 Assisi, Italy. He died on 3 October 1226. He founded the religious congregation of Franciscans Friars Minor Poor Clares. He was canonised (declared Saint) on 15 July 1228. In 1979, Pope John Paul II declared Saint Francis as the patron saint of ecology. Jorge Mario Bergoglio chose Saint Francis as his papacy name and model because of Saint Francis' unquenchable love for poverty and the poor, his zealous love for nature (ecology), his unshakable grip on the core of the Gospel of charity and his inter-religious dialogue (Sabatier 2006:17-22).



Ishida (2015:1) points out, Mario Bergoglio “won over the papal conclave [in March 2013] by his speech, calling for the Church to go out from the Vatican and move to the ‘periphery,’ i.e., caring for the marginalized and the voiceless people”. Pope Francis is not only a man who gives significant speeches; he is above all a leader who matches his words with concrete actions. For instance, “When he was elected as Pope, he chose not to wear the red shoes made specifically for him, and wore his regular black shoes. [He also chose] a humble papal ring in silver instead of gold with a design from the past [...] one created specifically for him” (Ishida 2015:2). Pope Francis’ contextual theological framework would have prompted him to issue an encyclical letter in which he devotes attention to the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic.

On 3 October 2020, Pope Francis published an encyclical letter entitled, *Fratelli Tutti* (All brothers and sisters) that addressed a broad range of issues, including God, morals, economics, politics, peace, social justice, solidarity, care for creation, fraternal love in “its universal scope” (Pope Francis 2020: n.6). The encyclical letter of Pope Francis speaks of “an attentiveness to solidarity” with what he terms “our brothers and sisters in humanity” and especially the poor and most marginalized who live on the peripheries of society (Pope Francis 2020:n.2). Obviously, this encyclical letter was written in the context of the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic when the world seemed unable to stabilise economically and socially. As I argued in section 2.3, South Africa was in lockdown alert Level 1 when Pope Francis issued this encyclical letter. Pope Francis’ awareness about the humanitarian health crisis and its socio-economic aftermath prompted him to include a number of paragraphs in which he specifically addressed the pandemic. These paragraphs mainly comprise of nn. 7-8, 32-36, 50, 54, 90, 97, 106-111, 154, 162 and, 180-182 (see Appendix G). These portions of the encyclical are a clear indication that the health and well-being of all of humanity is an important concern for Pope Francis. For purposes of our discussion here, only these paragraphs will be analysed in this section.

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, Pope Francis (2020) suggests closeness to each other and “the culture of borderless encounter” (Pope Francis 2020: n.7). His encyclical letter, *Fratelli Tutti* is a call for the renaissance of fraternity underpinned by human createdness in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27). Pope Francis argues that universal fraternity is “gratuitous love” (Pope Francis 2020: n.80); that is, the love that transcends all prejudices and individualistic mind-set, all historical, geographical and cultural barriers and embraces the

whole of humanity (Pope Francis 2020: n.8). Universal fraternity and social friendship promoted by Pope Francis have to be guarded by the principle according to which being “born in places with fewer resources or less development does not justify the fact [of] living with less dignity” (Pope Francis 2020: n.106). He holds the view that all people have shared dignity and rights, and that the unceasing and the tireless pursuit of the common good (the good of others and the entire human family) is what all ought to be working for (Pope Francis 2020: nn.112, 154). According to Pope Francis, universal fraternity engulfs fundamental human rights that must be preserved, especially during the humanitarian crisis of the pandemic (Pope Francis 2020: n.8). Fundamental human rights include the right to birth and to life, the right to health and education, the right to food and private property that is not absolute but subordinate to the truth that our earth’s goods are intended for all brothers and sisters (Pope Francis 2020: nn.22-24).

In enhancing “borderless fraternity”, Pope Francis champions for the promotion of the dignity of work which becomes “an essential dimension of social life” that has to be considered as a way “of personal growth, the building of healthy relationships, self-expression and the exchange of gifts” (2020: n.162). According to him, the coronavirus pandemic has more than ever led humanity to understand that the application of the ethics of justice should consist in giving to each person equal means for their shared joy (Pope Francis 2020: n.7). In this way, universal fraternity stands far from being a utopia or trivial words and “demands a decisive commitment to devising effective means to this end” through the exercise of international charity, since fraternity and inclusive justice go together (Pope Francis 2020: n.180).

Pope Francis’ discourse on universal fraternity involves the entire global human community in which human beings express their support for each other, keep looking ahead, and dreaming together in view of building a single human family (Pope Francis 2020: n.8). The universality of social friendship further brings Pope Francis to assert that human beings are fellow travellers in the same boat and sharers of the same flesh as children of the same earth, which is our common home<sup>14</sup> (Pope Francis 2015: n.1; 2020: n.8). In this boat, which is the earth, the evil against one person harms everyone and it is only possible to survive together as a human community (Pope Francis 2020: n.32). From this perspective, each human being is called to bring together the richness of one’s beliefs and convictions, sharing their voices as

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<sup>14</sup> Pope Francis has lengthy elaborated on the concept of the earth as our common home in his encyclical letter, *Laudato Si’* (2015) dedicated to the environmental awareness and the safeguard of creation.

brothers and sisters (Pope Francis 2020: n.8). For him, welcoming others becomes “an exercise of the sacred duty of hospitality”, the existential charity that is open to the “existential foreigner” (Pope Francis 2020: n.90). The concept of the “existential foreigner” used by Pope Francis in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic refers to people abandoned or ignored by society, the disabled, and the elderly who are sadly discriminated against, people born in dire poverty, those lacking good education and with little access to adequate health care, housing and decent food (Pope Francis 2020: nn.90, 97, 109). These are the people who live at the peripheries of society and to whom humanity is urged to go and embrace with caring love and compassion. Pope Francis points out that some of these peripheries are close to us on the margins of our town or city. It is worth mentioning that Pope Francis’ argument is in line with the social teaching held by the Second Vatican Council in *Gaudium et spes* (Joy and hopes) according to which,

the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts (Flannery 1975:794).

Pope Francis pays special tribute to the hard and selfless work of those who, in the context of the emerging Covid-19 pandemic, are inspiring hope. This hope springs from seeing people (our brothers and sisters around the world) who have understood and integrated the notion of serving one another in humanity, especially in the current health crisis (Pope Francis 2020: nn.54-55). Essential workers have put their own lives at the risk on the frontline of the pandemic with the motivation of saving the lives of others. Pope Francis cites the example of “doctors, nurses, pharmacists, storekeepers and supermarket workers, cleaning personnel, caretakers, transport workers, men and women working to provide essential services and public safety, volunteers, priests and religious” (2020: n.54). OXFAM has also claimed in its 2021 Annual Report that the current pandemic has brought humanity to the awareness of “what we should value more in our society” (OXFAM 2021:16). Similarly, the South African Council of Churches (SACC) has recognised and appreciated the enormous efforts of those from key sectors of social and economic life who are working day and night not only to fight the spread of the coronavirus through providing essential services, but also ensuring that the health system is accessible to all (SACC 2020:5).

Covid-19 is a humanitarian catastrophe that has exposed the susceptibility of our humanity. It has brought about the cognizance that in suffering humanity there is no distinction between the poor and the rich, the young and the elderly. People from all lifestyles have suffered directly or indirectly from Covid-19 (Pope Francis 2020: n.32). Pope Francis further contends that this pandemic is “the storm that has exposed our vulnerability and uncovered those false and superfluous certainties around which we constructed our daily schedules, our projects, our habits and priorities” (Pope Francis 2020: n.32). He goes further to urge humanity not to fight against the pandemic in an isolated way, but to come together in a “borderless fraternity” and in solidarity in order to address this crisis that is affecting us all (Pope Francis 2020: n.7).

Analysing the aforementioned paragraphs of the encyclical, I have identified three main themes: the first is universal fraternity; the second, promotion of the human person; and the third, social love. In the context of Covid-19, the theme of universal fraternity is clearly the predominant theme in the paragraphs on Covid-19 as it is mentioned twenty-five times. The theme of the promotion of the human person is mentioned fourteen times, while that of social love is mentioned nine times. This indicates that the prime concern of Pope Francis in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic is the idea that the global community is, and needs to be, one universal fraternity. This prime concern of Pope Francis resonates with the category of community life promoted in the African philosophy of *Ujamaa* and the theology of *Ubuntu*. As already indicated, Pope Francis sees humanity as a universal community in which people live and care for one another. According to him, this global community is translated into working, dreaming and looking ahead together, supporting and helping one another as a single family of the earth, and doing away with “egoistic self-preservation” (Pope Francis 2020: n.35), hoping for a better world, and exercising the sacred duty of hospitality” (Pope Francis 2020: n.90). Additionally, Pope Francis argues that it is imperative to search for truth through reliable sources of information and to assist the poor by offering dignified and non-exploitative work. According to Pope Francis, universal fraternity in the context of Covid-19 is a call to recognise the intrinsically sacred value of all human beings, whatever their social circumstances.

After having examined the pastoral letters and statements by different Roman Catholic Church leaders in their response to the emergence of Covid-19, it is appropriate to now discuss the extent to which the socio-economic impact of the pandemic was addressed which will be done comparatively between the different letters and statements.

#### **4.9. Analysis of the Socio-economic Impact in the Pastoral Letters and Statements**

In section 2.3 of this work, I argued that the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the existing socio-economic issues in South Africa. These socio-economic issues include unemployment, corruption, gender-based violence (GBV), and access to public healthcare.

The concern of unemployment occupied a good portion of the pastoral letters of Bishop Phalana and Archbishop Tlhagale. While the former argued that the greater visibility of joblessness is the result of the worsening of the South African economy during Covid-19 (Phalana 2020b:4-5); the latter recognizes on the one hand that the National State of Disaster has almost immobilized the already sick economy and, on the other hand, that job losses had plunged millions of people into disarray (Tlhagale 2020:2). Phalana (2020b:4) goes further by contending that the social support grant does not in any way replace jobs and that if industrial companies close down, the government risks not being able to “keep on the grants for pensioners”. For Tlhagale (2020:2), “To many an employee, work is a ‘sine qua non’. Work is an essential activity that makes a person to be a person. Work enables people to carry out their responsibility of caring for their families”. Tlhagale’s conception of human work joins the social teaching of Pope John XXIII (1961: n.22) who deals with not only the rights of workers, but also the intrinsic dignity of human work, which “makes life more human” (Tlhagale 2020:2).

The bishops hardly address the social ill of corruption in their pastoral letters. However, Archbishop Tlhagale (2020:4-5) speaks of corruption not as an exacerbation of the socio-economic impact of the pandemic, but rather as being at the root of deep “grievances” and “rebellious” attitude of a fraction of the population which manifests their displeasure through crimes such as break-ins and looting and the destruction of public and private property. Tlhagale (2020:4) asserts that these social misdemeanours are “caused by the absence of clean governance i.e. by corruption and by the limited State capacity to enforce compliance”. It could be argued that the bishops of the Roman Catholic Church have not paid particular attention to the phenomenon of corruption yet, as discussed in section 2.3, accusations of mismanagement have been levelled against some top sphere government officials (Medical Brief 2020:1-7).

Regarding the exacerbation of domestic violence against women and children during the different phases of lockdowns, Archbishop Tlhagale (2020:4), the KZNCC (2020:1) and Pope Francis (2020:nn23-24) discuss the issue of violence against women as a direct negative consequence of the pandemic. All three documents recognise that GBV has always plagued society, even before the pandemic. However, the concern about the resurgence of domestic violence and other forms of violence against women and children are addressed and condemned by Archbishop Tlhagale. While the KZNCC (2020:1) talks of the “increase in domestic violence” as the direct results of lockdowns, Pope Francis (2020:nn23) simply makes mention of the reality that women are “doubly poor” and are “[enduring] situations of exclusion, mistreatment and violence, since they are frequently less able to defend their rights”.

The themes of unemployment, corruption and gender-based violence that are central to the socio-economic impact of the pandemic were discussed and addressed in the bishops’ pastoral letters and statements. However, the theme of access to public health was never discussed and given the needed attention.

One the divergences in the various statements is at the level of certain themes discussed in their content. Bishop Phalana made no mention of the escalation of violence and oppression against women and children. He seems to close his eyes and mouth to the scourge of this social phenomenon, which does not honour the South African society. Yet his pastoral letters were issued at the heart of the strict lockdowns Levels 5 and 4. It means that, as shepherd of the people, he was well aware of what was happening in the families in relation to the severity of this nuisance. On his part, Pope Francis (2020: nn.23-24) decries the injustices done to women who are paying the heavy price of the socio-economic hardships in the context of Covid-19. Pope Francis did not explicitly discuss the issue of women who suffer from all kinds of violence from men, precisely in the African society still culturally dominated by patriarchy. It is also worth mentioning that Pope Francis does not speak of the family as the domestic church in the paragraphs of *Fratelli Tutti* related to Covid-19. He instead discusses on human family, which innate vocation to universal fraternity and make people brothers and sisters all (Pope Francis 2020: nn.2, 4, 8). Another discrepancy is that only one of the four church leaders, Archbishop Tlhagale, has discussed, although not in detail, the issue of corruption in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

As the bishops responded to the emergence of the socio-economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic through theological and pastoral vision, the Roman Catholic Church development agency of *Caritas* addressed it more practically. The following section discusses the response by *Caritas* South Africa.

#### **4.10. Practical Response through *Caritas* South Africa**

As discussed above in section 4.4, *Caritas* South Africa (CSA) has been tirelessly responding to the emergence of the social and economic upheaval resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa. From the onset of the pandemic, the organisation has specifically demonstrated considerable effort to come to material aid of the economically affected communities, which include migrants, refugees and undocumented people who could only rely on the church's support. As reported by the SACBC's *Caritas* department,

[...] according to government statistics of October 2021, more than three million people in South Africa have lost their jobs. Most of the poor communities, the migrants, refugees and undocumented people generate income from the informal economy, which shut down completely during lockdown. [This category of people could only] rely on the Church's support for food relief, clothes, sanitary products, the payment of rent and acquisition, etc. (SACBC 2021:11).

Immediately after the announcement of the national lockdown by President Cyril Ramaphosa in March 2020 as elaborated in the previous chapter, the CSA national office deployed itself on all fronts. It promptly followed Pope Francis' *Urbi et Orbi* (to the city [of Rome] and to the world) message of April 2020, which urges the Roman Catholic Church not to "forget the many other crises that bring suffering to so many people" (Pope Francis quoted in SACBC 2021:11). CSA launched a rapid survey in all the 20 dioceses in South Africa to determine the number of vulnerable and needy people (SACBC 2021:12). It is reported that CSA had "applied for an Emergency Grant which was approved and implemented in six archdioceses for three months serving a total of 8 172 families and 12 485 indirectly. People from 29 countries on the African Continent were assisted" (SACBC 2021:12). The request and the allocation of this grant was directed mainly towards migrants, refugees and undocumented persons because this category of people was considered the "most vulnerable and disadvantaged as a result of the current [pandemic] situation" (SACBC 2021:13). It is worth recalling that the migrants, the refugees, and asylum seekers were eligible for the social grant

system initiated by the South African government with the emergence of Covid-19 with social assistance only applying to South African citizens (SACBC 2021:12). That is why CSA had been striving to get undocumented migrants and children born on the South African soil to regularise their legal status (SACBC 2021:12-16).

Much of the work of CSA has been directed to children women and the elderly who have been most affected by the emergence of the socio-economic hardship caused by the pandemic (SACBC 2021:15-16). Many of these women were street vendors who could no longer open their small businesses due to the Covid-19 lockdown (SACBC 2021:12). CSA made an effort in all the dioceses and parishes to provide food (through soup kitchen or feeding scheme), clothing and health support to these people in distress (SACBC 2021:26). The work of CSA was carried out mainly by volunteers from all walks of society who had the well-being of their brothers and sisters at heart (SACBC 2021:28-30).

#### **4.11. Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter has been to assess the pastoral response of the Roman Catholic Church to the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa. In light of this objective, I have evaluated the social teaching of the Roman Catholic Church on responding to human need, especially through the institution of *Caritas* International. I have done this by discussing eight official documents on the social teaching of the Roman Catholic Church namely, *Mater et Magister* and *Pacem in Terris*, *Dignitatis Humanae* and *Gaudium et Spes*, *Populorum Progressio*, *Sollicitudo rei Socialis*, *Caritas in Veritate* and *Laudato Si*. These social documents of the Roman Catholic Church have then driven me to assess the response of Southern African Bishops' Conference to the emergence of Covid-19. The analysis of the documents published by Bishop Phalana, Archbishop Tlhagale, the KZNCC and Pope Francis in the context of Covid-19 has brought me to the understanding of various approaches and the underlying themes in their responses to the pandemic. These themes are underpinned by the theological and pastoral vision, which for the bishops, consists in encouraging, inspiring hope and sustaining the faith and spiritual life of the people in the emerging reality of the pandemic. The analysis of the said documents has led to the observation that bishops have approached with different emphases, the issues related to the socio-economic impact of the emergence of the pandemic such as unemployment, the embezzlement of funds, gender-based violence, and the access to public health care. All have left aside the concern of access to



healthcare, which is nevertheless of a significant occurrence in South Africa. Investigating the practical response by *Caritas* South Africa, the chapter has argued that this humanitarian and developmental agency was actively engaged in combating poverty by rejecting all forms of discriminations and by striving for the restoration of human freedom, rights and dignity. However, in the context of the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, *Caritas* South Africa seemingly focused much more on a certain category of marginalized and underprivileged people, namely the migrants, the refugees, the asylum seekers and undocumented foreigners in the country, thus paying less attention to the vast majority of the poor that might also have been in dire need for socio-economic relief service.

In the following chapter, I use the guiding principles found in the philosophy of *Ujamaa* and the theology of *Ubuntu* to offer suggested ways that the above pastoral response of the Roman Catholic Church to the socio-economic impact of the emergence of Covid-19 in the South African context could have been strengthened. This discussion will also focus on how these philosophical and theological principles could continue to guide a pastoral response as the Covid-19 pandemic continues to impact the lives of the South African nation.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **An Analysis of the Response of the Roman Catholic Church to Covid-19 in Light of the Philosophy of *Ujamaa* and the Theology of *Ubuntu***

#### **5.1. Introduction**

The previous chapter of this study undertook a document analysis of the response of the Roman Catholic Church to the socio-economic impact of the emerging Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa. In that chapter, I have argued that the Roman Catholic Church has a long history of meeting the socio-economic needs of humanity. This historical analysis moves through the various encyclicals and documents of the Second Vatican Council, which places human rights and dignity at the centre of the social teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. It is precisely in light of this teaching and concern for the social and economic well-being of the human person that from the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Episcopal Conference of Southern African Catholic Bishops through its development and humanitarian agencies and with the support of some bishops, were committed to addressing the hardships related to Covid-19 pandemic. During the first twelve months of the pandemic in South Africa, various bishops and later on Pope Francis issued pastoral letters and an encyclical letter respectively to address the socio-economic impact.

In this chapter, I am going to critically assess the way in which the documents from the Roman Catholic Church have responded to the existing systemic socio-economic inequalities that have been exacerbated by the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa. This critical assessment is underpinned by the guiding principles found in the framework of *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu*. *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* are underpinned by the principles of life in community, of conversion from mammon to God, of wholeness of life, and of self-reliance and it will be these principles that are used. Thereafter, the chapter will suggest some socially transformative actions that could lead to a more effective pastoral response of the Roman Catholic Church to the socio-economic impact of the emerging Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa. This chapter is, therefore, an all-encompassing link between the guiding principles of the African philosophy/theology of *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* as well as the documents by the Roman Catholic Church and the socio-economic impact of Covid-19 in South Africa. First, I will critically assess the response of the Roman Catholic Church using the above guiding principles of *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu*; and second, in light of these guiding principles, I will

suggest some socially transformative actions that could strengthen the pastoral response of the Roman Catholic Church to the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa.

## **5.2. The Response of the Roman Catholic Church to Covid-19 in Light of *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu***

A close reading of the documents analysed in Chapter Four of this study reveals that the founding ideas of the philosophy of *Ujamaa* and the theology of *Ubuntu* are found to some degree, the documents analysed. These ideas are evident in the way the bishops of the SACBC address, each in particular ways, the systemic and structural socio-economic ills such as unemployment, corruption, gender-based violence and the difficulty of access to public healthcare. As explored in section 2.3, these flaws have been aggravated by the emergence of the Coronavirus pandemic in South Africa. As I will demonstrate in the discussion below, the pastoral letters and statements of bishops are implicitly underpinned by the guiding principles of *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu*.

In the emerging context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the worsening of the loss of jobs and poverty compelled Bishop Phalana to suggest communion and solidarity as an answer. He exhorted families to consider lockdowns as an opportunity to instil *Ubuntu* values such as “togetherness” and “oneness” as a way of feeling stronger in supporting one another (Phalana 2020b:2). In the reality of the pandemic, community life is crucial in taking care not only of oneself but also of others by avoiding infecting others. In this way, the fight against the emerging Covid-19 and its unparalleled socio-economic impact becomes a communitarian issue. From this perspective, Bishop Phalana (2020b:2-3) and the KZNCC (2020:1) encouraged a communal response to the pandemic. This communal response implies compassionate unity with the poor, the marginalised, and the underprivileged as well as working together as churches to efficiently address the upheavals caused by the pandemic. Bishop Phalana (2020b:3) further suggests creative openness to others through the use of social media. Moving towards the direction of *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* community life, Pope Francis (2020: n.7) speaks of “universal fraternity as a borderless encounter”. He considers humanity as a universal community in which people live and care for one another. From this perspective, Pope Francis sees community life as key where there is a transcendence of racial and cultural prejudices as well as an individualistic mind-set. Pope Francis follows the logic of the principle of community life defended by *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* when he insists that we

can in no way win the battle against the Covid-19 pandemic as individuals but as a community. We stand stronger in living together as community and can only survive the devastating socio-economic impact of the emerging Covid-19 pandemic as a universal family.

The African liberation theological category of conversion from mammon to God is also highlighted in the documents by some Roman Catholic bishops. The popular adage states that “money is the sinews of war”. However, this same money, which is a means intended for the well-being of all, risks becoming a source of misfortune if it is selfishly diverted for personal accounts and interests. The exacerbation of corruption with the alarming misappropriation of funds dedicated to the fight against the emergence of Covid-19 pandemic through purchasing of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is one of these misfortunes. This scourge is addressed particularly by two bishops of the Roman Catholic Church, Bishops Sithembele Sipuka and Buti Tlhagale. While Bishop Sipuka (2020:1) viewed the appalling corruption as a cancer caused by the unbridled love of money and the prevailing culture of impunity, Bishop Tlhagale (2020:5) viewed the issue as the root cause of unemployment and the high crime rate in South Africa. These two leaders arguably view the rampant practice of corruption during the reality of the emerging Covid-19 pandemic as motivated by the love of money to the detriment of the neediest in society. As discussed in section 3.3 of this study and further articulated by Nussbaum (2003:22), “*Ubuntu* is the capacity in [South] African culture to express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony and humanity in the interests of building and maintaining community with justice and mutual caring”. In light of Nussbaum’s assertion, corruption in South Africa can be considered a crime against *Ubuntu*, a crime against humanity.

In line with the African liberation theological principle of conversion from mammon to faith in God, Bishop Tlhagale (2020:2-3) invites employers to exercise mercy, which can be inferred that they should not only be striving for their personal financial gain but also safeguarding jobs, human rights, and dignity. Bishop Tlhagale (2020:2-3) further champions that the practice of mercy in the employer-employee relationship stems from the belief that both are created in the image and likeness of God and, therefore, one cannot suffer the lack of basic livelihoods while the other indifferently and arrogantly swims in abundance. This is one of the tenets of African liberation theology found in *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu*, namely that the love of God and neighbour takes precedence over the love of money. The unequivocal condemnation of the embezzlement of funds during the critical times of the health crisis by

these two bishops of South Africa is conceivably proof that the Roman Catholic Church promotes altruism in its social teaching. The *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* theological category of the wholeness of life runs through the pastoral letters and statements issued by bishops in the context of the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic.

As discussed above, the *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* theology of wholeness of life is underpinned by the conviction and belief that God is the “source and purpose of human life” (Frostin 1988:137). Archbishop Tlhagale and Pope Francis had an underlying discussion on the wholeness of life in their respective documents. For them, wholeness of life has to do with human integral development. Archbishop Tlhagale (2020:5), for instance, asserted that a portion of the youth in South Africa has become pernicious, irresponsible and shameless “because they seem to have no purpose in life”. He further argued that the youth have an inalienable place in society. To explain his assertion, he used the “analogy of the body” in 1 Corinthians 12:25 that says, “God has arranged the body so that more dignity is given to the parts which are without it, and so that there may be no disagreements inside the body, but that each part may be equally concerned for all the others” (Tlhagale 2020:5). Furthermore, Archbishop Tlhagale (2020:4) reaffirms that human dignity is undermined in the context of violence against women and girl children. That is why he holds that the integrity of human life must be preserved at all cost (Tlhagale 2020:6). This condemnation of gender-based violence by Archbishop Tlhagale in the context of the emergence of Covid-19 lines up with *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* principle of wholeness of life.

For his part, Pope Francis (2020: n.162) emphasised that all human beings have shared dignity and rights, implying that the constant pursuance of common good has to be the goal of all human enterprise. The rationale for the safeguarding of human wholeness of life is based on their state of being created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27). The human person lacks completeness when their dignity is violated. By promoting borderless fraternity, Pope Francis (2020: nn.90, 97, 109) advocates sovereignty rights for all, especially for brothers and sisters who live on the periphery of society.

The socio-economic impact of the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa, is either explicitly or at least implicitly addressed in the pastoral letters and statements of the various bishops. They spoke of the exacerbation of issues such as unemployment, corruption, and gender-based violence, all of which negate the principles of *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu*.

However, it is worth mentioning that the issue of difficult access to public healthcare for the poor during the pandemic as discussed in section 2.3 is hardly addressed in the various documents of the bishops of the Roman Catholic Church in South Africa. Pope Francis (2020: nn.54-55) advocates for accessibility to healthcare for all and cites as example the goodness of “doctors, nurses and pharmacists” who, in the midst of the pandemic, worked tirelessly to bring healing and hope to “our human family” at the risk of their own lives. However, Pope Francis’ advocacy does not directly address the structural and systemic reasons for the problems as felt in the South African context. It is for this reason that, in light of African liberation theology of *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu*, socially life-changing actions need to be elaborated for a more efficient pastoral response of the Roman Catholic Church to the socio-economic impact of the emerging Covid-19 pandemic.

### **5.3. Socially Transformative Actions for a More Effective Pastoral Response of the Roman Catholic Church to the Covid-19 Pandemic**

In Chapter Two of this study, I assessed the social context of the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic and its socio-economic impact in South Africa; in Chapter Three, I reflected on an African liberation theoretical framework with special emphasis on the philosophy of *Ujamaa* and the theology of *Ubuntu*. In Chapter Four, I thematically analysed the documents published by the Roman Catholic Church in South Africa and the encyclical letter of Pope Francis in their pastoral response to the urgency of the health crisis in the country. In this section of the current chapter, I am going to elaborate on the dimension of socially transformative action in light of *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* that could strengthen the pastoral response of the Roman Catholic Church to the socio-economic impact of the Covid-19 in South Africa.

Taking into consideration the principles of *Ujamaa* and of *Ubuntu*, there are socially transformative actions that could enable the Roman Catholic Church to be more constructive in its response to the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa. This constructive response involves fourfold action: first, the strengthening of community life through family ties; second, encouraging *Caritas* to work towards enabling people to acquire skills and competence towards financial self-reliance; third, the safeguarding of creation; and fourth, engaging in psychological and pastoral counselling which aims at the healing of victims of GBV and

people who have suffered depression and anxiety disorders as a result of the socio-economic aftermath of the pandemic.

The family is considered as the backbone of community in the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church and in the African liberation theology of *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu*. Pope John Paul II (1981: nn.42-48) holds that the family is not only a community of life and love but also a fundamental unit of society. Pope Francis (2016) has devoted a large portion of his Apostolic Exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia* (the Joy of Love) to the family, which he considered “as the place of the bursting of joy and the blossoming of individuals”.<sup>15</sup> Both *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* hold the family in great value. *Ujamaa* is considered as the basis of African socialism underpinned by community spirit and solidarity within the broader family, which Nyerere saw as the nation (Mukhungulu et al 2017:183). *Ubuntu* is seen to be “the Africans’ most reliable way of building family relationships and [that] many have used it to build communities, and even nations” (Mafumbate 2019:7). Moreover, in traditional African culture the family as a community and society in miniature, plays a crucial role in the potential development of children (Mafumbate 2019:9-10). From this perspective, a healthy family life is the starting point and the basis of a healthy community life.

The African value of community life is recognised and praised in the Roman Catholic Church as the extension of the family. In 1994, members of the special synod of the Roman Catholic Church in Africa, commonly known as *Ecclesia in Africa* (the Church in Africa), recognised the sense of community as one of the providential cultural values that abound in Africa and which remains an asset for its socio-economic development. Indeed, Pope John Paul II (1995: n.43) captures the synod’s observation as follows, “In Africa it is unthinkable to celebrate a feast without the participation of the whole village. Indeed, community life in African societies expresses the extended family”. As emphasized by *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu*, Africans in their culture celebrate in community not only events of joy, but also sadness. Community solidarity is foundational to being together. Community in the perspective of *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* and in the context of the current humanitarian health crisis would imply the creation of a communication network and a chain of African solidarity whereby the wealthier people freely donate part of their resources to alleviate the suffering of others. An African liberation approach promoted by Nyerere (1968:104-105) and Tutu (1999:264-265) in their conception

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<sup>15</sup> See also *Ecclesia in Africa*, n.43.

of familyhood and communal fraternity excludes any idea of the exploitation of one another. From this viewpoint, exploitation and oppression of the poor can be considered as a crime against human rights and dignity. It is inconceivable that a minority of people amass more wealth than they need while an alarming majority languishes in oppression and misery. This resonates with Nussbaum (2003:22) who contends that, “*Ubuntu* calls upon us to believe and feel that: your pain is my pain, my wealth is your wealth, your salvation is my salvation”.

The philosophy/theology of *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* highlights the African value of living together in community. However, an analytical evaluation of the pastoral response of the Roman Catholic Church to the socio-economic impact of the emergence of Covid-19 in South Africa in section 4.5 of this study shows that less emphasis has been placed on the community dimension of the fight against the spread of the virus. The pastoral letters and statements issued by South African Roman Catholic bishops mostly discuss the need to work together as churches, the solidarity of the Roman Catholic Church with the distressed brothers and sisters, scrupulous respect of Covid-19 restrictions in view of flattening the spread of the virus and, universal fraternity. These solutions are theologically and spiritually relevant in the context of psychological, physical and socio-economic upheavals of the pandemic. It can be acknowledged that an emphasis has been placed on the community dimension of the fight against the spread of the virus and its socio-economic impact by the recognition in the documents that the pandemic is a public health issue. However, while public health issues are addressed, the socio-economic challenges are not sufficiently articulated as communal and structural issues. To some extent, Bishop Sipuka and Bishop Tlhagale addressed the systemic issue of corruption that caused heartless people to embezzle funds, leading to the impoverishment of their fellow brothers and sisters. Nevertheless, there is much more that could have been said about the structural dimensions of poverty addressing both the wealthier congregants and government officials. For instance, they could urge Christians in their thousands to sign petitions aiming to lobbying for the end of corruption and for the enhancement of job creation for the poor in South Africa. The centrality of community life and the well-being of all communities is fundamental to addressing the structural socio-economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. This was important in the early stages of the pandemic, but continues to be an issue needing to be addressed pastorally by the Roman Catholic Church bishops in South Africa. As discussed in the philosophy of *Ujamaa* and in the theology of *Ubuntu*, in Africa, liberation always comes to all when we recognise the communal dimension.



It was discussed in section 2.2 of this study that the poor were the most marginalized when it came to digital connectivity during the emergence of Covid-19. Unequal access to digital communication when it was so crucial was another indication of existing inequalities between communities. This is another aspect that was hardly addressed in the aforementioned documents when the need for social networks to strengthen community life and for the fight against the pandemic was so great. Only Bishop Phalana touched on this aspect. Perhaps it could have been suggested that the *Caritas* agency sponsor access to data for all in order to propagate at a high level, not only the word of God, but also social networking with the view to support and comfort one another in the time of distress. The narrative of the Community Action Networks (CANs) in Cape Town referred to, as Cape Town Together (CTT) appears to be illustrative for the concrete praxis of *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu*, especially in the context of the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic (Odendaal 2021:126). It started in March 2020 by a group of teachers, medical doctors, artists and activists as a collective and supportive network. It is arguably true to say that in the context of the emerging Covid-19, CTT-CANs in Cape Town was *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* in the modern technology. This further suggests that in the reality of pandemic physical / social distancing, human beings are still able to creatively connect to others in the spirit of family and community life. Technology can be used to enhance community value and promote a common goal in the neighbourhood, which is caring for one another and the *raison d'être* of living together. Another action that could strengthen the effectiveness of the response of the Roman Catholic Church to Covid-19 in line with *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* is bringing about long-term structures for people's material or financial self-reliance.

In its social teaching, the Roman Catholic Church pays particular attention to the integral development of the human person in order to reach their full potential (Pope Paul VI: 1967). Pope John Paul II (1981: nn.13, 15, 25) considers human work not only as the continuation of God's creation, but also as a source of development and liberation. He further insists that the human person is called to rejoice in the fullness of life because, created in the image and likeness of God, we share the very life of the Creator God (Pope John Paul II 1995: nn.1-3). Quoting Psalm 128:2, which stresses the necessity of and happiness found in human work, Pope Francis (2016: nn23-24) praises labourers who, by the work of their hands, sustain the physical well-being and tranquillity of their family. Additionally, Pope Francis (2020: nn.161-162) recalls the importance of the dignity of human work and expresses the desire to see the world from the perspective of the poor on the personal, economic, political and structural

levels. It is clear that the Roman Catholic Church in South Africa did and continues to do its best to assist people in their socio-economic distress during this time of the pandemic. It is important to note that the Roman Catholic Church has been doing good charitable work, especially through *Caritas*, in addressing socio-economic hardships. Nonetheless, given the unfolding of the pandemic, this response has been immediate and short term. There is a need for more effort in finding a sustainable long-term solution to the socio-economic impact of the pandemic. This is especially true for South Africa where 14.9 million people or 34.5% of the working population are unemployed (Stats SA 2022:5).

The actions of the Roman Catholic Church should aim more directly at creating ways of empowering people to work towards their financial autonomy. This will avoid setting up a dependency syndrome that means communities continually rely on external assistance, thus limiting their capacity for creativity and self-worth through hard work. Work is one of the fundamental characteristics of human persons because it contributes to shaping their dignity and responsibility through self-realisation. Feely (2015:1) contends that,

Work is one such essential responsibility, which shapes and fulfills human dignity by providing for the needs of one's self and one's family. Work belongs to the vocation of every person. Work is an essential means by which the goods of the earth and the creative capacities of human beings are engaged to provide for human flourishing and the common good. Human work is the fulfillment of human dignity by engaging in and cooperating with the creative work of God.

According to Nyerere (1968:104-105), self-reliance in *Ujamaa* is the capacity of people to realise themselves physically, materially, mentally, morally, socially and emotionally. This is framed in Gutierrez's (1974:109-111) conception of development and liberation, which he considers as expressions of people's deepest aspiration for freedom from a situation of economic and emotional dependence. Self-reliance implies standing on one's own feet as an individual and as community. It is one of the crucial conditions for human dignity to be upheld. From the perspective of *Ubuntu*, job creation or the empowerment for self-employment can create "social protection systems [that] facilitate targeted support to vulnerable individuals after a personal, health or social crisis has occurred. The practice involves finding a hardship-alleviating solution after the damage is done" (Mayaka and Truell (2021:4). In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Roman Catholic Church in South Africa could go beyond its soup kitchen and feeding schemes. It could train people in small

business management and farming skills and then allocate reasonable funds to small family projects that will help people provide for themselves rather than being fed every day. These projects could be run by the community and the fruits shared to families in need. It is important to specify that this suggestion of self-reliance through work, does not apply to the elderly and people with co-morbidities who would always need the support of the community.

Another dimension that the Roman Catholic Church needs to emphasise is the wholeness of life which, from the perspective of the African liberation theology of *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu*, considers the human being as part of the whole of creation including the environment. The humanitarian health crisis brought by the coronavirus has accentuated not only social inequalities but also the environmental crisis that increases the vulnerability of human beings. Liberation theology as articulated by *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* presents the human person as an integral part of the ecological environment created by God (Terblanché-Greeff 2019:94-96). Human health and the environment are intrinsically linked. That is why the global humanitarian health crisis is tied to the global environmental crisis. As stewards, human beings are called to safeguard ecological systems in order to live in harmony with the whole of creation. In the first months of Covid-19 in South Africa, the battle was mainly targeted towards eliminating the pandemic. As a result, there was little concern about the volume of medical waste generated at the global and national level. Added to this, is the issue of single-use facemasks that are thrown away often into the streets and can either be a source of coronavirus contamination or end up in a river and in the ocean to endanger the aquatic population. Surprisingly, no mention was made in any of the letters and statements of Roman Catholic Church's authorities of these ecological concerns in the context the Covid-19 pandemic. The Roman Catholic Church in South Africa needs to put forward a concrete action plan of educating communities about the preservation of the environment. This education campaign could include posters and seminars to raise awareness on the need to keep the environment clean and healthy. This effort would help the population to maintain their health while striving to come to terms with the pandemic because a healthy ecological environment brings harmony between human beings and the whole of eco-system.

The next transformative action to consider is bringing healing to victims of GBV and to those who have suffered anxiety and depression from the socio-economic aftermath of the pandemic. In sections 2.3, 4.9 and 5.2 of this study, I have argued that the exaggeration of violence against women and children in the context of Covid-19 pandemic is another

pandemic that requires not only appropriate efforts to combat against it, but a critical analysis in light of the principles of *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu*. Even though the social crisis of domestic violence demands such a social solution, it is evident that it is not clearly mentioned anywhere in the pastoral letters and statements about a structure to bring psychological and spiritual healing to victims of this scourge during the Covid-19 pandemic. It should be noted that existing GBV has been aggravated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Violence against women and girls was a national outcry prior to the outbreak of the pandemic. As pointed out by the Gender-based Violence and Femicide National Strategic Plan (GBVF-NSP 2019:4), South Africa was already holding “the shameful distinction of being one of the most unsafe places in the world to be a woman” long before the advent of the humanitarian pandemic. GBVF-NSP (2019:4-6) qualifies rape and sexual violence in South Africa as “hyperendemic” that cuts across races and pervades on all realms of society. Sinko *et al.* (2021:1-2) assert that GBV has many repercussions on the physical, social and psychological health of the victims, as well as on the children, their loved ones and society as a whole. These repercussions range from emotional suffering to post-traumatic stress, deterioration of the state of physical and mental health and the deterioration of the relationship with the children in the home and in society. The consequences of domestic violence take time to heal. This is why Sinko *et al.* (2021:4) further insists that GBV victims need continued support and practical help to assist them in regaining power over their lives, until they find safety and peace.

As discussed in the previous section of this chapter, the abuse against women is a perversion of the spirit of humanness and wholeness of life that is harnessed in *Ujamaa* and in *Ubuntu* (van Stam 2015:37). Van Stam (2015:42, 48) further posits that GBV is not only “inhuman”, but also the distortion of the unity and “peace-building” that the *Ubuntu* people of South Africa are called to display through their relationship with one another. Violence, especially violence directed against women and children, destroys the peace and social harmony contained in the values of *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu*.

It is appropriate to speak out and strongly condemn the plague of domestic violence in South Africa. Archbishop Tlhagale (2020:4) did so in his pastoral letter as did Pope Francis (2020: nn.23-24) who decried the injustices done to women who are paying the heavy price of socio-economic hardships in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, it would have been good to see elucidated in the pastoral letter some directives to *Caritas* South Africa towards effective concrete actions not only to prevent GBV, but also to render justice, offer support,

safety and protection to survivors of this violence through pastoral and social structures such as caregiving and counselling centres. These pastoral structures could eventually offer psychological and pastoral counselling even to the perpetrators of GBV and open the process towards reconciliation, which, according to van Stam (2015:49), encompasses “an acknowledgement of guilt, showing remorse and repentance, asking for and giving forgiveness, and paying compensation or reparation”. As already mentioned, GBV always results in brokenness and shame to the victim. That is why pastoral counselling centres would help, not only to heal the spiritual and psychological wounds of victims of domestic violence, but also above all to view life with more optimism and hope.

#### **5.4. Conclusion**

This chapter has critically assessed the response of the bishops of the Roman Catholic Church to the socio-economic impact of the emergence of the coronavirus pandemic in South Africa. This appraisal was made in light of the philosophy of *Ujamaa* and the theology of *Ubuntu* as elaborated by Julius Nyerere and Desmond Tutu. I have thus reviewed the exacerbation of socio-economic inequalities such as unemployment, corruption, domestic violence against women and children, and poor access to public health. The intersectional analysis of these issues through the lens of African liberation theology highlights the centrality of the dignity of the human person called to live in harmony with others in community and with God in faith. The documents published by the bishops of the Roman Catholic Church in their response to the emergence of the socio-economic impact of Covid-19 are certainly considerable pastoral directives in the reality of the humanitarian devastation caused by the pandemic. The analysis of the documents shows evidence that in their pastoral letters and statements, some bishops responded appropriately to some of the rampant socio-economic inequalities brought about by the emerging pandemic, while others did not. Bishop Tlhagale, for instance, was the only one who addressed the issue of gender-based violence in South Africa in the context of Covid-19. There were also some gaps in the documents in pointing out what has to be done with regard to corruption. The bishops failed to urge for just economic structures that need to be put in place to reduce unemployment and poverty among the underprivileged population of South Africa, especially in the reality of Covid-19. While this might have been difficult as the government scrambled to understand how to deal with the public health crisis of global proportions in the early stages of the pandemic, this aspect could certainly now be an ongoing pastoral concern of the bishops.

It is for this reason that this chapter of the study has argued that it is important to develop sustainable and transformative actions that would help communities to support themselves even as the pandemic seems to be subsiding. From this perspective, the theoretical framework of *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* has made it possible to suggest life-changing actions to strengthen this response of the Roman Catholic Church in South Africa to the socio-economic impact of Covid-19. From this perspective, the chapter has argued that the principles of community life and self-reliance much valued in the African culture and cherished by the African theological principles of *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* should be taken into consideration above all by the Roman Catholic Church in addressing the socio-economic upheavals of the current pandemic. Furthermore, emphasis on the safeguarding of creation through the promotion of clear guidance on the care for the environment, as well as structures for healing for victims of GBV through pastoral counselling would strengthen the response of the Roman Catholic Church in South Africa.

The next and final chapter concludes the study and offers recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Concluding the Study

#### 6.1. Summary of the Study

This qualitative non-empirical study used thematic document analysis as the major research methodology. In principle, it used the theoretical approach of the Pastoral Circle, which follows “See” (social analysis), “Judge” (bringing theological insights to the social analysis) and, “Act” (recommending ways to act as a result of the process).

Chapter One of this study outlined the background, the rationale, the theoretical framework, the key research questions and objectives of the study. It also included the research methodology, anticipated problems, limitations and scope of study, and finally the structure outline of the study.

The social analysis that addresses the context of the study is followed in Chapter Two. An exploration of the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic and its socio-economic impact was carried out. The chapter described the Covid-19 pandemic, its origins, its mode of transmission, and the health protocols put in place to mitigate it and its global effects. A particular focus was on the socio-economic impact of the emerging Covid-19 pandemic on the poorest household in South Africa. The chapter argued that the pandemic has exacerbated the systemic and structural inequalities that existed in the country before the pandemic, beginning with the legacy of *apartheid*. The socio-economic inequalities that aggravated the gap between the rich and the poor include rampant unemployment, high appetite for corruption, heightening of gender-based violence, and the difficulty in accessing healthcare by the poor.

After setting the context, Chapter Three discussed an African liberation theological reflection on Covid-19. The chapter sought to suggest a theological response to Covid-19 using an African liberation approach with a particular emphasis on Julius Nyerere’s philosophy of *Ujamaa* and on Desmond Tutu’s theology of *Ubuntu* because of their preferential option for the poor and their focus on community that is crucial in addressing the pandemic. The chapter positioned *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* within a broader context of African liberation theology by elaborating on Jesse Mugambi’s reconstruction theology and Kwami Bediako’s particular

approach to contextual theology. *Ujamaa* is defined as “familyness” or “familyhood” or “brotherhood” or “sisterhood”. *Ubuntu* is conceptualised as personhood, humanness, humanity and togetherness in intrinsic relationship to the community. The chapter further argued that both *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* hold the theological principles of community life, conversion from mammon to God, wholeness of life and self-reliance. These principles were foundational for the rest of the study.

In Chapter Four, the study thematically analysed various pastoral letters and statements issued by the Roman Catholic Church in South Africa at the outset of the emerging Covid-19 pandemic, including the socio-economic impact. Through its social teaching on responding to human needs, the Roman Catholic Church has always shown a particular interest in socio-economic problems. This has been specifically through its social development and humanitarian agency called *Caritas* Internationale, which was founded more than a century ago in Germany. *Caritas* is well established and active in South Africa and was also involved through assisting people in the difficult time of Covid-19. As an important wing of Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference, *Caritas* South Africa offered practical response to the emerging Covid-19 pandemic in the country through its efforts to offer material assistance to economically affected communities, which included migrants, refugees and undocumented individuals who could only rely on the support from the church. This assistance involved supplying food, clothing, health and educational support to people in Covid-19 distress. In their pastoral letter and statements, various bishops of SACBC endeavoured to provide theological insights through a vision of encouragement, of hope and of sustainability of the spiritual life and faith of the people. The bishops emphasised themes that included solidarity and communion with the poor, wholeness of life, ecumenical ministerial care, and universal fraternity. The categories of unemployment, corruption, gender-based violence, and access to public healthcare were used in chapter four as the markers to assess the extent to which the pastoral documents of the Roman Catholic bishops and the encyclical letter of Pope Francis appropriately addressed the issue of systematic and structural inequalities exacerbated by the emerging Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa. It was thus observed that three of the bishops spoke against the rampant corruption at government level but did not provide clear directives on how to combat it efficiently in order to create jobs for the unemployed poor population. Another observation was that only one bishop addressed the crucial issue of the exacerbation of gender-based violence. From this viewpoint, it can be asserted that the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church paid less attention to the scourge of GBV during the emerging



Covid-19 pandemic. It also became clear that the issue of the difficulty of access to public healthcare in the country was hardly addressed in the documents of the bishops.

In Chapter Five, the study used the guiding principles transpired in the philosophy of *Ujamaa* and the theology of *Ubuntu* to suggest ways in which the pastoral response of the Roman Catholic Church to the socio-economic impact of the emergence of Covid-19 in the South African context could have been strengthened. From this perspective, the study argued that the founding ideas of *Ujamaa* and *Ubuntu* were to some extent present in the pastoral response of the bishops to Covid-19 in South Africa, but they did not go far enough to clearly suggest socially transformative actions, which would strengthen their pastoral response considerably. These socially transformative actions include: strengthening of community life through family affinity; working with people to empower them for their financial self-reliance; bringing to the fold the theology of ecology through fostering the safeguard of creation; and engaging in psychological and pastoral counselling with the objective to bring healing to victims of GBV and people who suffered depression due to the socio-economic challenges of the pandemic.

## **6.2. Recommendations**

At the close of this study, there are four recommendations suggested for further research.

First, this study only focused on the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic and its socio-economic impact in South Africa narrowly in the timeframe March 2020 to March 2021. Yet, the presence of Covid-19 has gone beyond a single year and its impact is still being felt in South Africa. Important further qualitative research is needed to assess people's resilience to the pandemic and their coping mechanisms through their own voice.

Second, there is a need for further research to be carried out on the assessment of the receptivity and the enactment of the Roman Catholic Church's pastoral letters and statements on the emerging Covid-19 pandemic and its socio-economic impact in South Africa. This further research needs to look at the impact of the pastoral letters and statements, if any at all, on the Christian life of individual Catholics in South Africa.

Third, the scope of this study was specifically limited to the systemic and structural inequalities that the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted in South Africa. The pastoral response of the Roman Catholic Church to the individual psychological dimensions of the pandemic such as dealing with distress from joblessness, fear, traumatic conditionality caused by gender-based violence, loss of loved ones and bereavement has to be investigated further.

Fourth, the scope of this study is solely on the Roman Catholic Church in South Africa. Yet the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC) extends to countries such as Botswana and eSwatini. The investigation of the pastoral response of the Roman Catholic Church to the socio-economic impact of the emerging Covid-19 pandemic in these territories of SACBC is also important.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Exemption from Ethics Review



Rev Gilbert Kamta Tatsi (220112667)  
School Of Rel Phil & Classics  
Pietermaritzburg

01 September 2021

Dear Rev Gilbert Kamta Tatsi,

**Protocol reference number:** 00014115

**Project title:** An African Theological Assessment of the Pastoral Response of the Roman Catholic Church to the socio-economic impact of Covid-19 in South Africa

#### Exemption from Ethics Review

In response to your application received on [redacted], your school has indicated that the protocol has been granted **EXEMPTION FROM ETHICS REVIEW**.

Any alteration/s to the exempted research protocol, e.g., Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through an amendment/modification prior to its implementation. The original exemption number must be cited.

For any changes that could result in potential risk, an ethics application including the proposed amendments must be submitted to the relevant UKZN Research Ethics Committee. The original exemption number must be cited.

In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

#### PLEASE NOTE:

Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours sincerely,

Prof Philippe Marie Berthe Raoul Denis  
Academic Leader Research  
School Of Rel Phil & Classics

UKZN Research Ethics Office  
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building  
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS



## Appendix B: Pastoral Letter of Victor H. Phalana, 18 Mars 2020.



### CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF KLERKSDORP

P.O. Box 3071, Freemanville, 2573

Tel: 018 462 2261 | Fax: 086 295 4000 | [Email:klddio@gds.co.za](mailto:Email:klddio@gds.co.za)

18 March 2020

ALL PARISH PRIESTS, CHAPLAINS, ETC SERVING IN OUR DIOCESE,

ALL PARISH PASTORAL COUNCILS,  
ALL OUR CHRISTIANS & PEOPLE OF GOOD WILL

REF: PASTORAL LETTER IN RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS SITUATION  
IN OUR DIOCESE

Dear People of God,

*The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.*

*"The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him." (Lamentations 3:22-23)*

1) Coronavirus, also known as COVID-19 has arrived. To date, 116 people in South Africa are positive. About 110 of these are people who travelled overseas. We pray for them, we pray for their families and we pray for those caring for the sick. Let us pray for them to get well. We thank God there are no proven deaths connected to COVID-19 in South Africa yet.

President Cyril Ramaphosa has declared a state of National Disaster (*Stage 1*). This means that this virus is a big threat to our nation. This declaration goes along with certain restrictions but allows us limited freedoms. If we fail to comply, the government will be forced to declare a State of Emergency (*Stage 2*). During the Stage 2, the army will be called upon to assist the police in enforcing the restrictions and to monitor curfews. Should COVID-19 become too serious and out of control, as it is in Italy, then we will have to face a total lockdown (*Stage 3*) where churches would have to close, and everyone will have to work from home. All shops, restaurants, factories, businesses and malls would have to close. We are not yet there. I pray that we do not reach that stage. In our diocese, coronavirus is probably not yet prevalent and we thank God for that but we do not have to be complacent. Let us be proactive. We have to take heightened precautions around coronavirus so that we do not become part of the problem. We would like to contribute to limiting the spread of coronavirus among our people.

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The virus spread undetected, it can go on unnoticed, which means by the time we realized it, there could be a lot of transmission chains happening. This virus is very aggressive and contagious. It reminds me of a film CONTAGION which featured in 2011, talking about coronavirus coming from China and spreading to the whole world. It was a prophetic film because what it said 9 years ago is happening right now. Coronavirus, reminds us that we are weak and frail. The words of the psalmist ring true: "The life of mortals is like grass, they flourish like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone and its place remembers it no more" (Ps. 103:15–16).

## **2) WHAT CAN PARISHES DO?**

It is for this reason that I call upon all the parishes in the Klerksdorp Diocese to take precaution. I am not going to recommend extreme measures.

- ***Limit the number*** of those participating at Mass to **100** (***There is no negotiation. You must enforce this. Lock the doors if necessary.***). It is better to celebrate more masses with smaller groups (I will propose 3-4 Good Friday Services on Good Friday, of 1hr 15 min each) We have to disinfect pews and doors after every service). For this reason I give a dispensation to all the priests who celebrate more than 4 Masses a day. Maintain a safe distance from one another in each. The obligation to attend Sunday Mass is lifted for everyone until further notice. So do not feel guilty when you do not attend Mass during this time of the pandemic. Pray at home. Use the bible, rosary and other devotions. **SINCE WE CAN NEVER KNOW WHO HAS THE VIRUS OR NOT, IT IS IMPORTANT FOR US TO BE STRICT AND LIMIT THE NUMBER OF ATTENDEES. WE MUST ALSO TAKE PRECAUTION. WE MUST ENFORCE THE RESTRICTIONS WITHOUT COMPROMISE.**
- ***Provide water and antibacterial soap or gel*** at the church entrance. Let people wash their hands or use a sanitizer with 60-70% alcohol. Dettol has less than 50% alcohol, so it is not effective against COVID-19. (Buy and provide these things). Ensure that people wash their hands with soap and water or use a hand sanitizer for CONGREGANTS. **GO AND BUY!** With the help of the PPC, Liturgy committee, Ushers, etc., make sure they are sanitized as they come in and as they leave the church. (The clergy come up with the idea of using jugs where there are no taps. We also encourage the use of paper towels).
- ***Do not spread panic and fear.*** Do not listen to fake news. Do not be a prophet of doom. **USE COMMON SENSE AND LISTEN TO THE DIRECTIVES FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH.**
- ***The clergy and lay ministers must also wash their hands*** with soap and water or use sanitizers during Mass: before touching vessels and the Blessed Sacrament. They must wash or sanitize immediately after communion. Those who assist with the collection can use disposable gloves to count the money. Throw the gloves into the bin immediately and sanitise your hands. You are also count wearing a mask.
- ***The Sign of Peace should be done without the shaking of hands.*** You can simply smile and wave to your neighbour. Alternatively, you can put your hands together and bow to the person next to you: We call it the "*Namaste*" greeting. Refrain from holding hands during the "Our Father".



- **For the Easter Triduum**, keep the services short. Keep the numbers low, maximum 100. The Washing of the Feet can be left out during this time of the pandemic. Good Friday veneration of the Cross can be observed through bowing or genuflecting but not touching and kissing. To all ministers, avoid contact. You do not have to do confirmations at Easter. Postpone them to a later stage after the pandemic. Limit the number of songs in the Mass and do not preach for more than 10 minutes.
- **Chrism Mass** will be restricted to the clergy (27), the choir (30) members, altar servers 8, the religious and the seminarians (10) and the cathedral ushers, sacristians, musicians and PPC (10) THE Diocesan Pastoral Council executive and the chancery staff (10). **YOU MAY NOT ATTEND THE CHRISM MASS THIS YEAR. IT IS A CLOSED AFFAIR, BY INVITATION ONLY!**
- **Try to follow your services online. Using a Whatsapp video is easy. Inform parishioners so that they can follow services online. Live streaming is a possibility these days. Try it.**

- **3) GO FOR TESTING**

All those who show signs or symptoms, e.g. Dry cough, fever, fatigue, respiratory problems (short breath), etc., must go for TESTING. Those who have been overseas, especially in areas where there is an outbreak, must voluntarily go for testing. Those who have been in contact with those who have been tested positive, must go for testing. They must be ready to be quarantined or isolated for a while, until we are sure that they have not contracted the disease. This will ensure that they do not continue to spread the virus, unknowingly.

- **4) EXCLUSION AND ISOLATION**

During the clergy meeting, we expressed our concern for the stigmatization of those who have the Corona virus. They must not feel rejected. Let them practice self-isolation to protect their families and friends from infection. Being excluded and isolated isn't an easy thing, since we were created for relationships. But many people, now, are having to deal with isolation. It's an experience the leper community of Jesus's day knew all too well. Forced to live on their own, walking the streets of their hometowns shouting, "Unclean! Unclean!" (cf. Lev. 13:45). Let us care and help those in isolation, so that they do not feel dejected. Your doctor will guide you on how to handle them, especially when they show symptoms. Let us help them understand that quarantine is a temporary thing and they must accept it and protect the lives of others.

- **5) FEAR OR FAITH**

Many people are gripped by fear. It is understandable. Some people see the coronavirus everywhere: on the keyboard of the computer, in the air they breathe, in every physical contact and around every corner, waiting to infect them. Are we panicking? Perhaps this crisis is challenging us to react in a different way—with faith and not fear. Faith, not in the stars or in some unknown deity. Rather, faith in Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd who is also the Resurrection and the Life. Surely only Jesus is in control of this situation; surely only he can guide us through this storm.

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He calls us to trust and believe, to have faith and not fear. So we must pray. Pray the rosary, go for adoration, intercede and trust in God's Divine Mercy. Intercede for the end of the Coronavirus.

- **6) LET US RING BELLS AT MIDDAY, EVERYDAY, TO REMIND PEOPLE TO PRAY THE ANGELUS OR THE REGINA COELI (EASTER SEASON), praying for the end of the Coronavirus.**
- **7) HOW DID EARLY CHRISTIANS DEAL WITH PANDEMICS AND PLAGUES?**

Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History tells of how the early church was known for its sacrificial care for the sick in times of war, famine and plague. This is a description of events in Alexandria as recorded by Dionysius (Eccl Hist XXII).

For the very heart of the city is more desolate and impassable than that vast and trackless desert which the Israelites traversed in two generations ... men wonder, and are at a loss to know whence come the constant plagues; whence these malignant diseases; whence those variegated infections; whence all that various and immense destruction of human lives... ... But now all things are filled with tears, all are mourning, and by reason of the multitudes already dead, and still dying, groans are daily resounding throughout the city...

This pestilence was a calamity more dreadful to them [the pagans] than any dread, and more afflictive than any affliction, and which as one of their own historians has said, was of itself alone beyond all hope. To us, however, it did not wear this character, but no less than other events it was a school for exercise and probation.

"Indeed, the most of our brethren, by their exceeding great love and brotherly affection, not sparing themselves, and adhering to one another, were constantly superintending the sick, ministering to their wants without fear and without cessation, and healing them in Christ, have departed most sweetly with them." Many also, who had healed and strengthened others, themselves died, transferring their death upon themselves ... So that this very form of death, with the piety and ardent faith which attended it, appeared to be but little inferior to martyrdom itself.

Among the heathen it was the direct reverse. They both repelled those who began to be sick, and avoided their dearest friends. They would cast them out into the roads half dead, or throw them when dead without burial, shunning any communication and participation in death, which it was impossible to avoid by every precaution and care."

Let us not run away. Let us not behave like these heathens in the story. "There is no greater love than to lay down your life for your friends".

- **8) POPE FRANCIS CALLS US TO CARE FOR THE SICK**  
Referring to the story above, we can surely say that the Corona virus is the plague of our time. Pope Francis' call to priests to visit the sick is an echo of such courageous love. Putting others first at risk to yourself is profoundly Christian.

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It is not every man and woman for themselves, but how as communities of disciples we can look after those in need. Of course the Pope's call is problematic as to how it would work without risk of infecting the healthy. But its instinct is absolutely right. Behind such action is a belief that death does not have the last word. Christians believe death has been overcome already in the death and resurrection of their Lord. It has lost its sting and power (1 Cor 15:55-57). (We discussed this with the clergy and I recommend every priest and deacon to carry a hand sanitizer in their car. Feel free to buy disposable gloves and masks if you are dealing with the sick). We must not deny the sick the Anointing of the Sick and Holy Communion, because for some of them, this might be their Viaticum, their last Bread for the Journey.

- 9) As St. Teresa of Avila affirms: "Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes; you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours." We are God's agents in healing the world. This pandemic calls Christians to consider how they can prioritize helping the weak, the isolated, the elderly who may not have the resources and physical ability to look after themselves. We cannot run away from those who need us, but we must take precautions if the person has tested positive of coronavirus, flu, common cold, etc.
- 10) I care about your health: *physical and spiritual health*. We must take precautions to limit the spread of this disease by complying with government directives.
- 11) *The gathering of Men's Forum at St Peter this Saturday is vital. We will limit it to 100 men only. This is the number we had at Makwasie, Bodibe and last year at Maria MmaMohau. We were about 70-80. This is acceptable. The Mass and the rosary is our way of interceding for the end of this virus.*
- 12) *IN ADDITION TO WHAT I SAID ABOVE: The Bishops' Conference (SACBC) requested us to ensure that funerals and weddings are attended by close family in accordance with social distancing that the department of health called for. The number is limited to 100 according to Government guidelines. No confirmations during this pandemic. No retreats, no all night vigils and no weekend workshops, no events with more than 100 people. If you do meet, according to government directives, do not keep people for too long. Practice hygiene. These are trying times. Let the parish leadership meet and talk about this letter and see how they can implement it. Supermarkets, airports, companies, government departments are all trying to implement the guidelines. We are not the only ones. Let us do our best. When the government advises us to shut down the churches, we will do so immediately! Social distance means that people must leave space in between. Do not squash people in one small room or in a church.*
- *Social distancing is a public health safety intervention used to reduce the likelihood of transmitting communicable disease. Social distancing involves minimizing exposure to infected individuals by avoiding large public gathering venues, adhering to spacing requirements in the workplace, and following proper personal hygiene practices.*

**13) PRAYER FROM SECAM, THE SECRETARIATE OF THE BISHOPS OF AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR:**

**LET US PRAY:**

Almighty and merciful Father, who show your love to all your creation; We come before you asking for a quick control of the Corona Virus currently ravaging our world; Hear graciously the prayers we make for those affected by the virus in various parts of the world; Grant healing to the sick, eternal life to the dead and consolation to the bereaved families; We pray that an effective medicine to combat the sickness be speedily found; We pray for the relevant Governments and Health Authorities that they take appropriate steps for the good of the people; Look upon us in your mercy and forgive us our failings. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

***RE BALEHELA TSHIRELETSONG YA HAO, MME YA HALALELANG WA MODIMO, O SE KE WA KGESA DITHAPELO TSA RONA HA RE LE DITSIETSONG, O MPE ORE NTSHE KE MEHLA DIKOTSING TSOHLE, OHO MOVIRIGO YA TLOTLEHANG, YA LEHLOHONOLO, AMEN.***

**We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God; despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us always from all dangers, O glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.**

*May the Divine assistance remain always with us! Amen*

**SPIRITUAL COMMUNION FOR THOSE WHO ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND MASS**

*By making an Act of Spiritual Communion, we express our faith in Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist and ask him to unite himself with us. Here is the Act of Spiritual Communion written by St. Alphonsus de Liguori:*

***My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul.***


***Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You.***

***Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.***

**SAINTS PETER AND PAUL, PRAY FOR US.**

**MARY ASSUMED INTO HEAVEN, PRAY FOR US.**

**ST ANTHONY THE GREAT, PRAY FOR US**

  
†RT. REV. VICTOR PHALANA  
THE BISHOP OF KLERKSDORP

**CATHOLIC DIOCESE  
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## Appendix C: Pastoral Letter of Victor H. Phalana, 8 May 2020.



### CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF KLERKSDORP

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08 May 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In the light of the COVID-19, I found strength in the *Serenity Prayer*: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference."

Nothing could have prepared us for this pandemic. We were all caught off guard. The good thing is that we all complied and did what we were told to do. We listened to the voice of our President and the Health Minister. Yes, it is a great inconvenience. We are not able to gather and worship together. We cannot be nourished and sanctified by the Sacraments. We feel isolated, lonely, confused, without a purpose and without direction. At times we feel like prisoners in our convents, presbyteries and homes. COVID-19 has disrupted our lives, our plans and our projects.

#### **ACCEPT THE REALITY OF COVID-19**

We all have a sense of grief and loss. We have to live under strict regulations and restrictions. This is not what we voted for. We voted for freedom and human rights. Unfortunately, a virus has come in, to take away all the freedoms we enjoyed and perhaps, took for granted. The only way out, is to accept, just as the Serenity Prayer teaches us. We accept that this is the reality for today and we pray for the grace to go through these trying times. Once we accept this uncomfortable situation, then we can see this period as a period of grace and not just a time of grief. We can experience sorrow and joy at the same time. The Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, "sorrowful but always rejoicing." This is a strange contradiction, but is an excellent description of the Christian life. We recognize the trials, pains and losses of life, which we count as the price of living in a fallen world beset by the effects of sin, but we are simultaneously joyful that there is a better world to come, in which Jesus Christ will wipe away every tear. It is a world we experience only in part today through the church but will come to fruition in the world to come.

#### **IT IS A TIME FOR SUFFERING FOR MANY**

Let me remind you of the words of St Paul "... through honour and dishonour, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything". (2 Corinthians 6:8–10).

When St Paul was facing many challenges and was going through suffering, he prayed to God to relieve him of his suffering. Instead, the Lord said to him: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."... For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

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#### **FAMILY PRAYER IS THE ANSWER**

Let us be strong and strengthen one another. While we miss the opportunity to worship together, to hold our meetings, to celebrate and to build community in our parishes, in the Small Christian Communities, Renew Africa Faith-Sharing Groups, Sodalities and in the diocese at large, we are reminded of the fact that the family is the domestic church. Families must use prayer time as a way to transmit spiritual values, Ubuntu values and our beautiful Church Traditions to younger generations. Prayer can enable your family to address problems or the kinds of stresses you are facing, as well as reduce tensions in your relationships. This is a way of seeking God's healing in your relationships. Prayer can help family members bond with one another and create a sense of family unity, mutual love and forgiveness. Follow the Bible Diary or use the Liturgical Calendar and the Bible to feed your souls on the Word of God. Pray the Rosary together, the Divine Mercy and follow the wonderful programmes of Radio Veritas where you can listen to the Mass being celebrated and make your Spiritual Communion Prayer which I sent in the last Pastoral Letter.

#### **TAKE CARE, PROTECT YOURSELF**

In all our suffering, we must also make sure that we do not get infected. In my previous Pastoral Letter at the beginning of 'lockdown', I warned you about people who are asymptomatic, those who do not cough and sneeze and yet, might be Coronavirus positive. They look healthy and yet they are the carriers of COVID-19. Treat every person you meet as if they are positive. Stay one metre away, put on your mask and use sanitizers or wash with soap and water often. Whatever you touch could be contaminated and you can get infected. Protect your loved ones and the family you love. As we move into winter, Coronavirus will be most dangerous. Let us pray for a cure. Let us pray for a vaccine.

#### **OUR SOLIDARITY WITH THOSE IN NEED**

The experience of COVID-19 has heightened the consciousness and reawakened the conscience of the church to the fragile, incarnate reality of human life. The church, like the whole world, has also been reminded by our experience of social distancing that human life can only be fully human when live in solidarity and community with others. I used the time of 'Lockdown' to call upon the advice and counsel of members of Caritas, CATHCA, Justice and Peace and Renew Africa to see how we can show solidarity with the poorest of the poor. We worked hard so far and I can proudly say that through our efforts and the generosity of our donors, we have delivered 600 good quality food parcels to the KOSH deanery and to the Potch deanery. Our preference was always people in the farms, informal settlements and villages. Today as you receive this letter, we are sending 150 food parcels to Wollies deanery, to reach out to places like Lavine, Makwassie, Leeudoringstad, Witpoort, etc. In the next few weeks, we will be reaching out to places like Delareyville, Lichtenburg, Christiana, Bloemhof and Schweitzer. What we give is not enough, but it is our commitment to solidarity. In my previous Pastoral Letter, I mentioned the fact that we must not only help Catholics. Our SCC's know very well those who are in need, Catholics and non-Catholics, South Africans and immigrants. We must help anyone in need. The government and other NGO's are also distributing food parcels. Ours is just a drop in the ocean. Whatever our Diocesan Covid-19 relief team receives, we will share with others.

#### **WHATSOEVER YOU DO TO THE LEAST OF MY BROTHERS OR SISTERS....**

Remember the words of the Lord: "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?"

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When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You? And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'" (Matthew 25: 34-40). The apostle John wrote, "if anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?" (1 John 3:17).

#### **BE CREATIVE AND USE TECHNOLOGY**

This is a time for us to be creative. COVID-19 is not a time for boredom and sleep. Do something beautiful and beneficial. For instance, we could take this time to use our gifts and talents through art, music, and writing, to bring attention to our strengths and to share how we find beauty in a community and country with many flaws. This time can also enable us to reimagine ourselves through our creativity and strengths as a community. We can be "present" in other ways through our prayers, phone calls, texts, emails and video chat technology. This week, on Monday and Tuesday, we used Zoom to hold our SACBC Admin Board meeting. I am aware of people who are using Skype or Whatsapp video to communicate with their loved ones. We may not be able to visit one another, but we can always keep in touch. Let us make peace with technology. This is the future of our world. We are living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. All of us must have a cell phone that can allow us to communicate virtually.

#### **OUR PARISHES MUST CHANGE**

COVID-19 has made it clear that we have to change. It cannot be business as usual. We need computers and laptops so that we are not left behind. We must challenge our government to ensure that data is affordable. We have been exploited for too long and we have been quite. Our churches must invest in good sound systems. I am tired of going to communities, having to shout aloud to be heard in church because there is no sound system. We, from the chancery, send out messages through email and WhatsApp – yet people still come back to us to say that they have not received any message from the chancery or from the bishop. Let us improve our systems. All churches must have good ablution blocks. Toilets must be maintained and must be up to standard. We must fight germs and viruses as a church. We need running water in every church. We must have sanitizers and soap. We must renovate our buildings and maintain good hygiene.

#### **SUPPORT YOUR PARISH AND YOUR PASTOR**

Our Parish Councils and Parish Finance Committees must not use this time as an excuse to punish their pastor. You can all use WhatsApp to chat and to hold meetings without coming together. You can talk from a distance. Give the priest his allowance, banks are open! Pay rent, telephone, phepo ya moprista, etc. Times are tough, but we must all try to survive. Families and individuals must also come up to support their parishes and make sure that your pastor does not starve.

#### **LOCKDOWN MEANS WE ARE NOT ABLE TO COME TOGETHER AS THE BODY OF CHRIST**

All our pastoral programmes are suspended, as I declared in the previous Pastoral Letter. I will be encouraging our priests to participate only in facilitating the distribution of food parcels to the poor. I encourage them to help with emergency baptism, the Sacrament of the sick, Viaticum, emergency confession, emergency confirmation for all who are dying. They can minister wearing their masks, gloves and carrying their own sanitizers. While we are on level 4, we cannot meet, we cannot serve our parishes, unless it is an emergency or a funeral. Office work and administration must be done. I found joy, going to farms with our Diocesan COVID-19 relief team to distribute food parcels. I also went to our convents and presbyteries hosting our seminarians to give out vegetable and fruit hampers. Our priests will receive permits from today to render essential services to their communities. We are doing this, because we care. Please show your love and support to them during these difficult times.

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### **SCHOOL: FEARS AND PROSPECTS**

I am proud to be South African. Through president Ramaphosa we did what was good for our country. We closed down society very early in the epidemic and very efficiently. That is why we are now on level 4. When will the rest of our learners be allowed back to school? Are we ready? Whatever we do, and when the time comes for schools to be opened, we must ensure new hygiene and distancing measures, to protect students and staff. The Education Department must make sure that the children are split into smaller groups, can wash their hands immediately upon arrival, with fresh, clean water and soap, at least every two hours, and that contact surfaces like sinks, toilet seats and door handles are disinfected twice daily. The systems and health protocols must be in place before they can open the schools. Learners must be encouraged to recite the rules about hand washing, keeping their distance, not sharing food and not getting too close to each other in the playground.

Teachers and parents must work together, to control, in terms of social behaviour and hygienic precautions to reduce risk of infections. We need unemployed parents to volunteer at schools to help the teachers, to enforce these new habits. The children will know that we mean business. They have to comply. Children need social interaction and education. Parents must go back to work. Life wants to be lived, as we fight the pandemic. We cannot afford a one year lockdown. This will crush our economy and destroy our children's dreams. I trust our leaders that they will not risk the lives of our children. They will open schools when we are ready and when the virus is under control.

### **MY CONCERN IS NOT ONLY THE FAITH, BUT THE ECONOMY AS WELL**

Our Economy is damaged. We were already in a recession. COVID-19 is making a bad situation worse. First we are now forced to cut back substantially on the new capital spending plans announced by Minister Mboweni at the beginning of the year. By the look of things, those spending plans are no longer sustainable. Economists are already predicting a significant contraction of between 5% and 6% in our Economy after lockdown. Health experts are already warning us that we are at the beginning of the Coronavirus pandemic, meaning that the worst is yet to come. With that in mind, we can be sure that we are not going to be able to fully open up our economy. People will lose their jobs. Most of our people are in debt. We are not creating new jobs. Small businesses are suffering. We not able to export our goods. We cannot benefit from eco-tourism. Most of our businesses are closed. This is the reality of COVID-19.

### **THE REALITY OF POVERTY IN SOUTH AFRICA**

- \* The truth is that over 30.4 million South Africans were already living in poverty before COVID-19.
- \* 13.8% South Africans are Food Poor. That is why there is such a scramble for food parcels.
- \* South Africa lost the war against poverty before 2010. In actual fact, according to Stats SA, between 2011 and 2015, more South Africans became poor and the poor became poorer.
- \* Eastern Cape, Limpopo and North West are the poorest provinces.
- \* Stats SA says that 93% of the South African poor are black. My estimation is that unemployment will move from 27% to 50% post COVID-19. More job losses mean less income for our families and for the church. The government might not keep up with grants for pensioners, the disabled, orphans and unemployed mothers. Less income means we might not be able to maintain our priests and our churches. I am simply sending a warning. Life will never be the same again. The diocese is struggling to survive. We are already facing a financial crisis before COVID-19, and without income, we might be facing bankruptcy.



This is happening while we are trying to revive our economy. This is happening while we are experiencing new colonialists from the East, trying to buy, possess and control our country. They are destroying of manufacturing by selling cheap stuff. This is the time when we are trying to rebuild our economy post COVID-19. We need to pray and to ask God to guide our leaders on how to take us out of this disaster. We appreciate the stimulus package announced by the government. We are aware that the government has to get loans to be able to deliver this stimulus package. What are the implications of those loans for our country and for the future?

### **CONCLUSION**

Be not afraid. St Paul says: "For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. – 1 Timothy 1:7". And when you too are afraid, never forget that "weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning." (Psalms 30:5)

### **PRACTICAL THINGS TO DO**

- Avoid close contact with those who are.
- Thoroughly and frequently wash your hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, and nose.
- If you can avoid public places, stay home! If you have to go out, take your mask. Sanitize.
- Understand that quarantines or self-isolation will help slow the spread of COVID-19.

### ***If you are sick or think you might be sick:***

- Go and test immediately, especially when you experience flu-like symptoms and breathing problems.
- Stay home. Seriously. Consider your impact. Self-quarantine and warn others.
- Cover your nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing.
- Wash your hands frequently!
- Disinfect surfaces you've touched.
- Wear a face mask if available. If not, cover your nose and mouth.

This is a time, more than ever, for Christians to step up and care for the sick by being socially conscious, considerate, and diligent in practicing personal hygiene (Leviticus 19:32, 1 Timothy 19:32). Christians who complain about all the things they have to give up in this lockdown season while people in the world suffer are not practicing the love and compassion of the Jesus they claim to serve (Romans 12:15). As Paul wrote, "do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 2:4-5)

### ***What can Christians do?***

- Be generous and give to families in need.
- Continue to support the diocese and your parish. Deposit your Lenten offerings and forward to them diocese. Continue to pay Kabelo and your pledges under these difficult situation.
- Pray, cooperate and look after yourself and your loved ones.

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**LET US PRAY WITH POPE FRANCIS:**

Second Prayer "We fly to your protection, O Holy Mother of God". In the present tragic situation, when the whole world is prey to suffering and anxiety, we fly to you, Mother of God and our Mother, and seek refuge under your protection.

Virgin Mary, turn your merciful eyes towards us amid this coronavirus pandemic. Comfort those who are distraught and mourn their loved ones who have died, and at times are buried in a way that grieves them deeply. Be close to those who are concerned for their loved ones who are sick and who, in order to prevent the spread of the disease, cannot be close to them. Fill with hope those who are troubled by the uncertainty of the future and the consequences for the economy and employment.

Mother of God and our Mother, pray for us to God, the Father of mercies, that this great suffering may end and that hope and peace may dawn anew. Plead with your divine Son, as you did at Cana, so that the families of the sick and the victims be comforted, and their hearts be opened to confidence and trust.

Protect those doctors, nurses, health workers and volunteers who are on the frontline of this emergency, and are risking their lives to save others. Support their heroic effort and grant them strength, generosity and continued health.

Be close to those who assist the sick night and day, and to priests who, in their pastoral concern and fidelity to the Gospel, are trying to help and support everyone.

Blessed Virgin, illumine the minds of men and women engaged in scientific research, that they may find effective solutions to overcome this virus.

Support national leaders, that with wisdom, solicitude and generosity they may come to the aid of those lacking the basic necessities of life and may devise social and economic solutions inspired by farsightedness and solidarity.

Mary Most Holy, stir our consciences, so that the enormous funds invested in developing and stockpiling arms will instead be spent on promoting effective research on how to prevent similar tragedies from occurring in the future.

Beloved Mother, help us realize that we are all members of one great family and to recognize the bond that unites us, so that, in a spirit of fraternity and solidarity, we can help to alleviate countless situations of poverty and need. Make us strong in faith, persevering in service, constant in prayer.

Mary, Consolation of the afflicted, embrace all your children in distress and pray that God will stretch out his all-powerful hand and free us from this terrible pandemic, so that life can serenely resume its normal course.

To you, who shine on our journey as a sign of salvation and hope, do we entrust ourselves, O Clement, O Loving, O Sweet Virgin Mary. Amen.

***May the Almighty God: FATHER + SON+ AND HOLY SPIRIT+ BLESS AND KEEP YOU, NOW AND FOREVER.***

† VICTOR H PHALANA

Bishop of Klerksdorp Diocese

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## **Appendix D: Pastoral Letter of Archbishop Buti Tlhagale, 10 May 2020.**

1

A PASTORAL LETTER TO THE FAITHFUL OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF JOHANNESBURG

### **SAVING LIVES**

Coronavirus, a mercilessly devastating illness that spreads itself via droplets from person to person, has turned the whole world upside down. The world has virtually been brought to a grinding halt. Borders are sealed. There is no travel by air, sea, rail or road. The police with the help of the army have been ordered to enforce a crushing lockdown and only allow movement of those with appropriate permits.

The sole purpose of the Declaration of the National State of Disaster by Government is to save lives. Government has put at the disposal of the Nation every resource available in order to save the lives of its people from the insidious assault of COVID-19. Government leaders consider it their sacred duty and privilege to persuade every citizen to recognise the gravity of the threat imposed by Covid-19 and consequently to follow the directives aimed at fighting the disease. The gift of human life is “like a pearl of great price. The merchant who finds it sells everything he owns and buys it” (Mt.1 3:4.5). This is virtually what the Government has done. R500 billion will be raised in order to respond to the challenge of the deadly Corona virus.

### **THE INESTIMABLE VALUE OF LIFE**

The aspiration to preserve, protect and enrich human life is at the heart of the Gospel message, hence the words of Jesus: “I came that you may have life, and have it abundantly” (Jn. 10: 10).

This then, is the fullness of life which “far exceeds the dimensions of people’s earthly existence because it consists in sharing the very life of God” (John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, no. 2:1-2).

According to John Paul II, it is this exceptional nature of the calling of human beings that

highlights the sacred value of human life, its greatness and its inestimable value (*Evangelium Vitae*, no. 2:1-2). In light of the incomparable value of life, the church fully supports the selfless efforts by Government to keep the threat of the Corona virus at bay.

### **EMPTY CHURCHES AT EASTER**

A lockdown on the eve of Easter celebrations meant that there would be no liturgical celebrations of any kind. Everybody is expected to stay at home in order to minimise the unwanted spread of the virus. Easter is a major religious event in the Christian liturgical calendar. It is during the Easter Triduum that congregations hear about the narratives of creation ex nihilo, the enslavement and liberation of the Israelites in Egypt, the covenant between God and His people, the institution of the Eucharist and the priesthood, and finally, the tragic death and the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Easter worship commingle lamentation, praise and thanksgiving together.

This year, 2020, the Easter celebrations would have been particularly significant because worship would have been offered to God amidst fear, frustration, anger, uncertainty and indeed the real threat of COVID-19 that has already devoured more than 300,000 around the world.

This year's Passover memorial service would have been a poignant affair that symbolically linked Jesus' Gethsemane's experience with the painful death of so many who unexpectedly succumbed to the Corona virus. This year's Easter gathering would have been unique because a national lament in one country would have echoed throughout the entire world, for the whole world is in the grip of the same merciless disease.

It would have been a consoling and healing gesture to present our murmurings and complaints to God in the presence of a community in His house rather than as individuals or in the isolation of our private homes in obedience to the curt but welcome injunction: "Stay at home and be safe." There is a collective complaint against God as to why His "wrath blazes out against His own people", His own inheritance (Ex.32.10). Is COVID-19 an expression of His anger, a punishment for the sins of our ancestors or our contemporaries, or a mere accident in the affairs of nations? Is God not "a God of tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in mercy and faithfulness?" (Ex.34:6, Eph.2:4). The very celebration of Easter is a strong reminder of God the Father's love to humanity made manifest in the mission of His Son, Jesus Christ who died on the Cross and rose on the third day (Lk.24:7; John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia* 1.1). An Easter communal service would have given worshipping communities an opportunity to reconcile their state of terror by a virus with their image of a God "rich in mercy." The Easter services would have promoted a strong sense of solidarity in the face of a pandemic instead of people seeing themselves as powerless individuals in the face of a rampant and destructive disease. Communal services would have helped to release repressed emotions of unbelief, doubt, confusion, fear, frustration and helplessness. The temporary repeal of the human right to gather and to worship is based on the simple calculation that in the gatherings of worship, congregants are virtually on top of each other. There is no social distancing. They give each other a kiss of peace which might literally become a kiss of death because of the possible infection by the Corona virus. Saving lives trumps social and religious gatherings. This is the sacrifice expected from every single individual in order to protect life while scientists are in a desperate rush to find a vaccine.

"a God of tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in mercy and faithfulness?"  
(Ex.34:6, Eph.2:4)

### **THE SCOURGE OF JOBLESSNESS**

The Covid-19, once set in motion became the Pandora's Box that brought into the open ills of society that have been lurking in the background. The affliction of Covid-19 forced the hand of the authorities to declare a National State of Disaster. As a result, the already sickly economy ground to a halt. Industry stopped functioning. Businesses closed. People are only allowed to do shopping and attend to their medical needs. Otherwise they are restricted to their homes. Within a month of the attack of the Corona virus the lives of many people have been thrown into disarray. Many employers did not have enough money to pay their employees.

Some businesses were destined to fold-up. Many simply lost their jobs, thus bringing hardship, disappointment and unhappiness to many families. This is not the kind of fasting people had in mind during this year's Lenten Season. Those who have lost their jobs join the 29% who are already unemployed. Job-loss and unemployment bring hardship and tension within families. Job-loss threatens the livelihood of families. Many employers appreciate the loyalty and commitment of their employees and do their utmost to keep them employed even if it is at a reduced salary. To many an employee, work is a "sine qua non." Work is an essential activity that makes a person to be a person. Work enables people to carry out their responsibility of caring for their families.

John Paul II, maintains that in doing work, men and women respond to God's injunction that they "subdue the earth" (Gen. 1.28). Work performance therefore "reflects the very action of the Creator of the universe (Laborem Exercens, 4.2). John Paul II makes three other salient points about work. Human work "makes life more human" (3.2). It facilitates personal fulfilment (7.3). It expresses and increases the dignity of the worker (4.2; 9.3). The ubiquitous presence of the Corona virus has effectively led to joblessness. The long term effects of unemployment threaten to undermine the dignity and confidence of those without full-time employment. Their dreams for caring for their families and of leading a prosperous life are shattered. Their contribution to society becomes minimal. The scourge of unemployment leads to homelessness, poverty and a plethora of other social ills. While such concerns may not be uppermost in the minds of some employers, it would be to the benefit of the employees and society if the employers could walk an extra mile to fight tooth and nail to retain their employees in their employment.

It certainly would be helpful to recall the many years of a fruitful working partnership. It would not be unreasonable for those workers who have always considered their work and loyalty as an investment to expect some support now that they have fallen on hard times due to an uninvited and disruptive Corona virus. Employers are hard-nosed businessmen and women.

They are known to possess attributes of efficiency, discipline and industriousness. They are also expected to have an attribute of mercy. Often employers know that they themselves and their families would not be able to live on what they pay their workers. Justice is a desirable virtue. Employers with a conscience and an attribute of mercy are a true blessing. Mercy is not just a religious attribute. It is also a genuine attribute of true humanity. Human beings share this attribute with God.

The Government has ostensibly put its normal business on hold in order to lead the Nation against the invasion of the Corona virus. It has had to decide between the serious disruption of the economy with devastating consequences and a total engagement in a war against

COVID-19. The strict regime of "stay at home" revealed or perhaps brought into the open, some of the more serious societal challenges. Apart from the millions of workers who suddenly found themselves out of work because of the lockdown, the already 10 million unemployed people become more visible. So too the homeless, the child-headed families etc. To many, the lockdown spelled ruin. Some claim that the spectre of hunger has become more threatening than COVID-19 itself. Multitudes of poor people are no longer able "to glean and gather the ears of corn after the reapers" (Ruth2:7).

### **LEGENDARY GENEROSITY**

Apart from the R500 billion commitment by Government, a Solidarity fund was set up and the public has been invited to make contributions. The Executive of Government took a pay cut for 3 months and encouraged other executives to do likewise. This token has not gone unnoticed. It is a good example to be emulated especially when it comes to political leaders who are not always known for their magnanimity. The words of Christ come to mind: "I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you" (Jn.13:15).

It is incumbent upon those who occupy positions of leadership to remember that their calling is "not to be served but to serve" (Mt.20:28). Foundations, Philanthropists, businesses and individuals pledged to contribute generously in order to support the economy and to alleviate the plight of the needy. The many generous givers, big and small, across the country, have

shown themselves to be the true neighbours, the Good Samaritans to the needy whose luckless condition has been exposed by the marauding disease that first terrified people in Wuhan, China (Lk.11.29-37). Genuine concern for the neighbour writes Pope Benedict XVI “is a path that leads to the encounter with God” (Deus Caritas Est, no. 17). The many men and women who are moved by the plight of others went beyond their own immediate personal concerns, are a genuine reflection of the biblical shepherd who went after the lost sheep (Jn. 10.1-13). They can take encouragement from the words of Christ that: “in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me” (Mt.25:40).

### **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN DURING LOCKDOWN**

The lockdown has also shown South Africa to be still a deeply patriarchal and violent society.

Many men still lord it over women. This primitive and morally reprehensible attitude still prevails in spite of the affirmation that in Law, men and women are both equal. Christianity teaches the equality of man and woman. Many men who exchange marriage vows of equality, of belonging together, of becoming one person, do not appear to believe in what they say. They do not seem to believe that in Baptism, they become “a new creation” where male and female cease to exist (Gal.3:28). “Stay at home” in a restricted space for an unusually long period of time appears to create an opportunity for some men to become violent towards women. What is difficult to break is the patriarchal mould that women are subservient to men and the fact that many women regrettably still accept the status quo in spite of the growing opposition to patriarchy. Breaking with tradition demands a completely new understanding of reality.

Walter Kasper has this to say about the reality of a woman: “she does not receive value, dignity, prestige or position through man. In herself she has value and dignity” (Kasper, W. The Position of Woman, p.58). The theoretical recognition that values and virtues of a woman reside inherently in a woman without any reference to a man, has not altered the attitudes of men toward women. That recognition ought to be accompanied by a thorough subversion of the masculine “vices” of domineering, defiance, superiority and power. Virtues of decency, respect for women, honour, self-mastery and dignity, are to be vigorously promoted. It is also to be noted that prison sentences have not always served as a deterrent. If a fraction of the resources mounted against COVID-19 were dedicated to uprooting violence against women, the change in the attitude of both men and women would be remarkable.

### **CRIME DURING LOCKDOWN**

During the lock down, there has been some break-ins and looting. But what has been most unusual has been the vandalising and setting alight of more than 200 schools across the country.

In some cases equipment has been stolen. In other cases, the schools were set alight without any break-ins. Wanton destruction of property appears to be the South African way of expressing deep seated grievances and of rebelling against society. COVID-19 and its “stay at home” restriction, offer an excuse and an opportunity to commit crime. Crime is generally said to be caused by the high unemployment rate due to the sluggish economic growth. It is also caused by the absence of clean governance i.e. by corruption, and by the limited State capacity to enforce compliance (Steinberg, J. (ed) Crime Wave, 1-12, 2001).

But the burning of schools is done by young men who appear frustrated, angry and alienated.

They appear to have an axe to grind. They are destructive because they seem to have no purpose in life. They claim that society does not care about their plight. Their relationship with society is at best tenuous. They therefore do not feel responsible for the public good.

Schools are about the welfare and advancement of the next generation. They feel that the well-being of the next generation is not their responsibility. They feel they have no sense of shame and have nothing to lose even if they were to be caught and imprisoned. The lockdown has highlighted this disturbing aspect of our society that cries to high heaven for attention. Some young people are less schooled and probably unemployable. Others are schooled but less skilled and find it difficult to find work. The youth feel that they are the part or group in society without dignity. In St. Paul's analogy of the body "God has arranged the body so that more dignity is given to the parts which are without it, and so that there may be no disagreements inside the body, but that each part may be equally concerned for all the others" (1 Cor. 12:25).

Unemployment remains the biggest burden for young people. COVID-19 has not brought them any ray of hope.

### **DISSENTING VOICES**

There are those who now feel strongly that the lockdown has lasted for too long (7 weeks).

They stubbornly wish to ignore the advice that infections are still on the rise and that it is desirable to see the number of infections drop. Some argue that they are suffocating inside their homes and wish to move about in order to breathe. Others agitate for the resumption of economic activity, and that the soldiers be ordered to return to the barracks, *quam primum*.

These rebels ignore conveniently the major reason why the restrictions were imposed in the first place, to save lives. They ignore the growing ravages of COVID-19. They are friends of those who seek that cigarettes and alcohol be unbanned during the lockdown. The fickleness and recklessness of the rebel group is reminiscent of our impatient and headstrong ancestors in the faith. Moses had hardly gone to the mountain of Sinai to receive the two Tablets of the Testimony when they complained to Aaron that Moses had been gone for far too long. They demanded that he make them "a god to go ahead of us." From the gold rings of their womenfolk, Aaron made them an effigy of a golden calf (Ex.31 : 1-4) in order to deal with their impatience, frustration and lack of faith. It makes ample sense to be concerned with the welfare of the majority of the citizens rather than with narrow specific self-interests. It is equally critical to find a delicate balance between saving lives and relaunching economic activity.

### **LOOKING FOR THE SCAPEGOAT**

The widespread fear and indeed the devastation of the Corona virus (in other parts of the world) cannot be seen as the work of a God who seeks to pass judgement on the human race. Disasters have come and gone, the Black Death, the Spanish flu, etc. COVID-19 will God forbid, also have its successors. The sealing of borders and the stopping of international flights appear to have come in a little too late, like locking the stable door after the horse has bolted. Corona virus is now found virtually in every corner of the globe. Human failure, tardiness and sinfulness creep in at this juncture. It has at times been observed that "there is frightful human evil at the root of much suffering and absurd death" (Power, D. Calling up the Dead in Concilium 1993 (3). The lockdown, in spite of its negative impact, has created space for both individual and family prayer.

### EMPTY TOMB AND EMPTY CHURCHES

When level One permits religious gatherings, Christian believers will link the victims of COVID-19 and their families with the painful crucifixion of Jesus Christ. We will celebrate our liturgies in solidarity with the dead, not in their anonymity, but as deceased persons whose hope is brought to fruition in the resurrection of Christ the Redeemer of humankind. To date, the number of people who have died in some European countries is about 30 on average in spite of the gallant efforts made to reduce the rate of infection. South Africa's number of deaths is at 300. The country is yet to reach its peak. Many countries continue to stare death in the face while they anxiously wait for the discovery of a vaccine. The words of Job could not have been more relevant: "If we take happiness from God's hand, must we not take sorrow too?" (1 : 10).

### "GOOD JOB"

Much has been said about the health workers who have risked their own lives and that of their families by serving people who have been infected by COVID-19. The concern centred on the lack of protective gear for them. Hopefully by now they would have received all the necessary protective clothing. Some health workers have lost their lives after being infected by the patients they served in hospitals. This no doubt has had a devastating effect on their families.

Many knew of the danger but still continued to help others to recover from their illness.

Doctors and nurses take care of the sick because it is their job. True. But there is something more. In carrying out their duties, they also make the infirmity of others their own. Theirs is a beautiful act of self-giving. Under these circumstances the words of Christ have a strong echo: "A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends" (Jn.15:13).

Alicia Keys in her beautiful song, "Good Job", calls people like these health workers, "everyday heroes."

In her moving song, she expresses a message of gratitude and encouragement that "we are all in this together."

We are "each other's keeper."

**+Buti Tlhagale o.m.l.**



Archbishop Buti Tlhagale OMI e-signature 2020

Archbishop of Johannesburg  
Cathedral of Christ the King,  
10/05/2020



## Appendix E: Statement from the KwaZulu-Natal Christian Council, 16 April 2020.



## KWAZULU-NATAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL

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16 April 2020

Dear Church Leaders across our beloved Province of KwaZulu Natal,

### **COVID-19 CHURCH DISASTER RESPONSE: A Call to all KZN Church Leaders**

We greet you in the name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

The Covid-19 pandemic & resultant lockdown are causing immense spiritual, psychological, emotional and physical stress, fear and anxiety - with the loss of jobs & income, increase in domestic violence, lack of food, and infections & sickness. The weeks ahead are going to get much harder.

Now is the time for us, as the Church (at all levels, across the Province), to "get ourselves connected, organized and get into action" for the (inevitable) brutal impact of the pandemic.

The KZN Christian Council, in consultation with a broad cross-section of Church Leaders, have established an inclusive & coordinated **KZN Covid-19 CHURCH DISASTER RESPONSE** structure & plan. It includes 5 Provincial Task Teams to lead & support our responses at the municipal, local fraternal & congregational level. Accordingly, we humbly, but boldly, **call on Churches Leaders across the Province, to come together in the following very specific and practical ways:** -

1. Convene your local ecumenical Ministers' Fraternals (Christian association) on-line, this week, and discuss this "Call to Action" - in relation to your shared local community. Get connected and get organized!
2. Call your congregation to pray, fast, render service and action to overturn Covid-19.
3. Donate, gather & provide food & cash to the most vulnerable.
4. Circulate the pastoral letters & other relevant Information that will be sent to you regularly.  
**N.B.** A Guide & Toolkit will be available within one week.
5. Make suitable Church buildings available as "Hope Centres" to complement needs of the health system, as will likely be required (for storage, distribution, testing or quarantining).
6. Identify families needing emergency relief & advise our structures. Further, identify those who may need other forms of support in your congregations, e.g. the sick & elderly, health workers, volunteers, etc.

The battle-line of the Covid-19 storm is going to be in our communities, with the frontline in our health facilities (hospitals, clinics & health centres). We need to be prepared to collaborate at this level. Our Ministers' Fraternals need to be actively refocused on all the above.

Dear Friends in Christ now is a time for our congregations to act like the Good Samaritan rather than the Priest or the Levite. Let us imitate Jesus by committing & sacrificing our time, talent & resources to the victims of Covid-19. Let us be our brothers' & sisters' keepers. Could there be a better time



for the Church to confront & defeat this Virus, than Holy Week & Easter - *by responding* to this Call to act.

Below is a list of your key contact persons, for you as Church Leaders: [kzncccovid19@gmail.com](mailto:kzncccovid19@gmail.com)

1. **Mxoli Nyuswa:** Zululand, King Cetshwayo & uMkhanyakude district municipalities
2. **Revd Sonto Thusi:** Uthukela, Amajuba & uMzinyathi district municipalities
3. **Revd Milton Cele:** Ugu & Harry Gwala (South) district municipalities
4. **Revd, Dr Lucas Ngoetjana:** uMgungundlovu district municipalities
5. **Bishop Nathi Zondi, Pastor Ivan Haylock and Pastor Peter Watt,** Greater eThekweni Metro area

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, this then, is the Call. We will be following up with other specifics in the days and weeks ahead.

May our God strengthen and lead us through this storm - into the calm which our Lord Jesus brings to those who call on Him in need: "Oh Lord, how we need you at this time"!

**On behalf of the extended Church Leadership of KZN, in & because of our Faith,**



**+Wilfrid Cardinal Napier OFM**  
Chairman of the KZN Church Leaders Group



**Dean Nkosinathi Myaka**  
KZNCC Chairperson





## KWAZULU-NATAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL

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### **KZNCC COVID-19 CHURCHES RESPONSE ON THE RE-OPENING OF SCHOOLS**

Posted on February 16, 2021

The Steering Committee of the KwaZulu-Natal Christian Council (KZNCC) COVID-19 CHURCHES RESPONSE has carefully considered the proposal to re-open schools in KZN this month. We are aware that the opening of schools will be done in carefully worked out phases, which will give appropriate attention to the protection and safety of all teaching, office and support staff, and especially the children.

With the parents, we express our serious concern over the measures put in place to evaluate and monitor the control of risk to all engaged in the school environment. We are particularly concerned about the delay in supplying Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) such as masks and hand sanitizers to schools. We are also concerned that most of the schools in rural areas do not even have running water to use for washing hands as required by the COVID-19 safety protocols.

It is not good news that some schools did not receive PPE material because they do not have safe storage. It will be tragic and unacceptable to lose lives in our education sector because of this factor. As Churches, where necessary, we are open to negotiate the use of local Church premises for safe storage of PPE and other materials.

We support the notion that those schools that are self-sufficient or have received all PPE and will be able to implement social distancing and thereby meet all safety COVID-19 regulations, be allowed to re-open. We are conscious that since some children and teachers have to use kombis to get to school, this could be an avenue for COVID-19 transmission. So, we plead with kombi operators to comply with all the COVID-19 safety protocols. At the same time we ask commuters to report to the police kombi or public transport operators who do not comply with the COVID-19 guidelines.



We are informed that there are schools which do not have enough teachers because of COVID-19, or because the teachers have diabetes or other health conditions which put them at risk, and so are scared to report to schools where there are no PPEs. We urge the Department to deploy interim teachers so that the affected children receive the necessary urgent attention.

In cases where there is an infection in a family, we urge the family not to send the children to school for the recommended quarantine period.

Since we know that in some cases those who have tested positive have been blamed for catching the virus or even victimised for having it, we appeal to all who can to 2

help us educate each other to adhere religiously to each and every rule and regulation that has been put in place to control the spread of COVID-19.

Lastly, we place the welfare of parents, teachers and children in the safe hands of Jesus whose wish was that the Little Children be allowed to come to him, but not before their time, or because of our negligence.

We will continue to offer pastoral care and counselling upon request, and we pray for Christ's grace to be sufficient for the Department of Education and for all schools, and may God continue to support and bless the work of educators in support of the education system and the learners. May you be assured of our thoughts and prayers for you.

Yours in Christ



**+Wilfrid Cardinal Napier OFM**  
**KZN Church Leaders' Group Chairperson**



**Bishop Nkomo**  
**KZNCC Chairperson**





## **Appendix G: Paragraphs of *Fratelli Tutti* (3 October 2020) in which Pope Francis addresses the Emerging Covid-19 Pandemic.**

### **Paragraphs of *Fratelli Tutti* in which Pope Francis addresses emerging Covid-19 pandemic**

7. As I was writing this letter, the Covid-19 pandemic unexpectedly erupted, exposing our false securities. Aside from the different ways that various countries responded to the crisis, their inability to work together became quite evident. For all our hyper-connectivity, we witnessed a fragmentation that made it more difficult to resolve problems that affect us all. Anyone who thinks that the only lesson to be learned was the need to improve what we were already doing, or to refine existing systems and regulations, is denying reality.

8. It is my desire that, in this our time, by acknowledging the dignity of each human person, we can contribute to the rebirth of a universal aspiration to fraternity. Fraternity between all men and women. “Here we have a splendid secret that shows us how to dream and to turn our life into a wonderful adventure. No one can face life in isolation... We need a community that supports and helps us, in which we can help one another to keep looking ahead. How important it is to dream together... By ourselves, we risk seeing mirages, things that are not there. Dreams, on the other hand, are built together”. Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travelers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all.

32. True, a worldwide tragedy like the Covid-19 pandemic momentarily revived the sense that we are a global community, all in the same boat, where one person’s problems are the problems of all. Once more we realized that no one is saved alone; we can only be saved together. As I said in those days, “the storm has exposed our vulnerability and uncovered those false and superfluous certainties around which we constructed our daily schedules, our projects, our habits and priorities... Amid this storm, the façade of those stereotypes with which we camouflaged our egos, always worrying about appearances, has fallen away, revealing once more the ineluctable and blessed awareness that we are part of one another, that we are brothers and sisters of one another”.

33. The world was relentlessly moving towards an economy that, thanks to technological progress, sought to reduce “human costs”; there were those who would have had us believe that freedom of the market was sufficient to keep everything secure. Yet the brutal and unforeseen blow of this uncontrolled pandemic forced us to recover our concern for human beings, for everyone, rather than for the benefit of a few. Today we can recognize that “we fed ourselves on dreams of splendour and grandeur, and ended up consuming distraction, insularity and solitude. We gorged ourselves on networking, and lost the taste of fraternity. We looked for quick and safe results, only to find ourselves overwhelmed by impatience and anxiety. Prisoners of a virtual reality, we lost the taste and flavour of the truly real”. The pain, uncertainty and fear, and the realization of our own limitations, brought on by the pandemic have only made it all the more urgent that we rethink our styles of life, our relationships, the organization of our societies and, above all, the meaning of our existence.

34. If everything is connected, it is hard to imagine that this global disaster is unrelated to our way of approaching reality, our claim to be absolute masters of our own lives and of all

that exists. I do not want to speak of divine retribution, nor would it be sufficient to say that the harm we do to nature is itself the punishment for our offences. The world is itself crying out in rebellion. We are reminded of the well-known verse of the poet Virgil that evokes the “tears of things”, the misfortunes of life and history.

35. All too quickly, however, we forget the lessons of history, “the teacher of life”. Once this health crisis passes, our worst response would be to plunge even more deeply into feverish consumerism and new forms of egotistic self-preservation. God willing, after all this, we will think no longer in terms of “them” and “those”, but only “us”. If only this may prove not to be just another tragedy of history from which we learned nothing. If only we might keep in mind all those elderly persons who died for lack of respirators, partly as a result of the dismantling, year after year, of healthcare systems. If only this immense sorrow may not prove useless, but enable us to take a step forward towards a new style of life. If only we might rediscover once for all that we need one another, and that in this way our human family can experience a rebirth, with all its faces, all its hands and all its voices, beyond the walls that we have erected.

36. Unless we recover the shared passion to create a community of belonging and solidarity worthy of our time, our energy and our resources, the global illusion that misled us will collapse

that

“obsession with a consumerist lifestyle, above all when few people are capable of maintaining it, can only lead to violence and mutual destruction”. The notion of “every man for himself” will rapidly degenerate into a free-for-all that would prove worse than any pandemic.

50. Together, we can seek the truth in dialogue, in relaxed conversation or in passionate debate. To do so calls for perseverance; it entails moments of silence and suffering, yet it can patiently embrace the broader experience of individuals and peoples. The flood of information at our fingertips does not make for greater wisdom. Wisdom is not born of quick searches on the internet nor is it a mass of unverified data. That is not the way to mature in the encounter with truth. Conversations revolve only around the latest data; they become merely horizontal and cumulative. We fail to keep our attention focused, to penetrate to the heart of matters, and to recognize what is essential to give meaning to our lives. Freedom thus becomes an illusion that we are peddled, easily confused with the ability to navigate the internet. The process of building fraternity, be it local or universal, can only be undertaken by spirits that are free and open to authentic encounters.

54. Despite these dark clouds, which may not be ignored, I would like in the following pages to take up and discuss many new paths of hope. For God continues to sow abundant seeds of goodness in our human family. The recent pandemic enabled us to recognize and appreciate once more all those around us who, in the midst of fear, responded by putting their lives on the line. We began to realize that our lives are interwoven with and sustained by ordinary people valiantly shaping the decisive events of our shared history: doctors, nurses, pharmacists, storekeepers and supermarket workers, cleaning personnel, caretakers, transport workers, men and women working to provide essential services and public safety, volunteers, priests and religious... They understood that no one is saved alone.

90. Significantly, many small communities living in desert areas developed a remarkable system of welcoming pilgrims as an exercise of the sacred duty of hospitality. The medieval

monastic communities did likewise, as we see from the Rule of Saint Benedict. While acknowledging that it might detract from the discipline and silence of monasteries, Benedict nonetheless insisted that “the poor and pilgrims be treated with the utmost care and attention”. Hospitality was one specific way of rising to the challenge and the gift present in an encounter with those outside one’s own circle. The monks realized that the values they sought to cultivate had to be accompanied by a readiness to move beyond themselves in openness to others.

97. Some peripheries are close to us, in city centres or within our families. Hence there is an aspect of universal openness in love that is existential rather than geographical. It has to do with our daily efforts to expand our circle of friends, to reach those who, even though they are close to me, I do not naturally consider a part of my circle of interests. Every brother or sister in need, when abandoned or ignored by the society in which I live, becomes an existential foreigner, even though born in the same country. They may be citizens with full rights, yet they are treated like foreigners in their own country. Racism is a virus that quickly mutates and, instead of disappearing, goes into hiding, and lurks in waiting.

106. Social friendship and universal fraternity necessarily call for an acknowledgement of the worth of every human person, always and everywhere. If each individual is of such great worth, it must be stated clearly and firmly that “the mere fact that some people are born in places with fewer resources or less development does not justify the fact that they are living with less dignity”. This is a basic principle of social life that tends to be ignored in a variety of ways by those who sense that it does not fit into their worldview or serve their purposes.

107. Every human being has the right to live with dignity and to develop integrally; this fundamental right cannot be denied by any country. People have this right even if they are unproductive, or were born with or developed limitations. This does not detract from their great dignity as human persons, a dignity based not on circumstances but on the intrinsic worth of their being. Unless this basic principle is upheld, there will be no future either for fraternity or for the survival of humanity.

108. Some societies accept this principle in part. They agree that opportunities should be available to everyone, but then go on to say that everything depends on the individual. From this skewed perspective, it would be pointless “to favour an investment in efforts to help the slow, the weak or the less talented to find opportunities in life”. Investments in assistance to the vulnerable could prove unprofitable; they might make things less efficient. No. What we need in fact are states and civil institutions that are present and active, that look beyond the free and efficient working of certain economic, political or ideological systems, and are primarily concerned with individuals and the common good.

109. Some people are born into economically stable families, receive a fine education, grow up well nourished, or naturally possess great talent. They will certainly not need a proactive state; they need only claim their freedom. Yet the same rule clearly does not apply to a disabled person, to someone born in dire poverty, to those lacking a good education and with little access to adequate health care. If a society is governed primarily by the criteria of market freedom and efficiency, there is no place for such persons, and fraternity will remain just another vague ideal.

110. Indeed, “to claim economic freedom while real conditions bar many people from actual access to it, and while possibilities for employment continue to shrink, is to practise doublespeak”. Words like freedom, democracy or fraternity prove meaningless, for the fact is that “only when our economic and social system no longer produces even a single victim, a single person cast aside, will we be able to celebrate the feast of universal fraternity”. A truly human and fraternal society will be capable of ensuring in an efficient and stable way that each of its members is accompanied at every stage of life. Not only by providing for their basic needs, but by enabling them to give the best of themselves, even though their performance may be less than optimum, their pace slow or their efficiency limited.

111. The human person, with his or her inalienable rights, is by nature open to relationship. Implanted deep within us is the call to transcend ourselves through an encounter with others. For this reason, “care must be taken not to fall into certain errors which can arise from a misunderstanding of the concept of human rights and from its misuse. Today there is a tendency to claim ever broader individual – I am tempted to say individualistic – rights. Underlying this is a conception of the human person as detached from all social and anthropological contexts, as if the person were a “monad” (monás), increasingly unconcerned with others... Unless the rights of each individual are harmoniously ordered to the greater good, those rights will end up being considered limitless and consequently will become a source of conflicts and violence”.

154. The development of a global community of fraternity based on the practice of social friendship on the part of peoples and nations calls for a better kind of politics, one truly at the service of the common good. Sadly, politics today often takes forms that hinder progress towards a different world.

162. The biggest issue is employment. The truly “popular” thing – since it promotes the good of the people – is to provide everyone with the opportunity to nurture the seeds that God has planted in each of us: our talents, our initiative and our innate resources. This is the finest help we can give to the poor, the best path to a life of dignity. Hence my insistence that, “helping the poor financially must always be a provisional solution in the face of pressing needs. The broader objective should always be to allow them a dignified life through work”. Since production systems may change, political systems must keep working to structure society in such a way that everyone has a chance to contribute his or her own talents and efforts. For “there is no poverty worse than that which takes away work and the dignity of work”. In a genuinely developed society, work is an essential dimension of social life, for it is not only a means of earning one’s daily bread, but also of personal growth, the building of healthy relationships, self-expression and the exchange of gifts. Work gives us a sense of shared responsibility for the development of the world, and ultimately, for our life as a people.

180. Recognizing that all people are our brothers and sisters, and seeking forms of social friendship that include everyone, is not merely utopian. It demands a decisive commitment to devising effective means to this end. Any effort along these lines becomes a noble exercise of charity. For whereas individuals can help others in need, when they join together in initiating social processes of fraternity and justice for all, they enter the “field of charity at its most vast, namely political charity”. This entails working for a social and political order whose soul is social charity. Once more, I appeal for a renewed appreciation of politics as “a lofty vocation and one of the highest forms of charity, inasmuch as it seeks the common good”.



181. Every commitment inspired by the Church's social doctrine is "derived from charity, which according to the teaching of Jesus is the synthesis of the entire Law (cf. Mt 22:36-40)". This means acknowledging that "love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care, is also civic and political, and it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world". For this reason, charity finds expression not only in close and intimate relationships but also in "macrorelationships: social, economic and political".

182. This political charity is born of a social awareness that transcends every individualistic mindset: "'Social charity makes us love the common good', it makes us effectively seek the good of all people, considered not only as individuals or private persons, but also in the social dimension that unites them". Each of us is fully a person when we are part of a people; at the same time, there are no peoples without respect for the individuality of each person. "People" and "person" are correlative terms. Nonetheless, there are attempts nowadays to reduce persons to isolated individuals easily manipulated by powers pursuing spurious interests. Good politics will seek ways of building communities at every level of social life, in order to recalibrate and reorient globalization and thus avoid its disruptive effects.