

What does it mean that the Church is the instrument of the Kingdom of God in the South African context: a Catholic perspective

The role of the Catholic Church in the period of struggle against apartheid and in the post apartheid context

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1. Introduction

Ecclesial praxis is a participation in God’s work of salvation. Catholic missiology sees the mission of the Church² as a continuation of Christ’s mission rooted in the love of the Father (AG 2). The principal agent of the Church’s mission is the Holy Spirit (RM 21) indicating further the participation of human and divine in salvation history. The goal of this history is the fulness of the Kingdom of God which nevertheless is already present dwelling amongst us (Lk 17:21) to the extent that Christ lives in our lives and we live by the Spirit (Gal 5).

It is the ambiguity of the participation of human and divine which raises the question of the relationship between the Kingdom of God and the praxis of the Church. The given topic is: “What does it mean that the Church is the instrument of the Kingdom of God in the South African context: a Catholic perspective”. The value of the metaphor of “instrument” is that it places the agency of salvation in God: Christ is saviour and it is the Holy Spirit who is “the principal agent of mission: (RM 21). It also concurs well with the phrase “the Holy Spirit is

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²It is necessary at this stage to indicate the somewhat complicated system employed when referring to the Church in this work. When referring to the One Church founded by Christ the term is capitalised and always singular: the Church. Similarly, capitalization is employed when referring to the fullness of the Church as present in a place in a local Church, particular Church or new Church. Here, capitalization is employed since these terms all refer to the One Church of Christ (see ch. 10). When referring to official names of churches, capitalization is also employed but for a different reason viz. that proper nouns are capitalised: thus the Methodist Church, Roman Catholic Church, Presbyterian Church, and so on. In all other cases the lower case, church, is employed. Thus lower case is employed in phrases such as "mainline churches", "Coping-healing churches" and "African Independent churches" as well as in sentences such as "The Roman Catholic Church is a church which stresses the role of sacraments". In quotations we have followed the usage of the authors

the soul of the Church” (EN 75). Similarly, the Church is referred to as “in the nature of sacrament - a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men” (LG 1). These references all point to how the metaphor is compatible with Catholic missiology.

However, the metaphor also carries a problem with it, one that is exacerbated in the South African context. This is the understanding of instrument as a passive tool of the true agent. Much of South African ecclesial practice and cultural understanding is informed by the idea of a world of spirits which controls human experience (Tlhagale 1995b:173-178; Bate 1995:158-160). Human beings are seen to be helpless victims of the spirit world. It is this mind set which is often promoted by coping-healing churches and in African cultures. So Hansie Cronje, a former South African cricket captain and committed Christian, involved in a betting scandal, proclaimed that “the Devil made me do it” (*Mail & Guardian* 2 June 2000). Many South Africans often believe that the bad things of human experience are sent by evil spirits or permitted by angry ancestors. It is “bad luck”, witchcraft, and demons which cause sickness, unemployment and a poor lifestyle. People are helpless victims of these forces. Catholic theology is currently trying to respond to some of these challenges of culture.³ This response maintains that Christians are active agents in the process of salvation themselves. It is this co-participation of human and divine agency which allows both the discernment of the Spirit or the “good news” in a time and the manifestation of the Kingdom of God amongst us.

Catholic theology in South Africa has tended to adopt the approach of contextual theology in its reflection. This approach begins from human experience and attempts to find the presence of God within that experience. Authors such as Albert Nolan (1975, 1988) have been at the forefront of this effort. This is also the approach I have taken in my own work and which I will use here. So the answer to our question will be found only through an analysis of ecclesial praxis. Our starting point will be a study of the praxis of the Church in a particular human context since the context, its peoples, its cultures, and its history, provide the flesh into which God’s Spirit is incarnate. That context is the South Africa of 1950-2000.

A paper like this can only sketch an outline of the story. We will attempt to survey something of the preoccupations of the Catholic Church in South Africa during the period of apartheid, together with some indications of changes in the short post apartheid period to date. After a brief survey of how the term Kingdom of God has been understood in some South African Catholic writings, a working understanding of the term for the purposes of this paper will be introduced. The rest of the paper will demonstrate with illustrations how the preoccupations of the Catholic Church in South Africa during this period reflect the understanding that this church has of its role as instrument of the Kingdom of God.

2. Kingdom of God in South African Catholic writing

The term “Kingdom of God” is not used much by South African Catholic writers. When looking at the relationship between the saving activity of God and the reality of the South African situation it is the terms “human dignity” and “God’s plan” which mainly provided the

³There is an encouraging growth in Catholic theological and missiological writings over the past 10 years. In the area of Christianity and culture see for example Makobane et al 1995; AAVV 2000; Bate 1995; Keteyi 1996 and also the Journal, *Grace and Truth*, published by St Joseph’s Theological Institute, Cedara.

guiding thread for theological discourse. Earlier writings tend to crystallise around the theme of human dignity and human rights whereas increasingly from the early 1960's onwards, the theme of "God's plan" becomes the prevalent theological key for ecclesial praxis. Before exploring these more common usages however we intend to present a few examples of what South Africa Catholic writers *have said* about the term "Kingdom of God".

In general, there have been three perspectives to the relationship between the Kingdom and the Church in these writings. In the first, there is an identification of the Church and the Kingdom. In the second, we find more distance between the two with the Kingdom articulated as goal and vision and the Church as God's instrument in achieving his goal. In the third, the focus is on South African society itself and making society conform to the vision of God's Kingdom in particular with regard to issues of justice.

The South African Catholic Hierarchy was established in 1951. In a book published to celebrate this event, the metaphor of the mustard seed is used to present the new South African hierarchy as a branch of the tree which is the Kingdom.

The Kingdom of God, the Church, the mustard seed of Jesus Christ has grown into a massive tree and has filled the earth. The establishment of the Catholic hierarchy by the Supreme Pontiff in the year 1951 is an indication if indication be needed, that the Church in the Union of South Africa has reached maturity. (Agathangelus 1951:ix)

In this quote we find an example of strong identification between Church and Kingdom. But in the same book we find an example of a more nuanced relationship between the two. For Geoghegan (1951:8) the Church and Kingdom are not identified "Christ's Kingdom, which is not of this world, is nevertheless in this world, in part...the Kingdom, by his death, became the inheritance of all". Here then is a Kingdom for all people, an example of the third perspective identified above: the Kingdom as a model of how the world should be. Finally, Geoghegan provides an example of the second perspective when he shows that the Church is responsible to manifest the presence of the Kingdom. The Church is Catholic when it recognises its mission to bring the Kingdom to all: "So now, Christ's gospel of the Redemption and of man's vocation to the divine life is enshrined in God's new instrument, the Catholic Church." (:8-9). And so early on we meet our topic. Here the Church as God's instrument is explicated as the "Catholic" Church.

A particularly useful source of Catholic self-understanding is found in the pastoral letters of the SACBC. Again there are few references to the Kingdom of God but those present also reflect all three perspectives presented above. The earliest mention of the term is the 1960 pastoral letter which focusses on justice. It provides probably the best pre-Vatican II presentation on this theme. The letter articulates its theme of justice in terms of the Kingdom of God in the following way:

Christ teaches us that we have to seek first the Kingdom of God and His Justice, and tells that (sic) then all things shall be added to us. We pray 'Thy Kingdom come'...In other words we have to carry out the Commandments and leave the rest to God...The justice of the Kingdom of God must exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, those intensively exclusive sects of the times. (PL1:25.)

The bishops go on to indicate that God's sovereignty extends to "the destiny of nations as well as of men" (PL1:25) and they present a vision of society based on the Gospel which must always recognise economic, political and social dimensions of Christian justice and love (PL1:26-29).

The next reference by the bishops is found in the 1962 pastoral letter written to mark the calling of the second Vatican Council. In this pastoral, the Kingdom and the Church are strongly identified with one another: "We firmly believe that the Church is the kingdom of the Son of God, which He established on earth for the salvation and the perfect happiness of mankind" (PL1:31). The Bellarminian ecclesiology continues in the statement: "We believe that this Church, wondrously instituted by Christ our Saviour for the sake of mankind, is a society in the full sense of the word" (:34). The conclusion of this ecclesiology is that "...a solution for all human problems can best and most harmoniously be sought for under the protection and guidance of the Catholic Church which is 'the standard bearer and the herald of a way of life which is always up to date'" (:35).⁴ Catholics are reminded of their duty to participate in all affairs of the world: "to cooperate in giving a Christian note to modern civilisation"(:35) But in doing so they are exhorted to "seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His justice" (:35 quoting Mt 6:33).

Subsequent pastoral letters make very few explicit references to the Kingdom of God until it appears as a major theological key in a 1989 pastoral letter on the Municipal elections (October 1989) probably indicating a preference of the author but also indicating the influence of the growing popularity of this theological term, in particular its American form as Reign of God, on the South African Catholic theological community.

This document makes clear how central the reign of God is for the praxis of the Church: "The great concern of Jesus and therefore of his church is that all aspects of our life should come under the reign of God" (PL5:54). This vision is spelt out as follows: "This means that his truth, his purity, his justice, his love should grow in us - in a word, that we should become holier. This applies not only to our personal life but also to our domestic and social life" (:54). In a re-echo of the 1960 document the political and economic aspects of social life are highlighted: "In social life there are special problems because of its political and economic aspects. In social life it is not easy to foster the love and justice that should be the mark of followers of Jesus" (:54). The rest of the letter is given over to an analysis of the political strategy of the apartheid government which leads to a call for voters to boycott the election. In a conclusion it returns to the theological key of the Kingdom repeating that it is "...the Christian values of justice and love, sharing and unity, which are of such immense importance for the Kingdom of God" (:58). Here we find an example of the way the term is used as a vision for human society.

The term is dealt with in some depth in the report of the Theological Advisory Commission (TAC) of the SACBC in a document examining the role of violence in bringing about justice. Since this forms part of the section on the Church's role in the struggle against apartheid it is dealt with there (*infra* 4.3).

⁴The quote is from the encyclical *Mater et Magistra* of Pope John XXIII.

The South African theologian Albert Nolan has also dealt with the topic in his book *God in South Africa* (1986). He is pessimistic about the use of the term since he considers it to be so encumbered with apocalyptic and historical overtones to be rendered almost meaningless. Nolan's views are also considered in more detail in the section on the role of Catholic organisations and groups in the struggle (*infra* 4.5).

These examples give an indication of the way in which the theological notion of the Kingdom of God has been used by South African authors and in particular the hierarchy. The term cannot be said to have played a major role in South African Catholic theological discourse. This does not mean, however, that there is no more to say. Indeed, what is perhaps more important is to seek an interpretation of the way in which the praxis of the Church is related to the Kingdom of God. In order to do this we will need to formulate an interpretive model of this relationship.

3. A working understanding of the relationship between the Kingdom Of God and ecclesial practice

The Reign of God is both a goal which Christians journey towards as well as a reality of daily life when we experience faith, hope and love. Whilst there is a necessary rupture between the coming of the Kingdom in its fulness and the world in which we live, there is also a necessary connection between the two.

LEVEL 1	-----									
Fundamental commitment and Final Objective		AT THE SERVICE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD								

	THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS MANIFEST IN THE CHURCH									
		it is		it is		it is		it is		it is
		witnessed		lived		realised		proclaimed		celebrated
		in		in		through		by		through
LEVEL 2	-----									
Dimensions and means of Church Mission		MARTYRIA		KOINONIA		DIAKONIA		KERYGMA		LEITOURGIA
		Giving		Community		Service		Word		Eucharist
		ones life		Fraternity		Charity		Prophecy		Sacraments
		for the		Unity		Liberation		Doctrine		Feasts
		Lord.		Related-		Justice		Preaching		Celebra-
				ness		Develop-		Cate-		tion
		Faith		Communica-		ment		chesis		Prayer
				tion				Evangel-		Spiritua-
				Communion				isation		lity
										Piety
		^		^		^		^		^
LEVEL 3	-----									
People Groups		PEOPLE, GROUPS, ORGANISATIONS								
		MOVEMENTS, PARISHES, STRUCTURES								

Fig. 1 THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD TODAY
[Source Alberich 1987:19 with modifications]

Figure 1 presents a modified version of Alberich's (1987:19) well known model of the relationship between the Kingdom of God and ecclesial practice (see Bate 1995:237). This model provides a useful way of indicating the way in which the Kingdom of God may be manifest in the Church and its praxis. In this way it responds to a praxis based approach to the treatment of how the Church is an instrument of the Kingdom of God. For this reason it is chosen as a means of interpreting our data. The model indicates the primacy of the Kingdom of God as the goal towards which the Holy Spirit moves us (Cf LG 5; GS 45; Fuellenbach 1987:1-6). As well as the fundamental commitment of Christian life, this is an affirmation that the people of God have the mission to participate in making the Kingdom of God a reality in the world in which they live through their lifestyle, commitment and involvement. In this way they become the Church in action. The means of ecclesial practice expressed as *martyria*, *koinonia*, *diakonia*, *kerygma* and *leitourgia* are themes describing the activity of the Church and so are useful both for categorising and also for indicating lacunae in ecclesial practice. At the same time they are too general and so do not respond to the particularity of context. Such particularity has to be done by an observation of phenomena emerging from the Church's praxis. A phenomenological description of this activity will thus be the focus of our next section.

4. Emerging phenomena in the ecclesial praxis of the Catholic Church in South Africa

In identifying the major themes of South African ecclesial praxis we will be somewhat diachronic since the history of the context is intimately tied up with the emergence of response in ecclesial practices. But we also want to be thematic pointing to the principal areas of ecclesial practice in the period 1950-2000. The focus will be largely in the period 1970-1990 which is the most significant period as we shall see.

4.1 Alternative Society model: the Kingdom is found in the Church

In the pre-Vatican II period the Church considered itself to be closely identified with the Kingdom of God as we have seen and much of its praxis was geared towards the establishment of an alternative Catholic society within which Catholics could live their lives. For this reason, schools, hospitals and other services were provided especially within the white settler community to allow Catholics the opportunity of finding the social services they required within a Catholic world (Bate 1999a:6; 12-13). This praxis was reinforced by the sense of threat and alienation experienced by Catholics in South African society where the "*Roomse gevaar*" (roman danger) was a stated problem for the Calvinist ethos of the governing Nationalist party. In the 1957 meeting of the SACBC, the minutes record that the "government was already determined that the Church should not rise above five percent of the population" (SACBC 1957:26; See also de Gruchy 1982:71-72).

A similar goal and purpose obtained in the Catholic Mission church⁵ but lack of resources meant that not all areas of life could be recreated and education was the main focus and indeed the main instrument of its missionary activity. By 1953 the Catholic Church controlled 15% of all black schools, by far the most visible Catholic presence in society. The decision by government to withdraw funding from Mission schools since “they created false expectations amongst blacks” (Chamberlain et al 1999:187) was a major crisis. In 1955 a “high powered financial drive to establish a school fund” was launched and whilst some success was achieved, these schools were progressively closed.

The schools and hospitals were at the forefront of the Catholic effort to create a Catholic ethos but as the notion of the nature and role of the Catholic Church changed especially after Vatican II the need to maintain these structures was increasingly undermined. Post Vatican II ecclesiologies had two effects. The first was to emphasise a greater distance between the Church and the Kingdom effectively destroying their identification and the second was to indicate a certain distance between the notion of Church and Catholic Church so that identifying the two became uncommon something which was to prove helpful in building Christian solidarity in the struggle against apartheid. By 1980 a new phase of Catholic relationship to society was emerging in South Africa. This was articulated in terms of God’s plan for society and the Church’s plan to do God’s will. Pastoral planning was upon us. The pastoral plan *Community Serving Humanity* recognised the value of the Church’s previous pastoral practices in the educational and health ministries as part of a “wide variety of activities handed down to us” (CSH 1989:14) which were to be integrated into a “new vision” (:14). We will return to the “new vision” later, but first we focus on an important aspect of Catholic ecclesial practice which was to feature right from the early period and to continue through to today: the voice of protest against unjust governance by the State.

4.2 *Statements of protest to government. The Kingdom is found in respecting human dignity*

Catholic Theology has a rich tradition of social teaching which indicates social moral norms for nations, states and the international community.⁶ This teaching can also be seen as a way of helping make the Kingdom present in human society. The South African hierarchy’s initial attempts at protesting against apartheid were to relay this teaching through their pastoral letters. It is significant that six of the seven pastoral letters issued to 1974 were on the topic of race relations. Synnott (nd:9) remarks that this is “ a phenomenon in Church history and marks the racial question in South Africa as *the special test of charity*, or love in Christ which we [in South Africa] have...” (italics in original).

The principal hermeneutic key of these letters is human dignity and how this is not respected in the South African context. But Synnott (nd:18ff) shows that the notion of human dignity referred to is that provided by the gospel. This notion runs contrary to “normal social values” though it is expressed in a limited way in the UN charter. It is a notion which values all

⁵Note that two distinct churches could be identified in this period: a “Settler church” for the whites and a “Mission church” for the blacks. Whilst an overall Catholic unity was maintained the reality was very much of two separate bodies with separate fields of endeavour, cultures and praxes (See Bate 1999a).

⁶See for example Gremillion 1976.

people equally and proclaims the love of others as a universal value. In the 1952 letter, this key is seen in the expression “Fundamental Christian truths”. These are outlined as follows: that man⁷ is created by God in His Own image, with a spiritual soul, the power of reason and a free will; that his last end is to achieve everlasting happiness in the vision of God in heaven; that he is fallen in Adam but redeemed by the sacrifice of calvary and restored in Christ to supernatural grace and the heritage of Heaven; that Christ died for all men and all have the same right to eternal salvation”. (PL1:1-2)

For Synnott (nd:11) the theological vision operating in these writings may be “summed up as...the universality of love and justice and the ‘code’ of human rights which protect man’s dignity, freedom and well-being”.

The 1957 pastoral letter also focusses on the dignity of the human person (PL1:14) but it sounds an important new note when it affirms a “condemnation of the principle of apartheid as something intrinsically evil” (:15). This is the first such condemnation of the evil of apartheid by an ecclesial body in South Africa (Villa Vicencio 1988:36). In another strong statement it goes on to ask: “Are we not making a mockery of Christianity by proclaiming ourselves a Christian nation and pursuing a policy so contrary to these words⁸ of Christ?” (PL1:16). The pronoun “we” betrays the standpoint of this, and indeed all of the bishops’ statements until 1960. It is a criticism from within. The paradigm remains the white settlers attempting to deal with the “race problem”. The bishops speak from within Christian Western civilisation to which they assume the White Nationalist government belongs together with them.

This approach continues in the fourth letter published in 1960 which retreads the ground of human life under the light of the gospel: “All man’s activities must be directed in the light of the Gospel which is given that he might live as God requires and thus reach his great destiny.” (PL1:19). Consequently “[n]ationalistic aspirations cannot be the final criterion by which men determine their ends and actions. It is the Gospel of Jesus Christ which must be their guide and director” (:19). This letter also introduces the theological category “plan of God for man...which has been made known to us in the revelation of Jesus Christ” (:20). This category will eventually become the principal theological category for the Catholic Church’s praxis reaching its culmination in the adoption of the Pastoral Plan for the church in South Africa in 1989.

The “Call to conscience” (1972) is less theologically dense and more simple and specific in style. Its very title shows that whilst addressed to all Catholics, the principal interlocutors are clearly the whites who have shown “little significant response” (PL2:10) to previous documents. With it the hierarchy largely abandons its standpoint from within

⁷Most of these documents are written without the gender sensitivity found in most current theological discourse. The original terms are retained where, in the opinion of the author, they present a better phenomenological description of what was being said. The weakness of gender insensitive expression is explicitly affirmed.

⁸The reference is to John 23:34-35 found in the text as follows: “I have a new commandment to give you, that you are to love one another, that your love for one another is to be like the love I have borne you. The mark by which all men will know you are my disciples will be the love you bear for one another” (PL1:16).

Christian civilisation as represented by white society and begins to move to a more neutral position within the whole of South African society: “our witness to social justice must begin at home if it is to be credible” (:11). This and subsequent documents are more issue driven and so more practical. Issues such as just wages, education, trades unions and so forth move to the fore as does a more praxis oriented response rather than a statement based response: “When justice demands it a Christian must have the courage to act”(:15). Here we see the first steps of a journey the hierarchy will make during the following years to a greater identification with the standpoint of poor people especially those suffering as a result of the apartheid policy. This journey will also be reflected in the move to a more collaborative style of ministry (*infra* 4.6; 4.7). In the 1980's the Church will be siding ever more with the victims of oppression and attempting to articulate from within their perspective.

4.3 Commitment and involvement in the socio-political struggle: The Kingdom is found in solidarity with the poor

In the special consultation of Catholic leaders in the apostolate of social justice held in February 1976 one of the speakers illustrated the relationship between Church praxis and commitment to the poor on the one hand and the Kingdom of God on the other in the following way:

One of the pre-eminent signs that God's kingdom is being established is that the poor have the Gospel preached to them. This preaching of the Gospel cannot be the mere enunciation of the truths of religion....The preaching of the gospel to the poor that is required is living in solidarity with the poor....{which] ought to bring us to a distribution of resources and apostolic personnel that effectively gives priority to the poorest and most needy sectors. (CCSJ 1977:29)

A major step towards solidarity is seen in the 1977 SACBC document entitled “Declaration of Commitment on Social Justice and Race Relations within the Church”. Recognising the weakness of their response so far, the bishops moved here to commit themselves to a plan of action which has been articulated in terms of five tasks (Verryn 1982:63):

- X to change derogatory social attitudes and customs;
- X to advance Blacks in the Church;
- X to re-assess the distribution of personnel in the Church so that “ministry would be concentrated where needs were greatest”;
- X to move visibly to communalise Church funds;
- X to work towards a Pastoral Consultation with majority black participation for future policy on Church life and apostolate.

From now on the leadership of the Catholic Church in South Africa moves to become more actively involved in the struggle to rid the society of apartheid. Taking a stand is a coming of age which mirrors much of what was happening in the turbulent period born of June 16 1976.⁹ Now the awakening within people of a social conscience about injustice is seen as

⁹This was the day in which a protest by students against the introduction of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in all black schools was met with fierce resistance by the police. A number of people were killed and many were jailed. A period of intense confrontation between youth and police was initiated on that day which is for many the beginning of the final period of the struggle against apartheid. June 16 is now an annual holiday in

“central to evangelisation” (PL2:44) and the bishops commit themselves to promote it. But they also commit themselves to the task of “transforming the concrete structures that oppress people; and in the light of this, to strive that the Church be seen in solidarity with the legitimate aspirations of oppressed people; on the side, therefore, of Black Consciousness, in regard both to those who promote it and those who suffer for it” (:44-45). In their *Statement on the current situation and citizen rights of Blacks* issued at the same time this point is put more forcefully: “We affirm that in this we are on the side of the oppressed and, as we have committed ourselves to working within our Church for a clearer expression of solidarity with the poor and deprived, so we commit ourselves equally to working for peace through justice in fraternal collaboration with all other churches, agencies and persons dedicated to this cause” (:41). The question of taking sides will become an important issue in the South African political and theological debate. It will surface in the influential Kairos document¹⁰ where a “Church Theology” which remains “neutral” in a conflict between oppressor and oppressed is condemned.

Another important aspect of the quotation above is its ecumenical dimension. There is no doubt that the struggle against apartheid brought churches and religions together in South Africa in a way that is perhaps unparalleled elsewhere to date. The growing consensus of purpose amongst religious organisations but especially amongst Christian denominations saw people and organisations working together in many projects. The Diakonia ecumenical agency in Durban is probably one of the best examples of this. Diakonia’s social programmes and training events involved Christians from many denominations together in an attempt to respond to the socio-political crisis of the 1970s and 1980s. The agency continues to operate today. The various church consultations such as Cottesloe (1960), and Rustenburg (1990) allowed Christian leaders to exchange ideas and grow closer in vision and praxis.¹¹ This increasing unity of conviction was often cemented in marches, especially those involving confrontation with the police as well as in more structured events such as the *Standing for the Truth* campaign launched by the South African Council of Churches in 1988. During this period the SACBC and other Catholic bodies issued a number of documents together with the SACC or their non-Catholic counterparts.¹² The Catholic Church is now a full member of this ecumenical body. The importance of ecumenical collaboration is expressed in the following SACBC statement: “There was excellent cooperation between the SACBC and the SACC on practical socioeconomic and political problems since both groups were convinced that the Gospel of Jesus Christ had to be introduced and lived in these areas and so transform South African society” (SACBC plenary minutes January 1987 cited in Hinwood 1999:374).

South Africa dubbed “Youth day”.

¹⁰The Kairos document was a 35 page document developed by a number of concerned Christians and theologians in 1985 to respond to the deteriorating social situation at the time. The document points to the role of Christianity in this crisis outlining a “State Theology”: a “false god” which has legitimised apartheid; a common Christian attitude dubbed “Church theology” which adopts a neutral position in the conflict; and finally a “Prophetic theology” which calls for the evil of apartheid to be denounced as the source of the conflict and justifies the mobilisation of democratic forces to overthrow it. The document justifies prophetic theology as the only legitimate theology in this time (van der Water 2001).

¹¹This ecclesial history is well known. See for example Villa Vicencio 1988

¹²See for example: *Relocations: the churches’ report on forced removals in South Africa* (1984) the *Pastoral letter of Natal Church leaders on Violence and the Peace talks* (1989) and the *SACC/SACBC Joint Pastoral letter for those returning home* 1990.

During the 1980's as the socio-political situation deteriorated in the face of an intransigent government and an increasingly inflamed low intensity war on the ground, issues of violence and war moved to the foreground. In what one commentator has described as “the intellectual highpoint” (Egan 1999:341) of the Theological Advisory Commission of the SACBC, the document *The things that make for peace* (TAC 1985) examined the morality of violence and war in the South African context. Here we find what is to date the most developed South African theological reflection on the relationship between the Kingdom of God and the praxis of the Church.

In *The things that make for peace*, the relationship of the Kingdom of God to society is specifically linked with the mission of the Church in society. We recognise these two as the third and second of our original three perspectives. In the introductory section, there is a motivation of just why the Church has to be concerned about issues of war, violence and politics: “It is therefore the church’s task to bring God’s concern and guidance into the political realm, and not to give the impression that he is found only in religious worship or personal relationships. Jesus showed this kind of concern when he preached not just personal salvation but the coming of God’s kingdom” (TAC 1985:7). In the scriptural section (Chapter 3) there is a whole section entitled “The Inauguration of the Kingdom” (:56-58). The Kingdom brought by Jesus in his preaching is “not one ‘somewhere else’, but is shown in power being exercised within the framework of serving others, rather than forcing others to serve their ruler” (:57). At the same time the Kingdom renders all human states and nations provisional since they are “due to pass away” (:57) and the ultimate reality is to be revealed in the judgement.

The role of the Christian community today is to “witness through its life” to this ultimate reality as “a new source of value” (TAC 1985:57). Conflict, war and suffering is predicted by Jesus. When this happens we are not to “clutch at false promises of political security or religious deliverance...[but] show that God’s reign still holds through exercising so far as possible his justice and compassion amidst the surrounding turmoil” (:60).

The whole of chapter 10 is given over to the theme of “The Sovereignty of God”. God’s sovereignty “is shown above all in his releasing people from any and every kind of oppression, and inspiring them to strive together...[to] live in freedom and peace. While realizing that we have not yet come to the full peace and freedom of the Kingdom, nevertheless our responsibility is to prepare the way for it” (TAC 1985:175). So the agent of God’s Kingdom is God himself and the activity of the Christian today is a work of preparing the ground. The life and teaching of Jesus show how God extends his sovereignty over us. Each is called “through grasping their particular societal role to let His sovereignty be realized on earth...a certain real but limited responsibility which they ultimately exercise on God’s behalf” (:176). This implies action on the part of Christians to work for change: “In an oppressive society...an obligation arises for each person to assert themselves and so gain the responsibility that is rightly theirs...their actions have vicarious authority and thus legitimacy” (:176). The section concludes by legitimising the actions of those who “may involve them at times in a limited recourse to violence to guard against injustice”. The document is very cautious in recognising only that each individual is called to make a personal decision with regard to their actions. This makes it weak at analysing and informing collective actions which, of course, are the norm especially in the Church’s praxis. It also makes the distance

between the kingdom and the Church too great by presenting the kingdom as an activity of God alone. For the Church it is a remote vision, an ideal, for which it must just prepare the way rather than being actively involved in creating..

4.4 Later documents from the hierarchy: The Church must be involved in socio-political issues

Apart from this reflection of the TAC the notion of the Kingdom of God does not appear much in subsequent pastoral writings of the SACBC. It prefers to speak of the role of the Church in the modern world or of the plan of God. From this point, pastoral letters with general themes of justice and peace are less common and what emerge are issue based reflections with more practical recommendations. Here too is a sign of the Church leadership recognising its role as an active agent in society. Some of the issues include:

1. 1983: *On the proposed new Constitution for South Africa*: "...not a satisfactory step on the road to peace in South Africa...We cannot support the proposed constitution" (PL3:55-56).
2. 1986: *On Christian hope in the current crisis*. "The Gospel forces us to condemn injustice" (PL4:8) . "We are not neutral in the current conflict...we support fully the demands of the majority of people for justice" (:9) "The government's policy has ...done its satanic work well" (:11) Jesus offers us the gift of hope today of a better future "What we hope for is, in effect, the transforming power of God's love in our lives" (:13).
3. 1986: *On Economic Pressure for Justice*: "We ourselves believe that economic pressure has been justifiably imposed to end apartheid...[Such pressure should continue and, if necessary be intensified should the developments...show little hope of fundamental change...[Intensified pressure can only be justified if applied in such a way as not to destroy the country's economy...]" (PL4:18-19).
4. Other issues included militarisation, conscientious objection to military service, HIV/AIDS, on the bomb blast at SACBC headquarters, and on the Namibian peace accord.

4.5 Catholic groups involved in the struggle against apartheid and injustice: the Kingdom of God as a liberation praxis

Clearly the Catholic Church's praxis cannot be reduced to the activities of the hierarchy. There were many Catholic individuals and groups involved in the struggle against apartheid, numbers which rose considerably in the 1970s. After Vatican II, Justice and Peace committees began to spring up in parishes and dioceses throughout the country. A national Commission for Justice and Reconciliation was also established within the SACBC. These groups were often rallying points for those Catholics who wanted to get involved.

Local commissions were set up around the country and these attacked local evils and challenged injustices. Representatives of these commissions acted as animators and consultants for the bishops and were instrumental in having the bishops visit scenes of injustice eg. Namibia and in drawing up draft statements of their attention....Meetings, workshops and campaigns were organised to raise the consciousness of Catholics about events in the country e.g. the 1983 constitution, the various

elections, the negotiations process etc. Members of these commissions worked closely with other churches and organisations to ensure the success of various campaigns e.g. the Standing for the Truth Campaign. (Kelly 1991:25-26)

One of the first Catholic movements to become involved in justice issues was the Young Christian Workers (YCW). This movement was introduced into South Africa in the early 1950s and quickly got involved in worker issues. Its training methods of structured group meetings and “study weekends” where more in depth training was offered, was very effective in producing leaders many of whom eventually became officials in the trades union movements. In 1969 its chaplain was one of the first Catholic priests to incur a sanction by the state when his passport was withdrawn. The movement was increasingly harassed and even infiltrated by Security branch members and

in 1978 thirty members of the group were detained by the South African authorities. In only four of the cases were charges brought after detentions ranging from one to over fifty days, the other prisoners were released - with no apologies - probably in response to the solidarity demonstrations staged all over the world. The four brought to trial were convicted on various charges of violence, charges considered so far fetched by the YCW and the youths' parents that they embarked on a long expensive appeal process.

(Hope and Young 1983:166)

The YCW sees its purpose as “living the faith and not just knowing it” (Let’s Go nd:31). It is a movement committed to social action: “Through this little action, he is building a new world, made of greater love (in Action), Leaders become “an essential part of this PLAN OF GOD...” (:31). The YCW leader in his activity was “living and experiencing the mystery of incarnation, the mystery of redemption, the paschal mystery, the mystery of the Church... The Church is the Kingdom of God, the body of Christ. [The leader] is building this Kingdom through his active concern” (:31). Reference to the Kingdom is found in the YCW prayer: “Thy kingdom come in our factories, workshops, offices and in all our homes”. It helps people to see that all young workers “are created by God to be his sons and daughters...this is why [they] may not be treated as slaves or valued less than the machines they operate...why all have a right to a living wage, healthy working conditions, a family where there is love, adequate housing; the chance for education and the freedom to express opinion - BECAUSE GOD CREATED EACH ONE TO BE LIKE HIM.” (How to start...nd:5-6). A former YCW national president comments:

In the YCW I have learned that what is most important in life is the respect and dignity due to each and every human being, especially the worker; not only to respect this dignity, but to defend it and fight for it to be restored...I have learned that the worker struggle is a long and painful process with no short cut...I have learned that the problems I experienced were not just mine or confined to my family. They affect the whole community of working class in South Africa...I have learned that we are the Church, that we have to bring the Church to the workers. I have learnt that we have to start with real life and move towards the Kingdom of God, from here on earth. (Seriye, 1982:23-24)

The Black Theologian, Buti Tlthagale, in developing a black theology of labour, suggests that such a theology is found within the active struggle of the black worker to strive for the realisation of the image of God in their lives:

Black theology locates the 'solution' not in gratuitous options of rich Christians but in the revolutionary awareness of the workers themselves. The image of God in which the workers are made is not a given, an already existent reality. It is something to be striven for, to be realised in meaningful human activity. The more workers labour in accordance with their free will, in response to their material needs, the more that image of God becomes a reality. (Tlthagale 1985:130)

Black Theology is a liberation theology and so is praxis driven: "for black theology praxis authenticates Christian claims. Self assertive acts, in the form of strikes and work stoppages - despite expulsions, 'repatriation' and detention of union leaders - all affirm the dignity of workers." (Tlthagale 1985:134). Here is the Kingdom of God as a liberation praxis.

The YCW earned the praise of then President Mandela who in an address to them said:

It is common knowledge that the YCW has made a significant contribution to building the organs of civil society in South Africa...The YCW's approach has always been to acknowledge and challenge injustice, and then to build the capacity of the oppressed to act in a constructive way that will bring an end to injustice and create a better world for all of us. (Mandela 1995:2)

The YCW is not the only Catholic worker organisation in South Africa. Catholic worker militants have played a role in a number of Worker organisations. Lowry (1999) has chronicled some of this story.

Another youth movement which played a significant role especially in student politics and militancy is the Young Christian Students (YCS). Albert Nolan had a considerable influence on this group and his book (1976), *Jesus before Christianity*, provided a vision of Christianity which student leaders could identify with:

Nolan presented a Jesus who was a rebel -even a revolutionary- who consciously broke all the class and religious taboos of his day, challenging the first century Palestinian establishment, including Roman occupiers, Jewish collaborators and particularly what he perceived to be the morally and spiritually bankrupt social order. This Jesus challenged the rich to identify in solidarity with the poor, a spirituality of solidarity that resonated with white Catholics seeking a new, progressive direction. (Egan 1999:340)

Large numbers of student leaders, especially whites, came under the influence of the YCS during Nolan's time. He was also the founder of the Institute of Contextual Theology (ICT)¹³ an ecumenical body which was to have an immense role in providing theological underpinning for much of the struggle for liberation.

¹³For a number of articles on Nolan's influence on Contextual Theology in South Africa and on the ICT see Speckman and Kaufmann 2001.

Nolan's vision of the Kingdom of God is outlined in his book *God in South Africa* (1986:125-133). He presents Jesus' vision of the Kingdom as down to earth and practical to do with the life of the people of his time. "He spoke about a concrete practice at a particular time and in a particular place as the coming reign of God" (:132). For Nolan the term Kingdom of God has now become an unhelpful term since it means so many different things to different people but in particular because it has become spiritualised and conceptualised as an ideal and as a final point in history for all times. So it is rendered meaningless for the daily lives of the people of a particular time. It "has been so overlaid with apocalyptic associations that it is very difficult in practice to rework it and give it the meaning that Jesus had in mind" (:133). Nolan prefers the concept of Salvation and the idea of Good News as something which happens in the daily events of the life of people and not just as a text in a book, the bible. He sees Good News and Salvation in what is happening in South Africa today: "Are we not experiencing a classic example of Good coming out of evil....how racism has given rise to non-racialism, separation to a desire for unity, authoritarianism to democracy....They are just as much wonderful works of God as anything we read about in the Bible" (:155).

The increasingly strong stance of the Catholic Church against apartheid promoted the emergence of Catholic groups opposed to this shift. The two most important of these were The Catholic Defence League and TFP (tradition, family and property). Both groups became quite vocal during the 1980's and published a number of books and articles which claimed that the Church was being influenced and controlled by Marxist philosophies and communist agencies. These groupings were particularly concerned about liberation theology and its perceived influence on the hierarchy and some Catholic organisations (Tuffin 1991). The *New Nation* newspaper started by the SACBC in the 1986 as an alternative press came in for particularly vitriolic treatment (Tuffin 1987). These movements however distasteful they may have been to the SACBC, which issued a statement in 1979 "repudiating" their activities (PL 2:56-57), reflected a theological and political position which remains powerful in certain sections of the Church. This is a position which sees the Kingdom as an otherworldly reality and the practice of the Church as a purely religious one concerned with worship.

But for most Catholics and certainly for the leadership, this was a period in which the role of the Church in bringing about the Kingdom was increasingly one of socio-political engagement. From the standpoint of the poor and oppressed the Church had to get involved in the process of social liberation. Many Catholics paid a severe price. Some less well known people died, were incarcerated and were sometimes tortured in the process. This happened to some of the youth of my own parish in 1987. There were also more prominent cases like the incarceration and torture of Fr Mkatshwa, then secretary general of the SACBC (PL4:44) and the arrest of well known Catholic activists like Tome Waspe, Sr Bernard Ncube and Fr Motsiri Mosai OMI. A number of staff and students of my own institution St Joseph's Theological Institute (then Scholasticate) were also arrested in 1986 and a member of staff was deported the same year. The SACBC offices were bombed in 1988. This was an unpopular message for many whites and richer people, some of whom left the Church, but it was one which clarified Christian practice as active participation in making the vision of the Kingdom a reality in the South African society.

4.6 The Kingdom of God in community ministries: from clerical to peoples' ministry

Vatican II renewed a vision of the Church in which all were called to ministry. The emphasis of the priesthood of all believers and the importance of lay ministries in several of the Vatican documents had a big impact on the Catholic Church in Southern Africa. One of the principal difficulties facing the rural Mission church was the shortage of clergy (PA1:1). This problem was exacerbated by the rapid growth in the Catholic population especially after 1950. The traditional approach to this difficulty was the training of catechists and a number of catechist training schools were operating throughout the country including the Lumko centre in the Eastern Cape. At this time a number of priests and bishops were experimenting with the possibility of having local leaders trained for ministry within the outstations of the rural parishes. Gradually the Lumko Institute was involved in helping train these leaders and they developed a series of programmes for the training of community ministers in the Church. From 1974 onwards they published a large number of training booklets which have had an impact throughout the world.

In 1974 an *ad hoc* commission comprising bishops, priests, religious and laity was set up to examine how to introduce a wider variety of ministries into the Church. The purpose of introducing such ministries was seen as broadening the field of ministry in order to deepen the Church's mission and not merely to respond to clergy shortage (PA1:2). Another goal was to de-paternalise the role of the priest in the Church so that the Catholic Church might become less priest centred and more People of God centred (PA1:4). In this way lay people would be empowered to service.

However, the commission went much further than laying out long term goals for the kind of church it saw in the future. These goals were far reaching and daring, as already at this stage, the commission felt that their work was just a first step in preparing for "future forms of Christian community" (PA1:16). It proposed a future church built up of communities in which local leaders were also ordained priests but not employed by the Church as is the case at present. The vision proposed was of "self supporting teams of priests for each congregation" (:16). Such priests were to be "taken from local men who remain in their secular work and with their families" (:16), an example taken from the situation in the early Church (:16). Such an arrangement would imply priests with different levels of education. This was not seen as a problem. Such an arrangement "will require the bishop and existing priests to exercise the role of unifying, inspiring, training and updating the many local teams of priests" (:17).

The work of Lumko has been astonishingly successful in the rural areas of South Africa with most parishes now having teams of ministers to the sick, funeral ministers and ministers of the Eucharist. Services led by lay people are now the rule rather than the exception in all areas except the urban centres. Most ministers have been through some kind of training based on the Lumko programmes, whether at its centre in Germiston or in their own area. Courses are organised by qualified people, usually priests and religious, but sometimes lay people trained for this work. Clearly this has changed the nature of the Church and its praxis in this part of the world with so much of it now led by lay ministers trained in this approach.

An example here is the funeral ministry. Funerals are a major aspect of African traditional life, linked as they are to the question of ancestors. In a major study of the ministry of funeral leaders in rural areas of the Eastern Cape, Wuestenberg (2001:479) has confirmed that:

their ministry is an important contribution to the community based approach in the South African Catholic Church. It contributes to justice in many respects...It is a demonstration of a culturally initiated ministry...Initiated by 'the hierarchy', the community ministry of funeral leaders takes over the entire ministry at the ritual of funerals. By doing so it shares in the concern of ministry about unity, holiness, apostolicity, and catholicity. It serves these central aspects of faith in close co-operation with the priests and pastoral workers. So it by no means diminishes the hierarchical form of ministry. On the contrary it enhances it.

Clearly, the issue of the ordination of community ministers has not been resolved. The Eucharist is a central aspect of Catholic Christianity and yet the vast majority of people are only able to participate in a eucharistic celebration on an irregular basis. Whilst the blessed sacrament is often available for distribution by ministers of the Eucharist in Sunday worship services the Mass is celebrated much less frequently. This is the major area of concern for Wuestenberg in a study which is otherwise a confirmation of the values of community based ministries in the life of the Catholic Church in South Africa. When the Eucharist is not available at the funeral service this becomes a "major deficiency in the ministry. The restriction of the celebration of the Eucharist to the ordained ministry limits the efficacy of the offered community ministry...This deficiency has to be dealt with to some extent and needs further research" (Wuestenberg 2001:480).

Here we are dealing with an area in which the vision of the Kingdom remains obscured in the practice of ministry in the Church. The Church has come a long way in implementing the vision of ministry outlined in Vatican II but questions of the Eucharist and ordination continue to be problematic. The deprivation of the Eucharist in a church where it is so central remains a problem. Clearly ecumenical influences have helped the Church in revisiting its way of doing ministry in the South African context. Lobinger has explicitly cited the Methodist approach as being inspirational to his own vision of community ministries which Lumko has adopted. Similarly the vision of community ministry adopted by the *ad hoc* committee referred to above was inspired by Lutheran practice in Indonesia (PA1:15).

4.7 Pastoral Planning and the Pastoral Plan: empowering all Christians

We noted earlier that the theological category "Plan of God" has been a popular one within South African theological and ecclesial discourse. The term describes something of the relationship between the Kingdom and the way in which it is to be actualised in Christian praxis. It thus links very closely with our theme of the Church's instrumentality in realising God's Kingdom. The term is first found in the 1960 bishops' pastoral letter in this form: "[I]t is the plan of God for man, God's mind for us, that we must follow in our conduct whether as individuals, whether as members of a family, whether as citizens, whether as persons wielding authority. This plan has been made known to us in the revelation of Jesus Christ" (PL1:20). It is the chief term that is now used in the official discourse of the South African hierarchy. This is because of the decision to adopt a pastoral plan for the Church in South Africa in 1989, a decision that was some ten years in the making.

The reason for the decision to move towards a specific pastoral plan for the Church in

Southern Africa was two fold. In the first place, the second Vatican Council had evoked a re-appraisal of mission and ministry throughout the world and this was developed by the Synod of Bishops in 1974 which focussed on the theme of Evangelisation. This led to the Southern Africa bishops to commission a survey of Evangelisation today in Southern Africa (see Connor 1991:38-40; Bate 1991:71-73) which revealed the principal problem of the Catholic Church to be that it is “structured along lines that are foreign and white in a country which is overwhelmingly black” (Hulsen in Bate 1991:72) .

However, the second and probably more crucial factor was the increasingly grave social and political situation especially after the events of 16 June 1976 in Soweto. A pastoral consultation was carried out in which groups and organisations in the Church were asked to identify needs and concerns. These were collected into a document which formed the basis of three day meeting held in 1980 in which people from all over Southern Africa came together to process the results and prepare some conclusions for the future. Many issues emerged and a number of structures were set up to cull these into a workable plan. By 1987 it was clear that there was a need for a pastoral plan in the Church in South Africa which would meet the following four concerns (CSH 1987:4)

- a) that the pastoral plan must be unmistakably inspired by the understanding of the Church that emerged from the Second Vatican Council;
- b) that this understanding of the Church must be related to the realities of life in Southern Africa;
- c) that there should be a key theme for the pastoral plan and that this can be formulated as *Community Serving Humanity*;
- d) that the basic element in the pastoral plan must be *Formation*; that is, the education and evangelisation of all people in the Church - bishops, priests, religious, laity; adults, youth and children - in terms of the vision of the Church expressed in this theme.

The plan was launched in 1989 and remains in force representing the way in which the South African Catholic Church sees its mission at this time. The literature produced for the pastoral plan rarely uses the notion of the Kingdom of God, but has been interpreted as a “vision of society in terms of the kingdom of God” (Bate 1991:100). But allusions to the relationship between God’s Kingdom and the mission of the Church are found throughout the *Vision Statement* in phrases such as “the call to build community is not a mere human urge. It comes to us from the divine community of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in whose image we are made” (CSH 1989:17) and in a reference to the early Church: “the very kingdom whose coming they looked forward to was also a community” (CSH 1987:15). Similarly with regard to service: “Our God is a serving God. God’s Son came to serve, not to be served....We his body, wish to become a serving community” (CSH 1987:29).

The plan was introduced to parishes by means of a “pastoral plan kit” presented by people sent for training on a diocesan level. This allowed grass roots formation by means of discussion based on pictures and key words. This method had been successfully developed by Lumko in its bid to find effective forms of formation for people with low levels of formal education.

The pastoral plan calls for the Church to “become a serving community” (CSH 1989:29). In the past the Catholic Church was particularly known for its large service institutions: schools,

hospitals and clinics at which ordinary people were passive recipients. The aim here is to get ordinary people on the local level to set up their own organisations and structures which respond to local needs and which are sustainable by the local community itself. In other words to encourage and empower all Christian communities to service on their own level and within their own resources. These efforts were quite successful and many small Christian communities were able to set up their own services. A book published to review these efforts seven years after the establishment of the pastoral plan presented a number of grass roots small scale efforts as the basis for reflection on the progress of the plan. Amongst these are the Jabulani self-help project (Gneiss 1996), community kitchens (Huna 1996), small business development projects (Khamali 1996) and prayer groups for the sick (Mthethwa.1996).

We see here a similar process of empowering all people in the Church to service as was the case with ministry in the previous section. These two sections show us that a major priority of the Catholic Church in this period has been to recreate itself as a body in which all people have a role to play. This is a move away from an overly hierarchical and clerical body. It is also a response to the growth of consumer religion in which people shop for the best services for themselves. If the Kingdom is a vision and a power in human society it is even more so in the Christian community. All Christians are called to live in, contribute to and serve communities in which the Kingdom of God dwells amongst them. According to the Pastoral plan it is in this way that we become the Body of Christ.

4.8 Racism in the Church: the Kingdom is not found in the Church

The Catholic Church in South Africa has often failed itself to live up to the vision of the Kingdom which it is called to serve. In no other area is this perhaps more true than in regard to racism within the Church. Right from the beginning black people have experienced a feeling of inferiority and second class treatment. Mukuka (2000) has shown how the first black clergy suffered in this regard. When eventually, under pressure from Rome, the first Black bishop of a diocese was appointed, there was an immediate outcry from the white Catholics of the diocese who objected to “having a non-European as Bishop of Europeans (Abraham 1989:87). These were attitudes which were very common amongst whites including “good Catholics”. They were based on values and beliefs handed down over generations within settler culture, the so called “South African way of life”. Whilst there has been much change, such attitudes are still quite common.

The growth of Black consciousness in the late 1960s and early 1970s and the participation within it of a number of Catholics led to increased black awareness of the seriousness of these issues. One response was a much publicised protest by a group of black Catholics (and some white Catholic sympathisers) at a Bishops’ Conference meeting, in August 1971, where they accused the hierarchy of maintaining the status quo and confining blacks to secondary positions in the Church. In a subsequent document (PL2:125-127), “4 black priests and laymen” raised a number of “questions we are asking” (:125). Twelve statements of the reality of discrimination in the Church were presented including poor wages paid to church workers, bad working conditions, different pay for the same work to different race groups, the poverty of parishes taken over by blacks from whites and so forth.

A short history of these problems is presented in a publication of the African Catholic Priests Solidarity Movement (ACPSM 2000). It is presented as the story of “different groupings of African Priests and laity at different moments in the history of the Catholic Church in South Africa, as they waged a continuous struggle against homelessness and alienation within the Church” (:16) The group maintains that even today black people have a “painful experience of ‘feeling alienated - feeling like foreigners - in our very own Church’ (memorandum to the SACBC)” (:6).

The principal metaphor for their reflection is from psalm 84:10 “even the sparrow has found a home” (ACPSM 2000:5). All Christians are called to live in God’s house (:5) and the “idea of home is closely linked with the reality of what Jesus called the kingdom of God” (:36). The theme is clearly linked to that of “God’s family” a principal symbol for the Church proposed at the African Synod (:50; cf. EA 63). Indeed they point out that it is Jesus’ mission to create a home for all peoples (:37-39). A sociological and cultural analysis of the Church is presented in the book. In it the authors demonstrate how the Church, both by its social structure which is European and its culture which is Western, alienates its African members and causes them to experience homelessness. Their solution is a “pastoral plan” of action to work towards the goal of making the Church a more African home for its African members. A number of practical suggestions are made for redressing the balance in the Church. These include changing “the imbalance in cultural influence within the Church...by pushing up African culture” (:55); the study of African history within the Catholic Church (:56); developing “anti-racism awareness” amongst all Catholics (:57-58); empowering African leadership at all levels (:60-61); working for commitment, responsibility and accountability at all levels of the Church (:61-62); the empowerment of women (:63) and a more just redistribution of goods and wealth in the Church structures (:67-68).

4.9 Post apartheid emerging issues: building the Kingdom in the New South Africa

Finally, we would like to indicate some other areas that are becoming more important during the post apartheid phase. These do not imply that the issues raised before are decreasing in importance. Community ministry, the pastoral plan and issues of racism and culture continue to be important as does indeed the socio-political role in civil society that the Church is called to exercise. Nevertheless, a new context has led to the emergence of new concerns. The demon of apartheid has been defeated and this is a great victory for the forces of God’s Kingdom of which the Catholic Church was one. But its effects still linger in the physical, structural and cultural reality of our context.

4.9.1 The African Church and Inculturation: The Kingdom is found in African cultures

Linked with the issues raised in the previous section is the growth of interest in questions of Africanisation and Inculturation in the South African Catholic Church. Whilst these have been important areas for ecclesial practice in other areas of Africa for many years, the socio-political crisis in South Africa during the apartheid era meant that these issues were not a priority.

Today, however, black Catholics are increasingly interested and motivated to rediscover their cultural roots and the place they have within Catholic faith. A major conference on Inculturation was held at Lumko in 1995 and attracted 140 people from all over Southern

Africa. In his opening remarks, Bishop Mvemve of Klerksdorp noted: “The Church in Southern Africa has entered a new age. There is a growing awareness that people can embrace their culture and still remain Catholics, that the Catholic Church can become more diverse in its expression of faith and yet remain Catholic....The challenge is simply this, if you claim to be an African Christian then become an African in the expression of your values and your Christian faith” (Mvemve in Makobane et al 1995:10). The conference dealt with a wide range of issues: liturgy, healing, veneration of ancestors, African values and Christian morality, the role of music and dance and many others. The relationship between some of the issues raised in the previous section and inculturation are summed up by Tlhagale (1995b:170) as follows: “Inculturation argues that faith can find a home in an African culture and indeed open up its new home to new challenges”.

The process of inculturation describes how a local Church assimilates those aspects of its own cultures which are compatible with the gospel into its own praxis. But it goes further by challenging its own cultures and transforming them by the power of the gospel to bring these cultures “closer to the vision of the kingdom of God, affirming and developing what is of value whilst continuing the struggle against evil” (Bate 1991:98). This implies that the vision of the Kingdom of God has to be expressed in African cultural concepts and many African theologians have begun to examine these areas. Progress has been slow in the Southern African Catholic Church but recent studies include those on ancestors (Tlhagale 1995a), on African and Christian notions of Sacrifice and the Eucharist (Sipuka 2001) and on Marriage (Hlatshwayo 1996).

South Africa of course is a land of many cultures having their origins in Africa, Asia and Europe. The local Church recognises the special priority of Africanisation as a result of the condemnation of African traditions and customs in the missionary period. But South Africans have been quick to point out that the process of inculturation will be more complex than that. Cultural roots as well as the large influence of modernity in this country have to be considered if we are not to turn Christian practice into unreal religious romanticism (Nxumalo 1996:147-155; Keteyi 1996:51ff) . At the launch of inculturation in a special Mass in 1999 in the KwaZulu Natal province the task was explained as follows:

The Bishops of the KwaZulu-Natal region are inviting all Catholics to walk together as we together grapple with issues of our faith, and our culture or traditions. We are aware that the Province of KwaZulu-Natal embraces people of different cultures or traditions. In this booklet the term “African” refers to all people living or born in *Africa; regardless of their “roots” which may be of Asian, European or Mixed origin...*The great tasks of Christian Churches in Africa today is to encourage the members to express their African and Christian values in a fully African way. (We come... 2000:8-9; italic in original).

4.9.2 Reconciliation and Reconstruction: The Kingdom comes in healing racism, discrimination and oppression

In the post apartheid phase of the country socio-political concerns have moved from the struggle against apartheid to the building of the “New” South Africa. This is a process involving healing the wounds of the past, social reconciliation between communities and individuals who were at war and now find themselves as citizens of one land, and the reconstruction of the society by providing housing, infrastructure, work and a better life for

all people in the country. These are clearly goals with which the Church can identify. Indeed they are values found within the scriptures.¹⁴

Healing the wounds of decades of apartheid and centuries of colonialism and racism is obviously a very big task. In the first place, it implies political action. Injurious apartheid legislation must be dismantled and new legislation enacted which can direct the country towards a better life for all. The Catholic Church sees itself having an important role in civil society to lobby for legislation that is in accord with its vision of the Kingdom. In that regard a “Parliamentary Liaison Office” has been set up in Cape Town with the task of researching and coordinating a Catholic lobby to the committees in charge of preparing legislation as well as disseminating information on policy and legislation issues to Catholic groups and institutions.

Reconstruction also implies the provision of land, housing and infrastructure to people. In this regard an important initiative has been the review of Church held land to determine the history of the Church’s acquisition of land in South Africa and questions of restoration to tenants and other role players. Land is a major issue in the South African context. Colonial Land acts deprived Africans of land restricting them to 13% of the total. Retribution and redistribution are thus major social issues. This is a long process and involves a number of churches. Churches are cooperating with the Land affairs department of the Government in order to determine the best ways forward for land redistribution in the country.

Issues of reconciliation were confronted nationally by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Despite its many limitations, the commission has helped to open the wounds of the past and expose some of the evil that was carried out. In that way, it has played an important role in “healing the social psyche of the nation, through its public hearings, taking of statements and its use of the media, particularly radio and television” (Hay 1998:59). A number of churches and other organisations have tried to participate in this healing process by organising retreats and workshops where people can “tell their story”, be heard and participate in liturgies of reconciliation. The Justice and Peace commission and other groups in the Archdiocese of Durban held a number of such retreats in the mid 1990s. An example of the process in such a retreat is given by Edwina Ward (1995) who continues to organise them.

Racism in this context refers to the “internalised belief in the superiority of the white race over the black race - with the result that the culture, norms, theories and practices of the dominant white racial group come to be seen and treated as normative for all” (Mpako 1999:236). Mpako who is secretary of the African Catholic Priests Solidarity movement says that reconciliation demands an awareness and promotion of a spirit of antiracism. This implies dealing with “all that has been the cause of division in the past...a sincere and concerted effort to move away from racism and its hidden psychological effects...and from colonialist racist power relations” (:238-239). The reality of reconciliation has already happened in the Christ event and so we are called to “Become what God has already made you” (:238). The instrumentality of Christian praxis in making this reality of the Kingdom

¹⁴See Martin 1999 for a reflection on the changed role of the relationship between Religious groups and the State in the new dispensation as well as an agenda for the future including nine specific areas identified in the 1999 “Multi-Event” conference which examined the role of religion in public life in South Africa.

manifest amongst us is a clear imperative for the Church today.

4.9.3 *HIV/AIDS: healing a new scourge for South Africa*

South Africa currently has the highest number of AIDS deaths worldwide. This has become a new plague and crisis for the country - a wicked blow after the struggle to rid the society of the scourge of apartheid. Estimates suggest that as many as 10% of the population may be infected whilst statistics for pregnant mothers, the only ones available, indicate infection rates over 30% in KwaZulu-Natal, the worst hit province. This has led to death, the breakdown of family life and a growing phenomenon of "AIDS orphans". The response of the Catholic Church has been quite considerable: "the largest AIDS programme in South Africa, apart from the government" (*Southern Cross* July 11 2001). Hospices for AIDS patients have been set up around the country, the most famous being the one of Mother Theresa's sisters in Khayalitsha, Cape Town. A number of programmes of family based care are running like the one organised by the Archdiocese of Durban. The Catholic Health Care Association has developed a training manual for parish HIV/AIDS support groups which aims to "equip participants with the knowledge and expertise to develop appropriate parish-based actions to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic" (McGregor, nd:23). In August 2001 the SACBC began to discuss the question of approving the use of condoms for Catholics with HIV/AIDS to prevent infection of HIV- people and reinfection of HIV+ partners.

4.9.4 *Women: they are also full citizens of God's Kingdom*

The worldwide emergence of a struggle for women's rights within the Catholic Church has also begun to touch the local Church here. The issues around this struggle include: "women's entrance into liturgical ministries, election to parish pastoral councils and diocesan commissions" (Rakoczy 2000:34). The use of non-sexist language is increasingly promoted in theological writings and in educational institutions. WOSA (Women's ordination South Africa) was founded in 1997 and publishes a regular newsletter. The group together with some other Catholic women activists held a protest against discrimination against women in the Catholic Church at the 2001 Diakonia Good Friday ecumenical service which had as theme "end violence against women". The comments reported in a local newspaper of some other Church leaders against the Catholic position aroused some public controversy in the city leading to an apology by both the Methodist and Anglican bishops for the article which they repudiated (*Catholic News Archdiocese of Durban* No. 376 March 2001). The journalist stands by his story.

The Grail movement started the *Women's Leadership Training Project* in 1985 to respond to the need for "the development of women to their full potential in order to empower them to participate in society at all levels and in various spheres" (Mabaso 1996:173). This project runs training workshops, skills programmes and has sponsored some self-help projects amongst women. It has also established a women's resource centre. Theological training for women is another area where things are beginning to change. The Catholic Studies Programme at St Joseph's theological institute in Cedara now offers a three year programme which allows people to study theology, philosophy and the humanities without going through the normal six year seminary programme. Many women are taking advantage of this option.

African culture is often cited as an obstacle to the possibility for women to have leadership roles in the Church (Rakoczy 2000; Wuestenberg 2001:174-175). It is encouraging to note the

concern of the African Catholic Priests Solidarity Movement in this regard as they push for the empowerment of women in ministry (ACPSM 2000:63). However, it is sobering to note that these issues were also raised by the ad hoc commission for the study of ministry in 1975 (PA1:18) and not much has been done since then.

1. Theological reflection: What does it mean...?

The simple answer to the question posed is that it means that the Church has to be involved in the life of the community. The first line of *Gaudium et Spes* sums this up well: “The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the men (sic) of our time, especially those who are poor or afflicted in any way are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well” (GS1).

In our presentation we have shown how the preoccupations of the community have been those of the Church as well. But what does the Church, the people of God, bring to this human condition? Section 3 of our paper provided a pastoral theological model to answer this question. The Church is called to be a special site in which the Kingdom of God is manifest: a sacrament of salvation (LG 5). This manifestation of the Kingdom is described in the model presented above (*supra* 3). To the extent that the Church has manifested *martyria*, *koinonia*, *diakonia*, *kerygma*, and *leitourgia*, it participates in living Lk 17:21. The Kingdom of God is amongst (within) the people.

The long section 4 of our paper has been a phenomenological description of that reality. It is not necessary to make all the links: a few examples will suffice. We have seen *martyria* in the suffering of Christians against apartheid. We speak of those like Mkatshwa, Waspe, Ncube, Kneifel, members of the YCW national executive, staff and students of St Joseph’s Scholasticate, and many others who were imprisoned during the apartheid era. Some of these were also tortured. But *martyria* is also seen in the efforts of many millions who had to suffer the harmful effects of discrimination, prejudice, homelessness and injustice in the land of their birth and yet stood up to try to make a difference to the world around them.

We have seen *koinonia* in the emergence of the Pastoral Plan with its emphasis on building Christian community. We see it in the emergence of many Small Christian Communities and in community based ministries concerned to make the Church active and real in the lives of people. We see it in the attempts at reconciliation and in the struggle to destroy racism both within society and in the life of the Church itself.

We have seen *diakonia* in the service given by the many social institutions of the Church and in the struggle for justice of organisations like the YCW, YCS, Diakonia, as well as Justice and Peace commissions nationwide. We see it in the efforts of small groups of people inspired by the Pastoral Plan to set up small scale housing projects, farming projects, care for the sick, women’s training projects, diocesan development committees and the like.

We have seen *kerygma* in the statements of the bishops against apartheid throughout the years. “A country in crisis, a continent in crisis, demand our attention. The Church of South Africa in the year 2000 and later, will either praise our leadership or shamefacedly bow their

heads and rather forget the Shepherds of the Seventies”¹⁵ (CCSJ 1977:20). It is seen in the statements of many groups of Catholics on matters of social justice. It is seen in the statement of the “4 black priests and laymen” (*supra* 4.8) questioning racism in the Church. It is also seen in the quest for the provision of the Eucharist through the ordination of community ministers especially funeral leaders.

We have seen *leitourgia* in the Masses for peace and reconciliation held during the apartheid era and in the quest for inculturation in worship. It is also seen in the attempts to develop community ministries throughout the country. It occurs in the commitment of ministers to bring the sacraments and the possibility of religious worship throughout the country.

There are some areas of life in which Church praxis seems to have militated against the Kingdom. Racism within the Church, the marginalisation of women and the disparaging of African cultures are some areas in which the witness given has been compromised. There are probably others but these in particular are challenges the whole community faces. Another area of current weakness is in leadership training especially in the socio-political arena. The Catholic Church has learned over the years that it has to play a role on all levels of civil society. What it is now not doing which it did before is to train leaders for that future. The educational institutions are gone and so an influence over youth is considerably reduced. This is exacerbated by the current weakness of the youth movements such as YCW and YCS. Leadership training remains an important mission of the Church. Youth organisations which train leaders rather than choirs are an urgent need. New educational initiatives like the new Catholic University are of prime importance in this regard.

We also described the presence of the Kingdom in the praxis of the Catholic Church in South Africa in terms of the various themes presented. We collect the relevant headings below since they provide a summary of what we have discovered to be the relationship between the praxis of the Catholic Church in South Africa and the Kingdom of God.

- X Alternative Society model: the Kingdom is found in the Church.
- X Statements of protest to government. The Kingdom is found in respecting human dignity.
- X Commitment and involvement in the Socio political struggle: The Kingdom is found in solidarity with the poor.
- X Catholic groups involved in the struggle against apartheid and injustice: the Kingdom of God as a liberation praxis.
- X The Kingdom of God in community ministries: from clerical to peoples’ ministry.
- X Racism in the Church: the Kingdom is not found in the Church.
- X The African Church and Inculturation: The Kingdom is found in African cultures.
- X Reconciliation and Reconstruction: The Kingdom comes in healing racism, discrimination and oppression.
- X HIV/AIDS: healing a new scourge for South Africa.

¹⁵Bishop Fulgence Le Roy, from the introductory address to the special consultation on matters of social justice and race relations at the plenary session of the Southern African Bishops’ Conference of February 3-5, 1977.

X Women: they are also full citizens of God's Kingdom.

I do not agree with Nolan's (1986:133) assertion that the Kingdom of God is so overlaid with many historical interpretations that "it is very difficult to rework it and give it the meaning that Jesus had in mind". It is precisely the symbolic nature of this term that provides its richness and also its ability not to be captured by any one interpretation including the one we might believe to be the "correct" one. The richness of symbol is its ability to transcend concept and history and so to connect being and time from generation to generation. This is precisely the richness of human culture and why no one community or age can capture all of the mystery of God's plan and destiny for us. This is also the true meaning of catholicity: a unity which is rooted in but which also transcends all ages and all cultures. The rooting of the Church in context and culture means that it is for each generation and each group to "discern in the events, the needs, and the longings which it shares with other men (sic) of our time, what may be the genuine signs of the presence and purpose of God" (GS 11).

It means that the Church has to listen for the Spirit. Discernment is a necessary aspect of being an instrument of the Kingdom. It also means being committed to the context. The Church is the group of people that believes that within the events of the day it is possible to hear God's communication to us. This is the group that has to reveal this communication to all people and then to act on it. This is the true meaning of evangelisation and it also points to the active role of people in the saving work of God as he sends the Spirit. This same Spirit is also a power to action multiplying those human actions which are in accordance with God's will (1 Cor 12). In this way the Church through the Spirit becomes a leaven in this particular society, raising it up.

It also means openness to the universal. Africa is racked by factionalism, division and splintering. There are over 5000 separate churches in South Africa alone. The Catholic Church brings a particular Christian vision of lived unity within cultural difference which is evangelical for much of Christianity here. The witness of trying to be one in mutual respect is important. However, it is clear that the Church must listen to the African voices within it who have been patient for so long. The Catholic Church continues to be controlled by white interests. The majority of the bishops are still white and a large number still expatriate. This is a tremendous challenge for us right now. The critique of Hulsén of a church that is overwhelmingly black being led by a leadership that is overwhelmingly white continues to ring true.

In *The things that make for peace* (TAC 1985:175) the role of the Christian was expressed as preparing the way for the Kingdom which is a work of God. I would argue that this too reflects a too passive instrumentality. I indicated earlier (*supra* 1) some of the reasons why in the South African cultural context such a notion militates against human responsibility for the state of things in the world. The incarnation is a more intimate participation of God in humanity than just agency. Christians, filled with the power of God in baptism, and committed in faith, live as Christ in the world. It is not I who live but Christ. It is this intimate mingling of humanity and divinity which is the Church and which marks the people of God out as agents of their own destiny. We are able to create our own future by our own decisions and then the Lord magnifies this creation to the extent that we live in his light and the Kingdom is amongst us. In the English understanding of the word (for it too is cultural)

instrumentality as a model ultimately fails. It makes the people of God too passive. People in South Africa who participated in the struggle know the power of human solidarity and human commitment to change the world. This is truly a marvel of God but one which requires our own agency. Without this we are merely pawns in the heavenly battle and the reality of the incarnation as God's means for salvation is devalued.

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