

A HOMILY OF LOVE AS A MANTLE TO COVER THE GRIEF OF OUR BELOVED
BROTHER AND SISTER, ZAKHELE AND ZIWELILE KHUMALO ON THE OCCASION OF
THE LAYING OF THEIR SON TO REST

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MAHLABATHINI : 25 APRIL 1992

In all nature there is the snarl and the flash of a claw, or the rip of fangs, and then there is death. There are exploding volcanoes, there are raging storms and there is the flash of lightening, and then there is death. There is war, and there is death. There is disease, and then there is death. Death is one of the few absolute certainties for every one of us. None shall escape it.

Yet my son, you have lost your son. My daughter, you have lost your son. As parents you have had your first born ripped away from you by death. And despite all the death in the world, and despite the fact that not one of us will escape death, our grief for you

as parents, is as deep and as painful as though you were the first of God's children ever to lose a son.

We know that your grief is as deep as it would be if your son was the first of mankind to die, and to leave parents and brothers and sisters, broken and bereft. Yet my son, and yet my daughter, you stand as powerful witnesses to that indomitable spirit of man that nothing can crush.

Our grief for you is wrapped around with our admiration for your courage and your strengths of character, which would almost turn the tables so that you would turn to comfort us who grieve for you. And all in our hearts cries out a shuddering NO to the horror of

the death of a youth like the felling of a tree which has not yet produced its fruits.

The death of a young man running onwards through life to his prime, has such horror to it that we cry out for you my brother, and for you my sister, and each say "my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken them?". It is love that cries out, and admiration, and the bitterness of disappointment, that you who loved so much have had so much ripped away from you in the blinding flash of an accident.

We ourselves, grapple with the meaning of death, and grief, and suffering, and persecution. I, as your President, know more than anyone else just what sacrifices, my brother, your family has made

so that you may serve me, the nation, and South Africa in the unique way in which you have served in this corner of God's vineyard.

It is now over seventeen years that you have served your President, your party and your country with great distinction. You, my brother, were there in the opening years of the IFP's existence and you have been there every hour, every day and every month ever since. Your constancy and your commitment, and your reliability, has been surer than the rocks of the Ulundi mountains. Your show of duty has been surer than the miraculous constancy of the rising and the setting of the sun.

Yet you who would die for me and your party, and your country, and even for your enemies, have been hounded by the Weekly Mail. It has turned your every virtue upside down in one of the grossest distortions of love, loyalty and of patriotism that the world has ever witnessed.

As you were persecuted and loved and served, and sacrificed, your family paid the price for your commitment. To you, my sister Ziwelile, I reach out and say that I wish before the Almighty that we could turn the loss of your son into a gift for your husband, back into the fullness of your life.

We have known how you have always been there to back up our brother. We are human, and we too grow tired. We are human and we

too feel frail at times. We are human and we too know what it is like to thrust deep into ourselves to find the courage to go on. My sister, we know these things, and we know how you have lifted up our brother when he was reaching inside himself for courage.

Above all else, I grieve for you at this time. Remember how, you my brother and you my sister, have stood together in such a close-knit family. We know what it has cost for you as parents to drive forwards and upwards for the well-being of your children, that they may know opportunity and progress you could only dream of and your parents before you could only dream of.

Yours, my brother and sister, are lives spanning the hideous South African past to the glorious South African future. You are the bridges your children will walk across to the future, and this realisation immeasurably deepens our anguish for you. Your first born son will now not cross that bridge because cruel death has ripped him away.

Then, in the midst of pain and anguish and grief and despair, at the injustice of young corn being cut to the ground before it could form a cob, there is the exhilarating presence of Christ and the sure knowledge that death is only a pausing between this life and the next. Christ died that we may live, and He told us that there are many rooms in His Father's mansion.

We know that your son, my son, and your son, my daughter, is witness to your grief and my grief. He must be saying to you, his father and to you his mother, rise above me and know that God is God of all life for all eternity.

Let us in our grief abandon ourselves to the mercy of God. My brother and my sister, you and your daughters and your sons and your relatives, must know that Christ died that your son may live. There is a place where the lambs lie down beside the lions, and where there is no more pain and where the peace of God which passeth all understanding, prevails.

One as a human being can never look for advantage out of the hideousness of death. You cannot set about benefiting from the death of a beloved son. But that is where the miracle of the Holy Spirit begins to take us, where our human frailty can never take us. The death of your son, my son and my daughter, will be used by God to strengthen you and to deepen your spirituality and capacity to serve.

Let your grief be the battle-cry against everything that is evil and wrong and inhuman. Let the death of your son give you more to live for.

But in the end when we have tried and failed to take away grief,
all that is left to do is to say my brother and my sister, we love
you.

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