

FAREWELL TO THE RT REVEREND LB ZULU BISHOP OF ZULULAND

BY MANGOSUTHU BUTHELEZI, CHIEF MINISTER OF KWAZULU  
AND PRESIDENT OF INKATHA FREEDOM PARTY

ULUNDI, 14TH FEBRUARY 1993

---

Bishop Zulu, one does not know what imagery to use when one says farewell to the person of your stature, your greatness as a human being, your influence, and above all one just does not know how to say farewell to one who has your spirituality and your mental and personal integrity. I have said some of these words on the 16th December on behalf of the Diocese, but I today speak on behalf of the St Mary's Parish where I worship.

When you go you will take away from us the aura of your presence which has seeped beneath all our doors and into all our living spaces. When you leave you will take with you a very particular presence of the Almighty which came so peculiarly with you.

In asking these questions I am not saying anything about anybody else. You have trodden a path which others will follow. You have broken new ground which will put others in a position to break ground you could not break. You have gathered souls together for the work of Christ who will support whoever follows in your footsteps.



You, my Bishop, may indeed have prepared the ground for others to sow the word, and you may have removed the rocks and thistles which would impair the growth of that which they sow.

But it is you, our beloved Bishop, who we will miss forever, there will be a place in our hearts and in our souls even, which none will fill but you.

We are indeed blessed because Christ called you to high office in our midst. You have been with us during the most crisis-filled period of KwaZulu's twentieth century history. You have seen us struggle against all manner of temptations, and you have been witness to some modest success in putting temptation aside to put principles first.

None will know how many lonely hours I have spent in prayer fortifying myself to help me keep running the good race and fighting the good fight.

Always there has been the temptation to seek popularity and avoid paying the price of being right in the face of terrible adversity.

I remember how after Inkatha emerged in 1975 and grew so phenomenally in 1976 and 1977, that Steve Biko tried to entice me to leading protest politics, and to take up a position as national leader, behind whom he and others would rally to support me.



At that point in time there was a great hunger in Black South Africa for visible on-the-ground leaders to take the place of exiled leaders. At that point in time, euphoria which followed the rising tide of Black consciousness and the militancy of rising youth power, made that offer of Steve Biko a very attractive offer. The newspapers and the media were conducting unprecedented campaigns to denigrate self-governing states and the leadership in them.

The Black People's Convention and advocates of Black consciousness were crowing that the Government was on the run, and that it would fall by 1978. Everybody who was not for and with Black militancy and confrontationalism was treated as the enemy of the people.

I looked upon the world, and I thought of Christ, and sought to discern his hand in the direction of history. I then knew that I had to walk the hard road of unpopularity and refuse to lead in confrontationalism which would tear the soul out of Black South Africa and school a whole new generation in the ways of violence.

I said no to all of that. I stuck to the hallowed and deeply engrained values of the struggle for liberation by espousing democratic opposition to the apartheid on the ground when others were abandoning democracy for violence.



Our Bishop, I do not know very much about the infinity of God's wisdom, nor do I ever pretend to understand how God actually moves nations to their divinely appointed ends. All I know is that my KwaZulu, my culture, my history, my life, and the aura I breathe as a human being demanded that principle comes first.

I know that were it not for our own great Bishop Colenso, who laboured amongst us, and loved us, and strengthened our great King Cetshwayo, we would not be the Christian Nation that we are. He and many others of our fathers in Christ pointed the Zulu people in the right direction.

You, Bishop Zulu, have laboured in the fields first prepared by Bishop Colenso and others who followed him. You have carried a tradition of Christian resilience deeply into the soul of KwaZulu. You have helped us resist abandoning non-violence for violence even after we have felt that non-violence was not achieving anything.

My Bishop, you have walked also in the fields first prepared by our other great son of KwaZulu, Bishop Alphaeus Zulu.

When I was faced with having to make historic decisions about the arms struggle, and whether or not we should be involved in it, and when I was faced with decisions about whether or not to support the punitive isolation of South Africa, it was prayer that helped me make the right decisions.



I want today to pay you the greatest tribute I can possibly pay you. I say to you our Bishop that had you not been who you are, and had you not exerted the influence you have exerted, they would have been too few to follow me, to support the right decisions I made about remaining non-violent, rejecting the arms struggle and rejecting sanctions which cost people their jobs, their health and their lives even.

It has always been the fortitude of the very lowly that has sustained me most. It has been the frail suffering widow, and it has been members of families suffering all sorts of want that have kept faith, who have inspired me.

I have found that great historical figures such as Martin Luther King, Albert Lutuli and Mahatma Ghandi, have made me lift up my eyes to the mountains ahead. It has however been ordinary people, the people in your pews Bishop Zulu, we your sheep, our Bishop, who walked with me on the hard rocky road to the mountains ahead.

When I look around me today I see the devastation that violence has wreaked in our Black townships and communities. Our people live in circumstances of chronic social pathology in which ordinary people can no longer solve their own problems. Social cohesion has been destroyed. The fabric of society which is normally wrapped around the venerability of our souls has been



stripped from us and trampled underfoot.

Everywhere there is hurt, and anger, and fear, and everywhere there is the emergence of self-help in the business of dog-eating-dog. If anything ever convinced me of how right I was in eschewing violence, and seeking to bind people to each other in democratic practices, it is the aftermath of the arms struggle and the militarization of civil society.

It is as though God in all his infinite mercy is offering us this one only golden moment of history in which we can do more than vanquish apartheid. We could have torn apartheid apart with evil hands, but that is not what we should do. We should dismember apartheid, bury it in an ongoing process of establishing a fair and just society. Politicians will never do that on their own. Political parties will never establish a beautiful society on their own. It is people who must do that job.

In doing that job, people must assume the stature which their inborn rights to human rights and justice elevate them to. It is people who are finally sovereign in Gods' great scheme of things.

It is people who should own the process of establishing a fair and just society. It is people who should curb party political excesses when parties become obsessed with the pursuit of power at the expense of the national good. It is people who in the end get the government they deserve. It is the people who are the people whom you ministered unto Bishop Zulu.



I remember well some of the deep perplexes of simple souls in the White sections of your flocks, our Bishop when it was announced that you would be their shepherd. The grumblings and the rumblings and the disquiet could have built up to be a problem. That was not to be. Instead there was an early settling down, with you settling down to be a man of God in their midst.

It is people like you, our Bishop who have always guaranteed that in the end we will have one South Africa, with one united people sharing but one destiny with a single national will to make South Africa work for the good of everybody, and particularly for the poorest of the poor.

South Africa has agonized through decades of racist rule long after the rest of Africa saw freedom from colonialist and racist rule. It was during those decades of agony that Christ worked through people like you, our Bishop to achieve the present situation in which I know with a deep certainty that Christ is on every side of every political division.

I say all this in praise of this, our Bishop knowing that the road is going to get a lot more rougher, and the going is going to get much tougher before we reach any real historic turning point.



It is indeed a measure of my praise for you that I can say these things when I know what we are yet going to go into. You, our Bishop, and others, have given us more than the ability to scrape home to this golden moment of history in the early 1990's, in which we have the opportunity to put right that which is wrong.

The Christian ethic which you have helped permeate into the very essence of my people, will fortify my people to survive the blunders of political parties in the coming months, and to be as powerful as needs be to see the struggle for liberation to a final victorious end.

I so feel the emptiness of my soul when I realise, as I frequently do, that Bishop Alphaeus Zulu is not with us today, here on the ground, to witness the fruits of the spirit so evident in the opportunity. We have to turn away from racism and hatred, and establish a just society.

When you go my Lord, with your beloved family, go with our love. It is my prayer that you will yet be witness to the rewards of the martyrs who struggled, suffered and died that our land may be free. Go with peace Bishop, and God be with you, and go knowing that our love will follow you where ever you go.

-----0-----



