

KWAZULU DAY OF PRAYER AND THANKSGIVING

TESTIMONY BY MANGOSUTHU BUTHELEZI,
PRESIDENT OF INKATHA FREEDOM PARTY

ULUNDI : MAY 15, 1994

The Chairman of IDAMASA and other Church leaders who are conducting this important service for us; all other Church leaders present; members of the Zulu Royal House present; members of the South African Cabinet; members of the Cabinet of KwaZulu-Natal; members of the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Legislature; members of the IFP Central Committee and senior IFP members; distinguished guests; brothers and sisters in Christ. We are gathered here today to commemorate this KwaZulu Day of Prayer.

In the name of our living God, to whom all praises are due, I would like to welcome all Church leaders and all friends present. It is indeed a memorable occasion and a historic experience for us, the people of KwaZulu-Natal, to give thanks to our Lord in the new democratic South Africa. This is the first time that the people of this region can stand before God as liberated human beings, acknowledged and respected by the new Government of South Africa, and protected by the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Legislature.

As a Christian I have not the slightest doubt that the success that the people of KwaZulu-Natal accomplished in the recent elections was evidence of Divine intervention. To me it is a miracle itself that with only six days left to campaign following the IFP's decision to participate in elections, we achieved the success that we have achieved. We had been written off as the [FP. We had been tried through the media and written off as having lost the election even before we had decided to participate. It is only God's Hand that has changed this perceived failure into the spectacular success that we have achieved.

I will never forget for the rest of my life how God demonstrated His power not only to South Africans but to the entire world. In all the world media, we were presented as the villains of the piece. Indeed the largest newspaper in South Africa not only criticised me but its Editor called me a "rotten politician." He did so for no rhyme or reason except that he and his family supported our opposition. The largest newspaper in the world, the New York Times, had a headline "Buthelezi the only fly in the ointment." I was condemned by Foreign Ministers and was vilified in diplomatic and business cocktail circuits.

It was shown through surveys and polls that the IFP had at most only about three per cent support in the country. It was stated that we only stood so firm on principle not because ours was a good cause, but because we were afraid of the election as Buthelezi and the IFP had no support. People were regaled by the so-called "experts" on Buthelezi, the odd man out. There is no human explanation why our perceived demise as a political party became such a demonstration of th

e strength
of the IFP.

During the difficult times I have gone through, Psalm 118 gave me a lot of inspiration as I
mused on
all the condemnation that was showered on me:

8. It is better to trust in the Lord than put confidence in man.
9. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in Princes.
10. All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.
21. I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation.
22. The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.

I remembered as I read this Psalm what our Lord said in Luke 21, verse 17: "And he beheld them and said what is this then that is written. The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner."

I am very, very aware of the amount of Prayers that have resulted in our resounding success in this Region of KwaZulu-Natal. I know how many ordained men of God prayed for me. I know how many ordinary Christians prayed for me. I know how many Christians prayed for me not only in this country but in many countries in the world. Chains of prayers have resulted in our success. I know how many Christians here in Ulundi and in many Parishes in South Africa have prayed and fasted. I know how many Christians wanted to come and pray with me in Ulundi and in my home at KwaPhindangene, but it was just not possible for them to do so. The power of prayer has been demonstrated to me in a manner [I can never forget as long as I live. This KwaZulu Day of Prayer has today become a Day of Thanksgiving. The Lord has been good to us. We are humbled by the Lord's graciousness to us. It was not because we deserved God's Grace. No! It has been a demonstration that Jesus died for us because He loves sinners and that is why He decided to die for them. ;

In our moment of triumph, let us not forget the Lord and the blessings He has showered upon us. In the past couple of months He has worked miracles in South Africa. While political leaders were floundering in the passages of darkness, the Lord shed light on our predicament, and led us to the path of light and goodness.

As many of you already know, because of the manner in which the former National Party Government and the ANC deliberately attempted to unilaterally control multi-party negotiations and the period of transition, genuine democracy in South Africa was doomed. The power-hungry actions of these parties forced the IFP and the KwaZulu Government to remain outside the formal structures of transition.

The victims of the vicious power struggle occurring at the national level were the people of this region. Here in KwaZulu-Natal we were facing a future of despair, as the constitutional process did not permit us to enter into the election process. The IFP could never agree to the election into power of another dictatorial regime, where the freedom and security of our families and friends would once again be placed at risk. The sacrifices we have made in our struggle for liberation have been too great. Too many lives have been lost in the name of freedom and democracy.

Even during these dark hours the Lord was guarding His people from up above. The Lord would never abandon his children in times of need. We in KwaZulu-Natal stood together in our faith

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the Lord has not forsaken us.

In the eleventh hour before the holding of the April elections, when all indications revealed that the National Party Government and the ANC would never make room to accommodate the IFP, the KwaZulu Government and His Majesty the King of the Zulus, in the new South Africa - a miracle occurred.

In the final hours of negotiations the IFP and the ANC resorted to international mediation. Yet not. even international mediation could proceed successfully. This was truly our last hope for reaching a political settlement acceptable to all, but certain Communist elements within the ANC, people who

stood in opposition to our faith, came into the process and destroyed the foundations of international mediation that had been set.

The day was the 15th of April, and I was standing at Lanseria Airport in Johannesburg, dejected and disheartened at the failure of international mediation, waiting for a plane to take me back to Ulundi. And then out of the blue I received an urgent message to wait for Professor Washington Okumu. [I had met this distinguished gentleman 20 years ago at a Prayer Breakfast in Washington, and we have kept in touch with one another over these many years on the basis of our Christian fellowship. He was a last minute addition to the mediation process as adviser to the mediators and I had said good-bye to him on the evening of the 14th of April.

I waited for Professor Okumu for as long as I could, but two of my colleagues were participating in a meeting with His Majesty the King, and a delegation of the clergy led by Archbishop Tutu, so I was forced to leave in the plane with them. The workings of the Lord began to take place. We had been airborne for a couple of minutes when an announcement was made on the plane that due to technical difficulties we had to turn back to Lanseria Airport.

Professor Okumu was at Lanseria Airport on my arrival, . It was as though God was ensuring that the meeting between Professor Okumu and myself would go ahead as Divinely planned. I had been brought back to Johannesburg like Jonah. My forced return was the working of God.

The message from Professor Okumu was the inspiration I needed, as the leader of the IFP, to carry our struggle forward and negotiate the means by which my party could participate in the April elections, even at that late hour. I explained to Professor Okumu about the long battle the IFP had been waging for federalism and the self-determination of all South Africans. I explained the impossibility of the IFP participating in the elections before the serious concerns regarding His Majesty the King of the Zulus had been addressed.

Professor Okumu, like a messenger of God, heard my story and sought to intervene. He had been in touch with both Mr Mandela and the former State President, Mr FW de Klerk. The next day, after Professor Okumu's intervention, and following his advice, I contacted the former State President. After an intense and meaningful discussion Mr de Klerk gave me his assurance that he would look into the possibilities of dealing with the matters concerning His Majesty the King before the elections, thereby opening the way for the IFP's late participation in the April elections.

That Sunday Professor Okumu and myself met just before the Jesus Rally organised by African Enterprise. The significance of this meeting at a rally amongst Christian brethren can not be overlooked. Professor Okumu handed me a draft of a proposed agreement which could be entered into. It embodied the proposal that I had made at the meeting at Skukuza on the 8th of April which had then been ignored. In other words, there was no new idea in the draft but a reiteration of a proposal I had made at Skukuza which was ignored by both President de Klerk, the President of the ANC and the media.

It was this draft document that finally secured a political settlement between the IFP, the ANC and the former National Party Government. On this special KwaZulu Day of Prayer I would like to pay tribute to Professor Okumu, and the role he played, under the guidance of our Lord, to draw the IFP and the KwaZulu Government into the political process once again. I am at the same time saddened by how some in the media sullied even this by putting some words in Professor Okumu's mouth which tried to destroy our relations.

The April elections are now finally over. So much has transpired in these few short weeks, that it

is so easy to forget the difficulties we in KwaZulu-Natal were forced to overcome. The people of this region have emerged victorious. There is so much to be thankful for.

I would like to give thanks to the Lord for caring for my people. It could only have been the work of God that made it possible for people, from all corners of our nation, to travel to the polling stations. Despite the maladministration, despite the failure of many polling booths to open, despite the lack of facilities, documentation and voter education - we achieved what we set out to achieve.

For days on end, you my brothers and sisters stood in the baking sun to pledge your cross for the nation. There were old people who fainted on the 26th of April. I pay tribute to the old people who died waiting at the polls. Irrespective of the hardships and the endless waiting, the voting procedure was carried out in a spirit of goodwill and cheer. I have never been as proud of my people both young and old as I am at this hour.

Who else but our Almighty God could ensure that the bloody violence that has been racking our communities for months, would come to a complete halt? Who else but our Almighty God, could ensure that political opponents could stand side by side in the long queues to the polling booths to vote without intimidation and without animosity? For this we must thank our Lord

I would also like to give thanks to the Lord for giving my people the will to vote. The overwhelming success of the IFP in KwaZulu-Natal, and our victory against the ANC, is a great moment in the history of this region. Our Lord made it possible for the people of KwaZulu-Natal to express their democratic will.

There is no doubt in my mind that the IFP would have fared much better with proper vote-counting procedures in KwaZulu-Natal or with more than one week of political campaigning, or if the votes North of the Thukela were counted in a truly free and fair manner, rather than awarding these votes in the same proportion as the votes already cast elsewhere in the province. With the full tally of the votes north of the Thukela the 50 percent majority victory of the IFP would have risen to at least 60 percent. These were some of the many concessions the IFP was prepared to make to ensure that the political process could continue and in order to avoid bloodshed;

The philosophy of the IFP is a Christian philosophy. My supporters in the IFP place their faith in our Lord, and we know that despite the irregularities of the April elections, and the losses that my party was forced to bear, we will emerge victorious. In the true Christian spirit we will take the election's drawbacks in our stride, and strive for an even greater victory in the next election. The new Premier of the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Legislature, the Honourable Dr Frank Mdlalose, has already stated that the election machinery for the final elections, which could take place any time between

now and five years time, will be set in place immediately. The democratically elected leader of KwaZulu-Natal will ensure that the voice of the people will be heard.

My message to Church leaders gathered here today, is that there is much work to be done. Dr Mdlalose has made it the priority of the new KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Legislature to bring peace to this region. This enormous task cannot be accomplished by our Honourable Members of

Parliament alone. KwaZulu-Natal needs all the assistance it can get from the Church to spread the word of God, and thereby promote reconciliation and peace in our communities.

In South Africa the strength of the Church has played a crucial role, with all believers, some more and some less politically influential, remaining heroically vocal in their rejection of apartheid as totally in conflict with the real principles of religion. This is one reason I, as a Christian, have hope for the future of my country, because the Church has remained a force that elevates the ideals of democracy and freedom, and it must continue to do so during this period of interim government.

The Church can emphasise the positive features of KwaZulu-Natal's divergence and plurality by elevating the people of this region, and encouraging them to feel mutual acceptance and respect for one another. Religion and faith has throughout history played an integral role in creating a sense of community and nationhood. It has been there to inspire the poor and the disadvantaged. Minority

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groups in South Africa have always had Christianity to depend on for support in maintaining their identity, blessed with the knowledge that all men are equal before God.

With the guidance of our Almighty God, the leaders of our churches can promote the advantages of national building and national unity. The IFP believes that the Church can use its influence to promote a transition through non-violent, democratic and negotiated means - the growth of a new government in an open democratic society. There is a need to incorporate and respect the human qualities of all South Africans - their fears, apprehensions and day-to-day needs - to ensure that the post-apartheid South Africa will overcome the violations of the past and the present.

Violence and destruction must be brought to an end. My brothers and sisters I appeal to you to foster a compassion for humanity. You are all God's children, and it is our duty to protect what belongs to the Lord. In times of trouble and strife, the Church is there to give you strength, to work out your difficulties in this region, and to resolve the conflicts that arise between you and your neighbours. The politics of reconstruction is more than the politics of pragmatic adjustments, it has to do with the rediscovery of nation building, and perhaps the most important contribution the Church can make as our country struggles to find new direction, is the promotion of a sense of national unity.

We need to pray for many Church leaders who failed to carry out their mission of reconciliation but instead took sides in political conflicts.

As the chapter of apartheid has now been finally closed, our nation is left to reflect on the extent to which the humanity of our people has been violated. From this realisation there is a growing recognition of the necessity to oppose forces to alter their fixed political agendas to accommodate the process of reconciliation, in order to reach a final constitutional settlement favourable to all. I ask our Lord to give the leaders of South Africa courage to turn away from the past to a fundamentally different kind of future. South Africans need to develop a resolute commitment to restitution and socio-political and economic reconstruction. We must acquire new goals concerning the next crucial steps in the struggle for social renewal.

Political and economic options for a new South Africa can be tested against our fundamental Christian values, because our Christian faith is by no means neutral on such matters. There is great economic potential in KwaZulu-Natal that can be unleashed by an autonomous regional government. I believe a humanising, Christian culture must be encouraged which favours economic structures which provide the basic necessities of life in terms of food, housing, health care and education. Without accepting poverty and lawlessness as permanent features of our daily living, we need to face the economic challenge of meeting the needs and interests of the people of KwaZulu-Natal. This implies a responsible leadership - for all parties participating in the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Legislature to commit themselves to the establishment of a stable and prosperous economy.

Our unswerving faith can guide us in the process of democratic constitution-making. In this

respect
the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Legislature must respect principles which we as Christians recognise as crucial for the formation of a just and free society. Our constitution must recognise the centrality of man's humanity and must guarantee the right to life and civil liberty, recognising the dignity of the human person, freedom of thought, consciousness and religion, freedom of expression and freedom of movement.

Our Christian values demand that the constitution of our region must protect all basic human rights, and prohibit customs, laws and practices which dehumanise and oppress people. It must protect the right of all people to share in the creation of a just socio-economic order.

The people of KwaZulu-Natal are at a distinct advantage. The IFP, as champions of democracy, has much to say in the new government of this region. As the President of the IFP I can honestly say that my party has always remained firmly committed to national reconciliation, to bringing people of

different racial and cultural groups together in peace and unity. My party has firmly advocated that the constitution for the new South Africa must be active amongst the people, appropriately adapted and moulded through the history and character of our country. We believe that a national ethic needs to be instilled, which demands of the future leaders of our country a democratic spirit - a spirit of fair play and tolerance of other groups. The Church must respond to the needs and demands. We look to the Church to fill us with the greatness of this spirit. But if the Church is to fulfil its calling we wish to see less political - partisanship in the ranks of our high profile Church leaders. I

I ask God to bless each and every one of you today. May the Lord give you the power and courage to live in his glory. May, the Lord keep our children and families safe. The values and ethics of the Church must be used to guide and correct our emerging nation. As Christians, we must all unite and allow our faith to direct us in the process of peaceful reconciliation and change. O

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