

South African RC church failing, archbishop says

South Africa's Roman Catholic church has not met the challenge of educating the people, says South African Archbishop Denis Hurley.

"We are rethinking our whole pastoral approach now. But it may be too little, too late," he said at a public meeting Sunday.

Meanwhile, audience member Peter Mahlangu, a coordinator of the South African Congress of Trade Unions, said during a question period that the church "should be choosing sides now, yet you still talk of the middle of the road."

Hurley conceded the church's position is moderate — morally justifying sanctions — while stressing the consequences might ultimately be as harmful as good for South Africa's blacks.

"That is our great concern — economic breakdown, poverty, unemployment and misery that would be greater than it is now," Hurley said.

Mahlangu countered: "Why should we worry about what South Africa looks like tomorrow? Our people have been suffering from 1652."

Hurley, also the head of the South African Conference of Catholic Bishops, is in Vancouver as part of a 10-day Canadian tour during the 20th anniversary of the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace.

Speaking to an overflow crowd over 200 people at Robson Square, Hurley outlined the history of the various factions, black and white,

in South Africa.

He concluded his speech by saying several times that the Catholic church in South Africa has not matched the dedication and evangelization of its counterparts in Latin America and the Philippines.

Hurley, brought to trial in 1985 for his criticisms of the government, said accusations from frustrated blacks such as Mahlangu are unfortunately common.

Mahlangu said outside the meeting that the church always had and was still collaborating with the government instead of becoming a church of the people. He pointed out that in 1963, when he was a member of the church, black and white seminarians were trained in separate places.



ARCHBISHOP HURLEY:
approach considered

"I think the Catholic church is a racist church."

Hurley, though he insisted the Catholic church is progressive, conceded "we still carry a heavy burden from our long history of innocent acceptance of segregation."

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