



Thoughts on Comprehensive Sexuality Education The role of the United Nations

For the past while rumours have been repeatedly doing the rounds to the effect that some in government are thinking of removing “Good Friday” and “Christmas” from the South African calendar of Public Holidays.

South African Government and Morality

While some people are asking for a response from the Church, others are saying: “Why bother? They won’t listen to you anyway!” This second group have this low expectation of how our leaders’ ability to consider or even respect the religious beliefs and practices of those who elected them to office. They point out that during the debate on abortion in 1995-96, the party in government simply ignored the fact that three independent opinion polls reported that more than 70% of South Africans opposed the introduction of “abortion on demand”. Instead of recognising this fact the party went ahead and introduced the most liberal abortion legislation in the world. As a consequence South Africa offers the least protection to the most vulnerable and defenceless of its citizens namely those who are still in their mother’s womb!

Was that a surprise? Not at all! Any thinking person would know that when leaders deliberately exclude, if not reject, the authority of God over their human affairs, there is only one way after that - down the slippery slope of moral decay!

Today as we battle with the effects of Covid-19, not least of which is wholesale corruption in the provision of life-saving food relief, sanitizers, personal protection equipment, etc, it is clear that we are reaping the fruits of the ongoing rebellion against God and the moral order he gave us to keep us on the tracks of goodness, justice and peace.

Much of it began when as a country we excluded God from parliament by eliminating formal prayer, and replacing it with a moment of meaningless silence! What could possibly **not** go wrong?

It was only to be expected that those who exclude God from guiding their actions on behalf of his people whom they govern by virtue of their election to parliament, would sooner rather than later try to play God in other areas of life.

We are told nature cannot tolerate a vacuum! That is true also of human nature. No surprise, therefore that with God, the Master of life out of the picture, the “ruling caste” wasted no time playing God in other areas of life, including the sacred space of marriage and the family.

Temptation to “play God”

This tendency to “play God” was evident at the height of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, when our leaders chose to ignore the moral option of countering the spread of HIV/AIDS by adopting the most successful and morally acceptable counter-measure developed and used to good effect in parts of Africa. That counter-measure is the ABC method, which had practically become a culture in Uganda, and was yielding remarkable results. Instead of adopting that working model, with its primary focus on **A**bstain if you are not married, **B**e faithful if you are married, and use a **C**ondom if you or your spouse is HIV positive, our leaders opted for the unsupervised distribution of condoms. They did so while ignoring that this would inevitably produce a counter-culture which is today causing us all manner of grief. They had obviously not learned that God will not be mocked!

In spite of impressions to the contrary, HIV/AIDS incidences have continued to rise, teenage pregnancies are spiralling out of control, so much so that some are sarcastically referring to pregnancy as **the** most certain fruit of our education system. Alarmed at the fruits which their ill-advised policies are producing, the powers-that-be are taking another step toward deeper moral disaster, namely the imposition of Comprehensive Sexuality Education. The intention is to take it even to primary schools. As far as I know there has been no meaningful consultation with responsible bodies such as parent bodies, Churches and other civil organisations.

Role of United Nations

Surely the most damning evidence of what happens when you remove God from your moral and ethical compass is that impostors take to playing God! In many ways the United Nations is the worst of these as it clearly has an agenda that is determined to undo everything that the Christian culture has painstakingly developed and practised for centuries.

While I presume there are good and principled men and women at the United Nations, many of its actions flatly contradict that assumption. From what many of our fellow Africans are experiencing at the hands of the UN, this body which at its inception was the hope of a world slowly and painfully emerging from the ravages of World Wars, held high hopes for those whose humanity had been utterly destroyed by the atrocities of war. They had welcomed it as the agent through which they could win back their humanity.

In that distant past the UN was a peace-maker, as bringer of hope, an instrument of upliftment, a support for those people and countries struggling to rebuild their lives and their institutions after the devastation of war and conflict. The United Nations was seen as an effective harbinger of peace to conflict situations.

Sad to say, recent history suggests that the UN has become a pawn in the hands of powerful ideologues, who use the UN’s own charter of human rights to launch systematic attacks on traditional and Christian cultures and their moral values. Indeed some rights have been lifted from the Charter, given a completely different import, absolutised and used to impose completely new and untested measures on weaker nations. I am thinking here of the way in which African countries are having their most valuable assets, their culture and way of life destroyed by such

UN instruments as the Maputo Protocol and the Cairo Declaration. Both these Accords trick the African countries into committing themselves to introducing abortion as a right which a woman has over her body as part of her basic human right guaranteed by the Charter.

The second driver after ideologies is big money, which sponsors the implementation of these chosen ideologies in order to and benefit from them.

Sinister Ideologies

A third driver is the narrative which has been drawn up to propagate the chosen ideologies. Such narrative serves two purposes. First it floods people's thinking, speaking and acting with whatever it is going to impose; and second, it silences, or more accurately, it drowns out any contrary views. A key part of this strategy is to shame or "troll" any who dare to oppose the chosen ideology. More often than not the shaming or trolling is achieved by obliterating any views, facts or evidence to the contrary.

For example! Every culture affirms pregnancy as a human good. It is a universally known fact that what a woman is carrying in her womb is a separate and distinct new human being. Most societies value and protect that new human life and extend special care or even right to the pregnant woman. Yet the narrative says: "a woman's right over her body" is absolute, therefore she is entitled to abort her baby as and when she chooses!

Anyone who opposes this UN narrative, but especially impressionable young people who are still asking questions about life and in particular the value of life are bombarded with the brain-washing narrative that what is in a pregnant woman's womb is no more than "a cluster of tissues" or "a clump of cells." Some narratives go as far as to say that the baby in the womb is a foreign object threatening the woman's body; at best it is a part of her body, but she is still free to keep or to reject (kill) it as she chooses.

To its shame the UN has tried every trick in the book to get African countries to buy into this "fake gospel". When it failed to sell this false gospel of the absolute right of a woman over her body, the UN introduced it secretly through the back door, via a hidden clause in the Maputo Protocol.

It is this history of "fake moral teaching" practised by the UN that is raising questions about or even opposition to Comprehensive Sexuality Education among teachers and parents as well as others with an interest in the principled education of the next generations.

What would we like to see happening?

As was so clearly indicated by Pope Francis as he set out his programme for renewing the Church and where necessary reforming it, the place to begin sex or sexuality education is in the context of Marriage and the Family. And an excellent instrument is *Amoris Laetitia*, the Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation. Next is the "Theology of the Body" (TOB) developed by Pope St John Paul II. This TOB is the basis of Education for Life programme for young people. Like TOB it starts from the story of creation in the Book of Genesis.

The Book of Genesis

This is where the story of mankind begins, with Adam and Eve accepting each other as full partners in the project of setting up the human family. According to Genesis, man and woman are to complement each other, not compete with each other. They are to increase and multiply, not simply use each other for the selfish pleasure. Thirdly, they are to do all this with a clear understanding that there are rules and regulations put in place by their creator. “You may not eat of the fruit of the tree of good and evil.” “Therefore a man shall leave father and mother, and cling to his wife and the two shall become one flesh.”

Returning to the Dream

So, if we are to put South Africa back on track, we must accept that no human law is going to save us from the disaster we are floundering towards; no amount of UN direction is going to restore us to what we dreamed we could and would become, way back in 1994. The only way to put South Africa back on course to realising our 1994 dream of becoming The New South Africa is for us as a Nation and a People to hear and act on the Lord God’s call, stated and restated by one prophet after another:

“Return to me, and I will return to you!

Return from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.” (Zechariah 1:3-4)

“And you will be my People, and I will be your God”. (Jeremiah 30:22)

+ Wilfrid Card. Napier OFM
Archbishop of Durban

R.I.P. Father Richard John Patterson OMI

Born: 22 February 1924

First Vows: 15 September 1943

Final Vows: 8 October 1946

Ordination: 29 July 1950

Died: 20 October 2020

Appointments:

1950 – 1964 Lecturer and Superior, St Joseph’s Scholasticate

1964 – 1971 Provincial, Natal Province

1971 – 1972 Administrator, Emmanuel Cathedral

1972 – 1974 Superior, St Joseph’s Scholasticate

1975 – 1983 Ongoing Formation, Cleland & Germiston

1983 – 1991 Parish Priest, Woodlands, PMB.

1991 – 1996 Superior, Sabon House

1996 – 1998 Assistant, Bluff; Prison Chaplain, Westville

1998 – 2002 Assistant, St Mary’s, PMB

2002 – 2008 Formation, Zimbabwe Mission

2008 – 2013 Formation, Cebula House of Formation

2013 – 2020 Retirement, Sabon House



Fr John Patterson arrived in South Africa 1950. He was 26 years old, just ordained in July that year, in Ireland. He was destined for the Oblate mission in Botswana and was given an obedience to the Bloemfontein-Kimberley Oblate Province, together with Fr John Boyce OMI. The catholic foundation in Botswana was reassigned to the Passionist Fathers, and somehow Fr Patterson ended up in Natal, and Fr Boyce in the Transvaal.

Fr Patterson was first sent as a lecturer to St Joseph's Scholasticate, which in 1950 was situated at Cleland, and moved to Cedara in 1953. He spent almost 14 years in the Scholasticate, teaching mainly Church History according to Fr John Poole who was a scholastic during those years. Fr Patterson became superior probably in 1961 until 1964.

He was a tall, strapping young man, big in build, with a booming voice. He made quite an impression on the people of my home parish St Anthony's where he sometimes supplied for ministry. Bishop Eddie Risi recalls Fr John's preaching ability; he was able to capture the congregation into spell-binding imagery that conveyed the Gospel message and brought the listener to the heart of God.

Fr Patterson's ministry appointments were a mosaic – to use the word of Fr Sean Coleman OMI – giving testimony to his versatility and readiness to accept any ministry. He was lecturer and formator (Scholasticate and Pre-novitiates), Provincial of the Natal Province (1965-1971); Administrator of the Cathedral (1971-1972); assistant parish priest (Bluff and St Mary's) and parish priest (Woodlands, PMB - 1983-1991), prison chaplain (Westville), Superior of the Oblate retirement house (1991-1996) and missionary to Zimbabwe (2002-2008). Most of all he is known as a spiritual master. He became very active in the charismatic renewal movement in the 1970s, and had been a sought-after spiritual director for many people.

Mr Raymond Perrier, Director of the Denis Hurley Centre, wrote: 'I only knew Fr John in his final years but could see that he was a true gentle-man with a sincere feeling for all of humanity. When his health permitted, he came to events at the Denis Hurley Centre and always seemed to enjoy being surrounded by people. I saw him, in the course of one afternoon, able to chat easily to a Cardinal and a cabinet minister and an 8-year-old boy! I was so moved to hear that, from his few resources, he made regular donations to our funds. I hope that the time he spent with us helped him to feel closer to his 'older brother' Denis Hurley and also know that the Oblate connection with the Emmanuel Cathedral precinct was still there.'

Fr Patterson was truly a person with his feet on the ground! He could relate easily to all people. He could quote the famous poets effortlessly with appropriate lines for any occasion, and he had a keen sense of humour. His spiritual depth was already recognised as early as 1962, when besides being Superior he was appointed 'Magister Spiritus' of the Scholasticate.

Fr John's heart was weak but a pacemaker gave him a few extra years. He died peacefully, without any acute illnesses, quietly passing into the arms of his Saviour. He is survived by two sisters, Clare and Noel, who live in California, USA. His funeral was held on Monday, 26 October at the Oblate Cemetery in Cedara amid the Covid-19 restrictions. We regret not being able to have a grander send-off for him! May he rest in peace. We will miss him!

Some Little Light on Reconciliation

1. Introduction

Our country has 12 public holidays. The Public Holiday Act number 36 of 1994 has made it possible to have the 16th December as a Day of Reconciliation. The hope has been that this day will inspire all of us to make efforts of fostering reconciliation and national unity. The reality is that come December 16, this symbolic day comes and goes, and it has become an occasion for taking a rest. The shopping and drinking dominate the day in the lives of many people. We continue to have different versions of things. The 16th of December has lost meaning in the lives of many. It is a day which is ignored and sometimes disparaged. We remain alienated from each other. At the same time, our country aches for healing and reconciliation.

The sad reality about the way things are in our country is that many people do not seem to think much about their role in the challenge to play a meaningful part in the reconstruction of the country. They have made an option for settling in some internal exile. The central stage is occupied by opportunists, drifters, corrupt politicians, convicted fraudsters, pretenders, swindlers, conmen and women, fake prophets and self-appointed ‘deputies of God.’

I am certain that very few people remember the events connected with 16th December 1836 in the history of South Africa. It was a milestone day for the Voortrekkers of yesterday. The victory at the Battle of Blood River was not just an ordinary event according to those who emerged victorious in 1836 and their descendants. It was a victory made possible through the power of God. This narrative led to the idea of establishing the event as a national holiday.

The victory was named ‘Day of the Covenant’ and ‘Day of the Vow’ by the Nationalist Government which came to power in 1948. For many decades, this day was celebrated in such a way that many people were excluded because the day was used to rub salt in the wounds of those whose forebears were defeated.

But things have dramatically changed in South Africa. The symbols of the past have taken a different meaning if not receded beyond memory.

We need to take a pause and ask ourselves some important haunting questions. Twenty-six years into a democratic dispensation, how is South Africa doing? What are the efforts being made to build a sense of common nationhood and shared destiny? Are there programs to restore friendly relations between citizens? Can our country become a household of love, justice, and peace? Do we have a spirit of patriotism and civic responsibility in South Africa? Is there a place for genuine reconciliation in our country? How long are we going to live with artificial reconciliation in our hearts? Will this kind of reconciliation bring redemption among some people who fear, despise, and hate others? How do we respond to people who continue to insult, stigmatise and humiliate others who are different in terms of race, class, and gender and country of origin? Can the Church model the possibility of dialogue for the rest of the nation?

We cannot ignore the reality that there are social movements in South Africa that are creating instability, promote polarization and the viscerally disdainful treatment of those who are different in terms of race, gender, class, and country of origin. Pope Francis in his new encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, writes that in many instances, healthy debates and absence of listening have led to a “permanent state of disagreement and confrontation.” Pope Francis makes a clear stand against racism, tribalism, xenophobia and “empty individualism.”

2. The Pastoral Plan

The SACBC Pastoral Plan of 2019 has eight focus areas. One of the focus areas is Healing and Reconciliation. The document makes the point that “reconciliation continues to be something crucially important for the Church in South Africa”. Healing and reconciliation do not happen without some efforts on the part of the victim and the offender. Healing and reconciliation cannot take place without forgiveness.

3. The Authority of Jesus

Jesus is someone who teaches with authority and all who become his disciples are to embrace his teaching and authority. The disciples and crowds are described as listening attentively to what Jesus taught. See Matthew 5:1-2; Luke 20:1-8. He presented a new attitude to the Mosaic Law. His teaching demands a total commitment from those who follow his way. These followers constitute the New Israel.

If we call ourselves the followers of Christ, we cannot have the attitude of picking certain teachings of our Lord and ignore others. He teaches us, “You have heard that it was said, love your friends and hate your enemies. But now I tell you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may become the children of your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5: 43-43).

There are many teachings of Jesus that are so challenging and sometimes many people believe that it is impossible to practically put these teaching into practice. Jesus explained to Peter the need to forgive others “seventy -seven times” (Matthew 18:21-22). Jesus also teaches, “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ But now I tell you: do not take revenge on someone who wrongs you. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, let him slap your left cheek too” (Matthew 5:38-39).

These admonitions of Jesus are not easy and do not sit well with many people. Martin Luther King once wrote there are those who have expressed the opinion that the teaching of Jesus is not only impractical but is indicative that the “Christian ethic is designed for the weak and cowardly, and not for the strong and courageous. Jesus, they say, was an impractical idealist.” (Martin Luther King, *Strength to Love*, page 47).

4. Gaudete et Exultate

In the encyclical, *Gaudete et Exultate*, Pope Francis writes that the “Beatitudes are like a Christian identity card. In the Beatitudes, we find a portrait of the Master, which we are called to reflect in our daily lives” (GE 63). This is not an easy task; however, we cannot stop striving to follow the teaching of Christ. He has warned us, “The measure you give will be the measure you

get back” (Matthew 6:38). Pope Francis exhorts us and invites us, “We need to think of ourselves as an army of the forgiven. All of us have been looked upon with divine compassion” (GE 82).

What is clear from the reading of Scripture is that God is waiting to forgive us. John the evangelist proclaims that, “For God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not die but have eternal life” (John 3:16). God, according to Henri Nouwen, can be described in the following wonderful uplifting and consoling manner, “His only desire is to bless. As Father, the only authority He claims for Himself is the authority of compassion. That authority comes from letting the sins of His children pierce His heart. The touch of His hands, radiating inner light, seeks only to heal.” (Henri Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, page 97).

5. Pastoral Experience

As a priest, I have had so many episodes of dealing with challenges of looking for a solution in families that have refused to travel the route of forgiveness. I have witnessed the dangers of holding on to grudges in many people. I have witnessed ugly scenes of couples having reached the point of refusing to let go of the past. I have experienced that with all the skills of conflict management in some situations I had failed miserably. It was as if I had wasted my precious time because I was speaking to a cold wall. Some hearts had been hardened because of deep hurts, disloyalty, unfair hurts and plans by others that had gone astray.

I have witnessed individuals in the same convent and monastery, or priests’ house having come to the point of not greeting each other or speaking to each other because of some misunderstandings. There are hurts I consider trivial but for some people they are so deep in such a way that they can no longer see the culprits as weak and insecure people. I know that some chords of resentment and bitterness can only be broken by a special intervention on the part of God. The tangled and traumatic dynamics are beyond skilled human interventions.

I have been there when the inability to forgive has led to death. I have presided at three requiem Masses where one partner shot the other and killed himself. Be that as it may, I am convinced that forgiveness is the key to healing and reconciliation. I am not saying it is an easy route to travel. It is not something that is easily achievable.

It takes faith and reliance on God. It is a reachable goal through the power of God’s Spirit. There can be no healing and reconciliation without forgiveness. Forgiveness becomes a creative way of letting go of the past. Forgiveness should leave one better and not bitter.

Where there is the presence of hatred and revenge, there is no healing and reconciliation. To put it in a different way, forgiveness is an important ingredient if healing and reconciliation are to take place. Forgiveness is not a denial of the fact that there was hurt experienced, but it is also the willingness not to allow the hurt to control the present and future. Forgiveness is willingness to be unchained from the past so that the past hurts do not dominate the soul of the victim.

In his book *Forgive and Forget: Healing the hurts we do not deserve*, L.B. Smedes puts it more graphically, “Some people are lucky, they seem to have the gracious glands that secrete the juices

of forgetfulness. They never hold a grudge. The painful yesterdays die with the coming of the tomorrow. But for some the pains of the past keep rolling through memories” (L.B. Smedes).

Most people in our world belong to the group of people who struggle with letting go of the past and releasing other people from their past and embracing forgiveness. Forgiving does not mean forgetting. Forgiveness means the past should not have power over one’s life. In forgiving we let go of whatever shame we do not deserve. When we forgive others, we put into practice the teaching we have embraced when we were baptised into the body of Christ. Jesus was clear in his teaching about the need to forgive others. He told of a palace servant who was forgiven of a huge debt but refused to forgive a fellow servant who owned him a few denarii. The parable of the unforgiving servant is found in Matthew 18: 21-35. The teaching of Jesus ends with a warning in verse 35, “This is how my Father in heaven will treat every one of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.”

6. What can our community do?

The Pastoral Plan makes it clear that the work of healing and reconciliation belongs to all of us. It mentions families, parishes, and Religious Communities, the clergy, and seminarians. We all should do our best “to bring healing and reconciliation among ethnic and cultural groups, deliverance from internal and external forces of unfreedom.” True healing and reconciliation leading to nation building requires much more from each person.

It should be a commitment from each person to promote healing and reconciliation.

- Adopt the Twelve Steps Prayer: Admit that we are powerless over our myths we have about other people; come to believe in a Power greater than ourselves that could restore our sanity; make a decision to allow our hearts to be ruled by our God; make a searching and inventory of ourselves; admit to each other the nature of our wrongs; ask for the grace of God to remove all these defects and compulsions; be aware of the healing forgiveness of God; make a list of people we have hurt and our willingness to make amends.
- It is essential to create a space for dialogue, to learn about and engage each other relying on a non-violent way of communicating. We have much to learn from each other. Move towards letting go of negative talk about others. Highlight the positives. Pope Francis writes that, “Each day offers us an opportunity, a new possibility. We have the space we need to for co-responsibility in creating and putting into pace new processes and changes. Let us take an active part in renewing and supporting our troubled societies” (Fratelli Tutti, 77).
- Avoid dismissing the history of the other. The denial of history can preclude any discussion of coming to a common history.
- It is important to be conscious of myths that we all have and entertain. Be conscious of how the myths continue to influence our narratives. These myths have the power to silence dialogue.
- Avoid making sweeping generalisations because it is like using the same brush to paint a group of people who are different from you. The attitude of generalizing creates contending parties not dialogue.

- In all our moments of Evangelizing (catechesis, homilies, conferences), we should not forget the context in which we find ourselves. We do not live in some special territory. We live in South Africa. We are not robots.
- Let us celebrate December 16th in a special way, conscious of the needs of our country, the challenges facing us and the opportunities available to us to be dedicated to the ministry of reconciliation, justice, unity, and peace. We should make efforts to organize this day as an opportunity not only to pray for Healing and Reconciliation but also make a special commitment to walk the talk when it comes to the efforts of fostering reconciliation and national unity.
- Healing and Reconciliation demands sacrifices on all of us. There is the story of recorded conversation from the Greek world. “Thucydides,” they asked,” When will justice come to Athens?” And Thucydides responded,” Justice will not come to Athens until those who are not injured are as indignant as those who are.”

Conclusion

Reconciliation, in our nation, in our communities, in our parishes, and in our families, will not be easy. The Gospel of Christ is clear about the importance of reconciliation. We are children of God, and we belong to the one human family. We are called blessed when we are peacemakers seeking the oneness of all. The promotion of reconciliation is not peripheral to the teaching of Christ; it is at the very heart of his teaching. His vision for a reconciled nation is made to all of us. It is always a vision to be kept afloat. The prophet offers us this wisdom: “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18).

+ Abel Gabuza

Coadjutor Archbishop of Durban

DIOCESAN

December 2020

- 2 Diocese of Eshowe
- 4 Building Committee



DIARY

5	Confirmation: Red Hill	Cardinal
6	Consecration of new church Upper Tongaat 25 th Jubilee of Deacon Raphael Nene	
7	Diaconate Board	
8	Patronal Feast Day, Morningside Advent Confessions Morningside	Archbishop
9	Closing of Judicial Year	
10	Napier Centre 4 Healing Meeting	Cardinal
14	Chancery Meeting	
15	Advent Confessions Virginia	
17	Chancery Staff Lunch	
18	Matikwe Sisters Celebrations	
19	Pallottine Diaconate Ordination, Point Parish	Cardinal