

An unfortunate governance in the democratic dispensation

Anyone reading Alan Paton's novel "*Cry, the Beloved Country*" published in 1948 would, in all probability, think that the conditions in society that led to the writing of that landmark novel (which was a social protest against social structures that later gave rise to apartheid) would never be seen, felt and experienced in the post-apartheid democratic dispensation. It is indeed so hurtful to see, feel and experience the beautiful country with such rich resources and forgiving people, being run down mercilessly with callous indifference. The deafness of the ruling elite to public outcry and suffering is too much to bear.

One would never have thought that, at this stage in our democratic dispensation, there would be such chilling revelations about theft and corruption as outlined in Crispian Olver's Book "*How to steal a City: The battle for Nelson Mandela Bay.*"

What a frightening reflection to read gruesome details happening in times like these.

What is more disappointing are the events playing out in the metro named after a world icon, a true democrat with such rich human values - Tata Nelson Mandela.

If Olver's chilling chronology of the depth and pervasiveness of the utter decay in governance by the very people we as the church so earnestly prayed for is indeed true, the community will take years to be restored through proper and legitimate governance.

The psychological scars and lack of trust left from that kind of governance require divine intervention to heal. The damage is too much!

The coronavirus-linked corruption scandals are the last straw that broke the camel's back. Not only has it embarrassed the president, but more deaths in hospitals, the loss of medical staff, poorly equipped health facilities, hospitals without the basic protection equipment, and a breakdown in administration were all due in greater part to this corruption.

As Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the governor general of the World Health Organisation said, corruption practices around medical safety gear for Covid-19 health workers is tantamount to "actually murder".

It is agonising to see a few people getting rich through PPE tenders, while those who needed the protection most, including medical staff, were dying like flies

As if that was not enough, the country is battered by a startling daily litany of evidence being publicly laid bare at the Zondo Commission of Inquiry into State Capture.

We are in a state of apprehension about our future, and wonder how we got into this mess during a period where the country has been under the control of the oldest liberation movement of Africa.

The Church cannot keep quiet. How dreadful and hypocritical would it be for those who know the suffering of the people of God to keep quiet when they witness such open blatant theft, vulgarity, arrogance and incompetence in the democratic dispensation?

We have become a people with numbed senses, deprived of dignity and sanctity in the way we are governed.

Ours has become a degenerating community marked by villainism.

The development of such villainism has resulted in unabated levels of crime like drug abuse, murders, violence rapes and more.

Though our people are being cheated and raped, we as the Church respond meekly when those responsible for the suffering request prayers that they be voted in for another term.

The Church should be careful not to be blinded by the comfort and luxury of the palace.

Those who keep quiet, or who sell the church voice to the highest bidder must remember the words of Martin Luther King, Jr: "In the end, we will not remember the words of enemies, but the silence of our friends".

We must turn to God not out of hatred, but to speak the truth in love, just for God's sake.

It is good to be met with rejection if we are maintaining our prophetic integrity.

People of God know that there is a season in the life of humanity, when God seems to keep quiet and to be far from responding to the cries of His people.

This was the case for Prophet Malachi (2;17) when he seemed to be wearied at the high levels of evil in the land, and the time during which people were rising from all corners to ask “where is the God of justice.”

During this time of corruption, the Church must rise individually and ecumenically to rebuke and speak the truth without fear or favour – or we are doomed forever.

In the context of such a very low community morale the Church in every ward must intervene in:

- Political infighting that has become the order of distraction at every council meeting
- Resurgence of pseudo parallel governance structures that compromises the legitimate structure
- Where delivery of services is hampered by a corrupt tendering system
- In municipal management confusion that results in continuous litigation that wastes money which could be better spent alleviating poverty and creating employment
- Where daily water leaks in the drought-stricken Municipality remain unfixed
- Where residents’ homes are being flooded by sewage, water leaks and overflowing drains when it does rain

The Church in all of our communities must continue to cry on behalf of God’s people in this metro and South Africa.

We know God hears us. He may not respond as quickly as we would like.

It may be costly to prophesy and speak out, but God assures us, “the fear of the Lord adds length to life but years of wicked will be short” (Proverbs 10:27).

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