



Editorial

In a volume of *Koers* largely dedicated to emeritus Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the following extract from the *commendatio* deserves special attention:

He never failed to emphasise that forgiveness and reconciliation can never be cheap, but can only be achieved through equal justice for all citizens. This was the reason why he fought with his whole being and all the means at his disposal against the unjust, inhuman and unbiblical ideology of apartheid. He did so long before this university distanced itself from apartheid, first through some lonely voices in the seventies and finally in 1996. The Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education has the greatest respect, appreciation and admiration for the way in which this fellow-Christian consistently, openly, boldly and unashamedly lived out basic Christian principles like justice, truth, reconciliation and peace.

The conferral of the Philosophiae Doctor (Honoris Causa) on Desmond Tutu marks a milestone for the Potchefstroom University in its journey towards a total break with the past. Following the conferral of the degree in 2002 (which had also been the culmination of a fairly long process at the University and incurred further controversy in the press at the beginning of 2003), it was decided to publish the public speeches in *Koers* as a commemorative gesture. The submission of articles on his theological stance as well as material on other crucial issues in the South African political and socio-cultural landscape sparked the decision to publish a volume that could really stand as a milestone, and the editorial board is pleased to show its appreciation and support for the decision by the Council of the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education. The gesture is of especial importance at this juncture of history – the eve of the merger with the University of North West and the incorporation of the Sebokeng campus of Vista University.

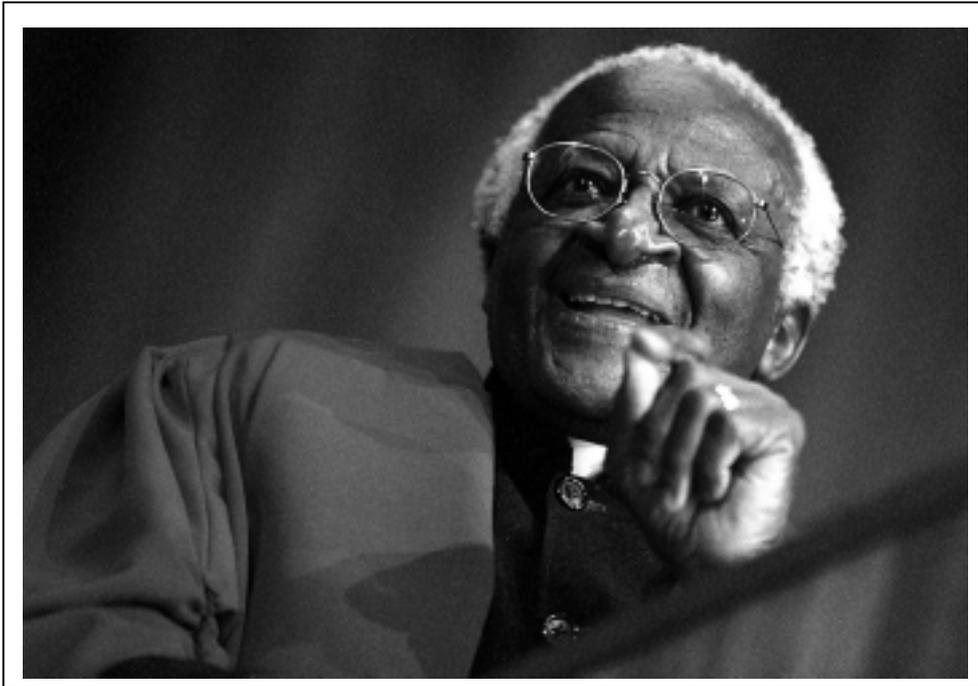
Annette L. Combrink

Editor, *Koers*

28 May 2003



Honorary degree to Archbishop Tutu



Philosophiae Doctor (Honoris Causa)

Desmond Mpilo Tutu

In gratitude to our heavenly Father for giving us such a man during such a time of our history, and in accordance with the Christian character of our University, we wish to recognise the extraordinarily valuable contributions of Desmond Mpilo Tutu, together with his dear wife, Leah - the secret “behind” his achievements – and bestow on him the honour of the degree Philosophiae Doctor (honoris causa) for the following reasons:

- his commitment to and embodiment of an integral Christian worldview and the way in which he concretised it in his own life and work;

- his own life as a clear testimony of foundational Christian principles, especially love, compassion, justice, peace and reconciliation amongst humans, and dependence on God;
- his exceptional and unselfish service rendered in the ecclesiastical, political and social spheres of our beloved country;
- his remarkable and outstanding contribution towards Christianity in South Africa, Africa and the rest of the world.

Nkosi sikelela Desmond Mpilo Tutu!

[As published in the programme of the Graduation Ceremony of 27 November 2003.]



Commendatio

Biography

Desmond Mpilo Tutu was born in Klerksdorp (a mining town 50 km from Potchefstroom), where his father was a teacher and his mother a domestic worker. Early in his life, during a prolonged illness, he experienced the love of Father Trevor Huddleston, an outspoken critic of apartheid. He studied and matriculated at the Johannesburg Bantu High School (1945-1950). From the Pretoria Bantu Normal College he obtained a diploma in 1953 and from UNISA a BA in 1954. He became a teacher and during this time (1955) he was married to Nomalizo Leah (née Shenxane). They have three daughters, a son and grandchildren.

In 1958 Tutu decided to become a minister in the Anglican Church and was ordained in Johannesburg as deacon in 1960 and as priest in 1961. From 1962 he continued his studies in England, obtaining the Bachelor of Divinity (honours) in 1965 and a Master of Theology degree in 1966. After his return to South Africa, he became a lecturer at the Federal Theological Seminary in Alice (1967) and (in 1970) lecturer in theology at the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. From 1972-1975 he was associate director for Africa of the Theological Educational Fund at the World Council of Churches in Bromley, Kent, UK. In 1975 he became dean of St. Mary's Cathedral in Johannesburg and in 1976 bishop of Lesotho. Following the Soweto uprising of 1976 he was convinced to return to South Africa to accept the position of general secretary of the South African Council of Churches. In this capacity (1978-1985) Tutu became a man of national and international significance. Tutu pursued the aims of the SACC, like ecumenicity, justice, the social-political responsibility of Christianity and reconciliation, with vigour and turned this organisation, representing the aspirations of millions of Christians, into an important factor in the spiritual and political life of South Africa. His criticism, on Biblical grounds, of apartheid and his struggle for a non-racial, democratic South Africa for all its citizens brought him into direct conflict with the National Party Government, but his work was internationally acknowledged when he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984.

In 1985 Desmond Tutu was enthroned as bishop of Johannesburg, in 1986 he was elected as archbishop of Cape Town and in 1987 he became the president of the All Africa Conference of Churches. Throughout the difficult 1980s – in spite of severe criticism from sections of his own black community – he continued his role as mediator and reconciler. He never intended to become a politician, but instead maintained his independence as a Christian striving for inclusive justice and peace.

Because of Desmond Tutu's integrity, stature and the fact that he always emphasised that South Africa belongs to both blacks and whites, President Mandela could not have appointed a more capable person to lead the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) from 1995 to 1998. This was a pioneering experiment with potentially far-reaching international implications on the way to human beings' dealing with conflict. Normally when a country experiences the difficult move from oppression to democracy, it deals with the past in one of two ways: either the previous injustices are swept under the carpet and the suffering of those subjected to violence is ignored, or the leaders of the old regime are put on trial. Under the chairmanship of Archbishop Tutu, South Africa followed a unique third way of both truth and reconciliation. His lasting contribution to the TRC was that it became as much a juridical undertaking as a deeply spiritual-Christian process of repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Awards

Apart from the Nobel Peace Prize (1984), numerous other international awards and honorary doctorates testify to the fact that Archbishop Tutu is one of the greatest, globally acclaimed – and still modest – African leaders. He serves on the council of the University of Fort Hare and as chancellor of the University of the Western Cape.

Works

Despite a very busy career, the following books (with different editors) appeared from his pen: *Crying in the wilderness; the struggle for justice in South Africa* (1982), *Hope and suffering; sermons and speeches* (1984), *Geen vrede met apartheid* (1985), *The words of Desmond Tutu* (1989), *The rainbow people of God; the making of a peaceful revolution* (1994), *An African prayer book* (1995), *The essential Desmond Tutu* (1997) and *No future without forgiveness* (1999), the archbishop's personal memoir of chairing the TRC.

His unique Christian contribution

Archbishop Tutu favoured a contextual theology, relevant to the South African situation but also true to the Word of God. In this respect he made a unique and lasting contribution in describing the relevance of the Gospel for changing political-economic-social structures without ever neglecting its personal-spiritual dimension.

While the South African government and some of the opposing liberation theologies propagated violence, Tutu, in spite of great pressure from both sides, always defended the peaceful option of dialogue and reconciliation. He was co-chairman of the Peace Committee, which resulted in a Peace Accord (Sept. 1991) and opened the way to multi-party negotiations. In this way he made an immense contribution to the peaceful transition to a new South Africa.

He never failed to emphasise that forgiveness and reconciliation can never be cheap, but can only be achieved through equal justice for all citizens. This was the reason why he fought with his whole being and all the means at his disposal against the unjust, inhuman and unbiblical ideology of apartheid. He did so long before this University distanced itself from apartheid, first through some lonely voices in the seventies and finally in 1996. The Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education has the greatest respect, appreciation and admiration for the way in which this fellow-Christian consistently, openly, boldly and unashamedly lived out basic Christian principles like justice, truth, reconciliation and peace.

Above all, our brother Desmond Tutu is a sincere Christian. His whole life as a leader is a testimony of unselfish service to God and his fellow human beings, irrespective of colour, sex or status, and of enormous personal sacrifices despite difficult situations and poor health. Cardinal Christian virtues, like common humanity, humility and humour, characterise his life.