



4th March 2019

Report Back to the St. Brigid's Third World Group – 2018 to 2019

My Dear Friends of the St. Brigid's 3rd World Group
And the People of the St. Brigid's Parish,

Greetings from Johannesburg, South Africa.

My sincerest thank you to each of you at the St. Brigid's Third World Group, and the people of the St. Brigid's parish in Belfast for your continued generosity and support toward poverty alleviation where I live and work in South Africa.

- *Page 3 includes the funding allocation breakdown and percentages of the funding granted.*

Hunger, Poverty, Crime & Frustration

As is usual, hunger is the single biggest challenge people face throughout South Africa and where I am is no exception. Unemployment is at its highest in years and is increasing annually with the number of young people leaving school simply adding each year to these figures. Frustrations are so high in some communities that the local people regularly take to the streets to vent their anger at government inadequacy and inaction. The number of people living well below the poverty line is shockingly high, and isn't decreasing but increasing! In our parish alone not a week passes when a food parcel or food aid isn't given out to some individuals or family in crisis.

Some National Statistics

- **Population** of South Africa mid 2018 **57.73 million people**
- **General unemployment** in SA in 2018 **27.5%**
- **Unemployment among young people** **40%** (approx.) *1 out of 3 young persons have no work! A young person in SA is regarded as between the ages of 15 to 34 years.*
- **Crime: approx. murders per day** in SA: **50 persons** *up by about 4% in previous years.*
- **Crime: general percentage increases:** **3% to 5%** *estimated general increases in crime of all kinds.*

Despite national campaigns, some in line with United Nations initiatives and guidelines, government corruption or ineptitude often stalls or halts completely any social progress and upliftment. The statistics are a little frightening and many South Africans, when I sit and discuss with them, despair at just how much more people can take. Often people complain the country will be like Zimbabwe soon enough! Many young people resort to criminal activities out of hunger, frustration, and a sense of hopelessness for their own futures. These days we undergo up to 7 or 8 hours power outages daily – businesses have to close, shops can't open, even the water supply is interrupted as pumps can't work and purification stations don't work.

We hear daily of robberies, home break-ins, vehicle hijackings, and general petty theft. Some days one can walk around and think that all is well, but it is far from the reality. Many ministers and religious leaders have been asked to join the local SAPS (South African Police Service) in their national campaign called 'Divine Intervention' to bring these matters to our congregations in our Churches, Temples and Mosques. I also have joined this national campaign of prayer and social and civic activities to deal with crime where we are. But unless we deal with the levels of poverty, hunger, homelessness and unemployment, then our prayers and religious services will amount to nothing!

25 Years of 'Liberation' – Elections 2019 – Land & Poverty

This year the country celebrates 25 years of 'liberation' since the end of Apartheid. Many of us wonder what there is to celebrate with the weekly discoveries of various corruption scandals to hit the headlines.

Elections are due in the first week of May this year, and politicians are busy with their promises, but people feel frustrated and no longer trust government.

Giving Back the Land

This year the issue of land taken by the White Colonisers over the decades and centuries has become the central issue in the political arena. The land in South Africa has become the focus of the frustrations of the millions of black people still stuck in the poverty trap, and politicians are using this issue to gain more votes. The statistics are dizzying and hard to grasp, but the bottom line is that White people still hold most of the arable and productive land in South Africa, even after a quarter century of 'liberation'. The president himself has referred to the taking of the land by colonisers as the 'Original Sin' in South Africa, and must be corrected for the sake of justice and the future healing of the country. How is it done, when it is done, how land is compensated for or not, are all being hotly debated this very moment. The Constitution has everything we need to address this historical injustice, but, again, government has not been proactive in maximising on the provisions of the Constitution for fair distribution of land around the country. The fear among some is a similar situation to the land grabs we witnessed in Zimbabwe over 10 years ago. We need international investment in South Africa, but can this really happen when there's growing uncertainty over how government will practically deal with the 'new policy' of taking back land 'without compensation'. Only time will tell.

Some Good News

There have been a couple of good government decisions such as the establishment of a minimum wage which government had made compulsory. However, this is not a living wage. Nevertheless, it is at least a move in the right direction at addressing the grinding poverty in the country. I do hear of the government's successes in some of the health departments – pre and post-natal care seems to be of a good standard, most clinics and hospitals function reasonably well, despite long queues. The government's handling of the HIV and AIDs crisis seems too to be under control and well organised. We only pray that these few success stories can continue.

Conclusion

This year's report to you, unfortunately, is rather more negative than previous ones. The reality on the ground in South Africa is very tough for ordinary folk and it doesn't seem set to improve any time soon. One tries to keep a positive outlook and hopeful, but this is a struggle.

I am constantly challenged by the attitude of Africa women and men who, despite their daily hardships, still manage a smile and kind of normal activities. As a Christian Pastor, with other Ministers and religious leaders, we are concerned just how long the people will keep patience in their difficulties – and we too as leaders are struggling ourselves to keep patience with government and its detachment from the ordinary woman and man on the street.

Personally, the present government needs to shift from its own obsession with itself and move to 'nation-building'. It needs to stop the corruption and the obvious and now highly visible grab of the national wealth by its government ministers – trillions of Rands simply missing from many state institutions and services such as Eskom (the national electricity supply company). It needs to be fast, tough and just in dealing with the perpetrators of national theft of this magnitude if it wants to win the hearts of the population of the country, Black and White alike! And not only win our hearts and trust, but to stop the country simply going down the drain. There is still time, and many good women and men are still holding up the idea of a just, multi-racial, prosperous South Africa.

We pray for our country of South Africa, for the sake of the children of this country, their future free from poverty, crime, social unrest, racism, and a future of hope, prosperity and justice & peace. The country that Mandela envisaged for 'all the people who live in it'.

As the opening words of the national anthem plead '**Nkosi, sikelel'iAfrika...**' – 'God bless South Africa...', we also pray this request, and ask for your prayers too.

Thank you to each one of you for your generosity in helping me to make a difference in people's lives.

*Fr. Raymond A. McQuarrie, M.Afr.
March 2019
Johannesburg
South Africa*

St. Brigid's Third World Funding - Poverty Alleviation

The Funding allocations are as follows:

St. Brigid's Third World Group Poverty Alleviation 2018 Fr. Raymond McQuarrie, Mafr South Africa	March 2018 to March 2019 1 Year	Donation Utilised From 5 666.00
	March 2019	

	CATEGORIES	Target Groups - St. Brigid's TWG	RAND	EURO	Percentage
1	CASH AID & Charitable Giving	Feeding Programmes; Homeless; Vulnerable Adults & children; HIV-AIDS; enable people gain work & make a living, support their families	20 539.74	1 416.53	23.66%
2	Clothing & Personal Needs	General help for clothing; personal dignity & hygiene; job seekers; vulnerable children/adults	4 647.00	320.48	5.35%
3	EDUCATION & SCHOOL	Education, books, training - children & adults; assistance in learning	3 240.00	223.45	3.73%
4	FOOD AID: Emergency Food Parcels	Prevent Starvation, malnutrition, assist in physical development; food parcels for poor families	38 285.86	2 640.40	44.10%
5	HOUSEHOLD AID & GENERAL HOME	Prevent homelessness; provide shelter, security, housing	13 447.00	927.38	15.49%
6	MEDICAL & HEALTH	Health & Hospice; preventing suffering & disease; cost of travel to and from hospital; vitamin supplements; support to the sick & dying	2 606.48	179.76	3.00%
7	TRANSPORT & TRAVEL	General assistance in travel; homeless; job-seekers; students	4 045.00	278.97	4.66%
			86 811.08	5 986.97	106%