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WAGING PEACE IN SACRED SPACE

**A Comparative Study of Catholic Peacebuilding
in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique,**

1963-2003

by

CHARLES THOMAS STRAUSS

**A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of Historical Studies,
Faculty of Humanities, University of Cape Town**

February 2004

University of Cape Town

Supervisor's Approval of Submission of Dissertation for Examination

I confirm that I have seen the final version of Charles Strauss' dissertation and that it is submitted for examination with my approval.

Supervisor's Signature:

Christopher C. Saunders
20 February 2004

Declaration

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Student's Signature:

Charles T. Strauss
20 February 2004

University of Cape Town

Abstract

WAGING PEACE IN SACRED SPACE

A Comparative Study of Catholic Peacebuilding
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Charles Thomas Strauss
(STRCHA012)

Supervised by: **Professor Christopher C. Saunders**
Department of Historical Studies

“Waging Peace in Sacred Space” ultimately begs the question: “What does it mean to be a Catholic *militant for peace*?” The dissertation tackles this question systematically: in three carefully researched case studies, the ways in which Catholic actors have waged peace in spaces of conflict and war will be explored. The three case studies include: the pastoral ministry of two township priests in Cape Town, the involvement of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe on a report detailing atrocities committed in Matabeleland by the ZAPU government and the role of the *Comunità di Sant'Egidio* in brokering peace in Mozambique’s Civil War. The narratives place special focus on the various *roles* the peacemakers played as well as the *skills* they demonstrated. Following John XXIII’s *Pacem in Terris* from beginning to end, the case studies also enrich a forty-year old Papal Encyclical with practical examples of how it has been translated into action on the ground. And finally, by paying special attention to the role of “the holy”, “the divine”, “the sacred” in each case study, the dissertation explores the significance of *things unseen* to Catholic approaches to peacebuilding in southern Africa.

For my Dad,

Charles Anthony Strauss

23 March 1949 – 18 February 1984

and for my Mom.

...I say more: the just man justices;
Keeps grace: that keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is –
Christ. For Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men's faces.¹

¹ Excerpt of “As Kingfishers Catch Fire” (1918) by Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J.

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Abbreviations

| | |
|---------|--|
| ANC | African National Congress – South Africa |
| BMW | Bonteheuwel Military Wing – South Africa |
| BBC | British Broadcasting Corporation |
| BISCO | Bonteheuwel Inter-School Congress – South Africa |
| CCJPR | Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace – Rhodesia |
| CCJPZ | Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace – Zimbabwe |
| CIIR | Catholic Institute for International Relations – London |
| CIO | Central Intelligence Organisation – Rhodesia/Zimbabwe |
| FRELIMO | <i>Frente da Libertacao de Mocambique</i> – The Mozambique Liberation Front |
| JMC | Joint Management Councils – South Africa |
| LRF | Legal Resources Foundation – Zimbabwe |
| MDC | Movement for Democratic Change – Zimbabwe |
| MNR | <i>Movimento Nacional de Resistencia de Mocambique</i> – The Mozambique National Resistance Movement |
| OAU | Organisation of African Unity |
| RENAMO | <i>Resistencia Nacional Mocambicana</i> – The Mozambique National Resistance |
| SABC | South African Broadcasting Corporation |
| SACC | South African Council of Churches |
| SACBC | South African Catholic Bishops Conference |
| SADF | South African Defence Force |
| SWAPO | South West African People's Organisation |
| UDI | Unilateral Declaration of Independence – Rhodesia (1965) |
| UDF | United Democratic Front – South Africa |
| USIP | United States Institute of Peace |
| UWC | University of the Western Cape |
| ZANLA | Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (military wing of ZANU) |
| ZANU | Zimbabwe African National Union |
| ZANU-PF | Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front |
| ZAPU | Zimbabwe African People's Union |
| ZIPRA | Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (military wing of ZAPU) |
| ZCBC | Zimbabwe Catholic Bishop's Conference |

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Finally, I dedicate this project to my parents. Although my father passed away when I was not yet four years old, it was the life that he and my mother prepared for me and the love they had for me that paved the way for all of my experiences and achievements in life so far. I dedicate this dissertation in memory of my Dad and in gratitude that my Mom is the woman that she is.

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

C.T.S.

February 2004

University of Cape Town

Peace on Earth, which human beings of every era have most eagerly yearned for, can be firmly established and sustained only if the order laid down by God be dutifully observed. [1]²

University of Cape Town

² John XXIII, “*Pacem in Terris*.”

WAGING PEACE

Over the last several years, an increasing number of scholars have recognized organized religion's legacy to society. R. Scott Appleby, John Paul Lederach, Paul Gifford, Marc Gopin, Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson represent some of the names on the growing list of historians, conflict resolution specialists and practitioners, social scientists and theologians who have turned their attention to the role of religion in modern society, particularly in regards to national and international conflicts.³ On one hand, they point to religiously motivated conflicts and acts of extremist violence or terror around the world. They name Hizbullah, the American Christian Patriot movement and Osama bin Laden. And on the other hand, they identify individuals and organizations that have drawn from their respective religious faith traditions to make peace. These names include: Mohandas Ghandi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Pope John XXIII, Pope Paul II, the Dalai Lama, Bishop Desmond Tutu, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Maha Gosanaanda of Cambodia, and many others. What these groups of religious actors have in common is their perception of their work as *sacred duty* and the *militancy* with which they perform their sacred duty. Nevertheless, the chasm that separates the two groups is vast. For the religious *peacemaker*, the appropriate resolution to conflict is an end to violence: reconciliation is the ultimate goal. By contrast, religious *extremists* consider victory over the enemy to be the only resolution and engage in violence, and often extreme violence, if necessary.⁴

³ See R. Scott Appleby: [Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, Carnegie Corporation of New York], *The Ambivalence of the Sacred* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000); "Catholic peacebuilding," *America* 189, no. 6 (8 September 2003); "Religion as an Agent of Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding," in *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict*, eds. Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall, 821-840 (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2001). Paul Gifford, ed. [Studies of Religion in Africa, Supplements to the Journal of Religion in Africa edited by Adrian Hastings (Leeds) and Marc R. Spindler (Leiden)], *The Christian Churches and the Democratisation of Africa* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995). Marc Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence and Peacemaking*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson [Center for Strategic and International Studies], *Religion, the Missing Dimension of Statecraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997).

⁴ Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred*, 10-11.

While there is an increasing number of scholars and institutions that recognize organized religion as a major factor in contemporary conflicts,⁵ careful analysis of the nature of religion's role in conflict situations and the ways in which religion has played an equally important function in peacemaking in these same conflicts is still inadequate. It is to this limited though burgeoning body of scholarship that this dissertation contributes. Structured around three conflict zones in southern Africa, this dissertation will explore the role of organized religion, specifically the Roman Catholic religion, in building peace in spaces of conflict.

Ultimately, this research is a response to R. Scott Appleby's monumental, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (2000).⁶ *The Ambivalence of the Sacred*, and Appleby's more recent writing on similar themes, introduces the notion of a religious "warrior" or "militant for peace." Appleby uses the terms *militant* and *militancy* very specifically to distinguish the notion from religious extremism. According to Appleby's definition from the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "militancy" involves an engagement in warfare or a social organization "in which efficiency in war is the primary object aimed at." Appleby concedes that "it may seem counterintuitive to describe the peacemaker as one engaged in warfare;" however, he also contends that it is, in fact, a common theme in religious history. Appleby observes that where the religious *extremist* is passionate about victory at any cost, the religious *militant for peace*, "attempts at great cost to avoid physical violence; employs it only sparingly, in self-defense, and as a matter of last resort, and most important, sees and seeks reconciliation with the opponent as an integral part of the act of resistance."⁷ Thus Appleby concludes that neither religion nor religious militancy represent the source of deadly conflict; rather, the problem is extremism. This dissertation, which focuses on three case studies of *religious militants for peace*, will provide supporting evidence to Appleby's claim.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu further illustrates a character sketch of a *religious militant for peace*:

Any person of faith has no real option. In the face of injustice and oppression it is to disobey God not to stand up in opposition to that injustice and oppression. Any violation of the rights of God's stand-in cries out to be condemned and to be redressed, and all people of good will must willy-nilly be engaged in upholding and preserving those rights as a religious duty. Such a discussion as this one should therefore not be merely an academic exercise in the most pejorative sense. It must be able to galvanize participants with a zeal to be active protestors on the rights of persons. [Religious peacemakers exercise] dominion, not in an authoritarian and destructive manner, but to hold sway as God would hold sway – compassionately, gently, caringly, enabling each part of creation to come fully into its own and to realize its potential for the good of the whole, contributing to the harmony and unity which was God's intention for the whole of creation.⁸

⁵ For example, see United States Institute of Peace, the Kroc Institute of International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame and the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation in Cape Town.

⁶ Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred*.

⁷ Ibid., 10-11

⁸ Desmond Tutu in the preface to Van der Vyver and Witte, eds. *Religious Human Rights in Global Perspective*, as quoted in Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred*, 38-39.

In addition to supporting Appleby's claim that nonviolent religious militancy has existed in history, this dissertation will consider three case studies of individuals or groups who fit the criteria Tutu offers above. Two township pastors in Cape Town, Fr. Peter-John Pearson and Fr. Basil van Rensburg, the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe and the *Comunità di Sant'Egidio* in Mozambique offer three opportunities for a deconstruction of Appleby's notion of the *religious militant for peace* as defined in Tutu's criteria.

Firstly, they are persons or organizations of faith, specifically the Roman Catholic faith and consider their daily work as peacemakers to be a "religious duty". They represent three levels within the Roman Catholic Church: the parish priest operating from a grassroots base, a lay commission of the Bishops acting on behalf and with the authority of the hierarchy and an international Catholic NGO whose independence and organization allows it to navigate through many levels of society. By bringing together this diverse group of Catholic actors and concentrating on the *roles* the three Catholic actors play in their respective spaces of conflict, this dissertation will highlight various ways in which the Catholic Church is equipped for peacebuilding. This approach will also underline some of the key characteristics of a *Catholic militant for peace*.

In addition, the three Catholic peacemakers in this study were each shaped by Pope John XXIII's Encyclical, *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth), which inspired in them "a zeal to be active protestors on the rights of persons." Published in 1963, *Pacem in Terris* established the Church's position on peace as the positive realization of the dignity of the whole human family. By contrast with some other religious traditions which emphasize conflict resolution or transformation, the modern Catholic social tradition, as introduced in *Pacem in Terris*, stresses the positive content of peace. Moreover, *Pacem in Terris* essentially reconceived Catholic political theology in terms of human rights by redefining the notion of "common good" as "the objective recognition, respect, safeguarding and promotion of the rights of the human person."⁹ Two years after the release of *Pacem in Terris* the Second Vatican Council declared that the promotion of human rights was one of the ways in which the church served the world. Each chapter of this dissertation will begin with a quotation from *Pacem in Terris* and will illustrate how the Papal Encyclical empowered the Catholic actors with the authority and the directives to wage peace. Thus *Pacem in Terris* will provide continuity and momentum to the case studies which follow.

⁹ John XXIII, "Pacem in Terris: Encyclical of Pope John XXIII on Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity, and Liberty: April 11, 1963." [Encyclical online]; available from Vatican website, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem_en.html; Internet; accessed 6 June 2003.

Finally, each case study will reveal the story of a Catholic militant for peace who struggles to build the perfect, the sacred, unity which Tutu suggests. “Contributing to the harmony and unity which was God’s intention for the whole of creation,” the township pastors, the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and Sant’Egidio have tough roads ahead of them. The case studies will not shy from the obstacles they encounter from others as well as the ones they create for themselves in constructing their approach to peacebuilding; rather, the three Catholic actors will be presented as this author discovered them through personal interviews, transcripts of interviews by others, newspaper articles, secondary source material and the literature produced by the individuals and groups themselves.

“Waging Peace in Sacred Space” ultimately begs the question: “What does it mean to be a Catholic militant for peace?” The dissertation tackles this question systematically: in three carefully researched case studies, the ways in which Catholic actors have waged peace in spaces of conflict and war will be explored. The narratives will place special focus on the various roles the peacemakers played as well as the skills they demonstrated. Following John XXIII’s *Pacem in Terris* from beginning to end, the case studies will also enrich a forty-year old Papal Encyclical with practical examples of how it has been translated into action on the ground. And finally, by paying special attention to the role of “the holy”, “the divine”, “the sacred” in each case study, this dissertation will explore the significance of things unseen to Catholic approaches to peacebuilding in southern Africa.

Any human society, if it is to be well-ordered and productive, must lay down as a foundation this principle, namely, that every human being is a person, that is, his nature is endowed with intelligence and free will. Indeed, precisely because he is a person he has rights and obligations, flowing directly and simultaneously from his very nature. And as these rights and obligations are universal and inviolable so they cannot in any way be surrendered. [9]¹⁰

¹⁰ John XXIII, “*Pacem in Terris*.”

“DOING THE ORDINARY THINGS WELL”

Township Pastors Minister Amidst Violence in South Africa

“A Space of War”¹¹

While many commentators on South Africa’s experience of apartheid during the turbulent 1980s and 1990s emphasize the highs and lows of the resistance movement in terms of individual, group or governmental actions and responses, David Chidester explains the interactions between the National Party government and the various resistance organizations in relation to the *space* they occupied. In this context, space can be defined as the physical areas inhabited by the competing parties and the atmosphere they created in these locations as well as the contested spaces of dialogue and expression over which they disagreed. And according to Chidester’s account, South Africa was “a space of war.” Tracing this war from the nation’s borders to its townships, Chidester observes that it was “fought not only with arms, but also through the deployment of religious symbols.” He suggests that the South African Defence Force drew upon religion in their military symbols, myths and rituals to justify their actions in moral terms. In the border regions during the 1970s, specifically concerning the SADF campaign against SWAPO in Namibia and against ANC training camps in Zimbabwe and Zambia, “a symbolism of power and place” was reinforced. Employing familiar religious symbols, the SADF attempted to extinguish or at least limit the spaces for opposition and even dialogue at home – spaces where their authority could be questioned. While it may sound like an abstracted way to wage war, the SADF employed tangible methods in dominating this space.¹²

The “Official SADF Border Song” provides one example of their use of tangible religious symbols: evoking spiritual notions of “will” and “courage” as well as claims of ownership of “our plains,” “our mountains,” “our country,” “our Southern land,” the song reveals how the

¹¹ David Chidester, *Shots in the Street: Violence and Religion in South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1992), 87.

¹² Ibid.

apartheid government justified its authority in spatial terms and with a religious tone.¹³ Chidester illustrates this point nicely:

The song effectively appropriated the discourse of the opposition that was struggling for freedom from South African oppression by taking over the very terms “freedom” and “oppression” and cleverly inverting them. South Africa’s enemies were dehumanised and demonised as “dark forces” of “menace,” with the unavoidable hint of racial classification in the image of the “dark” forces of opposition. Finally, the song conveyed potent imagery. While the enemy had a hand, the SADF had the whole arm, ruthless in its crushing strength. In the immediacy of that body symbolism, the official border song celebrated the obvious conclusion that soldiers in the SADF incarnated the transcendent power of the ruthless military arm of the South African government on the border.¹⁴

As the government redirected military force from the borders to the increasingly volatile townships in the 1980s, this type of rhetoric reappeared. Chidester remarks that the mobilization and deployment of troops to the townships “not only represented an escalation in the amount of violent force the government was willing to use in suppressing resistance, but [also] signalled a profound reorientation in the South African symbolism of space.”¹⁵ By deploying troops to locations inside the country, the government waged war on its own people “by violating any meaningful distinction between the inside (protected by police force) and an outside (threatened by military force) in the South African spatial order.”¹⁶ In a very compelling chapter entitled “The Space of War” in *Shots in the Streets: Violence and Religion in South Africa* (1992), Chidester struggles with this theme of contested space: he explores the symbols, myths and rituals used by the apartheid government and the SADF as well as by the religious actors fighting against them to secure public spaces, both physically and rhetorically, for themselves.

This chapter will focus on township resistance to the government’s disruption of space. More specifically, the chapter takes its cue from Chidester’s scholarship by exploring how *individuals* working in the townships countered the government’s manipulation of space with their own set of religious symbols and rituals. While ANC cells, UDF agitators and other such militant organizations took on the government’s attempt to control physical space with underground organization and force, the Catholic Church remained well suited *to offer an alternative construction of*

¹³ An excerpt from the “The Official SADF Border Song,” as published in *Paratus*:

Dauntless our will to survive and to prosper
Here in our Southern land –
Free as the winds o’er our plains and our mountains
Free from oppressor’s hand.
Dark are the forces that menace our country –
Frontier and city and farm.
Ours is the courage triumphant to crush them –
Ruthless in the strength of our arm.

Ibid., 99.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 100-101.

¹⁶ During 1985, 35,000 troops were deployed in ninety-six townships throughout the country. According to an editorial in a prominent black newspaper, it was hard not to form the “the impression that this part of the country [was] under military occupation.” *Ibid.*, 101.

space – to transform a “space of war” into an ethical space where notions of justice and peace, and later healing, could be considered. Simply put, because the South African government waged war on its own people, two Catholic clerics who feature in this chapter responded by waging peace.

Much has been written on the involvement of the Church as an institution or a structure in the wider struggle against apartheid legislation and leadership.¹⁷ This chapter will depart from this literature and consider the grassroots and individual efforts of two Catholic priests to carve out an ethical space in the townships in which they lived.¹⁸ According to Vincent Kolbe, well-known former resident of District 6 and parishioner of Holy Cross Catholic Church, in reference to the prevailing sentiment of Catholics from District 6, “you’ll find a log of people saying, officially the Church stinks, but there were some great individuals.”¹⁹ This chapter will take into consideration the efforts of individual Catholics who, often in spite of the Catholic hierarchy, made their mark in the struggle for peace. While this approach concentrates on the actions of individuals, the stories which follow are not merely anecdotal. Rather, the case studies will emphasize the ways in which these individuals “exploited” a Catholic theology and infrastructure, which was available to all Catholics, as well as their unique roles as parish priests to wage peace. Embodying the characteristics of Appleby’s “religious militants of peace” though embracing very

¹⁷ For the authoritative history of the Christian churches’ struggle against apartheid, see Peter Walshe, *Prophetic Christianity and the Liberation Movement in South Africa* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996). For a very informed account of the actions of the South African Catholic Bishops Conference and the South African Council of Churches, a more recent book written by Walshe’s student at the University of Notre Dame is helpful; see Tristan Anne Borer, *Challenging the State: Churches as Political Actors in South Africa, 1980-1994* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998). For more general history of the experience of religious activism under apartheid, see John W. de Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, 2nd ed. (London: Collins, 1986 [1979]); David Chidester, *Shots in the Streets: Violence and Religion in South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1992); Douglas Johnston, “The Churches and Apartheid in South Africa,” in *Religion, The Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, ed. Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson, 177-207 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). Also see the following by Charles Villa-Vicencio: *Civil Disobedience and Beyond: law, resistance and religion in South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1990); *The Spirit of Freedom: South African leaders on religion and politics* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996); *Trapped in Apartheid: a socio-theological history of the English speaking churches* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1983). For literature specific to the Catholic Church, see Stuart Bate, “The Church Under Apartheid,” in *The Catholic Church in Contemporary South Africa*, ed. Joy Brain and Philippe Denis, 151-186 (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1999); Joy Brain and Denis Philippe, ed., *The Catholic Church in Contemporary Southern Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1999); Colin B. Collins and Roslyn R. Gillespie, “Catholic Education in South Africa: A History of Compromise and Coincidence,” *JSR* 7:1 (March 1994): 21-47; Anthony Egan, “The Politics of a South African Catholic Student Movement, 1960-1987” [Centre for African Studies, UCT] *Communications* 20 (1991); David Ryall, “The Roman Catholic Church and Socio-Political Change in South Africa 1948-1990,” Work in progress, Department of Politics, University of Wales, Swansea, September 1994.

¹⁸ The author would like to acknowledge that though this chapter focuses on the efforts of two priests, the ministry and activism of religious women was particularly important in townships during the late 1980s. Where scholarship exists on the South African Catholic Bishops Conference, the Catholic Commission of Justice and Peace, the Catholic Youth Movement and individual Catholic priests, the experience of Catholic nuns in their service as activists, nurses, social workers and teachers is an important and compelling topic for future research.

¹⁹ Vincent Kolbe, Interview.

different approaches to peacebuilding, the clerics – both pastors in township parishes in the 1980s and 1990s – offer two useful case studies of ways in which the Church, through individual actors, engaged in apartheid South Africa’s spaces of war. In addition, both men underwent formation and were ordained as priests in the post-Vatican II Catholic Church. Observing their township work in light of *Pacem in Terris*, one is able to assess how this document from Rome was translated into action in areas of conflict. Thus this chapter will focus on the specific ways in which the two individuals took advantage of the rituals, theology and infrastructure of the Church for whom they worked to transform spaces of ignorance, inequality and violence.

“Doing the Ordinary Things Well”

Pacem in Terris begins by establishing the fundamental principle that every person is a human being possessing a nature that is endowed with intelligence and free will. As a result of this principle, every human being has rights and obligations that are universal and inviolable.²⁰ Needless to say, South Africa’s system of apartheid did not reflect the human rights principles of *Pacem in Terris*; the Catholic Church in South Africa, however, did. Through an educational system that historically rebelled against the injustices of the Bantu Education Act,²¹ pastoral letters by the nation’s bishops which articulated the Church’s social teaching on race relations and human rights,²² special reports on police conduct during township protests and the injustices of the forced removals,²³ and the compassionate and active ministry of lay and religious Catholics, the Church embraced the directives of *Pacem in Terris*. This chapter will explore the ways in which two priests, Fr. Peter-John Pearson of Bonteheuwel and Fr. Basil van Rensburg of Guguletu, translated the document’s language about human *dignity* and human *rights* into real engagement with spaces of war. Moreover, it will show that by “doing the ordinary things well” – that is, following their job descriptions as Catholic priests – the two men effectively opened up religious, physical and ethical spaces where *Pacem in Terris*’s directives regarding the human person had a chance of being fulfilled. The intent of this chapter is not to prove that Pearson and van Rensburg dramatically altered the course of history through their ministries; rather, it is to

²⁰ John XXIII, “*Pacem in Terris*,” Number 9.

²¹ See Colin B. Collins and Roslyn R. Gillespie, “Catholic Education in South Africa: A History of Compromise and Coincidence,” *JSR* 7:1 (March 1994): 21–47.

²² For examples, see: “Statement on Race Relations” (1952), “Statement on Apartheid” (1957), “Social Justice and Race Relations Within the Church” (1977), “Pastoral Letter of the SACBC on Christian Hope in the Current Crisis” (1986) in South African Catholic Bishops Conference, *The Bishops Speak*, vols. 1 – 5 (Pretoria: SACBC, 1994).

²³ South African Catholic Bishops Conference, *Report on police conduct during township protests, August – November, 1984* (London: SACBC and Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1984) and South African Council of Churches and South African Catholic Bishops Conference, *Relocations: the Church’s report on forced removals* (Pretoria: SACC and SACBC, 1984).

explore the possibilities open to a Catholic priest to take advantage of his special role, authority and set of directives and invite peace into spaces that had known only violence.

FATHER PETER-JOHN PEARSON

Bonteheuwel, 1989

Bonteheuwel is a coloured township situated along the Modderdam Road turn-off on the N2, which leads to Cape Town's northern suburbs. Built in the early 1960s, it was one of the first areas to be settled by members of the coloured community who were forcibly removed from their homes in District Six, Claremont and Newlands. Due to extremely poor living conditions and public works, overcrowding and escalating political activism, Bonteheuwel by the mid 1980s "had become synonymous with leftist activism, unrest and high crime."²⁴ Needless to say, the volatile atmosphere of Bonteheuwel provoked an increasingly violent response from the apartheid government.

Yazir Henry, in his careful study of Bonteheuwel, remarks that from 1985, the state via the Joint Management Councils and its security forces "employed a dual strategy in its effort to maintain 'law and order' in Bonteheuwel which was clearly identified as the main civil unrest area at the time."²⁵ Their first strategy to pacify the Bonteheuwel residents involved upgrading the area; however, after three City Council construction vehicles were burnt out by petrol bombs, the JMC focused its efforts on "cracking down heavily on people and groups of people they believed were responsible for undermining law and order."²⁶

The security forces thus turned their attention to the Bonteheuwel Inter-School Congress (BISCO) and its more militant offshoot – the Bonteheuwel Military Wing (BMW). According to one BISCO member interviewed by Henry, "we were a group of angry students who felt we were going to die, so we decided to protect ourselves."²⁷ A member of BMW used similar notions of self-defence in identifying his organization's goals:

"It [the BMW] would defend the school and community from the actions of the police by creating diversions at school when it became clear that the police would use force to break up peaceful meetings and programmes being run at the schools. BMW would co-ordinate all militant and non-violent actions at the school during the day and would spearhead similar activities on the streets after school hours."²⁷

²⁴ Yazir Henry, "Bonteheuwel a living testament to resistance – the Bonteheuwel Military Wing born in the eye of the storm." Work in progress; for *SAHS*, 1999.

²⁵ Ibid., 4.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 6.

Thus the position of the school in Bonteheuwel provided a space where resistance campaigns and actions were organised and a source of energy and momentum to those involved.

Other interviews in Henry's study reveal that though BMW was not formally controlled by UDF, it was discussed at UDF meetings and endorsed, albeit unofficially, by the organisation. However, as one UDF activist recalled, "...the UDF area committee in Bonteheuwel was a very broad coalition including, for example, the churches and other social groupings. It would not have been possible to discuss BMW matters in such a forum."²⁸ Although UDF activists interviewed by Henry suggest that they would not become involved in militant activities, they realised, too, that they could not be too far away from them as they needed to exert an influence. There is even evidence that the UDF played "a directive role in 'ordering' some of the incidents of public violence that took place." As one UDF activist put it, "if we wanted an effect they [BMW] would provide it."²⁹

It is in this volatile space shared between the government security forces, BISCO and BMW, UDF, radicalised youth and regular (including many conservative) Bonteheuwel residents, that Fr. Peter-John Pearson found himself in the late 1980s. He arrived in Bonteheuwel during a time that in retrospect many people consider to be the "apex of the struggle." Pearson took over the Catholic parish on a temporary basis in late 1989 while he was still serving as chaplain to the University of the Western Cape: he assumed his permanent role as pastor of St. Matthews, Bonteheuwel in 1990. The young priest had expressed interest in township work and social/political justice issues during his seminary days. Pearson suggests that he was transferred to Bonteheuwel because the Archbishop believed that St. Matthews, "a parish with an activist edge," needed a priest with Pearson's political sensibilities and his background at UWC.³⁰ Working more than a full-time job, as Pearson lived at his place of employment, in a politically radicalised and increasingly volatile township would take the young cleric in directions that he probably could not have predicted upon his arrival.

A ministry on wheels: creating religious space

Cruising the streets of Bonteheuwel on his bicycle in his pastoral ministry, Pearson essentially "carried religion" out of the church and into the homes of the elderly, the sick, the lonely, the hungry and the grieving. Pearson concludes that he was "interested in doing the ordinary things

²⁸ Ibid., 7.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Interview, Peter-John Pearson.

well.”³¹ Not only was he fulfilling his seminary goals for his priestly ministry with this work, but he were also gaining credibility and creating spaces for trust in the township. In these new spaces, Pearson was a recognizable face. According to Mark Thompson, Pearson’s colleague and fellow cleric from Bonteheuwel’s Anglican parish, politicised township priests achieved almost “pop star status.”³² The recognition and respect Pearson received in Bonteheuwel as a priest committed to “doing the ordinary things well” by ministering to those on the margins and by supporting the activists’ call for liberation made the young cleric especially important to the resistance movement.

Pearson’s definition of the marginal encompassed more than the poor and the sick but included the politically radical as well. He explains that just as the elderly and the grieving needed hope, “so did the community and so did the nation.” Pearson saw in Bonteheuwel a need to give the activists, the members of BMW and BISCO and the family members of activists “a home in the church.” While many at St. Matthews in Bonteheuwel expressed their concern and often disapproval at their priest’s ministry to the politically radical, as well as to the “revolutionary language” that came through in his sermons, Pearson is confident that “it was the place they had to be.” Drawing the radical into the religious community, Pearson, in a way, helped hold the resistance together by providing symbols and a discourse that was liberatory and religious but not necessarily partisan or party political. This had the possibility of providing a wider and bigger space for the struggle by inviting activists and people who had no political home as well as people who could see the challenges of the religious constructs into the movement. Pearson offered credibility to the causes the activists were fighting for and due to his special position in the community, influenced many in his congregation to support them as well. Moreover, as a minister of the faith, he offered counsel to friends and relatives of the activists in their times of confusion and grief. The work of activists affected more than the activists themselves: Father Pearson was present in those times of pain, helping to transfer a family’s destructive emotions into constructive energy and perhaps a deeper commitment to their shared struggle for justice.³³

Pearson created religious space in Bonteheuwel from the church pulpit and on his bicycle. In this space, he connected with the devout members of his congregation who knew and could understand the Church’s rituals and role in their lives. As a priest committed to political liberation, he was also able to connect the Church’s rituals and role to “the struggle” and by stirring emotion, often with religious language, he brought his congregations with him. In this

³¹ Ibid.

³² Interview, Mark Thompson.

³³ These conclusions are drawn from the interview with Pearson and his reflections over his role in Bonteheuwel.

space, Pearson also connected to those activists who were not religious but respected his role in the community and his support for and involvement in their cause.

Earning the blessing: creating physical space

The transformation of regular space into religious space may not seem like unusual work for an idealistic and energetic young priest – for it is in his job description. However, Pearson went above and beyond his job description by opening up physical space for the resistance and liberation movement in Bonteheuwel. Building from the religious space he created and the numbers of people he drew into that space with his presence in the community and his rhetoric from the pulpit, Pearson contributed even more to the anti-apartheid struggle in the physical space he was able to secure for it.

Peter Walshe, an expert on the Church and apartheid, observes that in 1988, “as the death tolls mounted and outdoor meetings were banned, church buildings and congregations became centres for protest.”³⁴ While more conservative clerics may have shunned away from using church buildings for political purposes, Pearson accepted this responsibility. Through his connection with the congregation in religious space, the priest fulfilled aspects of his ministry and earned the trust of the community; in the physical space, he could more deliberately demonstrate his commitment to the activists’ cause as well as fulfil important and necessary functions of the struggle.

Pearson was fortunate that his immediate predecessor at St. Matthew’s, Fr. Frank de Gouveia, had served as Episcopal Vicar for the Justice and Peace Commission in the Archdiocese of Cape Town and had established a good reputation in Bonteheuwel among activists, because of this.³⁵ De Gouveia had begun the process of engaging activists by opening the church hall to trade unions, activists groups and community organisations for all sorts of struggle activities. Pearson continued this tradition as pastor and opened his church for trade union and political meetings as well as for educational meetings on drainage, paving and other public works concerns in Bonteheuwel. When criticised, Pearson referred to the Rite of Blessing which in Catholic tradition, the bishop prays over any new church building: the lengthy blessing includes language about the church building as a safe space for the poor and marginalized. Confident that the Blessing applied to meetings associated with the struggle, Pearson concluded that if the Church

³⁴ Peter Walshe, *Prophetic Christianity and the Liberation Movement in South Africa* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 122.

³⁵ Incidentally, Peter-John Pearson would later serve as the Archdiocese’s Episcopal Vicar for Justice and Peace.

did not “take up the Blessing, they would lose it.”³⁶ And as the government managed the sports stadium and other public buildings in Bonteheuwel, St. Matthew’s served an important – and some would say essential – role in the resistance movement.

From the sanctuary to the street: creating ethical space

In religious space, Pearson connected with the activists and regular residents of Bonteheuwel. In physical space, he fulfilled important functions in the resistance movement. However, one could argue that his contribution was greater than this. In very specific ways, Pearson used the symbols, myths and rituals of the church to create ethical space. Where the government created “a space of war” in their actions and rhetoric, the activists searched for an ethical space where their cries for political change and equality could be heard and realized. The efforts of BMW and BISCO were essentially about beating back the spaces of war – in non-violent and violent ways – in order to carve out ethical space for their ideas to breathe. Through his special role in the “exciting mass marches” and “menacing funerals” of the late 1980s, Pearson helped to create some of this ethical space.³⁷

Under any circumstances, a funeral is an emotional experience: add a coffin holding a slain activist, AK-47 machine guns, the banned ANC flag, processions lined with policeman standing shoulder to shoulder and high-ranking Church officials and the funeral becomes – in Fr. Peter-John Pearson’s words – “menacing”. Peter Walshe concisely summarizes the funeral experience:

While the ANC’s internal organization remained weak, from the early 1980s onwards there were clear signs in the townships of its resurgent mass support. Thousands, and on occasions tens of thousands, gathered to assert their hatred of apartheid and to honour the victims of police and army violence, death squads and prison torture. Hymns and prayers were followed by freedom songs. Coffins were draped with ANC colours and, always, *Nkosi Sikilele’ iAfrika* (God Bless Africa) was sung.³⁸

It is not difficult to appreciate the mingling of religious and political symbols in this experience. Walshe continues:

Funerals, usually of the young, became the liturgical focus as whole communities stiffened their will to resist. These highly charged political and religious occasions were traumatic for the bereaved, but also for many clergy who were totally unprepared to minister to angry grieving crowds surrounded and bullied by troops.³⁹

While it is unclear how conscious Pearson was to the impact of these funerals, it is apparent that the mingling of political and religious symbols at the funeral created ethical space. Pearson had

³⁶ Pearson.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Walshe, 87.

³⁹ Ibid., 122.

already had a great deal of exposure to the rhythm and the stress of political activists' funerals and had taken part in many over the years. His first was that of the much loved and admired Muslim cleric and leader in Cape Town, Imam Haroun, who died in police detention. From then on he attended most activists funerals and while in the seminary in Pretoria was a regular participant in township funerals.⁴⁰

During his time in Bonteheuwel, Pearson participated in quite a large number of funerals. While each funeral had special meaning to the mourners present, three funerals of slain activists in the late 1980s were particularly stirring to the Bonteheuwel community: Ashley Kriel, shot in the head by security officers posing as City Council workers at his Athlone safe house in July 1987; Coline Williams and Robbie Waterwitch, killed when a limpet mine they were planting near the Magistrate's Court in Athlone prematurely exploded in July 1989; Anton Fransche, perished in a shoot-out with the police in his Athlone safe house which allegedly lasted seven hours.⁴¹ Mark Thompson explains that though the core group of activists in Bonteheuwel came from various religious groups and some were not religious at all, "when an activist was killed, it was the Anglican and Catholic Churches that took up the political nature of their deaths."⁴² Pearson concurs that religious funerals for slain activists, as well as having a pastoral component for the congregation, "incited community outrage, politicised people...and egged on participation in the struggle."⁴³

The Ashley Kriel funeral in July 1987 was the first time the death of an activist hit so close to home for the people of Bonteheuwel.⁴⁴ After the police turned over his body, it was taken to his family's home and then to the New Apostolic Church in Bonteheuwel, where Kriel was a member. According to Thompson, the New Apostolics "did not want any part of the political aspect of his death" and were not prepared for nor welcomed the great numbers of activists that attended the service. Dissatisfied with the handling of the funeral, a group of activists physically picked up the coffin and walked several blocks down the road to the Anglican Church – the biggest church building in Bonteheuwel – and "plunked it right down on the altar." Thus, it was in the Anglican church where Kriel's political convictions and actions were memorialised. In response, the police – who had been closely following the proceedings – shot tear gas into the

⁴⁰ Pearson.

⁴¹ There are theories that the limpet mine which caused the death of Williams and Waterwitch had been tampered with as well as first hand accounts of shots being fired at the site before the explosion – the suggestion is that Williams and Waterwitch were discovered, shot and put on top of the mine. In regards to Anton Fransche, the story has it that after realizing that the police had entered the house, Fransche – who was heavily armed – laid on top of a grenade rather than be taken. In all three accounts, there are theories that the police were tipped off as to the activists' whereabouts. Thompson and Pearson.

⁴² Thompson.

⁴³ Pearson.

⁴⁴ Pearson recalls that at the time of Kriel's death, funerals for activists "were happening all over the country but it was relatively new in the coloured community in Cape Town." Pearson.

church. The result was total panic as elderly women fainted and had to be carried out while others scurried for shelter. Thompson recalls that one woman even tried to seek refuge in the rector's refrigerator. A skirmish also erupted during the procession from the church to the hearse as the police reacted to an ANC flag draped over the coffin. Thompson reflects over the irony of the situation: "Ashley Kriel was killed because he was an activist but the police response to the funeral was that he shouldn't be draped with the ANC flag."⁴⁵ Police, standing shoulder to shoulder, lined the entire five-kilometre stretch of road that the mourners travelled to Maitland Cemetery. And although the memorial service took place in the Anglican church, Catholic Archbishop Stephen Naidoo and Fr. Peter-John Pearson joined Mark Thompson at the head of the procession lined by police: according to Pearson, "it was like a war."⁴⁶

While Kriel's funeral was unique in that it took place in the New Apostolic Church and the Anglican Church with Catholic clergy playing no small role, Coline Williams and Robbie Waterwitch – both baptized Catholic – received a full Catholic requiem mass at St. Mary's of the Angels, Athlone. Archbishop Lawrence Henry presided and Fr. Peter-John Pearson preached.⁴⁷ Pearson suggests that the activists were usually in charge of who did what in regards to homilies at funerals or speeches at marches: needless to say, Pearson, as well as Mark Thompson, were routinely chosen to preach alongside Anglican or Catholic bishops and archbishops.⁴⁸ This funeral, too, was disrupted by tear gas canisters and rubber bullets being shot into the roof as mourners gathered, in their traditional way, for a meal in the church hall. Anton Fransche, an Anglican, was memorialised in a religious manner and in great numbers as well, but his funeral took place in the Bonteheuvel sports stadium.⁴⁹

Remembering the four slain activists, Pearson believes that their religious funerals, in taking up the political natures of the deaths, sharpened the political views of those in attendance, radicalised members of his congregation and encouraged a new wave of activists.⁵⁰ Despite the restrictions the state placed on funerals and their attempts to disrupt them, the religious ceremonies created space for religious rituals which honoured the deaths but offered hope in a resurrection, homilies which linked Christianity to the struggle and solemn processions led by priests in clerical clothes followed by a coffin wearing ANC colours and a mixed group of

⁴⁵ Thompson.

⁴⁶ Pearson.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Although Archbishop Henry and seven priests concelebrated the mass, Pearson was asked – per telephone call to Knysna where he was vacationing on the night of the activists' death – to preach at the mass. Pearson was a kind of spiritual advisor to Waterwitch and was also familiar with Williams – who had recently been confirmed – from the Church. Walshe, 122 and Pearson.

⁴⁹ Pearson.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

mourners singing hymns or comrades chanting songs.⁵¹ This was indeed, ethical space, where the familiarity and credibility of religious symbols and the emotion of religious ritual blended with a fervent political message of liberation. In Chidester's words, funerals became "sites of ritual mobilisation of resistance against the state."⁵² Although the government tried to limit this ethical space with their myriad of restrictions and the physical space their police occupied, the religious symbols, myths and rituals with which the Church could respond and the people understood effectively carved out ethical space.⁵³ And though the police attempted to confine this space to the church building itself, those mourners certainly carried the symbols' meanings and the political message with them as they left – or in many cases, as they were carried away.

Pearson also created ethical space through the mass marches of the late 1980s. He explains that his presence in front of the march wearing his cassock, a sign that he was vested with a special mission, "acted as a kind of banner" for the march. He believes that it encouraged the protestors that their cause was credible and had dignity and that it was also useful when confrontations with the police turned violent. A priest wearing a cassock could challenge a police officer easier than the other marchers could and monitor the abuses from a close distance. He also caught the attention of cameras.⁵⁴ Pearson recalls an instance after one march when the BBC interviewed Mark Thompson and him after a mass march in Cape Town. Providing for a quick get-away should the authorities discover them, the BBC conducted the interview on the highway heading to the airport.⁵⁵ Thompson suggests that priests like Pearson and himself: "wore the Church's clothes when they thought they would be in a situation where they needed the authority to speak to the press and to negotiate."⁵⁶ This is not to say that clerics were never arrested despite their cassocks. Pearson has more than a few stories about his time in the police vans and queues outside of the jail, joining in the comrades' chants or leading the group in an "Our Father".⁵⁷

⁵¹ Some of the restrictions placed on funerals during the mid to late 1980s included: only ordained ministers could speak and even they were prohibited from any statement that might be spoken to "defend, attack, criticise, propagate, or discuss any form of government, any principle or policy of a government or state, any boycott action, the existence of a state of emergency, or any action of a force or member of a force"; one funeral could not be held for more than one person; the number of mourners was limited; outdoor rituals were prohibited, in Chidester's words: "Within the ritual space demarcated by four walls, funerals were permitted, but all space outside those walls was under the immediate control of the police and army."; the funeral route had to be determined by the divisional police commissioner; mourners were prevented from walking in the procession; funerals could take no longer than four hours in 1986 and limited to three in 1987; no symbolic display of certain ritual objects, flags, banners, placards, pamphlets, or posters were permitted. Chidester, 103.

⁵² Ibid., 103.

⁵³ "Although the state enforced its own ritual rules, opposition to the state could be registered with even greater clarity by breaking them. Thus, in the townships, the funeral became a ceremony of struggle and civil war." Ibid. 104.

⁵⁴ Pearson and Thompson.

⁵⁵ Pearson.

⁵⁶ Thompson.

⁵⁷ Pearson and Thompson.

Pearson's commitment to the resistance movement in the 1980s and 1990s may not be altogether different from the actions of others involved in the struggle at the time. For every Catholic priest associated with the anti-apartheid movement, there were large numbers of secular leaders equally or more dedicated to the struggle. However, when one considers Pearson's actions in religious, physical and ethical spaces in the context of *Pacem in Terris*, it becomes evident that his job description as a Catholic priest dictated the work that he did and offered him some of the tools he required to complete it. Because of this job description and his unique role in Bonteheuwel, Pearson helped to move the struggle forward in very tangible ways. The second case study, that of Father Basil van Rensburg of Guguletu, will present additional examples of how Catholic priests, by following the directives of *Pacem in Terris*, waged peace in very tangible ways during the 1980s and 1990s. While certainly not all of them chose to do so, the stories of Pearson and van Rensburg reveal that the potential existed for the Church to be a major force in the anti-apartheid struggle – and in some cases, it was.

FATHER BASIL VAN RENSBURG

Guguletu, 1986

Guguletu, which means “Our Pride” in isiXhosa, is a black township situated alongside the national highway just a few exits away from Cape Town's international airport. The history of Cape Town's black townships can be traced to the residentially segregated area of Ndabeni, which was established in 1901. Constructed to accommodate Africans who had been brought from the rural areas to work in Cape Town's harbour in the nineteenth century, Ndabeni experienced almost immediate overcrowding. In 1902, the colonial government established a peripheral site five kilometres southeast of Ndabeni, which became known as Langa. As the black population in Cape Town increased, the authorities extended the township areas, creating Nyanga in 1946 and Guguletu ten years later. According to one account of the geographical expansion of the black townships:

The construction of Guguletu in 1956, the western extension of Nyanga, consolidated the black residential areas over five kilometres east of those suburbs already built up at the time. The mushrooming of the squatter settlement at Crossroads in 1975 and the establishment of Khayelitsha have extended the sector further south-east to the coast.⁵⁸

As the plans for the “apartheid city” developed in the 1950s and 1960s, black Capetonians were forcibly relocated to the Cape Flats from their homes in newly designated coloured areas such as Kensington, Retreat and District Six. One source cites statistics that between 1957 and 1961, when Nyanga and Guguletu were developed, over 9,000 people were relocated from Cape

⁵⁸ *St. Gabriel the Archangel, Silver Jubilee 1966-1991, Program* (1991).

Town's city limits each year. According to G. P. Cool, this group consisted mainly of women, children and unemployed or unemployable males.⁵⁹ To make matters worse, new arrivals to Guguletu and other black townships discovered that under the provisions of the Group Areas Act, they were not allowed to own land but had to lease property from the government. Needless to say, these circumstances did not lend themselves to the feelings of pride among the new residents which the name Guguletu would suggest.

However, even under the most dismal of conditions, human beings find ways to survive. Despite the apartheid laws and the conduct of the military and police forces who enforced them, overcrowding, nearly total unemployment, high crime and poor public services and works, many residents of Guguletu found support in the various communities that formed around churches, schools or organizations. One such community was St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church. Officially opened on 21 August 1966, St. Gabriel's served Guguletu's Catholic residents who had formerly attended St. Joseph's Parish in Nyanga. At the time of its founding, St. Gabriel's was the only Catholic parish in Guguletu, a township with a population of 84,000 of which 2,000 to 3,000 were Catholic.⁶⁰ In 1983, the number of Catholics had climbed to more than 6,000 out of a total population of 150,000 as the parish boundaries were extended into parts of Nyanga, Crossroads and the outlying township of Mfuleni.

It was in this burgeoning though economically depressed and politically abused space that Fr. Basil van Rensburg found himself in 1986. Formerly stationed at Holy Cross Church in District 6, van Rensburg drew international attention to the injustices of the forced removals.⁶¹ Through his connections with foreign embassies and high-ranking business and government officials as well as his high-profile role in the protest marches and bulldozer blockades, van Rensburg remained an important spokesperson for District 6. Even those who were turned off by van Rensburg's "high-profile approach" to the project and the arrogance with which he dealt with many of the more radical activists, no one could deny the significance of his role. Dr. Crain Soudien, an education professor at the University of Cape Town who worked with van Rensburg on various committees associated with District 6, admits that van Rensburg's support and the use of his Church were essential to the activists' work. Not only was the physical space of Holy Cross Church important for its strategic location within District 6, but the community spirit which van Rensburg managed to create in his parish was helpful to the activists' efforts to organize a resistance movement. Moreover, the national and international attention van

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ These statistics represent the population in 1966. Ibid.

⁶¹ For a nice summation of van Rensburg's work in District 6, see Michail Rassool, "District Six: The Destruction of a Community," *The Southern Cross* 19-25 March 2003.

Rensburg attracted and the donations he raised certainly had a positive effect on their campaign.⁶²

Achieving near celebrity status for his work in District 6 and two well-publicized anti-apartheid hunger strikes,⁶³ van Rensburg did not endear himself to the Archbishop or fellow priests who saw his actions as grand-standing and not in line with the long-term projects of the Archdiocese. In 1984, he was sent to the University of Notre Dame to study at their Institute for Clergy Education. The Archbishop subsequently transferred him to the very unglamorous St. Gabriel's in Guguletu. Some have suggested that Archbishop Stephen Naidoo exiled van Rensburg to the township parish in order to quiet the priest's showmanship.⁶⁴ However, van Rensburg, trained in advertising and public relations before he entered the priesthood, did not wait long before he crafted a scheme to draw national and international attention to the injustices of black township life on the Cape Flats.

Van Rensburg served as pastor of St. Gabriel's from 1986 until his death on Eastern Sunday, 2002. During his time at Guguletu, the dissolution of apartheid and the 1994 democratic elections dramatically changed South Africa's political and social landscape; however, van Rensburg's commitments to peacebuilding in Guguletu continued until his death. The economic injustices in Cape Town's black townships remained after the political injustices of apartheid dissolved; as a result, Guguletu remained a space of war. Thus where the previous case study focused on a specific period during the anti-apartheid struggle, this study of van Rensburg's career will span a longer period of time and address more general themes.

⁶² Dr. Crain Soudien, Interview.

⁶³ In 1983, van Rensburg led a movement that protested the presence of uniformed and salaried Roman Catholic chaplains in the SADF. The protest culminated in van Rensburg fasting for thirty days and a change in the SACBC's policy which withdrew the chaplains from the military. Van Rensburg participated in another hunger strike during a sabbatical semester at the University of Notre Dame in 1984. Working with the Notre Dame Anti-Apartheid Network, van Rensburg fasted for twenty-nine days to protest the University for still investing in corporations that functioned in the apartheid economy. Although the University did not change its policy, van Rensburg received national and international attention. See Bronwen Dachs, "Fr. Basil van Rensburg, RIP: Veteran Anti-Apartheid Activist," *Common Sense*, 6 May 2002.

⁶⁴ Fr. Basil van Rensburg's obituary in the *Sunday Times* puts it this way:

By the time Van Rensburg left District 6 in 1985, he'd become something of a celebrity. This did not endear him to the local Catholic hierarchy. He was sent to study at the Notre Dame Institute for Clergy Education in Indiana in the US. While there he embarked on a much-publicised hunger strike to draw attention to apartheid. This went down very well among Americans and Van Rensburg became even more of a star. To his superiors and fellow priests at home, however, his behaviour looked rather too much like a glory-seeking publicity stunt. The then Archbishop of Cape Town, Stephen Naidoo, ordered him home and gave him one of the toughest, least attractive assignments the church could offer. He was sent to run a parish in the poverty-stricken, crime-ridden black township of Guguletu.

See Chris Barron, "Basil van Rensburg: The priest who kept the eyes of the world on District Six," *Sunday Times*, 14 April 2002.

Liturgy as tourist attraction: creating religious space

Like Pearson, Fr. Basil was interested in “doing the ordinary things well” and “carried religion” out of the church and into the streets of the township as he ministered to the sick, the elderly and the lonely. Van Rensburg also won the affection of many in his parish during the anti-apartheid struggle, especially the young, for his politically charged sermons. However, Sunday mass, an event which occurred in parishes all over Cape Town and all over the world every week, was one ordinary thing that van Rensburg did particularly well. Ordained at the late age of 45 in 1975, van Rensburg had worked as a bus conductor, a sound technician at SABC and in advertising in his 20s and 30s. Before entering St. John Vianney seminary in Pretoria in his 40s, he was twice engaged to be married.⁶⁵ Van Rensburg took advantage of this unusual resume of “life experiences” and especially his public relations background as he organized and attracted people to his liturgies each week.

Building up the liturgy at St. Gabriel’s was at the centre of van Rensburg’s engagement in religious space. Although there is evidence that the mass was always a lively experience for St. Gabriel’s parishioners,⁶⁶ van Rensburg certainly made an impact on their traditional Sunday worship, to which his obituary in the *Sunday Times* attests:

An irrepressible, flamboyant, larger-than-life man with a background in advertising, Van Rensburg appreciated the value of publicity better than most and knew exactly how to get it. He turned his Guguletu parish into a tourist attraction. He Africanised the liturgy and turned each Mass into a pulsating performance of dancing, Xhosa singing and marimba playing.⁶⁷

Although van Rensburg never mastered isiXhosa himself, which according to St. Gabriel’s faithful Parish Administrator, Wally Mngidi, “the congregation understood and were ok with,” one of the first things he changed upon his arrival was the language spoken at mass.⁶⁸

The Second Vatican Council encouraged Catholic parishes to use the vernacular languages of their respective congregations; however, liturgies at St. Gabriel’s were celebrated in English while the majority of parishioners in attendance spoke isiXhosa. Kader Asmal, South Africa’s Minister

⁶⁵ Van Rensburg was born in Woodstock, a suburb of Cape Town, in 1930. He went to Catholic school despite the fact that his parents were not Catholic and was baptized at age 15. At 21, van Rensburg decided that he wanted to be a priest; however, he was told by the administrators at St. John Vianney seminary in Pretoria that “he needed to do more living first” and was sent home. See Barron.

⁶⁶ The program from the Parish’s 25th Anniversary reveals that people came from far and wide in the early days of the parish to celebrate the mass together and to raise funds to build the church. See Anniversary Bulletin.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Interview, Wally Mngidi.

of Education and a good friend of van Rensburg's praised the Pastor for incorporating isiXhosa into his liturgies:

As a parish priest at St. Gabriel's in Gugulethu, Father Basil provided for both the spiritual, cultural and social needs of the community. He ensured that religious services at St. Gabriel's were conducted in the mother tongue of his parishioners, isiXhosa, as well as attempted to master the language. He encouraged the development of the musical talents of his parishioners and St. Gabriel's became well known for its musical groups.⁶⁹

Determined to enliven the weekend celebrations and possibly attract visitors, van Rensburg had the choir singing hymns as well as "traditional African music" in isiXhosa not long after he arrived. The parish already had several marimbas and van Rensburg believed that they would be put to better use accompanied by lyrics in the choir's first language.

Van Rensburg's hunch that an African township choir that sang religious music to the beat of a marimba would appeal to audiences outside of Gugulethu proved correct and it was not long before buses were unloading German, American and Irish tourists at Church's door. Drawing on contacts from his advertising days as well as his time in District 6, van Rensburg made sure that hotels, tourist guides, embassies and consulates spread the word to tourists who were looking for an "authentic African experience" to visit St. Gabriel's. He designated the first Sunday of each month as the visitor's mass and guests were invited to tea in the parish hall afterwards. To make guests feel welcome, many of whom had probably never been to a township before, van Rensburg organized a "Boy's Brigade" which directed visitors to the Church on Sunday mornings. The following letter reveals one guest's first experience at St. Gabriel's:

We all felt we had had a very special experience and look forward to coming back again with our friends. St. Gabriel's truly feels like a place for the people and it is from such a place that we can all learn more about love, peace and reconciliation. Your congregation gave us warmth and hope and we would like you to thank them particularly, not only for sharing their Sunday morning with us, but for what we were able to take home with us in our hearts. Please also tell your Boys' Brigade that we shall never forget the wonderful and welcoming sight of their cheerful faces directing us to St. Gabriel's.⁷⁰

Needless to say, a Catholic mass is not a typical tourist experience as this letter attests. It is not difficult to imagine the moving experience it must have been for visitors who after passing through the rough and desperate looking streets of Gugulethu found in St. Gabriel's Church, township residents enthusiastically celebrating their shared Catholic faith together. According to Mngidi, it was van Rensburg's hope that the mass and the social gathering afterwards would challenge white South Africans and foreign guests to join the struggle against apartheid and after the 1994 elections, against South Africa's economic inequalities.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Department of Education, South Africa, "Minister of Education (Professor Kader Asmal MP) mourns the death of Fr. Basil van Rensburg." [press release online]; available from Department of Education website, <http://education.pwv.gov.za/media/statements-2002/april02/death%20vrensburg.htm>; Internet; accessed 6 July 2003.

⁷⁰ Letter from Mrs. Kate Birch, 6 November 1988. Anniversary Program.

⁷¹ Mngidi.

A shrewd fundraiser, van Rensburg also encouraged visitors to offer a financial contribution and most were delighted to do so. Some of St. Gabriel's more well-known guests and benefactors include: Nelson Mandela, then president of Ireland and U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl (who remained a lifelong friend) and ambassadors from all over the world. To complete the tourist experience, parishioners sold CDs of the choir's music which van Rensburg produced with the help of the German consulate. Thus not only did van Rensburg open religious space where white South Africans and tourists could meet his parishioners and learn something of their challenges, but he used – one might say exploited – the liturgical experience to raise funds for his parish's educational and social programs. As a result of the large revenues generated by the visitors' masses, van Rensburg resolved the parish debt, constructed a parish centre which provided research and study facilities,⁷² created an educational fund to support students and funded an AIDS awareness project. Thus by opening the religious space in St. Gabriel's to visitors and by implementing social and educational programs, van Rensburg creatively followed *Pacem in Terris* which directed him to protect his parishioners' human *rights*.

Van Rensburg's efforts in religious space also respected the *dignity* of his parishioners. For one hour a week, they put aside their daily responsibilities and worries and celebrated with singing, dancing, scripture and prayer. According to Mngidi, there was also something comforting, purposeful and even healing in performing the rituals of Sunday Mass or seasonal festivities such as the Paschal Feast. Some of them fulfilled various functions during the mass as readers, ushers, eucharistic ministers and choir members which all distinguished them in the roles they played and with the badges or special dress that they wore. While the National Party government did little to respect the dignity of South Africa's black population in the townships, Catholic parish life and Sunday mass provided space for individuals to claim their dignity through their special liturgical roles. The presence of guests once a week could have only validated the dignity they felt during their Sunday rituals and religious experiences. In addition, by helping St. Gabriel's be self-

⁷² According to the parish's Anniversary Program, the principle commitment of the St. Gabriel's Community centre was student involvement, "the centre is available to all from amongst 250,000 persons in greater Guguletu who wish to study, do homework, research educational projects, and make use of its well stocked library." Known as E-Roma, van Rensburg's educational programs were widely popular throughout Guguletu. Minister of Education, Kader Asmal offered heavy praise to van Rensburg's educational efforts:

Father Basil passionately believed in the importance of education. To this end he assisted those students who had failed matric as well as engaged in a number of educational programmes to bolster the Ministry of Education's efforts in ensuring that all our people have access to high quality learning opportunities.

See Anniversary Program and Asmal, Press Release.

supporting, the visitors' monetary donations would have also contributed to the sense of pride each parishioner felt about St. Gabriel's and his or her special role in supporting it.⁷³

Power of place: creating physical space

During Sunday mass, van Rensburg used the rituals, music and atmosphere of his church to open religious spaces where the *rights* and *dignities* of his parishioners could be realized. However, van Rensburg's efforts were not limited to one day per week. Like Pearson, van Rensburg opened physical space for all sorts of meetings associated with the struggle. Mngidi recalls ANC meetings that he attended in the evenings at the Church. As these meetings were illegal, the attendants would keep bibles close at hand in case the Special Branch should appear. According to Mngidi, if their meetings were ever discovered, the line was that "everyone was Catholic."⁷⁴

On various occasions, van Rensburg also invited journalists to the rectory to observe the actions of a corrupt and oftentimes violent police force in Guguletu. The Group Areas Act did not legally permit van Rensburg to remain at his parish after dark and so he entrusted Mngidi to collect the journalists from one of the entrances to Guguletu, hide them in the back of the parish kombi (as they were also breaking the law) and set them up in one of the upper rooms in the parish building. From this location, the journalists took photographs of the police antagonizing conflict between the residents of Guguletu and a neighbouring settlement of migrant workers. The Special Branch used the clashes between Guguletu residents and the migrant workers as a justification for their harsh policing in the townships; however, the journalists aided by the parish staff of St. Gabriel's revealed that it was actually the Special Branch who was antagonizing the conflict.⁷⁵

By opening up these physical spaces, van Rensburg provided room for activists to gather information and to organize themselves: essentially, the Church building provided a safe-house for the resistance movement within the township's spaces of war. However, the Pastor also remained attentive to the physical condition of his own parish. He took great care of the parish grounds, particularly the garden. Drawing from his network of benefactors, van Rensburg managed to raise funding for a paved parking lot, uncommon in Guguletu, and a security gate

⁷³ In 1962, Cardinal Owen McCann used money from the estate of a wealthy Capetonian to build St. Gabriel's Parish under the condition that it would eventually be repaid and that the parish would support itself. During van Rensburg's tenure, St. Gabriel's became a self-supporting parish. A source of pride for the entire community, the Parish recognized the event with a special liturgy and celebration. Interview, Mngidi.

⁷⁴ Mngidi.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

around the entire complex. Inside the Church, van Rensburg solicited the help of his fellow priests in the white suburbs and the Parish was delighted to receive an altar from the Catholic Church in Pinelands and pews from St. Mary's Cathedral in Cape Town. Recruiting men from the township, van Rensburg supervised the refurbishing of the pews which completed his plans for beautifying the Church's interior.⁷⁶ While his providing physical space for ANC meetings and journalists contributed to the long-term *human rights* struggle against apartheid, his efforts in the garden and inside the Church were aimed at restoring some of his parishioners' *dignity*, which the forced removals and years of apartheid regulations had assuredly damaged.

Breaking down barriers: creating ethical space

In a press release in response to van Rensburg's death in 2002, the ANC leadership in the Western Cape mourned the loss of an individual whom they considered a friend:

It was people like Basil van Rensburg who prevented our struggle against apartheid from becoming a struggle against a particular skin colour, and he prevented religion from ever becoming irrelevant in the search for freedom and democracy. More importantly, his example helped to keep our struggle human and our ideals noble.⁷⁷

It is clear from van Rensburg's efforts to carve out religious spaces with a spirit-filled and multi-racial liturgy and to create physical space for the resistance movement to organize and collect information that he valued the role of religion in the struggle. Moreover, by inviting his parishioners as well as individuals from outside of Guguletu into these spaces, he was effectively following the *Pacem in Terris* directives in regards to *rights* and *dignity*. However, van Rensburg's greatest service to his parishioners may not have been the physical and religious spaces to which he invited others but the ethical space he extended well beyond the boundaries of his parish through his extraordinary networking.

As mentioned earlier, van Rensburg's efforts to attract Catholics from other parts of Cape Town to his liturgies was part of his plan to break down the residential barriers between white and black Catholics. The following advertisement, which he placed in Cape Town's Catholic newspaper, illustrates van Rensburg's candour about the problem of division within Cape Town's Catholic community:

St. Gabriel's R C Church, Guguletu, invites you to worship with us on Sunday at 9:30 a.m. and through worship to get to know and understand each other as fellow

⁷⁶ Mngidi.

⁷⁷ African National Congress – Western Cape, "Obituaries: van Rensburg and Biehl." Press Release (3 April 2002). [press release online]; available from ANC website, <http://anc.org.za/ancdocs/pr/2002/pr0403.html>; Internet; accessed 6 July 2003.

countrymen. After all, how on earth are we supposed to build our future together when we are so polarised that we can't even pray together?⁷⁸

Van Rensburg also conveyed this message as he wooed potential benefactors at embassies or social clubs in Cape Town or during fundraising missions overseas. According to his obituary, van Rensburg was a member of the Kelvin Grove Club in Newlands and the Netherlands Club in Cape Town where he often invited guests to lunch or dinner, “religiously preceded by a few G&Ts at the bar.” Van Rensburg was also a regular on the diplomatic cocktail party circuit and in the society pages of the Cape Town newspapers. When he went overseas on fundraising missions, van Rensburg flew first class, courtesy of the international diplomatic corps.⁷⁹ Van Rensburg took advantage of his ability to travel between the world of Guguletu and the world of the Netherlands Club to spread the spirit of his community as well as to raise the consciousness of the influential individuals he met. As he had done in the District 6 campaigns, van Rensburg became a spokesperson for Guguletu: his unique role as pastor of a thriving Catholic parish and his personal skills for public relations served him well in this role.

Another tangible way in which van Rensburg created ethical space where the rights and dignity of his parishioners could be considered was through the St. Gabriel's Cultural Group. Van Rensburg realized that if he wanted to increase the number of people who had experienced one of his Sunday liturgies, he would have to take the experience out of Guguletu. And so he recruited members of the choir as well as other young people from the community to form a Cultural Group that would sing and dance at embassies and consulates in Cape Town. He collected funds for the purchase of material that was made into clothing and commissioned Wally Mngidi to practice with the group each week. Over the years, the Cultural Group performed at the British, French and German embassies, the American Consul's residence in Bishopscourt and the Mt. Nelson Hotel. At each performance, the group offered their audiences a program of “traditional African” singing and dancing. While it is obvious that van Rensburg, a master of public relations, manufactured an experience with the Cultural Group that he knew would entertain audiences, he did no more than draw from the spirit that his parishioners demonstrated every Sunday at mass. Moreover, once van Rensburg attracted the audience's attention, he worked to transform their interest in the entertainment to financial commitments to his social and educational programs. Finally, by providing venues for the Cultural Group to perform outside of Guguletu, van Rensburg showed his parishioners that they had gifts that should be shared with others. Through his position in Cape Town's social network and his connections overseas, he showed individuals outside of Guguletu that his parishioners' gifts deserved to be seen and even showcased. In the spaces he created for these experiences, van Rensburg did

⁷⁸ *The Southern Cross*, [?] 1990-1991.

⁷⁹ Barron. Mngidi.

more than package his parishioners' talents into a nice show, he dissolved a barrier between the two worlds that, as a Catholic priest, he occupied.

The PASTOR as Catholic *militant for peace*

It would be foolish for one to argue that the Church was responsible for dismantling apartheid in South Africa or even that Father Pearson and van Rensburg can be credited for the achievements or consolidated energy of the resistance movements in their townships. Yet, their work should not be underestimated. By fulfilling their job descriptions in their churches and in their townships' streets, Pearson and van Rensburg carried religious symbols out of the church and into homes. Moreover, they brought with them a biblical or religious language of liberation that could be used by their congregations in making sense of their need for political liberation. Opening their churches to political meetings and after-school tutoring, they fulfilled important functions in South Africa's defiance campaign. Pearson opened up ethical space through the Church's funeral rituals and the Church's clothes in his participation in the deaths of slain activists and – wearing his cassock – in mass marches on Cape Town.⁸⁰ Van Rensburg, the public relations wizard, dissolved racial and class barriers by inviting white Catholics to worship at St. Gabriel's and by making his Sunday liturgy a tourist attraction. Moreover, using his travelling cultural group, van Rensburg packaged "African culture" to wealthy and influential audiences – who in turn donated to his educational and social programs. Pearson militantly professed a religious language of political and economic liberation as he performed his pastoral duties in Bonteheuwel. His militancy won him the respect of the activists to whom he in turn provided a home in the Church. Van Rensburg's militancy drew national and international attention to his parishioners who, in spite of the daily hardships of township life, assembled weekly to celebrate a mass together with enthusiasm and a community spirit. His militancy prevented the realities of Guguletu from being forgotten. Thus with bicycles and cassocks, hymns and holy water, revolutionary-charged sermons and well-marketed CDs, Pearson and van Rensburg exploited their priestly roles, albeit in very different ways, to invite peace into spaces of war.

However, the clerics' attempts were not without their drawbacks. Pearson assuredly opened up religious, physical and ethical space, though once opened, it had to be preserved. For priests working in townships around the country during the struggle, the act of opening up the space

⁸⁰ "Struggling to read the signs of the times and responding with a theology of hope, prophetic Christians meshed with a black political culture formed in the decades following 1910, a culture that was open to the language and symbols of religious protest. There was also a moment in early 1988 when Christian activists moved to the forefront of the struggle." Walshe, 120.

was difficult enough and many paid a heavy price for the time they spent submerged in spaces of violence and war. By 1990, Pearson's Anglican friend, Mark Thompson, had experienced all he could of the violence in Bonteheuwel: he felt as if he could offer nothing more and asked to be transferred. Not very much later, he left the priesthood. The lessons Thompson's story offers to the Church and to society are beyond the scope of this chapter, yet should be considered as part of the wider history of Bonteheuwel.

Van Rensburg often said that when he left a parish, "he took his donors with him."⁸¹ And this is nearly what happened when he passed away in 2002. Today, St. Gabriel's is once again struggling for money as contributions from overseas and big businesses declined sharply in 2003. One could argue that van Rensburg's efforts at bringing peace to Guguletu rested too heavily on his networking skill and larger-than-life personality and that he instigated a kind of "cult of personality" during his tenure at St. Gabriel's. As van Rensburg's story reveals, spaces for peace do not stay open by themselves and despite van Rensburg's efforts to keep them open during his lifetime, they closed soon after his death.

Though this is only a survey of Pearson's and van Rensburg's respective ministries – and a more comprehensive history needs to be written – one may conclude from this account that ethical spaces were realised in Bonteheuwel and Guguletu and that it was in these spaces that the resistance movement was most powerful. Moreover, the two case studies reveal that *Pacem in Terris* and the unique role and authority of the parish priest empowered van Rensburg and Pearson to wage peace in spaces of war. Nevertheless, the fact that Thompson and many of his fellow priests left the priesthood in the early 1990s and that many of St. Gabriel's benefactors disappeared after van Rensburg's death provoke some concern as to the long-term implications of individual efforts of peacebuilding. While this chapter explores two religious militants who thoughtfully and effectively waged peace in spaces of war, it concludes that their individual efforts could not be sustained. The next chapter will suggest factors that are necessary to sustaining individual and group peacebuilding projects by considering the efforts of a group of individuals commissioned by the Catholic hierarchy in Zimbabwe to wage peace in that nation's space of war.

⁸¹ Mngidi.

...before a society can be considered well-ordered, creative, and consonant with human dignity, it must be based on truth. St. Paul expressed this as follows: “Putting away lying, speak ye the truth every man with his neighbour, for we are members of one another.” [35]⁸²

⁸² John XXIII, “*Pacem in Terris*.”

“ON BEHALF OF THE BISHOPS”

The Zimbabwe Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace Breaks the Silence

An unexpected response

In December 1996, Mike Auret, Director of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe, hand delivered final drafts of the 261-page *Breaking the Silence – Building True Peace: A report into the disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands, 1980-1988* to the Bishops of Zimbabwe’s seven Roman Catholic dioceses.⁸³ The report represented years of research into atrocities committed by the Government’s Fifth Brigade in the western region of Zimbabwe. The following passage from the report describes the type of violence which was occurring in Matabeleland and illustrates the seriousness of the Commission’s work:

They [Fifth Brigade] accused my husband of having a gun, which he did not have. They shot at him. The first two times they missed, but the third time they shot him in the stomach and killed him. They then beat me very hard, even though I was pregnant. I told them I was pregnant and they told me I should not have children for the whole of Zimbabwe. My mother-in-law tried to plead with them, but they shouted insults at her. They hit me in the stomach with the butt of the gun. The unborn child broke in pieces in my stomach. The baby boy died inside. It was God’s desire that I did not die too. The child was born afterwards, piece by piece. A head alone, then a leg, an arm, the body – piece by piece.⁸⁴

Commissioned by the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference to report on the activities in Matabeleland and the Midlands between 1980 and 1988, Auret believed that the Commission would receive a “good show” for their years of dedication to the project and that the Bishops would direct him to publish *Breaking the Silence* during their meeting in Gweru in January 1997. Auret was in for a surprise. This direction to publish was never given and the consensus of the Bishops was to first send it to Zimbabwe’s President, Robert Mugabe, and wait to publish until after he responded. This was not the answer Auret or the Commission were looking for and Auret walked out of the meeting disillusioned indeed. When two years later neither Mugabe nor

⁸³ Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace – Zimbabwe. *Breaking the Silence: Building True Peace, A report into the disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands, 1980-1988* (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe and Legal Resources Foundation, April 1999).

⁸⁴ Ibid.

the Bishops Conference had acknowledged the report despite it being leaked to the press and published by another organisation, Auret resigned his post as Director.⁸⁵

The following case study will explore the efforts of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe, a commission of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference, to uncover the truth about atrocities being committed in Matabeleland and begin a process of healing and reconciliation in the region. Where the previous case study offers two detailed accounts of Catholic priests ministering amidst violence in South Africa's townships, this chapter will present the advocacy work of a Catholic lay organisation under the direction of the Bishops on behalf of the Ndebele people of Zimbabwe. As the previous paragraph suggests, the work of the Commission was neither acknowledged by the Zimbabwean government nor appreciated by the Bishops. Nevertheless, in speaking the truth in spaces of violence and ignorance, Auret and his staff assuredly waged peace on behalf of those who could not. Thus not only will this chapter present the story of how these Catholic actors built peace by revealing the truth, it will reveal a tension between the Catholic hierarchy and its lay justice and peace commission.

***Gukuruhundi* in Matabeleland**

Matabeleland is a province in western Zimbabwe home to the nation's minority ethnic group, the Ndebele. According to government statistics, the Ndebele represent 15% of Zimbabwe's population whereas the largest ethnic group, the Shona, make up 82%.⁸⁶ During Zimbabwe's liberation war in the 1970s and in the first years after independence, these ethnic groups also represented the two principle nationalist factions in Southern Rhodesia and, later, the two political parties in the new Republic of Zimbabwe. The Shona-dominated Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) was led by the Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole and later by Robert Mugabe. Concentrated in Matabeleland, the Ndebele-dominated Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) was led by Joshua Nkomo. Although ZANU and ZAPU leaders negotiated as a united block at the Lancaster House Conference, which paved the way to Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, a true coalition did not survive the first year of the new republic. His eyes

⁸⁵ Michael Auret, Interview; Also see Gunther Simmermacher and Michail Rassool, "Why Mugabe is scared: Interview with human rights veteran, Mike Auret," *The Southern Cross* (27 February 2002) and Fr. Oskar Wermter, "Mike Auret resigns as director of CCJ&P," *Catholic Church News* 46 (July – August 1999). [article online]; available from Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference website, <http://www.zcbc.co.zw/ccn.htm>; Internet; accessed 30 January 2004.

⁸⁶ The white population, most of whom are descendents of British settlers from the colonial era numbered some 223,000 people in the mid-1980s, although the numbers had fallen to 75,000 by 2000. In addition, there is an Asian population of 20,000. Other minority groups include: Tonga, Sena, Hlwenge, Venda and Sotho.

election, ZANU's Robert Mugabe wasted little time in consolidating and securing his authority while curbing the influence of Joshua Nkomo and ZAPU. At the same time, armed bandits, labelled as "dissidents", started operating in Matabeleland. Believed to be dissatisfied former members of ZIPRA, ZAPU's military wing, the "dissidents" quickly met swift retribution from Mugabe and his particularly vicious Fifth Brigade. Unfortunately for Ndebele civilians, no region in Zimbabwe was more affected by the ZANU/ZAPU clash and the exceedingly harsh tactics of the Fifth Brigade that Mugabe recruited to fight "the dissidents" than Matabeleland. While the majority of Zimbabweans, as well as many international leaders, praised Mugabe for his early leadership and aggressive development projects, the Ndebele, a people caught in the middle of a particularly brutal political – and some would say ethnic or tribal – conflict endured untold suffering.

To place the Matabeleland conflict into proper context, a wider historical view is required. Cecil John Rhodes claimed the land now known as Zimbabwe for the British in the late nineteenth century. British subjects proceeded to settle in the colony of Southern Rhodesia during the first half of the twentieth century. In 1965, the white-dominated Rhodesian Front administration of Prime Minister Ian Smith made an illegal Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) for Rhodesia from the United Kingdom. Following UDI, Southern Rhodesia sunk into economic depression as the international community imposed sanctions and black nationalists fought for majority rule. ZAPU and ZANU wisely merged their military efforts in 1976 in the uneasy Patriotic Front alliance and essentially put Smith's government on notice. In 1979, Ian Smith and the UDI administration, in an effort to maintain power, concluded an "international settlement" with some black nationalists led by Bishop Abel Muzorewa, who subsequently became Rhodesia's first black Prime Minister. Later in 1979, all parties participated in the Lancaster House Conference in London, which concluded with an independence settlement consisting of a new constitution and conditions for a transition period and ceasefire. The Rhodesian Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, the precursor to Zimbabwe's Commission, played no small role in the events which led to the success at Lancaster House. Uncovering and fighting the injustices of the Smith regime in the press and the courtroom, facilitating conversation between ZANU and ZAPU and drawing on resources and contacts overseas, including Pope John Paul II, the Rhodesian Commission created many of the conditions which made the conflict ripe for resolution.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ See Diana Auret, *Reaching for Justice: The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace looks back at the past twenty years, 1972-1992* (Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 1992); Ian Linden, *The Catholic Church and the Struggle for Zimbabwe* (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1980); Ron Kraybill, "Transition from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe: The Role of Religious Actors," in *Religion: The Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, eds. Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson, 208-257 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

In Zimbabwe's first democratic elections, which followed the Lancaster House Conference in February 1980, Robert Mugabe's party, now called ZANU-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) won 57 of the eighty "common roll" seats. Joshua Nkomo's Patriotic Front (effectively ZAPU) party won twenty seats and Bishop Muzorewa's party took three seats. The Rhodesia Front won all twenty seats which the new constitution reserved for the white minority. Reverend Canaan Banana became Zimbabwe's first President, with ceremonial duties only, and Robert Mugabe became Prime Minister, leading a collation government. With the validation of the elections and the withdrawal of British troops, a new Zimbabwe was borne.

According to Richard Hodder-Williams, Mugabe's government inherited two distinct sets of problems after independence in April 1980. Firstly, because guerrilla war had ravaged large areas of the country, displaced hundreds of thousands of people, destroyed schools and clinics, and seriously damaged the economy's infrastructure, Mugabe fought an uphill battle in rebuilding the country. Hodder-Williams aptly observes:

Faced with a major internal refugee problem and the need for physical regeneration, any government, especially one whose experience had largely been determined by the prison cell or the guerrilla cadre, was bound to be overwhelmed by the enormity and variety of problems to be resolved.

⁸⁸

Mugabe's second problem set was structural and ideological in nature. Despite Zimbabwe being one of the most modern and industrialised nations in Africa, the nation's economy was dominated either by external companies and states, most notably South Africa, or by the same white population against whom the guerrilla war had been fought. Simply put, although ZANU won control of Zimbabwe's political structure, their adversaries remained economically dominant.

A student of Marxist-Leninist socialism, Mugabe sought to transform this power structure in Zimbabwe with aggressive socialist policies; however, the new Prime Minister found it difficult to meet his country's popular demands and to cope with the initial challenges of the war. Nature was not on the ZANU Government's side either: after one year of bumper rainfall, a severe drought devastated a sizeable section of the country. As a result of these circumstances and despite Mugabe increasing the minimum wage, Zimbabwe's standard of living declined while its cost of living, transport and food costs, rents, and consumer goods prices escalated. Moreover, Mugabe failed to make good on his promises for land redistribution or new jobs. Despite his hopeful rhetoric and development projects, the country's economic future looked grim.

Times were particularly tough in Matabeleland, where the historical division of land between the races was more disadvantageous to blacks than in Mashonaland. Thus there was greater pressure

⁸⁸ Richard Hodder-Williams, "Conflict in Zimbabwe: The Matabeleland Problem," Pamphlet, Institute for the Study of Conflict, [?].

on the land available from Ndebele peasants, but little fertile and well-watered land available for purchase and redistribution. One could argue that these depressed economic conditions and Ndebele's view of Mugabe's ZANU regime as unsympathetic to their concerns were responsible for the increasing instances of armed robbery and murder in the Matabeleland region. According to Hodder-Williams, instances of armed robbery and murder occurred throughout Zimbabwe since the nation's birth, but in Matabeleland they continued longer and more regularly as groups of ex-ZIPRA "dissidents" exploited their military strength "to provide money for their continued existence and notoriety for their cause." Hodder-Williams observes:

They have robbed banks or hijacked army vehicles; they have murdered and isolated farmers and non-co-operative headman; they have abducted tourists and killed missionaries.

Many of these violent acts were followed by demands for the release of ZAPU politicians or ZANLA military leaders while other crimes had seemingly no political motive, beyond denying the state authorities from controlling one part of the country.

The discovery of large caches of arms on ZAPU-owned properties in Matabeleland in February 1982 led to the dismissal of Nkomo and his allies. This provided the Government the perfect motivation to engage in the "dissident" disorder with great force; under the guise of keeping the rural areas safe, Mugabe soldiers would stomp out the ZAPU influence that threatened to keep Mugabe from his one-party state. Thus the Government responded to the "dissident" problem by sending the North Korean-trained Fifth Brigade to Matabeleland in early 1983 to quell dissent, in a campaign known as the *Gukuruhundi* - "the rain which washes away the chaff before the singing rain. The Shona-dominated Fifth Brigade was accused of committing atrocities against civilians in its pacification campaign and it alienated support for the Government amongst Matabeleland's Ndebele population. It has been estimated that at least 5,000 and as many as 10,000 to 20,000 civilians died during the Fifth Brigade's campaign between 1983 and 1986.⁸⁹

The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace visits Matabeleland

After independence, the Rhodesian Commission reorganized its leadership and refocused its efforts on improving the living conditions of Zimbabweans in their newly established nation. In November 1982, the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe assembled to discuss its new direction and prioritise goals and responsibilities. According to Mike Auret, on

⁸⁹ Mugabe also wreaked havoc on the Matabeleland region in a food embargo beginning in January 1984. After three years of draught, 400,000 people in the South Matabeleland province were dependent on emergency supplies. Mugabe imposed his embargo by halting the aid for four terrible months. The number of individuals who starved during those months is unknown but there are reports that the Ndebele resorted to eating insects and grass seeds to survive.

the top of the list were: concerns about the Indemnity and Compensation Act, the state of affairs in Bulawayo's townships, the Emergency Powers Regulations and increasing complaints about the brutality of the North Korean-trained Fifth Brigade in Matabeleland.⁹⁰ Ultimately, it was the Fifth Brigade that kept the Commission occupied far longer than any of them could have expected at the time.

Sometime in early 1982, the Commission's central offices in Harare received a call from a worker in the Bulawayo office about the brutality of Mugabe's Fifth Brigade. Auret explains that initially, the Commission did not disapprove of the Government sending in troops to address the disorder that they believed dissidents were causing in Matabeleland; however, they were assuredly "taken aback" by the reports that began trickling into the Commission's office in January and February 1982. On 15 February, Auret visited the region to discern the situation for himself; what he discovered still horrifies him to this day. While many of those he met in Matabeleland were reluctant to speak to him out of fear of the Government and the Fifth Brigade, he did manage to get some idea of the atrocities being committed in the region from the individuals who would talk to him. Auret learned that while the Government justified its deployment of the Fifth Brigade as a necessary force against the "dissidents", the reality was that these viciously trained soldiers were targeting ordinary people in villages and farms. Auret recalls standing at the top of a deep valley, which had formally been the site of a village, and listening to the story of how "the Fifth Brigade started at the top of the valley and killed everyone in it." Needless to say, Auret returned to the Commission's headquarters in Harare determined to investigate the extent of the Fifth Brigade's brutality and petition Mugabe to have it stopped. At this point in time, the Commission had no reason to believe that Mugabe would not be open to pulling back his Fifth Brigade once he knew of the atrocities being committed in Matabeleland.

As the press was not reporting the excesses of the Fifth Brigade, the Commission assumed the responsibility of researching the situation and sharing their findings with the Government, and if necessary, the national or international media. This was the approach they had with the Rhodesian Front and though the Commission did not expect that they would be again playing this role under Mugabe's Government, they remained just as committed to protecting the rights of Zimbabweans under Robert Mugabe as they had been under Ian Smith. The Commission assigned Dorita Field, a journalist from Northern Ireland, the task of completing a report on the atrocities in the region. It took her six weeks to finish the report, which became the first document to record the violence in Matabeleland and the suffering of the Ndebele people in the region at the hand of Mugabe's Fifth Brigade.

⁹⁰ Auret, Interview.

Beginning during Smith's Government, the Commission had maintained a policy that it would not go public with its findings unless the Government did not accept them. Smith never did accept them, nor would he meet with the Commission, and so they always went public in those days. Mugabe, on the other hand, did agree to a meeting concerning their report in March 1983. Two bishops joined Auret in his conference with Mugabe: Auxiliary Bishop of Mutare, Patrick Mutume, and the Bishop of Bulawayo, Henry Karlen. The group brought with them their report as well as a copy of the Bishop's Pastoral Letter, *Reconciliation is Still Possible*. According to Auret, the Prime Minister "showed great concern" and agreed to investigate their findings; however, the following day, the press attacked the Catholic Church for stirring trouble and published Mugabe's denial of any excesses of his Fifth Brigade.

As reports of Fifth Brigade brutalities continued to flood the Commission's office, they met with Mugabe for a second time with another report in hand in July 1983. Auret recalls that the Commission did not publish their first report because Mugabe did withdraw the Fifth Brigade – but only for a short time. At the July meeting, Mugabe and the Commission officers were joined by ministers of the CIO, the police and the head of the army. According to Auret, Mugabe listened in "fairly stony silence" to the Commission's report and then "went out of his way to ease fears" that these actions would continue. The meeting concluded with a promise from Mugabe to establish a committee to collect information on the Matabeleland situation and publish their findings. And this time, Mugabe followed through with his promise and set up the committee a few weeks later. Unfortunately, it soon became clear that the committee was not serious about getting to the truth of the problems plaguing the Ndebele of Matabeleland. One way they made this evident was their scheduling only one day for the Commission to present its report. Under protest, the committee extended to three but it still did not provide them enough time for a thorough presentation. Auret also adds that he knew that there was something not right about proceedings when Mike Shutte, who served on the committee and who had been friends with Auret since their time in the army together, left the country as soon as the Government published the report that essentially exonerated the Fifth Brigade.

During this time, Auret made visits to the Matabeleland provinces every two weeks. He continued to run into the obstacle of people's fear of the Fifth Brigade which provoked an unwillingness to talk with him. Relying on his connection with the local Catholic parishes and the people's feelings of safety in Catholic churches, Auret would often go into the confessional and have people tell him their stories there. As the Commission continued to receive reports from the North and South Matabeleland provinces through 1984 and the media printed nothing, Auret began sending some of the Commission's findings to newspapers overseas, including: *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Telegraph London*, *Independent London* and the *Christian Science Monitor*.

Auret was supported in these efforts by the bishop of Bishop Karlen, who contributed his own set of strong statements to the newspapers.

After the 1985 elections, the violence escalated in Matabeleland.⁹¹ ZANU started burning granaries and reports of murders, house burnings, political mobs and mass graves were flooding into the Commission each day. As the press kept silent, many Zimbabweans knew nothing of what was happening in Matabeleland. Thus Auret began to give public speeches about the human rights violations of the Fifth Brigade. He spoke at Rotary meetings and often at the Parkland Hotel in Harare. At the same time, the Commission continued to collect information and produce reports. They held back at publishing their first four reports because Mugabe reacted correctively to each one; unfortunately, each correction proved to be temporary and the Fifth Brigade remained.⁹² In May 1986, the Commission spoke out against the banning of ZAPU which resulted in the ten-hour arrest of Mike Auret and several other Commission members being detained.

Mugabe finally withdrew the Brigade in 1986; however, its members were incorporated into the regular forces. After the 1987 Unity Accords between ZAPU and ZANU-PF achieved Mugabe's plans for a one-party state in Zimbabwe and ZANU-PF's lock on the Government, the atrocities stopped. With political opposition squelched, Mugabe no longer required such extreme policing of the ZAPU-dominated Matabeleland region. Another signal of Mugabe's confidence in his political control of the country came in 1990 with his repeal of the Emergency Powers Regulations. Lifting of these regulations, which had been in existence since Ian Smith first instituted them in 1965, did away with the Government's extra legal powers, many of which had allowed for the infringement of basic human rights. According to *Breaking the Silence – Building True Peace*, Zimbabwe's human rights record in the mid 1990s, while still not perfect, was better than it had even been since Independence in 1980.

⁹¹ The Commission observed these elections and despite ZANU violence and propaganda at the time, they believed that it was representative of the voters of Zimbabwe. Auret has been criticised for this assumption; however, he still argues that Zimbabwean voters still believed that Mugabe would take the country in the direction he promised. Auret, Interview.

⁹² Later, in 1987, the Commission published "A report on the practices of torture and brutality employed by members of the security services of Zimbabwe in the investigations of criminal, subversive or political activities of citizens of this country, to the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishop's Conference." (25 January 1987). After presenting the report to the Bishops and receiving its approval, the Commission distributed the report to Army, Police and CIO stations in the Zimbabwe, making it the most widely circulated document at the time. They also made the report available to the public and subsequently saw a dramatic decrease in the number of cases of brutality being reported to the Commission. The Commission summarizes the intent of the report with the following: "This report is now made public in order to inform citizens of their rights with regard to any form of torture and to remind the forces of Law and Order of its contents. We hope that its publication will serve as the basis for the complete eradication of torture from Zimbabwe and lead the Government to sign the UN Covenant Against Torture."

Breaking the Silence – Building True Peace

This break of violence in Zimbabwe in the 1990s afforded the Commission an opportunity to begin efforts aimed at healing and reconciliation. According to Auret, the Commission was the only human rights organisation in Zimbabwe to deal with the first generation of civil rights abuses in Matabeleland. In 1984, the Legal Resources Foundation started working on women's rights and ZimRights opened in the 1990s, but during the tumultuous 1980s in Matabeleland, the Commission was the Ndebele's only advocate. Auret remembers the period as "a lonely time". However, he continued with his work for the Commission, first as Chairperson, then as Educational Officer and finally as Director beginning in 1992.⁹³

Auret's first years as Director were on the whole, quiet ones in Zimbabwe. With the signing of the Unity Accords, the withdrawal of the Fifth Brigade and the repeal of the Emergency Power Regulations, Mugabe's ZANU government seemed content with its political power. Nevertheless, the Commission knew that although the atrocities had ceased in Matabeleland, the suffering remained. A Catholic organisation, which took the directives of *Pacem in Terris* seriously, the Commission believed that reconciliation was only possible once the truth had been revealed and considered their advocacy work for the Ndebele to be unfinished. In late 1992 or early 1993, Auret wrote a letter to the Bishops explaining the need for a comprehensive report on the atrocities committed in Matabeleland and the Midlands region in order for the Ndebele to begin the healing process. The Bishops responded with their approval and the Commission, with some assistance by the Legal Resources Foundation, began its research in 1994.

Mike Auret commissioned Sheri Eppel, a veteran of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, to complete the majority of the research. Eppel was aided by an Ndebele translator.⁹⁴ Auret defined the report as a project for the past, present and future:

The purpose of this report is to record for posterity what transpired in our post-independence era. We want the government to acknowledge that the massacres took place and also to make an apology to the relatives of the victims and find ways of assisting the affected dependents of the victims.⁹⁵

⁹³ Auret.

⁹⁴ *Conversations with History: Institute of International Studies, UC Berkeley*. "Healing Community Trauma: Exhumation and Ritual in Zimbabwe: Conversation with Shari Eppel, Human Rights Activist." Interview with Harry Krelser and Shari Eppel. 24 April 2001. [radio transcript online]; available from UC Berkeley website, http://www.globetrotter.Berkeley.edu/people/Eppel/eppel_cons.html; Internet; accessed 13 February 2004.

⁹⁵ Lewis Gaba, "Zimbabwe: A chronicle of post-independence massacre," *Africa News* (16 July 1997). [article online]; available from OneWorld News Service website, http://www.oneworld.org/news/reports/jul97_zimbabwe.html; Internet; accessed 30 January 2004.

Set off with these inspiring instructions but without great resources, Eppel concentrated her efforts on two villages in Matabeleland: Nyamandlovu and Matobo (Kezi). Interviewing 1,000 people, she spent three months of collections in one district and approximately one month in the other. It is important to note that the information Eppel received was voluntary and not a random survey. Thus when compiling her findings, she could not extrapolate the data to illustrate how significant the consequences of the massacres were. Nevertheless, Eppel argues that she was able to present some good indicators of the extent of the violence but that it was a challenge:

...we did get a lot of information coming in about these massacres. And because nothing was out there, I had to put this together in terms of time scale and say, "Well, we have an epidemic [of violence] during these months, and then a year later, the strategy changed in certain ways." To put that together from about a thousand individual testaments which we took during those years was a real challenge.⁹⁶

Despite these frustrations, Eppel remained disciplined in her research and committed to, in her words, "her human rights work." Eppel suggests that her job description included gathering information, chronicling what happened, being affected and outraged by her discoveries and then communicating the information. With the help of the Commission's staff and resources and the LRF, Eppel communicated her research in a 261-page report, *Breaking the Silence – Building True Peace: A report into the disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands, 1980-1988*.⁹⁷

The final draft, ready by December 1996, concluded that 7,000 Ndebele were massacred in the Matabeleland and Midlands regions between 1980 and 1988. Although Eppel accounts for 4,000 known dead in her two case studies, she suggests that because of the very small voluntary data collection process, that 4,000 was "clearly the tip of the iceberg" and would argue that the number of victims is more in the 10,000 to 20,000 range. Eppel offers a concise summary of some of her findings:

In the space of six weeks in 1983, thousands of people were massacred – men, women, and children. And it was blatant, it was very crude. People were just rounded up to schools, bore holes, they were beaten, they were forced to dig their own graves, and then they were shot into the graves. This included the women; at times, children. People were put in a hut, thirty, forty people in a hut, and then the hut would be set on fire and burnt down. So there was widespread massacres, but the curfew was so effective that very little news of this actually leaked out. And when it did, the international community played it down. They didn't want to believe that Mugabe, who was very well respected internationally could be capable of such a thing.

Eppel recalls that when she first started to collect statements, she was "overwhelmed with pain and anger" over stories like the one mentioned above. According to Eppel, she used to walk

⁹⁶ Eppel.

⁹⁷ Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace – Zimbabwe, *Breaking the Silence: Building True Peace. A report into the disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands, 1980-1988* (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe and Legal Resources Foundation, April 1999).

around the house at 3:00 in the morning and think, “How didn’t we know? How come we didn’t know this was happening?” It was this widespread ignorance in Zimbabwe and around the world that motivated the Commission to produce *Breaking the Silence* and despite the Bishop’s disapproval, remain committed to seeing it published. Where the Commission engaged in spaces of violence with their early reports and Mugabe conferences in the 1980s, they now brought the truth to spaces of ignorance. Their goal was the same in both: reconciliation and peace.

Breaking the Silence is divided into four parts. Part One introduces the Matabeleland conflict and provides a historical overview and useful background information on the nation’s geography and climate, the nation’s data collection process and the important individuals and groups involved. Focusing on two case studies, Part Two presents the results of Eppel’s interviews and conclusions on a massacre in the village of Nyamandlovu and the impact of Mugabe’s food embargo on the village of Matobo (Kezi). Part Two also includes the Commission’s findings from other areas. Part Three offers the implications and consequences of the results. Finally, in Part Four, the Commission offers its recommendations, which include suggestions for: national acknowledgment, human rights violators, legal amendments, human remains, health, communal reparation and the future.

Although the Bishops did not permit the Commission to publish the report until Mugabe acknowledged it, which he has yet to do, *Breaking the Silence* reached the public through other means. In June 1997, with Auret overseas, the report was leaked to South Africa’s *Mail and Guardian*, some suggest the LRF as the culprits, and published on their website. It was later published in paper form by the Legal Resources Foundations at which time the Catholic Bishops crafted an angry letter in response to LRF. While it is difficult to understand the Bishops’, who commissioned the report in the first place, refusal to acknowledge the report once it had been completed. Some contend that the Bishops long relationship with Mugabe, particularly the Shona bishops many of whom went to the same Jesuit schools as Zimbabwe, and their desires to keep the peace and their authority in Mugabe’s Zimbabwe coloured their decision-making in regards to the report. Even today, when Mugabe’s rule is as oppressive as it ever has been, only one bishop, Pius Ncube of Bulawayo, has the courage to speak the truth as the Commission had done before him.

The ADVOCATE as Catholic *militant for peace*

Despite the tension between the hierarchy and the Commission, *Breaking the Silence* has remained an important record of the suffering endured by the people of Matabeleland, who lived in spaces of conflict for eight years. Nearly all scholars writing about Zimbabwe history or current events today refer to the Commission's report. In her analysis of the dissident perspectives during the conflict, Jocelyn Alexander comments on the thoroughness of the report:

The most thorough account to date, this extraordinary report combines a thorough examination of the widest possible range of sources, including the press, hospital records and the contemporary reports of the Catholic Commission with two interview-based case studies.⁹⁸

Journalist David Blair praised the Commission's attention to detail in his account of the Matabeleland conflict:

A remarkable report, *Breaking the Silence – Building True Peace*, later documented the atrocities with meticulous accuracy and fairness. It is in the raw, verbatim testimony of the victims that the true horror of Fifth Brigade's murderous campaign is exposed.⁹⁹

It is clear from these accolades that Auret achieved his mission for *Building Peace* as an historical document for posterity. However, perhaps what is more important is the impact of the document, and all of the Commission's work in Matabeleland, on the present and the future. When discussing the Matabeleland conflict, Auret likes to answer the question: "What is peace for Matabeleland?" with a simple answer, "truth-telling!" Thus in completing the report, the Commission became an advocate for a group of people to whom no one would listen. The efforts of their advocate offered them a listening ear and later, the tools and the processes necessary to recover from the truth that had been shared and to build a healthier and more just future. Ultimately, the blindness of the Catholic Bishops and the abuses of Mugabe's ZANU Government cut short the Commission's advocacy work and closed the spaces for peace too soon in Zimbabwe. The next case study will demonstrate the possibilities when the grassroots, the hierarchy and the NGO cooperate. Not only are they able to wage a richer campaign for peace, but they find ways to sustain that peace in the long term.

⁹⁸ Jocelyn Alexander, Joann McGregor and Terence Ranger, *Violence and Memory: One Hundred Years in the "Dark Forests" of Matabeleland* (Cape Town: David Phillip, 2000), 175.

⁹⁹ David Blair, *Degrees in Violence: Robert Mugabe and the Struggle for Power in Zimbabwe* (London: Continuum, 2002).

In their deliberations together, let men and women of outstanding wisdom and influence give serious thought to the problem of achieving a more human adjustment of relations between States throughout the world. It must be an adjustment that is based on mutual trust, sincerity in negotiation, and the faithful fulfilment of obligations assumed. Every aspect of the problem must be examined, so that eventually there may emerge some point of agreement from which to initiate treaties which are sincere, lasting, and beneficial in their effects.

[118]¹⁰⁰³

¹⁰⁰³ John XXIII, "*Pacem in Terris*."

“A LAY COMMUNITY OF FRIENDS”

Communita di Sant'Egidio Mediates an End to Mozambique's Civil War

Roman Hospitality

In January 1991, Cameron Hume of the U.S. State Department and Fr. Matteo Zuppi of the *Communita di Sant'Egidio* met for coffee in the Trastevere district of Rome, Italy.¹⁰¹ An observer of the two middle-aged, professionally-dressed men would have paid little attention to what must have appeared to be a business meeting or more likely, a light-hearted chat between friends – and perhaps that is what it was. Although Hume and Zuppi had only recently been introduced, their relationship demonstrated mutual respect and even affection almost immediately. It would have been apparent to the observer of the American diplomat and the Italian cleric that Zuppi was, like any good Italian host, doing most of the talking and gesticulating as he introduced his new friend to Roman hospitality and cuisine. Nevertheless, the two shared more than anecdotes over their extra-strong espresso and day-old biscotti. For nearly seven months, Matteo Zuppi had been participating in a team of volunteers charged with brokering peace in war-torn Mozambique at Sant'Egidio headquarters in the Trastevere.¹⁰² Deputy chief of mission at the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See, Cameron Hume had been recently commissioned to observe these talks and to offer technical assistance to Sant'Egidio as they moved forward. A community of exceptionally devoted and predominantly lay Roman Catholics, Sant'Egidio maintained a remarkable resume of service to the poor and humanitarian aid to Third World nations but had zero experience with the type of high-level mediation required to resolve Mozambique's thirteen-year old and

¹⁰¹ Translated into English, *Communita di Sant'Egidio* is Community of St. Giles.

¹⁰² Of the four official mediators who made up this team, two were members of Sant'Egidio: Matteo Zuppi, parish priest in the Trastevere neighbourhood of Rome and Andrea Riccardi, professor of history and leader of the Community since its founding. Jaime Goncalves, Archbishop of Beira, Mozambique and long-time friend of the Community, and Mario Raffaelli, who represented the Italian government as the group's chairman, completed the group. Although only half of the mediators were official members of Sant'Egidio, they each embraced the ethos of the Community and all talks were held at Sant'Egidio headquarters. Thus, throughout this chapter, the four mediators will be described collectively as Sant'Egidio.

particularly bloody civil war. Thus despite appearances, the exchange between Hume and Zuppi must have consisted of a good deal more than mere friendly banter.¹⁰³

Although Hume's instructions were to observe the negotiations, report regularly to Washington and offer assistance when warranted, Matteo Zuppi was not ignorant to the fact that any sustainable peace agreement reached in Rome would require the full backing of the United Nations, the international community and especially the United States during the implementation stages. A friendly rapport with Hume would be essential. Thus the naturally personable and outgoing Italian priest wasted little time in demonstrating the values and goals of Sant'Egidio to his important guest.

"A Lay Community of Friends"

According to R. Scott Appleby, Sant'Egidio was "one of the fruits of Roman Catholicism's internal revolution of the 1960s."¹⁰⁴ One could argue that if Sant'Egidio was one of the fruits, the Second Vatican Council was one of the seeds and Pope John XXIII the hand that sowed it: for in three short years, the Council called to Rome by the pope assuredly breathed new life and introduced significant reform into an old Church. The result was not only fresh Church teaching on a myriad of contemporary subjects but also a wave of optimism and recommitted energy to living Christianity's Gospel message.¹⁰⁵ Few places experienced this energy more acutely than Rome itself. Thus it should come as no surprise that it was at Virgil High School in Rome's poorest and most diverse neighbourhood that the first meeting of a community that would later be known as Sant'Egidio took place on 7 February 1968. Reflecting on Sant'Egidio's founding in the late 1960s, Cameron Hume comments that while many in Rome "went socialist/communist", Sant'Egidio "went Christian."¹⁰⁶ John Allen, a reporter for the *National Catholic Reporter* who regularly covers Sant'Egidio, concludes that while "other student radicals drew inspiration from Che Gueverra or Mao, the founders of Sant'Egidio looked to the gospels and the Second Vatican Council."¹⁰⁷ Appleby aptly describes the early Community as "an independent . . . predominantly lay movement . . . of young Italian Catholics who wanted to live and work together in the spirit

¹⁰³ Ambassador Cameron Hume, Interview.

¹⁰⁴ R. Scott Appleby [Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, Carnegie Corporation of New York], *The Ambivalence of the Sacred* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 155.

¹⁰⁵ See Walter M. Abbot, S.J., *The Documents of Vatican II: With Notes and Comments by Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Authorities* (Piscataway, New Jersey: America Press, 1966) for the documents of Vatican II as well as commentary.

¹⁰⁶ Hume, Interview.

¹⁰⁷ See John L. Allen, "Host Sant'Egidio community in familiar mediator role," *National Catholic Reporter* (6 October 2000).

of the Second Vatican Council, as expressed in Pope John XXIII's dictum, 'Let us stress what unites us, not what divides us.'¹⁰⁸

It was a youthful curiosity about their Christian faith and their attendance at the same high school in the Trastevere that united Sant'Egidio's ten founding members. Most of them were baptized though not practicing Catholics and in 1968, they started asking the question, "What does it mean to be a Christian?" They hoped to find answers in the scriptures; consequently, the Community's first meetings consisted of the shared reading of a text that also united them – the Bible. The students quickly realized that scripture was calling them into service to the poor and they decided that in addition to reading the Bible together, they would also help the poor children in their neighbourhood with their homework. One member explains how the religious practice of reading scripture motivated the young students into action in the secular world:

That was the very beginning. Everything was based on the common reading of the Gospel. I have to stress this. This was a very religious and a very secular event put together. In a way the community today as well is very religious, profoundly spiritual but also profoundly worldly, very worldly, the sense that we are extremely concerned about the world, about the city where we live and we also use those worldly means to change the world itself.¹⁰⁹

Thus Sant'Egidio members did not desire a pious religious life disconnected from the world nor did they seek the ordained ministry of priests and nuns. Rather, through a shared reading of scripture and service to the poor, the high school students would strive to live up to the challenges they believed Christianity offered them in the careers and activities they pursued in the secular world.

Young people themselves, the early Sant'Egidio members befriended the children with whom they worked as well as their families, friends and others in their neighbourhood. And before long, visitors started attending their weekly scripture sessions, activities with the poor and

¹⁰⁸ Appleby, 155. For detailed histories and more background on Sant'Egidio, also see Andrea Bartoli, "Mozambicans Mediating through Third Parties: Successful Synergies and the Role of the Community of Sant'Egidio," in *Herdling Cats: Multiparty Mediation in a Complex World*, eds. Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson and Pamela Aall (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1999), 17; Cameron Hume, *Ending Mozambique's War: The Role of Mediation and Good Offices* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1994), 15-19. Alex Vines and Ken Wilson, "Churches and the Peace Process in Mozambique," in *The Christian Churches and the Democratisation of Africa*, ed. Paul Gifford, 130-147 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 140-144; Mario Giro, "The Community of Sant'Egidio and Its Peace-Making Activities," *The International Spectator*, no 3 (July-September, 1998). [article online]; available from Sant'Egidio website, www.santegidio.org/archivio/pace/19980703_spectator_EN.htm; Internet; accessed 6 June 2003; Hans Oberlander, "Waging Peace on War. [reprinted by permission of *Lafihansa Magazine*, 2003]." [article online]; available from Aloha International website, www.huna.org/html/wagepcc.htm; Internet; accessed 27 May 2003; and Sant'Egidio's own website, <http://www.santegidio.net/en/index.html>.

¹⁰⁹ See *Radio National Encounter*, Australia: "The Community of Sant'Egidio." Interview with Radio National reporter, Margaret Coffey and Claudio Mario Betti, Sant'Egidio member. 6 February 2000. [radio transcript online]; available from *Radio National* website, <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/relig/enc/stories/s95042.htm>; Internet; accessed 30 January 2004.

evening prayer services.¹¹⁰ In 1973, the Vatican offered the growing community an old Carmelite convent formerly inhabited by cloistered nuns. It was from this convent that the community of students, having graduated from Virgil High School, along with newcomers they had attracted over five years took their name. Less than twenty years later, it would be at this same convent – refurbished by the Italian government – that two of Sant’Egidio’s founding members would broker the Mozambican peace agreement. Also from their headquarters, Sant’Egidio organized the founding of “popular schools” for the disadvantaged children with whom they worked. And the Community continued to expand from there: beginning in 1968 with ten members who helped children with their homework after school, today Sant’Egidio boasts over 30,000 members who are spread out in over thirty-five countries and are active in a myriad of ministries.

Despite the Community’s popularity and branches around the world, Rome has remained Sant’Egidio’s centre. In the 1970s, Sant’Egidio began what many consider to be “the best appointed soup kitchen in Rome.” According to John Allen, “1,500 diners a day are treated like guests at an elegant *trattoria*, seated at tables and served a full-course meal from a menu.”¹¹¹ Today, Sant’Egidio volunteers serve the poor five nights a week. Like any good host, the Community waits on their guests at tables as opposed to rushing them through a cafeteria line as a way of respecting their dignity. At 8:30 each evening, the host invites their soup kitchen guests, their Roman neighbours as well as tourists and visitors to its vespers service in the Basilica of Santa Maria in the Trastevere. And according to Allen, the vespers are invariably powerful: “Overflow crowds of young Romans and pilgrims come, drawn both by the beautiful music and by the clear connection Sant’Egidio seems to make between liturgy and life.”¹¹² One visitor attributes the large crowds to the welcoming atmosphere Sant’Egidio creates at its services:

With simple, white walls, the church is in the form of a cross. The altar on the left side is piled with Bibles in all the languages of countries where the Community has active

¹¹⁰ See Ellen Leonard, “Emerging Communities of Dialogue and Mission,” *Grail* 8 (September 1992) in which she chronicles her June 1991 pilgrimage to four religious communities in Italy and France that represented new evangelical life in the church. Known as “Global Classroom”, Leonard’s journey was sponsored by the Maryknoll School of Theology. She concludes her article that new life indeed exists in the Catholic Church:

In the midst of war and political strife in so many parts of the world, new life is emerging from the old Roman Catholic countries of Italy and France and it is spreading to other areas including Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Africa. All four of the communities which we visited are communities of dialogue, dialogue within the communities and among communities of the world. Their prophetic spirit challenges our communities and our parishes to respond in our own contexts to that spirit of dialogue and mission which was unleashed at Vatican II (21).

For a description of a more recent visit to Sant’Egidio headquarters – this one by members of the U.S. Mennonite Church in May 2003 – see Marilyn Stahl and Dirk Giseburt, “Common threads: Mennonites in Dialogue with the Community of Sant’Egidio in Rome,” *Bridgefolk.net Newsletter* 3 (June 2003). [article online]; available from Bridgefolk website, <http://bridgefolk.net/newsletter/03/sant'egidio.htm>; Internet; accessed 30 January 2004.

¹¹¹ Allen (6 October 2000).

¹¹² Ibid.

membership. The altar on the right is decorated with a multitude of crosses made by craftspersons in many countries.¹¹³

In addition to displaying the craftsmanship of artists from around the world and making available Bibles in various languages, Sant'Egidio provides simultaneous translation at all of its events. The Community places a high premium on hospitality and consequently organizes its soup kitchens, meeting and worship spaces, vespers services and conferences with great care.

Needless to say, the Community has always thrived in its urban context. For thirty years, Rome has afforded Sant'Egidio the opportunity to work with the poor and pray with individuals of different backgrounds and faiths who visit one of Europe's most cosmopolitan capital cities. Speaking to the geographical location of Sant'Egidio's headquarters, one member observes, "Coexistence among different peoples is considered a value and a reality to be preserved in the Mediterranean world."¹¹⁴ And unlike poverty or war, this is one reality which Sant'Egidio assuredly embraces.

Before moving forward to the ways in which Sant'Egidio engaged in the Mozambican conflict, it might be helpful to summarize the Community's defining virtues. Andrea Bartoli suggests that the ethos of Sant'Egidio can best be described by using four Latin words: *communio*, *traditio*, *romanitas* and *pietas*.¹¹⁵

Communio. Sant'Egidio recognizes itself as part of a large family that stretches around the world. In practical terms, Sant'Egidio focuses on the skills most valued by community: careful listening, prompt response, a commitment to relationships, a preparedness to stop and change pace and hospitality. Under the notion of *communio*, R. Scott Appleby would add friendship:

The ethos of friendship finds expression in practically every aspect of the members' individual lives and corporate life, including the Community's penchant for networking and establishing relationships with political and religious actors at every level.¹¹⁶

Sant'Egidio began as a community of friends and one could argue that despite its large numbers and high-level connections, it remains this way today.

¹¹³ Stahl and Giseburt.

¹¹⁴ Giro.

¹¹⁵ See Andrea Bartoli's presentation in David Smock, "Catholic Contributions to International Peace," Summary of presentations at United States Institute of Peace Conference on Catholic Peacemaking (5 February 2001) (report released: 9 April 2001). [complete audio and summary online]; available from USIP website, <http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr69.html>; Internet; accessed 6 June 2003 and 10 February 2004.

¹¹⁶ R. Scott Appleby, "Religion as an Agent of Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding," in *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict*, eds. Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall, 821-840 (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2001), 828.

Traditio. The Community sees itself as an integral component of the Catholic tradition. According to Bartoli, “it also views itself as one of the latest expressions of Catholic *plasticity* – a Catholic ability to adapt, respond, and to incorporate change.”¹¹⁷ One member suggests that historically, Sant’Egidio’s service to the poor demanded that it be an organization which embraced change:

First of all there is the temptation of being ideological. We could have chosen to scream out our desire and ended there. When you start working with children who live in a hut and have problems finding the wood to heat their hut and who are prevented from school, well you cannot just scream out that there is an unjust society. You have to do something. So the poor have been our masters too.¹¹⁸

The Community emerged as a response to the question, “What does it mean to be a Christian?” Appreciating that scripture directed them to live their faith first in their community, Sant’Egidio’s founding members reacted to the poverty in their neighbourhood with after-school programs and soup kitchens. As their numbers expanded and branches were created in other parts of Italy and around the world, new Sant’Egidio members reacted to the needs specific to their respective neighbourhoods, whether they be poverty, illiteracy or HIV/AIDS. And when a civil war hindered the Community’s ministry in Mozambique, Sant’Egidio members adapted their traditional services in that nation by volunteering to mediate a resolution to the conflict.

Romanitas. Headquartered in Rome, Sant’Egidio considers the space it shares with the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church to be sacred. Moreover, it embraces the fact that cultures and faiths from all corners of the globe interact in the piazzas and alleys of Italy’s capital city.

Pietas. Love of the poor is central to the Community’s commitment to peacemaking. Appreciating that the poor suffer most from war, Sant’Egidio members have a strong sense of responsibility for those in any kind of pain. Through person-to-person contact, open dialogue, an understanding of their own weakness and a willingness to seek assistance from other organizations in their peacemaking efforts and their preparedness to risk failure in pursuit of peace, Sant’Egidio measures success in how much it can do for the poor.

Communio, Traditio, Romanitas and *Pietas* are the virtues Matteo Zuppi articulated to Cameron Hume that January night in 1991. Hume would soon discover that not only were these Latin words Sant’Egidio’s founding virtues, but they were also the Community’s negotiating tools.

¹¹⁷ Bartoli, 18.

¹¹⁸ Claudio Mario Betti; see *Radio National Encounter*, Australia; transcript.

The Italian Pied Piper

Fr. Matteo Zuppi, a founding member of Sant'Egidio, served as a parish priest at the Santa Maria Basilica in the Trastevere, a neighbourhood that has been a crossroads of nationalities, classes and religions for more than 2,000 years. Beginning with the founding of the Community in the late 1960s, Zuppi ministered to those in his neighbourhood who were in the greatest need: “the poor, Gypsies, addicts, orphans, AIDS victims and the handicapped.”¹¹⁹ As the community swelled in number and enthusiasm, Zuppi led Sant'Egidio's efforts to express solidarity with individuals suffering outside of the city limits of Rome and beyond the borders of Italy. Under Zuppi's direction, Sant'Egidio members built relationships and organized activities in “Third World nations as diverse as Albania, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Mexico, Mozambique, Somalia and Vietnam.”¹²⁰ Hume describes Zuppi as the “pied piper of Italy” – an individual who everyone knew and wanted to follow.¹²¹ Along with Andrea Riccardi, Sant'Egidio's more intellectual founding president and lead mediator in the Mozambican negotiations, Zuppi expanded the Community's membership and influence by articulating Sant'Egidio's three-part mission of *service to the poor, friendship and prayer*.¹²² The Community's officers and members – who all held day jobs as lawyers and labourers, doctors and secretaries – expanded their organization's influence by contributing their own friendships and connections in various levels of Italian and Vatican society to Sant'Egidio's address book.

Zuppi chose not to enumerate items on his CV or boast of the successes or reputation of his organization in order to win the respect of his influential American guest; instead, in their very first meeting, Zuppi introduced Hume to a roomful of smiling infants at a Sant'Egidio-run orphanage in the Trastevere. Explaining to Hume that each baby in the room had been born with AIDS and that Sant'Egidio cared for them as part of their mission “to deal with the people that were excluded,” Zuppi made a poignant first impression on the American career diplomat. It was this same mission that motivated the Community to volunteer its services to the warring parties in Mozambique: although the Mozambican conflict was assuredly ripe for resolution – and according to Hume, everyone knew it – no one was willing to devote the time, energy and resources necessary to see it through. It remains unclear whether Zuppi's decision to take Hume to the orphanage on his very first day in the Trastevere was strategic. Not wishing to suggest that Zuppi was exploiting the children, Hume nevertheless recalls the visit as a shrewd move on the Priest's part and one that he believes Zuppi repeated with other guests.¹²³ By disarming Hume

¹¹⁹ Hume, 16.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Hume, Interview.

¹²² Visit Sant'Egidio's website for more information on the Community's three pillars: <http://www.santegidio.net/en/index.html>.

¹²³ Hume, Interview.

with genuinely welcoming conversation over coffee and offering him a tour of the orphanage, Zuppi subtly communicated the friendly ethos of the Community as well as the heart of its ministry to “the people who were excluded.”

Needless to say, Hume’s first impressions of Sant’Egidio and his esteem for Matteo Zuppi and Andrea Riccardi – he describes the two men as “very very clever and charming Romans” – well served the interests of the Community as they facilitated a gruelling twenty-seven months of negotiations in Rome (June 1990 to October 1992).¹²⁴ It is the intent of this chapter to explore Sant’Egidio’s unique approach to mediation – what former U.N. Secretary General Boutros-Boutros Ghali hailed as “the Rome formula” – and to deconstruct the Community’s Catholic character as it pertains to its role in resolving the Mozambican conflict.¹²⁵ Thus the remainder of this chapter will focus on the details of Sant’Egidio’s mediating role – such as the first meeting of Zuppi and Hume – to assess exactly how this organization operated and how significant Roman Catholicism was to the operation. It will begin by considering the nature of the conflict in Mozambique and move on to a closer examination of the overarching *principles* by which the organization mediated and the *skills* its representatives demonstrated. Together, a study of Sant’Egidio’s *principles* and *skills* will animate a picture of the organization’s method of mediation that highlights its Catholic characteristics.

A Note on Historiography

Several scholars have already analysed Sant’Egidio’s role in the Mozambican peace negotiations and the Community’s approach to mediation. Perhaps most notable is *Ending Mozambique’s War: The Role of Mediation and Good Offices* (1994), in which Cameron Hume offers a careful and chronological account of the talks in Rome and devotes considerable attention to the role of the mediators.¹²⁶ Andrea Bartoli, a leader of the Sant’Egidio Community in New York City and the Director of the International Conflict Resolution Program of Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs, contributes a comprehensive study of Sant’Egidio’s approach to peace negotiations, their successes in Mozambique and the lessons they impart to future mediators in his chapter in the USIP volume, *Herding Cats: Multiparty Mediation in a Complex World*

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Allen, (6 October 2000).

¹²⁶ See Cameron Hume, *Ending Mozambique’s War: The Role of Mediation and Good Offices* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1994). *Ending Mozambique’s War* is essential reading for those interested in the twenty-seven month negotiation process which brought an end to civil war in Mozambique. Where this chapter emphasizes the role and character of the Catholic mediators, Hume’s book presents the larger themes as well as the finer details in a thorough and readable text.

(1999).¹²⁷ Finally, professor of history and director of the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame, R. Scott Appleby presents Sant'Egidio's achievements in Mozambique as a justification for his call for a deeper appreciation of the role of religion – and specifically “religious militants for peace” – in international peacebuilding. Appleby uses the Mozambique negotiations as a case study in nearly all of his writing on religious peacebuilding, namely *The Ambivalence of the Sacred* (2000) and his more recent chapter in another USIP volume, *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict* (2001).¹²⁸ Building from the fine scholarship of the diplomat, the conflict resolution expert and especially the historian, this narrative will contribute a new approach to the burgeoning field of *mediation studies* by introducing the Papal Encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*, as a tool for understanding Sant'Egidio as a Catholic mediator in Mozambique. Like the previous two case studies, *Pacem in Terris* provided Sant'Egidio a blueprint for its peacebuilding efforts. Moreover, the document bestowed upon the Catholic NGO the authority – “in Christ's name” – to carry out this work. Needless to say, these are unique directives indeed and an exploration into how the Community embraced the spirit of the Encyclical as they toiled at the negotiating table in Rome may refine even further our working definition of Appleby's notion of the Catholic “militant for peace.”

A History of the Conflict

Like much of the civil unrest on the African continent over the last several decades, the Mozambican drama which played out at the negotiating table in Rome can trace its roots to events surrounding the colony's independence from its imperial power – in this case, Portugal – decades earlier. After brief negotiations following a coup in Lisbon, Portugal relinquished power to the Mozambican Liberation Front (Frelimo), thus ending a bloody ten-year liberation struggle.¹²⁹ And so in September 1974, Frelimo assumed legitimate authority over Mozambique

¹²⁷ See Andrea Bartoli, “Mozambicans Mediating through Third Parties: Successful Synergies and the Role of the Community of Sant'Egidio,” in *Herding Cats: Multiparty Mediation in a Complex World*, eds. Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson and Pamela Aall (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1999). Also see Andrea Bartoli, “For a Peaceful Mozambique,” *CROSSLINES Global* (Geneva) 1, no. 4 (September 1993). For an articulate and illuminating explanation of Sant'Egidio's understanding and use of prayer in its peacebuilding efforts, see Andrea Bartoli, “Seeking Peace, We Must Start from Prayer,” *National Pastoral Life Center Initiative Newsletter* (March 2002).

¹²⁸ In the monumental R. Scott Appleby [Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, Carnegie Corporation of New York], *The Ambivalence of the Sacred* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), Appleby introduces the notion of “religious militants for peace” as the reverse side of violent religious militants based upon his decades of research on fundamentalism and his more recent study of religious peacebuilding. See also R. Scott Appleby, “Religion as an Agent of Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding,” in *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict*, eds. Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall, 821-840 (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2001) and R. Scott Appleby, “Catholic peacebuilding,” *America* 189, no. 6 (8 September 2003).

¹²⁹ Frelimo was founded in 1962 in the Tanzanian capital of Dar-es-Salaam with Dr. Eduardo Mondlane as its first president. In 1964, Frelimo launched an armed struggle in northern Mozambique to achieve

without the burden of needing to promise free and fair elections, which most of the other decolonisation agreements in Africa required. They exercised total power and immediately began to transform Mozambique into a socialist country. Andrea Bartoli aptly describes Frelimo's mission:

Its task was immense: to create a new state – a new nation – from an area that had been left completely deprived of functional infrastructure, capital, and human resources, and that had never before regarded itself as having a single identity or a common cultural history.¹³⁰

According to Bartoli, Frelimo's priorities were education, health and institution building; however, ten years of war and the subsequent flight of 230,000 Portuguese settlers, taking with them professional skills, business enterprise and working capital, made these tasks especially difficult.¹³¹ Nevertheless, Frelimo set the tone for a liberated Mozambique and "to downplay Mozambican tribal, racial, or religious identities," the new government promoted a new socialist identity.¹³²

Unfortunately for Frelimo, they enjoyed no honeymoon in their rule over Mozambique. Bartoli summarizes the predicament Frelimo faced early in its tenure:

While the Frelimo government was able to set the tone for a liberated Mozambique, it was also forced, by lack of resources and some ideological rigidity, into an impasse. The assertion of the legitimacy of a new nationalist socialist authority over the traditional authorities created dissatisfaction and tension that were promptly used by Rhodesian military intelligence to fuel resistance to the Frelimo government.¹³³

independence from Portugal. Mondlane was assassinated by a parcel bomb in 1969 and after an internal power struggle, he was replaced by Samora Machel. In 1974, a military coup in Lisbon brought officers to power who favoured independence for the country's African colonies. A transitional government in Mozambique was formed with Joaquim Chissano serving as prime minister to prepare the country for independence. Mozambique subsequently declared its independence in 1975 and set in motion the first of its ambitious reforms which involved nationalisation. For historical background on Mozambique, the liberation movement and the civil war, the following sources are helpful: Hilary Andersson, *Mozambique: A War against the People* (London: Macmillan, 1992); Jeremy Armon, Dylan Hendrickson and Alex Vines [Acord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives], *The Mozambique Peace Process in Perspective* (London: Conciliator Resources, 1999); Joao M. Cabrita, *Mozambique: The Tortuous Road to Democracy* (New York: Palgrave, 2000); M. Chicongo, *The State, Violence, and Development: The Political Economy of War in Mozambique, 1975-1992* (Aldershot, Vermont: Avebury, 1996); William Finnegan, *A Complicated War: The Harrowing of Mozambique* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1992) David Hoile, *Mozambique. Resistance and Freedom: A Case for Reassessment* (London: Mozambique Institute, 1994); Eduardo Mondlane, *The Struggle for Mozambique* (New York: Penguin, 1996) and Marilyn Newitt, *A History of Mozambique* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995). For a concise narrative of the Mozambican conflict, see Conflict Early Warning Systems (CEWS), Conflict Database: Center for International Studies, Department of International Relations, University of Southern California: "Mozambique (1977-1992) – Narrative," <http://www.usc.edu/dept/LAS/ir/cis/cews/database/Mozambique/index.html>.

¹³⁰ Bartoli, 11. The page numbers for Bartoli's chapter do not correspond to the numbers in *Herding Cats* – which the author was unable to consult – but rather to page numbers in the document e-mailed to the author by Andrea Bartoli. Please e-mail the author at ctstrauss@alumni.holycross.edu for a copy of this chapter.

¹³¹ Appleby, 168. Appleby also notes that the Portuguese settlers sabotaged equipment as they departed.

¹³² Bartoli, 11.

¹³³ Ibid., 11-13. In 1977, Frelimo declared itself a Marxist-Leninist vanguard party and turned towards the Soviet Union for support. Responding to the new government's actions, a fearful white government in bordering Rhodesia established The Mozambique National Resistance (MNR – later Renamo) and

The resistance facilitated by Rhodesia and later South Africa emerged in the form of a Mozambican insurgent movement called Renamo. To make matters worse for Frelimo and the fledgling nation, Renamo defined resistance as violence against civilians and embarked on the systematic use of mutilations, killings and indiscriminate violence. Nicknamed the “Khmer Rouge of Africa” in a 1988 U.S. State Department report, Renamo chose not to engage Frelimo on the battlefield but raise havoc in villages and attack civil society instead.¹³⁴ According to a report by Human Rights Watch: “The mutilation of civilians, by cutting off ears, noses, lips, and sexual organs, and by mutilating corpses has been one of the most characteristic abuses of the war in Mozambique.”¹³⁵ By 1990 and the start of negotiations at Sant’Egidio headquarters, this particularly gruesome type of civil war had been raging in Mozambique for thirteen years.

Add civil war to an already crippled Mozambican society, which included: extreme poverty, a 90% illiteracy rate, periodic and devastating drought, a destroyed or inoperable infrastructure, a population dependent on massive international aid, hundreds of thousands of Mozambican refugees in neighbouring countries or displaced inside Mozambique, rural areas “reduced to a stone age condition” and one discovers a region literally gasping for air.¹³⁶ Writing during the time of the Sant’Egidio negotiations, Hilary Andersson poignantly describes conditions in Mozambique’s capital city:

In Maputo, the capital, skyscrapers decay and theatres collapse while no one can afford to revamp them. Deep holes, where once a European had started to lay the foundations of a dream, litter the ground. The only way of telling how old and abandoned the dreams are is by measuring the height of the trees which have grown out of the partially laid foundations. Presently the trees are 17 years high. For it was in 1975 that what had been Mozambique’s life stream, fled.¹³⁷

For fifteen of those years, Frelimo and Renamo had held Mozambique civil society captive as the nation fell apart. Though never a unified state, Mozambique experienced great peril as a result of its post-independence divisions. And unlike concerns about unfinished business in Rhodesia which propelled Britain into action at Lancaster House a decade earlier, Portugal showed no signs that it would undertake a similar form of third-party mediation in Mozambique.

commenced activities inside Mozambique to destabilize the Frelimo government. Rhodesia remained especially concerned about this new black government as it had been supporting guerrillas of the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (Zanla) since 1972. In 1980, the Lancaster House agreements ended civil war in Rhodesia and control of Renamo was transferred to the South African military. See general history sources listed in footnote 29.

¹³⁴ The U.S. State Department released the Gersony Report in April 1988, enumerating the human rights offences of Renamo, and subsequently extinguishing most of Renamo’s support among conservatives in the U.S. Senate and Administration.

¹³⁵ Africa Watch, *Conspicuous Destruction: War, Famine, and the Reform Process in Mozambique* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1992), 3.

¹³⁶ Appleby, 168.

¹³⁷ Andersson, 169.

In retrospect, the situation in Mozambique seems to cry out for international attention; however, the 1970s and 1980s passed with little in the way of action by Western powers – even after Frelimo signalled a move towards capitalism and more democratic government in the late 1980s. With the Cold War drawing to a close, the West was no longer interested in Africa as a place to fight its proxy wars against communism as it had done in Angola and Namibia. David Hoile describes the Western states as “ill informed, naive, and reactionary” and blames the United States and the international community for letting the civil war continue as long as it did.¹³⁸ Although several of Mozambique’s African neighbours offered themselves as mediators throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, Frelimo and Renamo could not agree on a neutral arbiter. Thus the changing post-Cold War relationship between Western powers and Africa and the severe divisions within Mozambique made attempts at negotiating a ceasefire especially challenging.

Why Sant’Egidio?

The circumstances articulated above reveal that the Mozambican conflict necessitated a new type of mediator – one committed enough to begin the monumental task of healing domestic divisions in Mozambique without requiring a reward for itself and one neutral enough to gain the trust of both sides. Between September and November 1989, Sant’Egidio signalled that it was prepared to take-up this challenge – or at least to begin the process.¹³⁹ Yet, Sant’Egidio’s role in the negotiations did not materialize out of thin air. Colonized by Catholic Portugal, Roman Catholics were by far the largest religious denomination in Mozambique. Although Frelimo turned against Mozambique’s Catholic hierarchy and infrastructure upon assuming power, the Church never completely sacrificed its influence.

In 1984, two factors converged in the southern African nation that were pivotal to the Church’s future mediation role. Firstly, the Church began to voice its call for peace based upon dialogue between Renamo and Frelimo. This call would culminate in 1987 with the Bishops’ pastoral letter entitled, “*A Paz Que O Povo Quer*” – “The Peace the People Want.” Secondly, the Church in Mozambique sought to recapture the popular support and respect it had lost due to its colonial

¹³⁸ Hoile, 177.

¹³⁹ Interviewed on Australia’s *Radio National Encounter*, Claudio Mario Betti of Sant’Egidio suggested that the Community expected that another, more powerful, mediator would take over after they had facilitated the initial arrangements:

We didn’t think that we would have to run the whole process. We thought that after having the first meeting here in this very building in a nearby room between the two delegations, one of the guerrilla and one of the government, someone else would have taken over. I don’t know, the UN or the Americans – you always think that the Americans are going to do it but it didn’t happen and we had to carry the whole process ourselves for two years and a half.

See *Radio National Encounter*, Australia; transcript.

association. The pope invited Mozambique clergy and Frelimo officials to the Vatican on several occasions between 1984 and 1988. Discussions between the Vatican and Frelimo were held at Sant'Egidio headquarters and focused on the peaceful coexistence of Catholicism and socialism, church and state, in Mozambique.¹⁴⁰

Even before the Vatican's response to the Mozambican problem, Sant'Egidio became involved in the country on a personal level. In 1976, Jaime Goncalves was a young Mozambican priest studying in Rome. He befriended members of Sant'Egidio by attending their evening prayer services. In 1977, Goncalves was named the bishop of Beira, Mozambique's second largest city, and returned to Rome for a synod on the severe restrictions Frelimo had placed on Christian churches since independence. According to Bartoli, "Catholics were marginalized and sometimes harassed, constrained in their expression of religious belief, and unable to attend regularly to their liturgical functions."¹⁴¹ Goncalves did not forget his friendship with Sant'Egidio and solicited the Community's assistance upon his return to Rome. Thus it was the personal relationship between Goncalves and Sant'Egidio's Andrea Riccardi and Matteo Zuppi that paved the way for their involvement in the negotiations.

Sant'Egidio decided to use its connections in the Vatican and the Italian Communist Party (PCI) to help its old friend. In 1981, the Community arranged meetings at its headquarters between Goncalves and Enrico Berlinguer, the PCI secretary general. At these meetings, Berlinguer offered to use his own moral authority and connections to persuade Frelimo to lift its restrictions on religious practice. Needless to say, these encounters went a long way in solidifying a friendship between the Community and the Mozambican government.

Sant'Egidio established a relationship with Renamo much later. In April 1989, Renamo's President Afonso Dhlakama, who came from the same part of Mozambique as Goncalves with whom Sant'Egidio had previously arranged a meeting, telexed the pope and Sant'Egidio requesting help in setting up a unilateral Renamo ceasefire in the Nampula province. This began a series of conversations between Renamo and the Vatican facilitated by Sant'Egidio. The Community finally arranged for Dhlakama to visit Rome for a series of meetings in February 1990.

While mediation efforts by Kenya, Zimbabwe and Malawi all failed in March and April 1990, Sant'Egidio continued to facilitate dialogue simultaneously with the Vatican, the Italian

¹⁴⁰ Moises Venancio, "Mediation by the Roman Catholic Church in Mozambique, 1988-1991," in *Mediation in Southern Africa*, eds. Stephen Chan and Vivienne Jabri, 142-158 (London: Macmillan, 1993) 144-145.

¹⁴¹ Bartoli, "Mozambicans Negotiating through Third Parties," 17.

government and the Mozambicans themselves. Finally, Frelimo and Renamo each indicated their willingness to meet in Rome and the Italian government offered financial and diplomat support for the talks. On 16 June, a Renamo representative arrived at Sant'Egidio headquarters and formally asked the Community to mediate. A week later, Frelimo President Joaquim Chissano alerted the Italian Ambassador to Maputo that he was ready to send a delegation to Rome to meet with Renamo. On 8 July, the two delegations formally met for the first time and initiated what would end in a resolution to Mozambique's civil war.¹⁴²

Strength from Weakness

Sant'Egidio volunteered their services to the Mozambican negotiations with no ulterior motives or physical resources other than a genuine commitment to peace. Moreover, viewed essentially as a charitable organization, Sant'Egidio had another important credential: since 1984, the Catholic organization, through skilful fundraising and an extensive list of personal and powerful contacts, had offered war-torn Mozambique significant humanitarian aid and had acquired credibility in the process. In 1982, Sant'Egidio helped to negotiate the release of priests and nuns held captive by Renamo. Matteo Zuppi and Andrea Riccardi travelled to Maputo in 1984 to discuss humanitarian assistance with government officials. The Community subsequently sent shipments of food and medicine to Mozambique in 1985 and 1988: it is worth noting that two Community members involved in the shipments were killed in armed attacks.¹⁴³ Some suggest that it was the civil war's interference to Sant'Egidio's humanitarian assistance programs that propelled the Community into action. Forging personal connections with Mozambicans on both sides of the political spectrum, Sant'Egidio was seen as an organization that could be trusted. Thus, despite the organization's lack of military power, political prowess and negotiating leverage, Sant'Egidio was welcomed by Frelimo and Renamo and according to Hoile made "diplomatic history."¹⁴⁴

Deconstructing the Blueprint: *Pacem in Terris* Suggests Principles

In eleven rounds of negotiation, the four mediators and their staff of volunteers empowered the competing Mozambican factions to begin to see each other as parts of one community. By opening the doors of their refurbished headquarters, convincing the Italian government to finance the travel of the Mozambican leaders and their expenses while in Rome and

¹⁴² See footnote 29.

¹⁴³ In 1985, Sant'Egidio sent Mozambique a "ship of solidarity" with 3,500 tons of humanitarian aid, and in 1988, a second ship arrived with 7,000 tons. Hume, 18.

¹⁴⁴ Hoile, 177.

demonstrating extreme patience and careful attention to detail, Sant'Egidio provided space and time for Frelimo and Renamo to build a new relationship out of the little that united them. Twenty-seven months later, the process was complete and protocols for a cease-fire, transition period and elections were settled.¹⁴⁵ With considerable, and essential, assistance from the United Nations and several Western powers who provided the resources and organization for the post-settlement period, the parties returned home and fashioned a new state. Although it must be noted that the Sant'Egidio settlement did have its flaws, they were mainly resolved during the U.N. organized post-settlement period and pale in comparison to the systemic issues that continue to plague countries like Zimbabwe and Cote d'Ivoire today.¹⁴⁶ The following sections will attempt to deconstruct the directives presented in *Pacem in Terris* as a way of better understanding Sant'Egidio's motivations and method in the Mozambican negotiations.

“In their deliberations together, let men and women of outstanding wisdom and influence give serious thought to the problem of achieving a more human adjustment of relations between States throughout the world.”

One would be hard-pressed to find a group of individuals possessing more “outstanding wisdom and influence” than the members of Sant'Egidio who devoted two years of their lives to the Mozambican peace negotiations. From the U.S. Government to the Mozambican press, officials associated with the process laud Sant'Egidio's commitment to seeing that the Mozambican civil war was resolved and that plans for a new future in the southern African nation were in place. However, individuals familiar with *Pacem in Terris* would not find the Community's work unusual as it patiently facilitated a process in Rome aimed essentially at “achieving a more human adjustment of relations.” From its founding, Sant'Egidio preached a message of unity, following Pope John XXIII's dictum, “Let us stress what unites us, not what divides us.” In Rome, the

¹⁴⁵ To view these protocols, known as the “Rome Accords,” see Department of Information, United Nations, “Rome Accords”: *Joint Communiqué* (10 July 1990); *Agreement on a Partial Ceasefire* (1 December 1990); *Declaration on the Guiding Principles for Humanitarian Assistance* (16 July 1992); *Joint Declaration* (7 August 1992) in Department of Information, United Nations, *The United Nations and Mozambique, 1992-1995* (New York: United Nations, 1995).

¹⁴⁶ In their respective studies of UN peacekeeping action in Mozambique, Aldo Ajello and Richard Synge commend Sant'Egidio for the way in which they facilitated negotiations between Frelimo and Renamo and the positive impact of their method on the post-settlement period. However, they also suggest that the agreement was flawed. Firstly, the agreement lacked a number of key provisions, including: a set number of police necessary, stipulations for power sharing after the election, and the creation of a neutral body to monitor the impartiality of the mass media. Secondly, the timetable settled in Rome, which forecasted that demobilization would be completed in a few months followed by elections within the year, was unrealistic. However, the UN peacekeeping team corrected these flaws and the commentators credit the mediators and observers for the UN's relatively smooth mission in Mozambique. Aldo Ajello, “Mozambique: Implementation of the 1992 Peace Agreement,” in *Herding Cats: Multiparty Mediation in a Complex World*, eds. Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1999); Richard Synge, *Mozambique: UN Peacekeeping in Action, 1992-1994* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997).

Community did not waver from this principle as it worked towards a “more human adjustment of relations” around the negotiating table. Without directly attributing Sant’Egidio’s approach to the directives of *Pacem in Terris*, some experts suggest that the success of the negotiations can be attributed to the Community’s method of slowly building from items that Frelimo and Renamo agreed upon – items that united them.¹⁴⁷

Sant’Egidio’s emphasis on unity manifested itself in its special attention to *relationships* around the negotiating table. According to Appleby, Sant’Egidio embraced a form of mediation advocated by John Paul Lederach, formerly at the Eastern Mennonite University and currently stationed at the Kroc Institute at Notre Dame. Lederach suggested an approach that moved “away from a concern with the resolution of issues and towards a frame of reference that provides a focus on the restoration and rebuilding of relationships.”¹⁴⁸ This mediation style suggests that after relationships are transformed, resolution of issues will follow. Thus Sant’Egidio laboured at getting the Renamo and Frelimo representatives to consider themselves parts of one Mozambican family. The mediators believed that it was important for the factions to recognize each other as parts of one nation so as to allow for genuine negotiation instead of a courtroom type encounter where the conflicting parties would attempt to put each other on trial.¹⁴⁹

The tone set from the beginning of the negotiations is evidence of this strategy. In his first speech to the delegations, lead mediator Andrea Riccardi evoked John XXIII and poignantly expressed his vision of the negotiations:

Many serious problems exist in the past and in the future. We are aware that every problem can give rise to misunderstanding and that the interpretations which are made are very different. Will we be able to resolve them and overcome the human and political difficulties which are on the field? An expression of the great Pope John XXIII, which was also his working method, comes to mind: “let us strive to find that which united rather than that which divides.”

The desire for that which unites can also suggest to us a working method, the spirit of this meeting. That which unites is not little, rather there is a great deal. There is the great Mozambican family, with its very ancient history of suffering...The union of the Mozambican family has survived this history of suffering. We find ourselves today, if you will let me say, before two brothers, truly part of the same family, who have had different experiences in these last years, who have fought each other...Conflicts with outsiders pass, between brothers it always seems more difficult. Nevertheless brothers will always be brothers, notwithstanding all the painful experiences. This is that what unites, to be Mozambican brothers, part of the same great family.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ See Bartoli “Mozambicans Mediating through Third Parties.”

¹⁴⁸ Appleby, 18-19. Also see John Paul Lederach. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997).

¹⁴⁹ Giro.

¹⁵⁰ Sant’Egidio, “War, Mother of All Poverty.” [article online]; available from Sant’Egidio website, www.santegidio.org/en/peace/peace1.htm; Internet, accessed 27 May 2003. Also see Hume, 33.

Subsequent speeches by the other mediators evoked similar themes.¹⁵¹

In addition to setting a tone of unity, Sant'Egidio desired a written agreement which would carefully state this familial union. Thus the first document Renamo and Frelimo representatives signed, the *Joint Communiqué* (June 1990), recognized the existence of one Mozambican family. This preamble to the negotiations marked an end to the slow and difficult, but important, recognition process – Renamo agreed to recognize Frelimo as the party governing, not occupying, the country, while Frelimo recognized Renamo as an opposition party and not as a clan of armed bandits.¹⁵² This document ensured that the negotiating table would be the place for the conflicting sides to make their peace. Perhaps most important was the new logic Renamo embraced with the *Joint Communiqué*: by signing the document, the insurgent group agreed that “Mozambique had a legal and political system based in Maputo which could be changed but already existed.” According to Sant'Egidio member Mario Giro, the *Joint Communiqué* signalled that “the common Mozambique family already had its state.”¹⁵³ Where mediators often begin negotiations by urging agreement on a ceasefire, elections or a constitution, Sant'Egidio introduced this innovative though fundamental first step. And their strategy achieved more than momentum for the remainder of the process. With lofty rhetoric about unity and very real commitments to changing the relationships around the negotiating table, Sant'Egidio achieved the human adjustment of relations which foreshadowed future success.

“It must be an adjustment that is based on mutual trust, sincerity in negotiation, and the faithful fulfilment of obligations assumed.”

Needless to say, Sant'Egidio did not mediate from a position of strength and possessed no bargaining leverage of its own. However, the mediators compensated for this by employing a patient, sincere and step-by-step approach throughout the process. The fact that they began by adjusting the human relations around the table before turning to the conflicting issues is one example. However, even before the *Joint Communiqué*, Sant'Egidio initiated a strategy which would transition Renamo from a loosely affiliated group of rebels to a political party which could

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 33-34.

¹⁵² Sant'Egidio was particularly aware of a need to alter terminology. In an interview in 1989, Archbishop Gonçalves, one of the four mediators, reveals his concern with the terminology used by Frelimo in particular:

For dialogue to be successful terms like “bandits” have to be dropped...by saying look these are bandits...naturally it will be difficult. We have to avoid these terms and try to consider them as people, part of our people. (*Edivesa News*, October – November 1989).

In a radio broadcast that same year, President Chissano confirms Gonçalves' suggestion that Frelimo was using the wrong terminology, even in its early efforts at negotiation (*Radio Mozambique*, Maputo, 17 July 1989)

¹⁵³ Giro.

effectively negotiate with Frelimo. Sant'Egidio grappled with this challenge in their usual way – dialogue:

We sat down with these people and slowly in two years and a half we transformed a rebel movement into a political party who was able to talk about politics and not about weapons and it was successful.¹⁵⁴

Continuing the private dialogue with Renamo throughout the negotiations, the mediators moved systematically from the *Joint Communiqué* to discussions of the Zimbabwean troops, the corridor, cease-fire, military arrangements for implementation and democratic elections. When the talks broke down, Sant'Egidio embraced the opportunity to pause. During several of these pauses, the mediators flew to Africa for meetings aimed at restarting the process. In the implementation discussions, Sant'Egidio relied on the expertise of the U.N. and U.S. observers to assist them in completing a step. One observer remarked: “More than just offering the “right” answers to a specific crisis, [Sant'Egidio] offered a framework within which all crises could be assessed and addressed.”¹⁵⁵ Where mediators often attempt to coerce swift concessions with one-size-fits-all agreements, Sant'Egidio considered each challenge a possibility from which to build permanent peace and remained patient during the two years of negotiation.¹⁵⁶

Nevertheless, throughout the Mozambican negotiations, a number of parties exerted influence over the proceedings and could make things difficult or easy for the mediators. Although the West did not express an interest in mediating, Western powers, along with the U.N., did offer critical leadership during the implementation stages. Pope John Paul II was a key player throughout the negotiations in his granting or not granting of meetings with Frelimo's President Chissano and Renamo's Afonso Dhlakama. The Italian government, host to the negotiations, was another important factor as were the various religious organizations with connections to Mozambique or to Rome. Finally, Mozambique's neighbours, each with their own ideas of how the conflict should be resolved proved to be powerful interests.

Sant'Egidio's reaction to the myriad of parties affecting Mozambique attests to the Community's appreciation of *synergy*. Andrea Bartoli defines synergy as a “complex dynamic of gathering and fusing together individual and in some cases disparate actors, actions, motivations, and interests

¹⁵⁴ Claudio Mario Betti; see *Radio National Encounter*, Australia; transcript.

¹⁵⁵ Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson [Center for Strategic and International Studies], *Religion, the Missing Dimension of Statecraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 329.

¹⁵⁶ In a recent review of the Mozambican peace process, commentators pay special attention to the patience of Sant'Egidio:

Whereas mediators are often chosen for their abilities to apply leverage on parties in order to advance negotiations, the strength of the Rome team was its very willingness to bear patiently with the quibbles, doubts, and stalling tactics of the various parties while helping them focus on the ultimate objective of forging an agreement.

Jeremy Armon, Dylan Hendrickson, and Alex Vines [Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives], *The Mozambique Peace Process in Perspective*. (London: Conciliator Resources, 1999), 7.

to contribute to a positive process.” He concludes that, “Sant’Egidio’s realization of the possibility for synergy within the negotiation team was one of its most profound contributions to the peace process.”¹⁵⁷ Sant’Egidio’s own literature on their method of mediation demonstrates an appreciation of synergy, particularly in the post-Cold War world:

The work of peace in a multi-polar world and disorderly world, different than the one many were accustomed to during the Cold War, makes necessary the collaboration of all available energies. In this sense Sant’Egidio, rather than a parallel diplomacy, would prefer to speak of a synergy of efforts among all levels: institutional and non-institutional, official and from civil society.¹⁵⁸

According to Sant’Egidio, “The synergic approach to the peace process is essential in order to answer one of the great questions which are posed in every negotiation: the issue of guarantees.”¹⁵⁹ By inviting different governments and the United Nations to send observers during the final phases of negotiations, Sant’Egidio applied this synergic approach to make the guarantees that it could not make on its own. Thus in addition to “sincerity in negotiation,” the Community was ensuring its “faithful fulfilment of the obligations assumed.”

Sant’Egidio managed synergy simply by providing the space for it. Not only did the organization offer physical and organizational space to the negotiating teams, observers and international agencies, they employed a support team of volunteers who carried out the necessary duties of the negotiation – “from logistics to translation, accommodation to communication.” Hume recalls Sant’Egidio members scuttling between hotel rooms at all hours of the night as they attempted to reach consensus between a “nocturnal” group of Renamo and Frelimo representatives.¹⁶⁰

According to Bartoli:

The mediation team shared not only a vision and commitment to peace, but also a realistic evaluation of its own strength. Because it was not a strong international power, the team’s strength relied on its ability to create synergies and on the cumulative effect of its success.¹⁶¹

Thus, Sant’Egidio motivated synergies through direct personal relationships between representatives of different interests and organizations. As was the ethos of their Community, Sant’Egidio placed high premiums on friendship and interpersonal relations and even assigned one volunteer to “care” for each negotiator during the discussions. Where mediators often embrace a top-down approach and shun outside involvement, Sant’Egidio provided space where the parties could meet each other and cooperate.

¹⁵⁷ Bartoli, “Mozambicans Negotiating through Third Parties,” 20.

¹⁵⁸ Sant’Egidio. “The ‘Method’ of Sant’Egidio.”

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Hume, Interview.

¹⁶¹ Bartoli, “Mozambicans Negotiating through Third Parties,” 19-21.

Finally, Sant'Egidio was acutely aware of its need to maintain trust throughout the negotiating process. One member recalls that because the Community was well known for its humanitarian projects and since it was evident that it harboured no hidden agendas, trust was not too difficult to win:

We had no, absolutely no, know-how at all. I think most of the mediation in that case was trying to exercise a lot of good sense which is always a very important characteristic of a mediator and a great deal of care for the people you have in front of you. Without prejudice for example. Without hidden agendas. People understand and these people have understood that we had nothing to gain from that peace process and that they could trust us so we built trust, first of all in us and then slowly between the two of them.¹⁶²

The Community sustained this trust by remaining attentive to needs of both sides for the duration of the process, bringing together key parties at strategic moments to create synergy and by remaining patient during the intense moments at the negotiating table as well as the frustrating moments when the talks would break down.

“Every aspect of the problem must be examined, so that eventually there may emerge some point of agreement from which to initiate treaties which are sincere, lasting, and beneficial in their effects.”

Above all else, Sant'Egidio was and is first an organization committed to the poor. According to Sant'Egidio member Mario Giro:

The Community's approach to peace-making is based on this fundamental social commitment to the poor and the disposed. The conviction that no one is more needy of peace than the poor matured in the Community in the very early stages of its work in aid of needy populations of the world.¹⁶³

Sant'Egidio had long expressed its solidarity with Third World states in projects throughout Latin America and Africa.¹⁶⁴ Thus the mediators were acutely aware of the impact war has on civil society: it was their rationale for offering to mediate in the first place. Sant'Egidio's history of humanitarian aid to Mozambique is also the reason why Frelimo and Renamo welcomed the organization as mediator. Therefore, throughout the process, the Community did not allow the opposing sides to agree on a resolution that did not examine “every aspect of the problem” and adequately address the needs of Mozambique's poor. An international NGO practicing non-official diplomacy and free of limitations imposed by government interests or even the Vatican, Sant'Egidio created the important – though often missed – link between civil society and the power brokers. Where the international community desired an end to the conflict with or

¹⁶² Claudio Mario Betti; see *Radio National Encounter*, Australia; transcript.

¹⁶³ Giro.

¹⁶⁴ Appleby, 155; Bartoli, 17; Hume, 15-19.

without attention to civil society, Sant'Egidio brokered a peace aimed more towards relieving the suffering Mozambicans than securing Renamo credibility or Frelimo's ability to govern.

Simply put, Sant'Egidio's style of mediation drew from a deep well: it desired conflict transformation and lasting peace based upon notions of justice, human rights, reconciliation and trust. Borne out of the optimism of the Second Vatican Council, Sant'Egidio found support and fuel from a tradition of Catholic social teaching and theology. Pope John XXIII's monumental encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*, which included the words: "look for what unites rather than what divides" began a commitment in the Catholic Church to fighting for human rights across the globe. Therefore, while other mediators might build from years of diplomatic experience, swelling bank accounts and strong militaries, Sant'Egidio offered a sincere mission rooted in an established tradition of Catholic social teaching and supported by a remarkable network of contacts and a community of friendship and prayer.

The HOST as Catholic *militant for peace*

Appleby credits Sant'Egidio's militancy for peacebuilding for the successes of the Mozambican negotiations. He contends that the Community's religious ethos earned it the trust of the combatants and the motivation to understand various points of view. In addition, Sant'Egidio's ability to work in concert with a variety of governmental, intergovernmental, nongovernmental, cultural and religious agencies and individuals was essential to the management of Mozambique's multi-party conflict. According to Appleby, "The Community saw its own mediating and facilitating role in the peace process as limited and quite specific, but it also played an important bridging or coordinating role at crucial moments in the progress."¹⁶⁵ Bartoli would add that it was not the Community's ability to work with many parties, but its commitment to creating synergy that represents its greatest contribution. Finally, Appleby suggests that, "the cumulative impact of Sant'Egidio's neutrality, its connections, and its disinterested participating in the peace process enabled the Community to serve effectively as host, facilitator, and mediator of the negotiations."¹⁶⁶ Thus as Appleby and Bartoli conclude, Sant'Egidio's religious ethos, its emphasis on synergy and its "disinterested participating in the peace process" made the Community a religious militant for peace and paved the way for conflict transformation in Mozambique.

Assessing Sant'Egidio's efforts in the context of *Pacem in Terris*, this chapter reveals yet another attribute of the Community that make it a religious militant for peace and a successful mediator

¹⁶⁵ Appleby, "Religion as an Agent of Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding," 829.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

in Rome. Sant'Egidio's Catholic characteristics, as enumerated in this chapter, placed the Community in good position to wage peace in Mozambique. Not only did the directives of *Paxem in Terris* provide a mission and authority to Sant'Egidio's efforts at transforming conflict, but the Catholic hierarchy and the Vatican's long reach were important tools. The international influence of the pope, the Church's abundance of resources for humanitarian aid, the setting of Rome as the centre of the Church and location of great ecumenical dialogue and the ability of the Church to draw international attention to human rights abuses all provided practical backup for the Catholic NGO's efforts. Though mediators can often rely on the strength of their armies and national resources, Sant'Egidio belonged to a world Church, which had the social teaching, enthusiasm and infrastructure, from the clergy and the laity, to wield great power for peace.

The sacred liturgy [recches] the same message: “Our Lord Jesus Christ, after his resurrection stood in the midst of His disciples and said: Peace be upon you, alleluia. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.” It is Christ, therefore, who brought peace; Christ who bequeathed it to us: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give into you: not as the world giveth, do I give unto you.” [170].¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ John XXIII, “*Pacem In Terris*.”

IN SACRED SPACE

The spirit of *Pacem in Terris* could not be better fulfilled than through the work of Catholic militants for peace of the likes of Fathers Pearson and van Rensburg; Mike Auret, Shari Eppel and the Catholic Commission for Peace in Zimbabwe; and Andrea Bartoli and Fr. Matteo Zuppi of the *Comunità di Sant'Egidio*. As the previous case studies have demonstrated, this Papal Encyclical remains current forty-years after John XXIII signed his name to it. The document offers Catholics residing in spaces of conflict, as well as those looking from the outside, a clear set of directives regarding human rights and dignity, the power of truth and the need for conversion through a human adjustment of relationships. The blueprint could not be any clearer.

However, for parties residing in the conflict zones, the spiritual notions of *Pacem in Terris* might seem too abstract, too idealistic and too focused on “things unseen” like truth, justice, charity and freedom to be helpful. The previous case studies all reveal examples of the difficulty with which the *Pacem in Terris* directives are applied. Nevertheless, the preceding chapters offer rich examples of Catholics making a concerted effort to fulfil the role they know is theirs to fulfil and with which they are comfortable. This is Catholicism at its best. As *pastor*, Father Peter-John Pearson and Father Basil van Rensburg minister to their parishioners amidst extraordinary levels of township violence; however, by fulfilling their job description with passion, they manage to invite others into spaces for peace. As *advocate*, the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe takes advantage of the authority and organisation of the Bishop’s Conference to give voice to those who have no voice by speaking the truth about atrocities being committed in Matabeleland. However, when the Bishops withdraw their support from *Breaking the Silence*, the spaces for peace quickly close. And finally, as *host*, Sant’Egidio brokers peace between RENAMO and FRELIMO in Mozambique by seeking first to change relationships around the negotiating table and then worry about reconciling issues. Following this with a commitment to drawing many parties into the process and creating synergies where possible, Sant’Egidio creates good grounds for lasting peace in Mozambique.

To answer the question posed at the beginning, a Catholic *militant for peace* is a pastor, an advocate and a host. These case studies demonstrate that the Catholic Church provides the necessary tools in its social teaching, its rituals and its infrastructure for individuals or organisations from the grassroots to the hierarchy to the international NGO to wage peace in space of conflict. The project first requires the individual or organisation to understand the role it can play, its strengths and its weaknesses, and to militantly work towards fulfilling that role.

Finally, while the possible *roles* Catholic *militants for peace* choose and the *skills* they demonstrate are very much of the world, the *vision* which guides them is not. *Pacem in Terris* suggests that a Catholic *militant for peace* may operate from worldly locations, but in their efforts for peace, they transform their worldly location into a spiritual reality:

...we must think of human society as being primarily a spiritual reality. By its means enlightened men and women can share their knowledge of the truth, can claim their rights and fulfil their duties, receive encouragement in their aspirations for the goods of the spirit, share their employment of all the wholesome pleasures of the world, and strive continually to pass on to others all that is best in themselves and to make their own the spiritual riches of others. It is these spiritual values which exert a guiding influence on culture, economics, social institutions, political movements and forms, laws, and all other components which go to make up the external community of men and its continual development.¹⁶⁸

In waging peace in spaces of conflict as *pastor*, *advocate* and *host*, these Catholic actors practice the spiritual values which have the ability not only to resolve or transform conflict, but to open new sacred spaces where peace is possible. There are glimpses of these sacred spaces in all three case studies but the length of time they stay open varies between the three. Thus Catholic *militants for peace* are those individuals or organisations who possess the passion and the worldly skills, drawing from the Church's social teaching, rituals and infrastructure, to wage peace in sacred spaces. The most effective Catholic *militant for peace* will be the individual or group that, perhaps best represented by Sant'Egidio, is able to draw on the spiritual values of others, both friend and foe, to sustain these sacred spaces and keep them open.

¹⁶⁸ John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*.

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- PJPE** Fr. Peter-John Pearson, personal collection of Fr. Peter-John Pearson, Archdiocese of Cape Town
- SGAB** St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Parish, private collection of St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Parish, Guguletu, Western Cape

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A.M.D.G.

University of Cape Town