



Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference

The Catholic Bishops of Botswana, Eswatini, and South Africa held their bi-annual plenary session at Mariannhill Centre, in KwaZulu Natal from August 5 to 9, 2024 with the theme 'A Synodal Church in Mission' – inspired by the Synod on Synodality 2021–2024.

The bishops expressed gratitude to the Holy Father, Pope Francis, for the appointment of Archbishop Henryk Jagodziński as the Apostolic Nuncio and appreciated his presence at, and address to, the plenary session.

The Conference of bishops committed themselves to further discussion, consultation and discernment on a number of issues raised by the President of the SACBC, Bishop Sithembele Sipuka, most especially:

- 1. The abuse of alcohol by young people:** There is an alarming increase in alcohol and substance abuse among young people, necessitating more stringent laws against the liberal sale of liquor and the free reign drug lords seem to have. Consultation will be initiated to question whether a review of parts of the law, and possibly even the Constitution, is necessary regarding the sale of liquor.
- 2. Ordination of women to the diaconate:** The ordination of women to the diaconate needs further study and reflection, bearing in mind that this is a universal issue and not merely a local matter.
- 3. Ordination of Viri Probati:** The concept and viability of Viri Probati is not a new issue but the bishops were of the opinion that further discernment needs to be given to the matter, especially in the light of the decreasing number of vocations to the priesthood.
- 4. The need for a National Dialogue:** In the light of the disappointments of the last 30 years of democracy, and in the light of the recent political developments in South Africa, the SACBC joins the many others in their call for a National Dialogue for a reflective and inclusive discourse on the needs of the country.

The bishops added their voice in expressing displeasure and hurt at the ridiculing and insulting of the Last Supper during the opening of the Paris Olympic Games. They called on all Catholics and Christians not to be discouraged at the mockery but to continue to hold firm in their faith.

The Task Team on Catholic Higher Education, led by Cardinal Stephen Brislin, continues to hold discussions with the aim of forming a strategic plan to establish a



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synergy between the three existing Institutes of Higher Education in order to form an Integrated Catholic Institute of Higher Education.

The bishops welcomed the election of its new leadership: Cardinal Stephen Brislin, President; Archbishop Zolile Mpambani SCJ, 1st Vice-President; Archbishop Mandla Jwara CMM, 2nd Vice-President. The new leadership will assume their responsibilities at the close of the Plenary Session of January 2025.

Cardinal Stephen Brislin
Spokesperson SACBC

09 August 2024

"The Synod is about synodality and not about this or that theme... The important thing is how the reflection is done, that is, in a synodal way" Pope Francis