

2021 02 28: Candle for Peace, Hope and Justice

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We light our Peace, Hope and Justice Candle today with a focus on poverty.

MOTHER THERESA: "When a poor person dies of hunger, it has not happened because God did not take care of him or her, it is because neither you nor I wanted to give that person what he or she needed"

That "you" can be the individual or a "collective you".

This past week the Government, a "collective you", presented the Budget speech.

One of the elements of the national budget is the budget for Social Grants.

Just over 18 million South Africans; vulnerable to poverty, or in need of state support, receive social grants, relief assistance, or social relief paid by the government. That's 1 in 3 of us South Africans.

For the first time since 1994, the total social grants budget has been cut, by 2%. So, the actual increase is less than inflation.

Old age, Disability and Care dependency grants have increased by 1.6% or R10,00 to R1 890. Child support grants have increased by 3,4% or R10,00 to R460.

Poverty as defined by Statistics South Africa:

A person or community lacking financial resources and essentials for a minimum standard of living. Essentials include housing, food, water, sanitation, work.

The South African Poverty line is R1 227 per person, per month.

Poverty and need have been compounded by the covid 19 pandemic restrictions, morbidity and mortality; economic reversals; job losses and right now; school leavers of 2020, seeking work.

People in need, continue to knock on doors, stop you in the street, forage refuse bins, stand at roadsides offering their services, beg at traffic lights, occupy unimaginable spaces to sleep, to live.

It is predicted that the no. of qualifying beneficiaries will increase by 300 000 persons this year.

Not all in need qualify; many homeless don't, foreign nationals don't.

There are over 3 000 verses in the Bible that talk to poverty and justice. Let us heed; the word, the prompting of the spirit, and our eyes and ears.

Let us pray:

Lord at this Lenten season, we thank you for your creation. We are so wonderfully made, in your image O God. You have created us as stewards of all creation and all the beauty and abundance of your presence is all around.

We have ability to love, care and be Christ in the world to all and all of creation.

Forgive us lord when we don't share or care enough when we see injustice, hopelessness and despair around us, when we are not living in ways that others may discover more about you. We cry injustice more in protest than of conviction and we often continue our own incomplete lives, avoiding the pain that persistence and passion brings.

We pray Lord, for the poor in our land, made in your image.

We pray that the officials in state institution who administer the provision of grants and relief will find ways to obliterate the horrific indignities their compatriots experience in the process of receiving their grants each month.

We pray for innovation, boldness and definitive action in comprehensive policy making by Government, in addressing systemic inequity in our land.

We pray O God that the isolation regulations of Covid-19 have not further entrenched the relational divisions and physical segregation in our land, especially in our living areas, churches, and schools because of race, economics and fear.

We give thanks o God for Activists and organizations who see what we see, yet do more than we care to, to bring real help and hope. We salute the campaigns seeking sustainable systemic justice for the poor ... the oppressed, for all.

Lord we pray for a deeper analysis of our conditioned understanding of wealth, poverty and inequality.

Finally. Lord, we pray for, and give thanks for, the hosts of mini Mother Theresa's in communities who serve and feed and bring comfort, sharing from their little that others may live. Seeking to answer the pray of the poor, said and wished for, from Luke11:3.

Lord give us this day the food we need.

Amen

We say the prayer for Africa.

God bless Africa and the world

Guard our children

Guide our leaders

And give us peace

Amen