

Prayer for Peace, Hope and Justice

“A single death is a tragedy, a million deaths is a statistic”. This quotation is attributed to Soviet Leader Joseph Stalin who was highlighting the military’s tendency to give more importance to a single casualty if it was an American than to the million civilians who perished in WW2 if they were non-Americans.

This sentiment echoes though society daily as we read/ hear about casualties, this week when comparing the deaths of billionaires in a submersible vessel and refugee boats carrying hundreds of desperate people fleeing conflict, or deaths in the ongoing conflict zones of Ukraine, Sudan, the Cape Flats.

It exposes how privilege has hardened our hearts. Psychologists say that when we are confronted by multiple casualties, we turn our emotional volume down in fear of being overwhelmed.

But as children of God, this goes against our understanding that we are all created in the image of God. Throughout the ages the church has taught that “all human life is sacred; everyone has a right to life which should be protected and valued at every stage of life”.

In our reflection today, we think of the things that cause us to dehumanise people who are different to us – race, gender identity, citizenship, class – the barbed wire.

We use the light of the candle to rediscover our belovedness in Christ, to draw courage to reach out beyond our comfort zone and bring life and light to people on the outside.

Let us pray:

O Lord, we confess that we are afraid of being overwhelmed by daily reports of death, and our hearts have hardened.

But you have promised to give us a new heart, that you will put a new spirit in us. You will take out our stony, stubborn hearts and give us a tender, responsive heart (Ezekiel 36:26)

O Lord, as we are faced with daily news about

- Refugees losing their lives trying to flee conflict.
- Artisanal miners losing their lives fighting for scraps left by mining companies.
- Fatalities of gang warfare in the nearby neighbourhoods
- People losing their dignity by politicians “cleansing our communities” of foreigners.

We ask you for courage to

- Speak out against injustice and dehumanising policies and practices.
- Stand up for those without a voice and the strength to fight dehumanising systems.
- Use every opportunity to make a difference in the lives of those who suffer.

Knowing that you call us to be your hands and feet as our act of worship.

We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

We pray the prayer for Africa and the world:

GOD BLESS AFRICA AND THE WORLD, GUARD OUR CHILDREN, GUIDE OUR LEADERS AND GIVE US PEACE.
AMEN