

## MEDIA STATEMENT

concerning recent events in the parish of Saint Timothy, Tafelsig.

The Catholic Church condemns all forms of violence, particularly when it manifests as gender-based violence.

Last year, a parishioner of St Timothy's Tafelsig laid a criminal charge against Fr Kizito Gugah alleging that he had physically assaulted her on 2 December 2018.

After several court appearances, the prosecutor withdrew charges on 2 September 2019 and the case was diverted, which is a legal remedy that does not involve a finding of guilt or innocence. After this I started an official church investigation following the finalization of the criminal matter. The investigation, which involves the interviewing of witnesses by an autonomous panel, is proceeding and should be finalised shortly. The panel will make a recommendation to me.

In the meantime, two other women have come forward alleging that Fr Gugah assaulted them. It seems that both of them claim that I was informed of these assaults. The one complainant had contacted a senior priest in April 2018, complaining that Fr Gugah had told her to leave his house. In the complaint there was no allegation of physical violence or physical contact. Apart from that, I have no record of any other communication with this particular person. The other complainant is unknown to me and I have no record of any allegation made by her.

Before the original allegation of assault, there had been tensions in the parish of St Timothy involving internal Church practices. Several attempts at reconciliation were made by mediators from outside the parish but some parishioners rejected the outcome of those meetings. Unfortunately, on some occasions, witnesses report highly insulting language being used.

The allegation of assault is being investigated now that the criminal case has been finalized. Based on the outcome of the church investigation decisions will be made as to what action is necessary. My chief concerns in this have been, and are, the well-being of everyone in the parish, justice for all concerned, as well as their personal safety.

Archbishop Stephen Brislin  
(Catholic) Archbishop of Cape Town

31 October 2019

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