



Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference

Statement on the Appointment of Archbishop Brislin as Cardinal

Yesterday afternoon Sunday, the 9th of July, we received the unexpected news of the appointment of 21 Cardinals, among whom was Archbishop Stephen Brislin, the Archbishop of Cape Town. It is the prerogative of the Pope to name Cardinals, and it is always unexpected as to when and whom he will name; for this reason, together with the new Cardinal himself, we were taken by surprise when the news came.

The Pope is the head of a global Church of over a billion members. History has also assigned the papacy the role of facilitating peace in the world and being attentive to issues vitiating against human dignity and the integrity of creation. When the Pope appoints Cardinals, he keeps the reason for his choice private. Still, one thing we know, is that the primary role of Cardinals is to advise the Pope in these two huge and complex responsibilities.

Although he will not agree with this assertion, Cardinal-elect Brislin is one of the senior Bishops of the SACBC with proven pastoral experience and sharp insight into social challenges and complex political situations. The Cardinal-designate is also well regarded in ecumenical circles.

As a two terms president of the SACBC, he was part of the leadership of the South African Council of Church (SACC) and a member of the South African Church Leaders' Forum. He also formed part of the SACC task team for engagement in the Palestinian and Israeli conflict. We have no doubt he will make the needed contribution to the task for which the Pope has appointed him.

Following his episcopal motto, *Veritas in Caritate*, "Truth in Love", Cardinal-elect Brislin has a rare gift of combining gentleness with firmness. He has clarity of mind that enables him to give a succinct resume of issues with penetrating insights and wisdom.

He presents a good balance between the teaching of the Church and pastoral sensitivity. These qualities saw him being awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Pastoral Leadership by the Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio, Texas, USA, in May this year. The Cardinal elect can do all this with a simple disposition, friendly and welcoming, and with a sense of humour and impeccable knowledge of the Sesotho language.

As a Conference, we are happy that the Pope has recognised the gifts of Cardinal-elect Brislin and availed them for the larger Church by appointing him a Cardinal. Although Cardinal Napier has reached the age of 80, which makes him unable to be part of the Cardinals that elect the new Pope, he remains active as the advisor of the Pope.

With the appointment of Archbishop Brislin, it is a joy for the Conference to assist the Holy Father through the two Cardinals. We congratulate Cardinal-elect Brislin and assure him of our prayers and support as he takes on this new service for the Church.



+Sithembele Sipuka
SACBC President
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