

## A Eulogy for Paddy Kearney, Emmanuel Cathedral, Durban - 1 December 2018

I greet you all within the solemnity of this service and in our profound sadness.

When I was asked by Paddy's brother, Brian, to contribute a eulogy here today, I was greatly taken aback.

Then I remembered what Archbishop Hurley said when we phoned him to ask him to preach the homily at Peter Kirchoff's Requiem in Pietermaritzburg's Anglican cathedral in 1999. He said: "How can I not accept such an honour?" That is how I have felt about your gracious phone call, Brian, earlier this week: "How can I not accept such an honour?" We reach out to you, and all the Kearney family, in your grief today.

All of us gathered here are, I am sure, still trying to absorb, let alone overcome, the shock of hearing about Paddy's sudden and unexpected death. Albeit it past his threescore years and ten, he was still in the full flight of his activities. Only two days earlier, he was in Johannesburg for a launch of his latest book, the last of his many distinguished writings about his archbishop, mentor and friend, Denis Hurley: a rich selection of Archbishop Hurley's letters, brought together by Paddy in partnership with Jane Argall and Philippe Denis.

Paddy did not have time to write anything substantial during his activist years as the founding Director of Diakonia (now the Diakonia Council of Churches). Yet he remained a teacher of excellence, delivering a great quantity of public addresses - some of which have recently been published, doing his utmost to persuade the member churches of Diakonia to wake up from their inward-looking attitudes and embrace the need to confront the enormity of apartheid and the grievous wounds it was inflicting on our society. I myself, as the Anglican Bishop here from 1982 until the end of the century, found myself increasingly persuaded by his critique and by the principled courage of his witness as an ecumenical leader and a prophetic voice within the tensions and traumas of the greater Durban area. With Peter Kerchhoff, the founder of PACSA in Pietermaritzburg, and Paddy Kearney of Diakonia here, we were challenged and blessed, in politically very fraught times, by two outstanding Christian Leaders, both of them with their support teams. They paid a big price for their courage. Each of them was detained without trial by the infamous Security Police of that time.

This was the Paddy Kearney we knew: self-effacing, brave, ever concerned about an authentic pursuit of justice and peace - both together. There was a paradox, I think, about Paddy in the combination he displayed of boldness, on the one hand, and utter humility, on the other. This is part of what must have prompted the many honorary awards he received in later years; I know that he would not want me to mention these in any detail. He was indeed a self-effacing man.

Paddy was ever loyal to his own background and conviction as a Roman Catholic, yet not uncritically and certainly not gullibly, for he was a critical thinker as well as a devout believer. Increasingly, too, he became ecumenical (open to all) in a double sense: first, to his fellow Christians, and secondly, to people of other faiths, all of whom loved and respected him. Diakonia is not his only living memorial. The Denis Hurley Centre, right next door to this iconic cathedral, is another. This very congregation of people from all races and classes, from various Christian denominations, and from many different faiths or none, is a lively testament to Paddy's range of openness, tolerance and compassion. Yet it is a Catholic Requiem Mass, presided over by Paddy's diocesan bishop, Cardinal Napier. Paddy gave to us, as we give to one another here today, living proof that we can combine close, immediate loyalties with a very wide range of sympathy and warm identification with others. Isn't that something we should always aspire to rather than the narrow and judgmental allegiances we sometimes settle for?

After his retirement from Diakonia, having given it over thirty years of unrelenting service, Paddy did not really retire at all. He moved sideways, becoming fully committed to the creation of the Denis Hurley Centre, showing, among other things, his practical acumen in raising, nationally and internationally, many millions of rands for this new project. Paddy was not only a prophet; he had a charism for administration.

Amazingly, he now also found the time - or, more truthfully, made the time - to write, and he did so very substantially, especially in recording the life and letters of Denis Hurley. His large biography of the former Archbishop is a masterpiece, and the several other volumes are not to be minimised. Taken together, they constitute a small library of distinguished books, a significant part of Paddy's legacy.

Finally allow me to remind you that all this lifelong witness and ministry, with its candour, devotion and flair, came from a lay person. It is probably not surprising that some of the newspaper articles about Paddy's untimely death have described him as "Father Paddy Kearney". They should, of course, have known better, but the error reveals an assumption out there that only priests and bishops can accomplish such things, that only bishops and priests can lead. No: Paddy's lay vocation demonstrates how untrue this is. We all belong together equally, lay and ordained, in a great unity of spirit and purpose. We thank our friend and colleague, Paddy Kearney, for leading the way.

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