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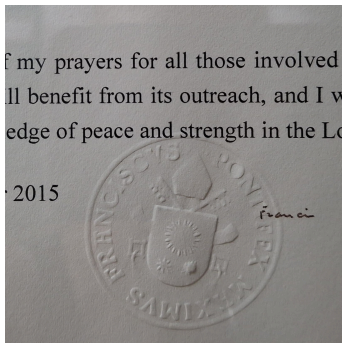
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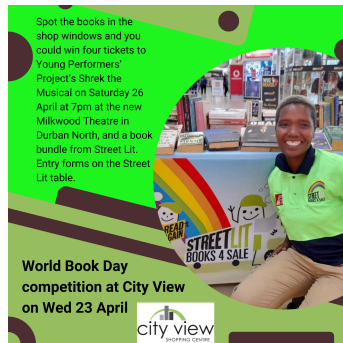
April 2025

continued Easter Blessings to our Christian readers

Different ways of marking Holy Week
Giving thanks for Pope Francis
World Book Day with our Street Lit vendors
+Hurley remembered in the Western Cape



A strikingly tiny signature



Competition in City View Mall



Planting two olive trees

MARKING HOLY WEEK IN VARIOUS WAYS

There are many very moving rituals during the services that make up the Christian Holy Week which culminates in Easter Sunday. One of these is the 'washing of the feet' which imitates the moment when – the night before he died – Jesus washed the feet of his followers, including the one he knew was going to betray him. By doing this, Jesus demonstrated what we have come to call 'servant leadership'.

Pope Francis had an instinctive ability to make old traditions impactful once more and he took this ritual and re-imagined it. Instead of washing the feet of 12 smartly-dressed, specially-selected clerical men, he reached out

beyond the Vatican. Over the years of his Papacy, he washed the feet of prisoners, of migrants, of women and of Muslim people.

At the DHC, we try to follow this model of servant leadership. And so, we have made the annual Holy Thursday ritual part of our in-house prayers. In our organisation, there is no priest who presides and so everyone is invited to wash feet and have their feet washed. In this, we are following the instruction of Jesus as he washed the feet of his disciples: “Love one another as I have loved you.” Our Holy Thursday prayers comprised, as every week, a mixture of staff, interns, volunteers and homeless people who are working in the organisation. Sr Cathy led a reflection and then played Roy Crabtree’s [“A new commandment I give unto you”](#).

Sitting in a circle, each person washed one foot of the person next to them. By doing this, we each had the experience of humbly serving someone else; but also the experience of being served by someone else. Given that so many members of our team are usually focused on serving others, being required to accept service from another person can also be an act of humility.

Earlier in Holy Week, our own Stuart Talbot led a group in a very moving Stations of the Cross around the city centre, using different buildings to reflect on how the suffering of Christ can be linked to the suffering of people in Durban, in the past and in the present. Especially interesting was the story of the ‘Dead Man’s Tree’ which stood outside the Post Office and on which the names of people who had died (or gone missing) were posted to share news with others; there was a striking echo between this and the wood of the cross on Calvary.

Holy Week also sees the annual Good Friday Service which was started by Archbishop Hurley and Paddy Kearney in 1985 during the very harshest period of Apartheid repression, as a way of being a voice for the voiceless. It was organised by Diakonia Council of Churches at the DEC with a number of politicians in attendance. We were pleased that we could mark Easter weekend by offering a special meal to our homeless guests, thanks to the extra generosity of certain donors.

A further part of our Holy Week this year was the opportunity that our Director had to attend a Passover meal – a *seder* – at the invitation of the Union of Jewish Women. It is always insightful for a Christian to recognise how many of the elements of the *seder* have become included in a ritualised form in the Christian Eucharist or Communion: the singing of psalms, the mixing of water and wine, the breaking and sharing of bread, giving thanks to God for the experience of liberation.

The ways in which different religious rituals are celebrated at this time of year, and so soon after the recent end of Ramadan, gives us a reason to reflect more deeply. Our director expressed in a [recent article in *The Post*](#) the opportunity to look beyond current turmoil and focus on the ‘great arc of the moral universe’ (to adopt a phrase from Martin Luther King).

Photo: Lindani Ngubane (assistant to the Building Manager) washes a foot of Mpume Fuze from our clinic.



GIVING THANKS TO GOD FOR THE PAPACY OF FRANCIS

We share the shock that the whole world experienced on Easter Monday with the death of Pope Francis and we give thanks to God for his witness and ministry.

Hanging in pride of place at the DHC is a personal blessing from Pope Francis that was graciously brought to us from Rome by Cardinal Napier in time for our official opening in November 2015. St John Paul II had specifically named Archbishop Denis Hurley as one of the leading heroes of the Oblate movement when he met with the OMI's at their General Congregation in Rome in the early 1980s. And now we knew that Pope Francis was also aware of the enormous legacy of +Hurley.

That legacy found many resonances during the 12-year papacy of Francis: a commitment to working for the poor – Francis repeatedly said we must be 'the Church of the poor'; using his position to be a voice for the voiceless – Francis spoke out on behalf of migrants, indigenous people, survivors of clerical abuse, LGBTQI people and other groups that have been marginalised in society and even in the Church; and working with people of all religious groups.

This latter aspect of his ministry has been evidenced by the many expressions of sympathy that the DHC has received from members of different faith groups in Durban. And also the presence, at the special [memorial Mass that Archbishop Jwara held at Emmanuel Cathedral](#), of our own Chair, Canon Delysia Timm, and Anglican Bishop Nkosinathi Ndwandwe. The bishop and archbishop had in fact travelled together to meet Pope Francis just last year.

The framed blessing from Pope Francis includes his personal signature – absolutely tiny and unassuming (*pictured at the top*). This ties in with Francis' reputation for humility and modestness that he demonstrated from the very start: just a few hours after his election he went back to pay his

hotel bill and then moved out of the palatial papal apartments into modest rooms.

We recall Ela Gandhi commenting how wonderful it was that Francis had shown his solidarity with the poor and had moved to more humble accommodation and then she added: “Of course, the Catholic Church could have had a Pope like that years ago; if only they had elected Denis Hurley as Pope!”. What she was pointing to was that fact that Francis and +Hurley both demonstrated a model of humility in leadership which sadly is often the exception rather than the rule.

There were powerful examples of this even in his funeral this week. Francis had requested that he be buried, not in the Papal vaults of St Peter’s Basilica but in the (slightly) less grand setting of the St Mary Major basilica in a poorer area of Rome. His coffin was welcomed there not by the ‘princes of the church’ but by the ‘poor and needy’ – according to AP by “migrants, prisoners, homeless and transgender people each holding a white rose.”

This posthumous gesture corresponds with so many acts of the Pope as Bishop of Rome. He opened up areas of the Vatican to create a clinic, showers and feeding area for the homeless – an interesting parallel to the way in which the Archdiocese of Durban gave the DHC the right to restore and use the site next to Emmanuel Cathedral so that this work of mercy would be placed at the heart of the life of the Church.

Furthermore, Francis showed his concern for the plight of refugees and migrants from the time of his very first trip outside Rome, when he visited a migrant ‘holding centre’ on the island of Lampedusa. He repeatedly challenged the xenophobia that has been nurtured by expedient politicians in so many countries around the world, including in South Africa.

There is now great uncertainty while we wait to hear whom the College of Cardinals selects as the next Pope – and we offer our prayers for Cardinal Stephen Brislin from Johannesburg who will be part of the conclave (Cardinal Napier will not be, because he is aged over 80). In the meantime, we also offer prayers of gratitude for the gift that Pope Francis has been for the world, and most especially for the poor and marginalised, and hope that the Church continues this legacy.

Raymond offers his [reflections on Pope Francis for IOL on line.](#) A special edition of SA’s Catholic magazine *The Southern Cross*, commemorating Pope Francis will be available soon. Individuals and churches can order their copy by contacting md@scross.co.za.

Photo: Pope Francis shared breakfast on his 80th birthday (8 years ago) with a group of homeless people in Rome.



STREET LIT CELEBRATES WORLD BOOK DAY

April 23 was World Book Day – a day established by UNESCO in 1995, to honour the birthday of William Shakespeare, and to celebrate and promote the enjoyment of books and reading, especially among children. Schools often encourage learners to dress up as their favourite characters and authors.

Our Street Lit project proactively supports Durban being a UNESCO City of Literature, and to this end, we were part of two events to mark World Book Day. Some of the team were guests of honour at a special function where they received more than 600 books donated to the project by staff from Hollywood Bets and the Hollywood Foundation.

“Receiving such quality books makes a huge difference to the sustainability and success of our project whereby 20 homeless and formerly homeless book vendors sell donated books at pop-up book stalls throughout Durban.

We really appreciate what has become a joyous annual ritual for us – visiting Hollywood, enjoying lunch for the team and the gift of an abundance of books,” said project facilitator Illa Thompson at the handover function.

Hollywood’s Nonhlanhla Mpungose shared a story: a while ago she wanted to re-read a school set book (‘Shades’ by Marguerite Poland) but was battling to find a copy. While shopping at Bluff Towers, she saw the book table, and chatted to vendor Vusi Meyiwa, who promptly found it on his table.

She was delighted at his knowledge of books and efficient service, and has been a fan of the project ever since.

The Street Lit team was represented by volunteer Mette Bunyan, vendors David Sithole and Comfort Ngubane, and project driver Lindani Ngubane.

David charmed all those present by gifting them all a sweet. “There are always sweets on my book table to encourage people to stop and browse,” he explained.

Thank you, Hollywood Foundation: your thoughtfulness, care and generosity is sincerely appreciated.

of the current generation as well, at his famous theatre '[Evita se Perron](#)' in [Darling](#).

Raymond and the editor of the *Southern Cross*, Gunther Simmermacher, were recently in Darling with Pieter-Dirk. He was delighted to show them, from Evita's closet, the dress that was made for her during a visit to Durban in 2017 which incorporated *shweshwe* with the image of Archbishop Hurley.

The second tribute was at [Goedgedacht](#), a famous centre for rural development in the hills beyond Malmesbury. The director Rev Deon Snyman had worked with and admired both Paddy Kearney and Archbishop Denis Hurley. He said he was especially impressed at their commitment to interfaith collaboration and was pleased to show off the inter-faith chapel that they had recently built.

Outside were inscribed words from Hans Kung, the famous Catholic theologian (and one time friend and sparring partner of Pope Benedict XVI): "No peace among the nations, without peace among the religions. No peace among the religions, without dialogue between the religions."

Goedgedacht is committed to continuing the ecumenical tradition that started in South Africa with the Christian Institute and was exemplified by Diakonia in Durban. They are building up an archive of documents and books to ensure that the pan-Christian contribution to the anti-Apartheid Struggle is properly remembered.

As part of this, they have also created a 'Grove of Justice' with olive trees planted, each to commemorate a different individual of faith who played an important role. Already included are friends of +Hurley such as Beyers and Ilse Naudé, Fr Albert Nolan (the Catholic liberation theologian), Ann Hope (from the Grail community), and Cosmas Desmond. As a Franciscan priest, 'Fr Cos' had worked closely with +Hurley in trying to protect displaced communities, immortalised in his book 'The Discarded People'. After leaving the priesthood, Cos was married and both of his sons, Tim and Chris, have been Trustees of the DHC.

Now two more trees have been added to the Grove of Justice – in honour of Archbishop Hurley and Paddy – both taken from root stocks from the Garden of Gethsemane in Jerusalem (*picture at the top*). As is only right, Paddy's tree will sit in the shadow of Hurley's; we will have to wait and see if the Archbishop's tree grows to a height that will rival 'the burly Hurley'!

A prayer service preceded the planting and the Litany of Restitution that was read echoes many of the sentiments of the DHC. It is attached for you to use in your own prayer if you wish.

Photo (left to right): Gunther Simmermacher from the 'Southern Cross', Raymond Perrier (DHC Director) and Pieter-Dirk Uys (the guardian of tannie Evita!)



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www.denishurleycentre.org

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