

*Incontro Vescovi Dehoniani*

*Roma, 10-15 Gennaio 2013*



*Meeting of Dehonian Bishops*

*Rome, January 10-15, 2013*

## My experience as a religious bishop

**Mons. Adam Leszek Musialek**  
Vescovo di De Aar



### Information about the Diocese of De Aar

On 24 March 1953, Territory of De Aar Diocese (formerly included in the Aliwal Diocese) was made a Prefecture and entrusted to the American Province of the Priests of the Sacred Heart. The Rt. Rev Mgr AJ Dettmer SCJ was appointed the first Apostolic Prefect. In 1966 the Diocese was established and Rt. Rev. Joseph De Palma SCJ was consecrated first Bishop of De Aar on 19 July 1967. Rt. Rev. Frederick Lobinger was Apostolic Administrator from 13 March 1988 to 30 April 1992. Rt. Rev. Joseph Potocnak SCJ, ordained Bishop May 1, 1992 and retired 23 September 2009. Rt. Rev Adam Musialek SCJ appointed Bishop of De Aar on 17 July 2009 and ordained Bishop on 24 September 2009.

Area: 67 248 sq km. / Total Population: 164 000 / Catholic Population: 5 854

### Personal – Spiritual aspect

Years of formation and work within the congregation naturally marked certain way of my living, thinking, organising daily activities and relations with priests and people. From my experience as bishop who was ordained only little more than three years ago, I believe that as bishop I've lived my Dehonian spirituality. At the beginning of my appointment I include somehow the essence of my spirituality in my coat of arms. I always nurtured the Eucharist as the real source of Christ's presence in my personal life and in the Church. The Coat of Arms also expresses this central Catholic belief and points to Eucharistic devotion as a daily reminder of the love that God shows to humanity through His Son. The African art-work relates to the South African geographical setting and signifies South African cultural heritage which I treasure in my ministry.

The **fish** motif points to the concept of early Christian identity rooted in Christ Jesus which I continue to build in my local Church. The **cross with the heart** is both the symbol of Christ's salvific work and an essential characteristic of the spirituality of the Priests of the Sacred Heart which I adopted as my own.

My life; religious, priesthood and episcopacy needs to be viewed as an ongoing invitation to answering God's call expressed in the axiom **Ecce venio** – "**HERE I AM, I COME TO DO YOUR WILL**" (Heb. 10:9). **Ecce venio** is an expression of my willingness and readiness to endure the will of God, serving Christ as Bishop in the Diocese of De Aar.

It is apparent, therefore, that these highlights, featured on the coat of arms, are the chief aspects of Christ's relationship with the Church and people's relationship with one another.

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They also continually inspire and shape my life of prayer, daily Eucharist, adoration, reparation Masses and pastoral work as bishop. I desire a passionate fidelity to the unifying and life giving nourishment of Jesus Christ, to all: priests, sisters and the faithful of the Diocese of De Aar.

Therefore:

Pastoral aspect or Socio-pastoral aspect (Can we separate those two?)

This is important challenge for my ministry in the diocese as bishop. In my small diocese, as people used to say, there are variety of religious groups, satanism and sects, broken families, abuse of alcohol and drugs, AIDS pandemic and almost 70 % percent unemployed = spiritual and social poverty.

Where the dignity of the person is violated by a variety of unjust: religious, social, political and economic systems, it has been always the cry of the Church. It is a cry on behalf of those who cannot defend themselves and on behalf of those who no one listens. During the time of apartheid it was much easier to be visible as the “prophets of love and servants of reconciliation” but that political system has been replaced by democracy and in our new political situation we/I have to find our new ways of evangelisation and being present among people. In the Diocese of De Aar social work had been developed by my predecessor Bp Joseph Potocnak, the support for the poor in the form of hospices, soup kitchens, kindergarten or associations of St. Vincent. I continue his work but seeing the new needs of our society, I plan to open in the future the Divine Mercy Centre for single mothers, abundant infants and elderly people rejected by the families.

As I stated at the beginning, more attention has to be given to the family life, because we have a great socio-religious problem; alcohol, negligence and abuse of children as well as mixed religious marriages with its consequences.

The diocesan pastoral program has its goal to build among our people a strong faith foundation based on the daily Eucharist, adoration and sound catechetical knowledge not only among children but also among adults. **(e.g. Christ blessed children and taught adults we are doing opposite)** Therefore, my concern is to have systematic catechesis, showing the values which is offered by the Catholic Church and working for the unity within diocese by respecting those who believe and think differently. Place Christ in the centre of the life of our Catholics, teach them to understand the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and how to get into personal relation with Jesus in their daily lives **(e.g. nahmal – Afrikaans - sharing)**. One of the important aspects of my pastoral concern is reconciliation. Last year, before the inauguration of the year of faith, we commenced parish retreat in each parish of the diocese centre on reconciliation. For some, it had been painful experience but at the end it was a fruitful ending.

It is also important for me to have regular contact with priests and sisters. With the small number of active priests 8 and 3 sisters, and quite isolated places in the diocese, therefore, the pastoral concern for the priests: diocesan and religious has an significant part of my life, to keep union, good relation and cooperation by meeting them during our regular diocesan meetings and different celebrations on the occasion of Christmas, Easter, birthdays and parish celebrations to make them feel that we are one family.

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Key words of Fr Dehon: passionate for Christ,  
go to the people,  
take care of the local clergy,

Pope Leo XIII to Fr Dehon: make known my social teaching (Rerum Novarum)

Those fraises we may find in the testament of our Servant of God Fr Dehon.

As religious bishop, I believe that I am follower of Fr Dehon's teaching, which became also part of my daily life.