

“The pain and trauma of AIDS can be beaten by international compassion” (11/11/03)

“The toll exacted by sickness and death associated with AIDS could, if not dealt with comprehensively, cause the disintegration of the South African society,” warned Bishop Kevin Dowling of the Southern Catholic Bishops’ Conference, at Sizanani Conference in Bronkhortspruit, east of Pretoria.

Bishop Kevin was addressing two hundred international delegates including thirteen African countries, who are gathered to find ways of caring for the orphans and vulnerable children in sub Saharan Africa.

He encouraged government and business to listen to “those who experience the plight of orphans and vulnerable – Church constituencies are constantly exposed to the cries of innocent and helpless children.”

“Global structures are a hindrance to the life of the African child. International debt repayments, unfair trade barriers and huge agricultural subsidies continue to keep our continent perpetually impoverished and unable to fully realise the potential of our own human and natural resources.”

“Besides the growing and heart-rending culture of child-headed households, grandparents are being forced by circumstances to care for orphans and vulnerable children.”

“Grannies are not a *solution* to the orphan crisis. They are tired by demands made on them. In their poverty they are denied opportunities to enjoy their deserved time of rest and old age. It is not easy to bury your own child and then take care of their children.”

Thus it is important to respect the role of home-based carers. Home carers are compelled to incorporate orphan care as part of their calling.”

“We must also begin to train and support small children to care for their own terminally ill parents.”

“Positive government and business contribution can help to ease the escalation of orphans and vulnerable children. The provision of anti-retroviral programmes, including Prevention of Mother to Child therapy and child care supplemented by nutritional programmes, is a vitally important sustainable solution to the crisis facing us. This will enable the parents to live longer and to be able to care for the children.”

“How can billions be spent on a mythical war against Iraq while doors are closed to the survival of those of those infected and affected by AIDS? America and the West must realise that AIDS will destroy their economies in the long term. AIDS and poverty can only produce more terror attacks. Economic giants of the world will

subsequently loose prospects for investment, trade and growth as Africa is crippled by AIDS.”

“It seems that only in the face of such considerations, well argued, will the world powers perhaps be moved to respond to this human tragedy. The policies or lack of policy of governments and the powerful ones of the world who debate in Five Star luxury and postpone urgent decisions until ‘next year’ condemns a few hundred thousand more to a painful, horrible death.”