

BEATIFICATION OF BENEDICT DASWA 13 SEPTEMBER 2015

Stephen Brislin

President: Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference

“The church, entrusted with the earth’s glory, believes that in each person is the Creator’s image and that everyone who tramples it offends God”.

These words, spoken by Archbishop Oscar Romero, are an apt description of the martyrdom of Benedict Daswa, who knew that death would be the likely consequence of the superstitious sniffing out of those presumed to have caused lightning. Rather than participate in an act which would lead to the demise of others, he chose to give his own life. In so doing, he manifested the fundamental Christian belief that each person bears the image of God and he was prepared to go against the tide of popular opinion to affirm that truth and the duty to protect all life.

He is probably not the first South African martyr, but he is the first to be beatified. For this we are overjoyed because the life of Benedict Daswa is an encouragement to all of us to stand firm in our faith and in virtue. This is especially important at a time when human life is being de-valued and when the truths and values of our faith are being eroded for the sake of expediency. Like Benedict Daswa we need to have the courage to stand firm our Catholic faith, even in the face of scorn and persecution.

As a loving husband and father of eight children he is an example of family life as a gift from God. This is an inspiration for us to guard and promote this great treasure which God has given us, and to seek ways to strengthen families. May every husband and father strive to exhibit the same love and virtue as Benedict Daswa.

As an educator of young people, he inspires us to value the education of our children, not only in the different school subjects but also in human and moral formation. May every teacher look to him as an exemplary role model.

As South Africans, may we all imitate him in his love for God, for neighbour and for the Church, in which he played an active part. In his life and death he has taught us about God’ love. May we too give the same witness to the love of God for all people.

As the Church of Southern Africa we are deeply grateful to His Holiness Pope Francis for granting our request for this beatification and for sending Cardinal Amato to be with us today. We are grateful to Cardinal Amato for presiding at this joyful

Eucharistic Celebration. It is a historic moment in the life of the Church in Southern Africa and a day which we shall never forget. We are also grateful to Bishop João Rodrigues and Bishop-emeritus Hugh Slattery, as well as those who worked with them, for their untiring efforts to ensure that this day would come about. We also thank the family of Benedict Daswa for their co-operation and support. Today we celebrate with pride our fellow Catholic and fellow South African. May God bless us all, keep us united and bestow his love upon us.

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