[redacted]

NOUPOORT

[redacted]

NYANGA

[redacted]

OUDTSHOORN

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PAARL

[redacted]

PATENSIE

[redacted]

PLETTENBERG BAY

[redacted]

PORT ELIZABETH

[redacted]

RIVERSDALE

[redacted]

ROBERTSON

[redacted]

SALDANHA BAY

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SOMERSET WEST

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SWELLENDAM

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REFLECTION

HOPING AGAINST HOPE

There are times when it sounds very hollow to speak of hope. Many people believe that the only time when we can speak of hope is when there is reason for hope. But could we not say that to hope where there is reason to hope is no hope at all?

"Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?" (Romans 8 v 24) The hard and difficult times we live in are the very things that should make for hope.

We also have to remember that we are in the twentieth century since the advent of Christ. Right through these centuries there have been serious catastrophies and human-beings have survived them, and life has not stopped. Someone once said: "We do not know what the future holds but we know who holds the future." We still have certain powers which can never be taken from us. We still have the power to pray. This is a source of inner strength which has seen many a martyr through. We do not have to be christians in order to pray; God does not judge according to labels but He judges the hearts. It was the Archbishop, Desmond Tutu who once said: "...we are not called upon to be successful but to be faithful". It is the sincerity of our prayers that counts.

We still have the power to refuse to be bitter. Jesus lived through the Roman government as if it did not exist. He acted according to his conscience and what He believed to be the will of God. Part of the victory of Jesus was that His agenda was not dictated by the stringent laws of the land under which He lived. The situation in His country could not stop Him from giving to the world, His own self. His teachings abide with us today still. The socio-political situation did not paralyse Him. He lived above it "What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?" He posed the rhetorical question.

There are many things for which we could sell our soul, our very being. The tragedy is not those who inflict pain and suffering. The real tragedy is when in pain and suffering we succumb to pressure. Jesus teaches us here when He says: "And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious how or what you are to answer or what you are to say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say" (Luke 12 v 11,12).

For christians not to continue in strength and hope borders on blasphemy, according to Jesus: "Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? and not one of them is forgotten before God ... Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows". (Luke 12 v 6,7).

Evil is not something outside of life; it is within life. We know the reality of evil so that we may not be part of it. We have seen that evil moves with death and destruction. But good is also real. Our hope will lie in our choosing good so that we can overcome evil by not being a part of evil.

Our hope is real and nothing can remove that hope, unless we allow it. Jesus' cry on the cross: "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me", is not only a cry of pain and feeling of abandonment, but it is also a cry of hope for one cannot say "my God" unless you still believe in Him.

There are certain things which we must keep within us, otherwise we perish: And now abides faith, hope and love. If we let go of these we have given the devil a double victory; physical and spiritual victory.