

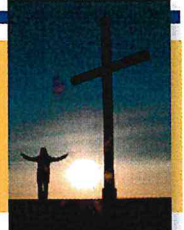


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Holy Trinity Parish in Olifantsfontein in Gauteng launched its St Anne Sodality after many years of serving under Moya parish in Tembisa. The launch Mass was celebrated by Fr Paul Tatu CSS, communications officer of the bishops' conference. Three probators were awarded medals: Mpho Sewela, Sindiwe Mpungose and Rebecca Kwadi.

## Have will to fix crime, police minister told

STAFF REPORTER

UNLESS the problems in the police force are tackled head on, crime will become worse, a Church analyst has warned after the release of the latest crime statistics by police minister Fikile Mbabula.

The crime statistics, covering the period April 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017 record a slight decrease of 1,8% in the commission of serious crimes.

However Fr Peter-John Pearson, director of the Catholic Parliamentary Liaison Office, noted that murders increased nationally by 1,8%, translating into 52 homicides per day. One in five murder victims is a woman or child.

"By way of comparison: the murder rate is five times higher than Mexico and ten times higher than India," Fr Pearson said.

While an average of 109 rapes were reported daily, civil society organisations hold that for every reported rape, as many as nine are not reported.

Hijackings were up 14,5%; home robberies showed a significant increase of 7,3% compared to 2,7% in the previous year; and business robberies showed an increase of 5%.

Drug-related crimes were up 12,9% and the possession of illegal firearms and ammunition increased by 9,22%.

"Gun control experts have warned that this increase is in fact at the root of the increase in violence in the other crime categories. A greater effort in curbing the leak of legal guns, and annihilating the numbers of illegal firearms, will contribute to creating a safer environment," Fr Pearson said.

He observed that a recent survey found that six out of ten victims of robberies did not report these crimes to the police "as they had no confidence that the police would do anything about them". This, Fr Pearson said, has led many, including Mr Mbabula, "to believe that the police, despite many hardworking and sincere personnel,

are part of the problem".

"But this raises the question as to whether the minister has the political will, the stamina and the courage to tackle this herculean task, especially given the way interests of factions within the governing party have crept into and bedevilled the institutional life of the police force," Fr Pearson said.

Mr Mbabula has promised "to revive specialised units, have competent police officers who know how to investigate crimes, make arrests and ensure that cases are so solid that we secure convictions".

However, Fr Pearson argued, "it has long been argued that the failure of the intelligence units and the high levels of suspicion, distrust and collusion by individuals and groups, have opened a space where organised criminals can act with impunity, thus perpetuating an almost invincible criminal culture".

Fr Pearson emphasised that "the statistics in all provinces show that crime is mostly concentrated in the poorer areas and that it is thus the poor who carry the heavy burden of criminal activities".

This, he said, "raises the question of the allocation of personnel and resources and whether poorer areas receive the benefit of adequate resources".

That has broader implications. "At the end of the day policing, crime, violence, aggression and extremism are linked to questions of sharing resources, justice and human rights. They are all interlinked and we need to be careful to not analyse crime in isolation," the priest said.

He referred to Pope Francis who last month said: "The poor and the poorer peoples are accused of violence yet, without equal opportunities, the different forms of aggression and conflict will find a fertile terrain for growth and will eventually explode."

Fr Pearson added: "We would do well to bear that in mind."

## Kids win out over racists

A COURT had to decide whether the central square in Dresden, Germany, would be used for a children's festival in support of a South African charity or for a right-wing demonstration against migrants.

The children's festival was planned to be held in conjunction with that evening's gala ball to raise funds for the HIV/Aids project Hope Cape Town, which was founded in 2001 by the German-speaking Catholic Community of the Cape Peninsula, under the guidance of Fr Stefan Hippler.

But on the same day, the right-wing anti-immigration group Pegida wanted to use the city's Altmarkt square for a political rally. Local businesswoman and socialite Viola Klein, who organises the annual Hope Gala in Dresden—a highlight in the eastern German city's social calendar—became the public face in the battle between children and extremists which made newspaper headlines in the region.

The Dresden administrative court eventually found in favour of Mrs Klein and the children's festival. The daily *Dresdener Zeitung* afterwards profiled Mrs Klein under the headline: "She Took Pegida's Spot".

Pegida head Lutz Bachmann described



Viola Klein and Fr Stefan Hippler

Mrs Klein as a "left-wing extremist". The charity organiser became a hate-figure for the right-wing group, the *Dresdener Zeitung* noted—but also a hero to locals standing against xenophobia.

At the children's festival a bodyguard discreetly watched over Mrs Klein's safety.

The short notice, the police presence and bad weather resulted in a lower turnout than expected, but the festival was nevertheless a joyful event, according to local media.

The Dresden gala, the 12th event, raised

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