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**The
Catholic Church
in
Contemporary
Southern Africa**

Edited by Joy Brain and Philippe Denis



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1999**

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Foreword

Bishop Louis Ncamiso Ndlovu,
President of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference

Some three years ago the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference felt that the time was ripe to undertake a study that would assess the missionary activities of the church during the past fifty years. The evangelization of the people of Southern Africa represents the Church's mission "ad gentes". It is a fervent response to God's desire that all people are to be saved and are to come to the knowledge of the truth of God's redeeming love (1 Tim 2.5). The following pages are an investigation into what progress has been made in the daunting work of evangelization. It is significant that this study has been made on the eve of the third millennium. It is therefore an opportune time to cast our eyes back in time in order to assess how we as evangelizers, have responded to the charge: "Go into the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation" (Mk 16.15).

The history of the mission of the Catholic Church in Southern Africa started during the second half of the 19th century. By way of introduction to the period under investigation, some of the essays have gone back to the very beginnings of the missionary endeavours in order to depict the drama of the heroic deeds of those who first brought the Word of God to the shores of Southern Africa. It was during the past fifty years that the complexity of the mission of the Church began to unfold. The Church rapidly moved away from being a settler Church to being a mission Church; and more recently, as a result of the pastoral plan, to