

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN SOUTHERN AFRICA (N-T)
EVANGELISCH-LUTHERISCHE KIRCHE IM SÜDLICHEN AFRIKA(N-T)
EVANGELIESE LUTHERSE KERK IN SUIDER-AFRIKA (N-T)

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“Direct the spray at the base of the flame”

A call to all

“Direct the spray at the base of the flame” reads the big instruction on the fire extinguisher. The reason is simple: When the fire is devouring, the natural reaction is to spray at the flames - but they just keep coming. You need to reach the base, the source of the fire. Only then will the flames go out.

Our country is burning - the devouring flames shoot out of the highest office and the top leadership. The voices are loud: put out the flames, remove the president.

Indeed, he is causing massive damage. But even if he steps down, the fire will continue to devour. Corrupt dealings will not stop. Women and children will continue to be abused. People will continue to hate, despise or distrust “the other”. Innocent lives will continue to be taken. The poor will continue to become poorer. The corruption on highest level is not the source of our misery - it is only the most visible expression of serious issues in our society, our homes, our personal lives.

“Direct the spray at the base of the flame” - this is the approach that we must take.

We are entering the holy week. On the night of his betrayal Jesus urged his disciples to stay awake with him, to pray with him. They slept. “Be alert, and pray, so that temptation will not overwhelm you” he said (Mk 14,38). And then: Stand up, let us go (v42)- knowing that the darkest hours of the universe were lying ahead.

It is naive to believe that, with a change of president or of government things will be in order. Our country is smouldering, burning, deep down. That is where the fire needs to be put out.

It starts with me. Where do I need to turn around, to repent, to acknowledge evil, greed, bitterness? “Be alert and pray”

Next I direct the prayer to my household, my relationships, my work situation, my habits: Where is the fire burning, where is the base of the fire that needs to be extinguished? Where am I destructive?

When we listen to Jesus and are alert and pray, we will become like a fire break, rather than fuelling the flames.

I want to invite all of us to start a movement, directing our prayer at the base of the flame.

Yes, of course the devouring flames at the top need to be put out. But they will continue to re-appear in different forms unless the base is dealt with.

Good Friday and Easter give us a helpful time roster for a prayer directed at the base of the flame

Prayer Roster

1. When you **wake up**, you are reminded of Easter: Jesus has risen, life has conquered death. Start the day with a prayer of thanks, because, despite all chaos and fear, Christ is the victor. His victory gives you the strength to tackle the issues lying ahead. End with: **Lord Jesus Christ, king of kings, strengthen me for this day.**

2. **9h00:** the hour when Jesus was nailed to the cross. The innocent one is at the mercy of the powerful. Pray for all those who abuse their power against others: Confess your own abuse, pray by name for those where you see or experience abuse. End with: **Lord Jesus Christ, crucified, have mercy.**

3. **12h00:** the gospels tell us that on Good Friday darkness covered the earth at noon. Pray for the darkness in your own life - self-inflicted or caused by others. Pray for forgiveness and the willingness to forgive. Pray for those who are engulfed by darkness: The unemployed, homeless, abused, God-forsaken. Pray for guidance and wisdom where you can and should act. End with: **Lord Jesus Christ, come into this darkness**

4. **15h00:** the time that Jesus died, carrying the wrongs of the universe.

Pray for the wrongs in your life, bring it to Christ. Pray for the mess in your family, work, relationships, in the country. Bring it to Christ. End with: **Lord Jesus Christ, you carried the sin of the world - have mercy on us.**

5. **Nighttime:** Good Friday was a time of hopelessness. Even Easter evening was a time of fear. And into that fear Jesus appeared: Peace be with you!

As you go to bed, hear these words, directed to you: Peace be with you! In the world you have fear, but do not be afraid. I have overcome the world. (Jn 16,33) Place yourself into his care with the words that Jesus prayed on the cross: **Father, into your hands I commit myself!** (Lk 23,46)

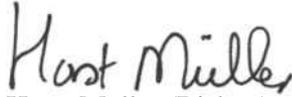
Repeat this prayer roster for the whole week.

But let us not stop there. Let us repeat it after Easter, day after day, week after week, month after month - till the base of the fire has been extinguished and the flames at the top gone out, till there is peace and healing in our country.

Be alert and pray and do what God calls you to do!

Feel free to pass this on to others.

Your fellow servant in Christ



Horst Müller (Bishop)

Prayer Roster bookmark

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