



AFRICA/SOUTH AFRICA - South African Bishops pray for Mandela "Father of the Nation"

Johannesburg (Agenzia Fides) - "On behalf of the Bishops, Clergy, Religious Sisters and Brothers as well as the Catholic Church in Southern Africa, the Catholic Bishops of Southern Africa extend to President Mandela and his family our prayers for his speedy recovery," states a message sent to Fides by Cardinal Wilfrid Napier OFM, Archbishop of Durban and Spokesman of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC, which unites South Africa, Botswana and Swaziland)

"Former President Mandela means different things to different people," continued the message. "To his family he is a veritable Patriarch who stands for and is an example of the virtues of a truly great and loving Father, who cares for all near and dear to him.

"To the Nation, he is a great and inspiring leader, a true icon of the 'toenadering' and reconciliation which we still need urgently." "Toenadering" is a Boer term that means "to approach" and that in the post-apartheid South Africa was used to indicate the informal unity of all political parties to address the Country's problems.

"To the international community, he is a unique African and global statesman who rose above personal, tribal, race and party interests in order to lead the South African nation through a difficult transition from apartheid to Democracy.

"Tata, you are in our prayers," concludes the message. Nelson Mandela, first post-apartheid President of South Africa and Nobel Peace Prize winner in 1993, is recovering from a collapsed lung. According to medical sources, the situation is not life-threatening for the former President, who is 93 years old. (LM) (Agenzia Fides 28/1/2011)