

When Desmond Tutu retired from his position as the Archbishop of Cape Town, Nelson Mandela said of him, 'His joy in our diversity and his spirit of forgiveness are as much part of his immeasurable contribution to our nation as his passion for justice and his solidarity with the poor.' As Mandela recognized, Desmond Tutu has managed to combine, over a long life of service, a deep commitment to social justice with a profound passion for personal devotion.

Therefore, it is of no surprise that he has been given the informal title of 'South Africa's moral conscience.' A brief look at his life reveals a man who despite suffering great injustice maintained an authentic journey on the path of holiness.

He followed in his father's footsteps as a teacher, but after a while, he left to pursue theological education, initially in South Africa before completing his studies at Kings College London. Upon returning to South Africa, he taught at theological colleges before becoming the Anglican Dean of Johannesburg in 1972.

Until its fall, Tutu was a staunch critic of apartheid, even when it was costly to do so. However, the manner and purpose of his criticism differed significantly from the aggressive and

often violent approach taken by many of his contemporaries. His goal was reconciliation, which he was convinced was only possible through forgiveness, not revenge. For these efforts, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984.

In 1986, he became the first black leader of the South African Anglican Church when he was appointed the Archbishop of Cape Town. His influence grew and, for a number of reasons, cracks began to appear in the apartheid system. However, the country remained a powder keg, constantly on the brink of exploding in violence. When Chris Hani, a key leader in the struggle for freedom, was murdered in 1993, the atmosphere grew particularly charged. Archbishop Tutu spoke at the funeral to an angry crowd of 120,000. He proclaimed, 'We will be free! All of us! Black and White! We are the rainbow people of God...nothing can stop us for God is on our side.'

Following the momentous and peaceful political change in 1994, Tutu became the chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This was set up to bring into public the human rights violations that took place during the apartheid era. Abuses were heard and recorded and the commission was given the authority, in some instances, to grant amnesty to the perpetrators. This remarkable fusion of justice and forgiveness enabled, in part, a relatively peaceful transition from apartheid to democracy.

Desmond Tutu continues in his unceasing commitment to social justice, continually promoting the significance of forgiveness and reconciliation. His authenticity enables

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**Spouse:** Nomalizo Leah Shenxane

**Children:** Trevor Armstrong, Thamsanga Tutu, Theresa Ursula Thandeka Tut, Naomi Nontombi Tutu and Moho Andrea Tutu



him to speak with moral authority into situations as complex and unstable as Israel and Palestine, and Zimbabwe and Burma.