

Obituaries

Thomas George Vernon Inman (1905–1989)

In his charge to Synod in 1924 Bishop S.F. Baines, D.D., fourth Bishop of Natal, made special reference to the development of a South African ministry and to the number of recruits to that ministry who were coming forward. In particular he referred to a young man from Durban, from the Parish of St Mary, Greyville, who was on his way to St Augustine's College, Canterbury, to commence his ordination training, with financial help from the Ordination Candidates' Fund. That young man was Vernon Inman, who went on to obtain his M.A. at Selwyn College, Cambridge, in 1932. Having been ordained in England in 1930 and having served as an Assistant Priest in London, he returned to Natal to be Assistant Priest in the Parish of Estcourt in 1933,



Rt. Rev. T.G.V. Inman
(Photograph: Natal Witness)

followed by four years at St Paul's, Durban, where he was Vicar from 1937 to 1951. A Canon of St Saviour's Cathedral, Pietermaritzburg from 1944, he was appointed Archdeacon of Durban in 1950. He was consecrated Sixth Bishop of Natal in St Paul's Church, Durban, on 18th October, 1951. He was a sub-Prelate of the Order of St John from 1953.

He began his episcopate in an era when the winds of change were starting to blow with gale force through Africa as a whole. It was to his great merit that he brought the Diocese through these tumultuous years to a point where it became well-equipped for a changed world. This could not have happened had he not been an able administrator and far-seeing Father in God, initiating many changes aimed at improving communication and lay participation in the organized life of the Diocese. He saw to the setting up of a central administration with full-time staff in a Diocesan Office. He found African priests assistants to missionaries, and left them as Rectors of Parishes in their own right. Under his leadership the principle of equality of clergy stipends, irrespective of race, was finally implemented, and the stipends of all clergy improved. To him was owed the appointment of the first Bishop Suffragan to share in the episcopal oversight of the rapidly growing Diocese, and his firm but broad governance established a unity in his flock where parishes and individuals of wide and strong difference of outlook were able to contribute to the common task of the Household of God, each in their own way.

A major achievement of his was the setting up of a New Cathedral Building Committee and this led, after many delays and difficulties, to the unification of the parishes of St Peter and St Saviour in Pietermaritzburg, and the building of the Cathedral of the Holy Nativity.

During his years as Bishop he sought untiringly to encourage ordination candidates and to give them experience beyond our Diocese and Province. His concern for the social and educational needs of society was reflected by the Diocesan Schools, Homes and other institutions which went from strength to strength under his patronage.

As Bishop of the CPSA, as Dean of the Province, and finally Acting Metropolitan, Thomas George Vernon unfailingly led his people towards the goal of Christian Unity. He retired as Bishop of Natal in June 1974 and then spent ten years in Australia. He continued to be interested in the affairs of the Diocese and made regular use of the Diocesan Cycle of Prayer. He returned to Natal in June this year, but passed on to higher service on 4th July at the age of 84.

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