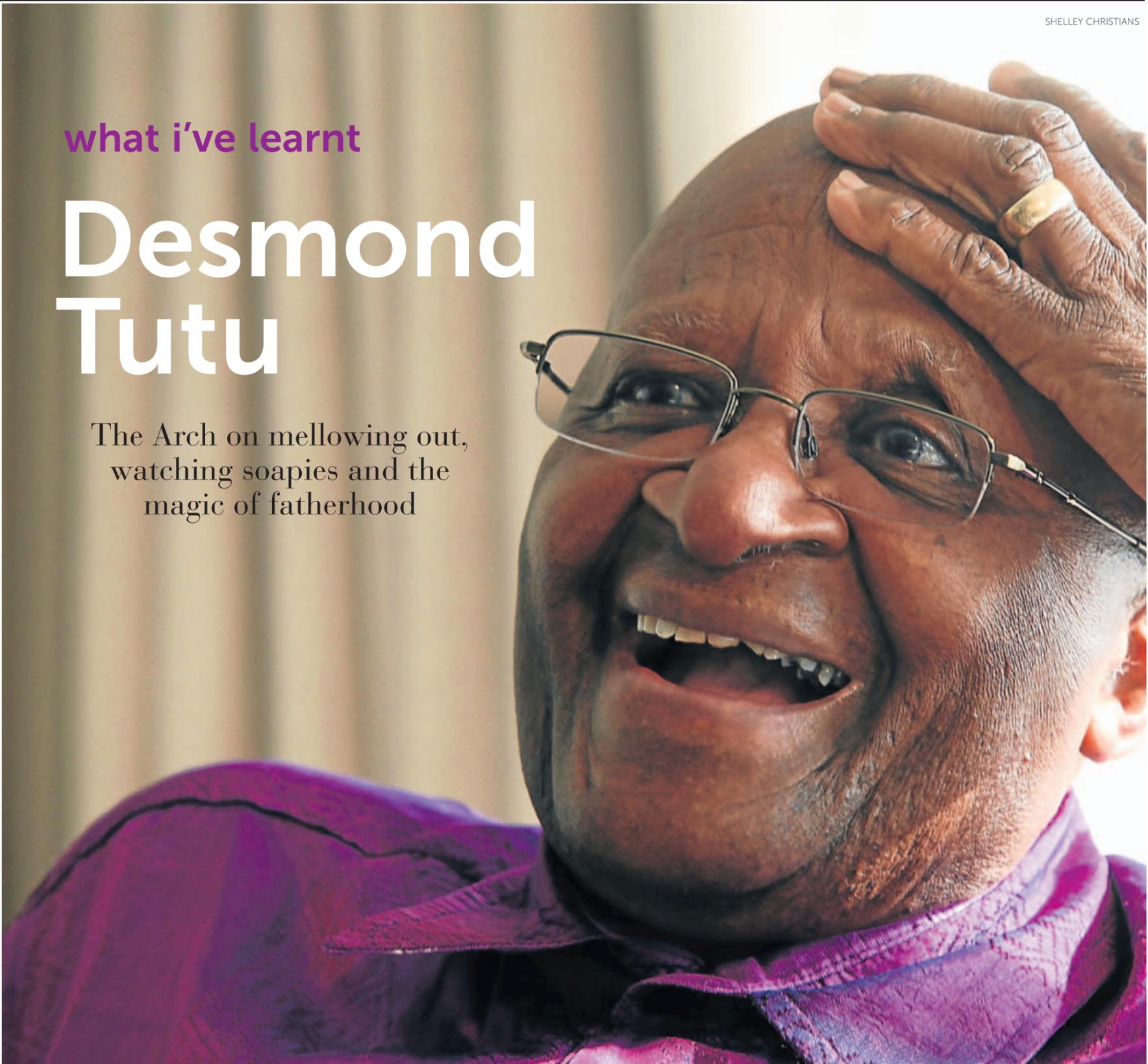


what i've learnt

Desmond Tutu

The Arch on mellowing out, watching soopies and the magic of fatherhood



SET to celebrate his 80th birthday on October 7, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu has dedicated more than 50 years to fighting social injustice at home and abroad. One of Africa's most well-known sons, the exuberant Nobel peace prize laureate announced his retirement from public life in July last year, although it is tough to argue that this father of four has slowed down. This year he has made public appearances throughout the world and remained firmly outspoken on a range of issues, such as child marriage and, lately, the so-called wealth tax. His birthday bash at a Boland wine farm promises to be a star-studded affair, with invited guests ranging from rock star Bono to former US president Jimmy Carter.

I'm particularly surprised I've made it this far. Originally it was thought that I was going to die as a baby — I had polio and ended up with a semi-paralysed right hand. I'm left-handed because of this and my right hand is smaller than my left.

If there's one lesson I've learnt later in life that I wish I knew when I was 25, it is that people are fundamentally good. It probably would have made me less judgmental of others, especially my opponents. They actually did believe they were doing what was right. They didn't go and say, "We are choosing to do something that is wrong. They believed (apartheid)

was right." They believed that the best way to avoid friction in South Africa was to separate the races.

I like watching telly — most particularly sports — but recently I've been taken by the acting on the soapie *Generations*. Especially if you think of the acting you used to have in the townships. Now it's understated, life-like. You'd think those situations were actually happening.

I've had prostate cancer since 1997. When the doctor tells you that you have cancer, inside you say to yourself, "That's a death sentence." But I found that cancer was a messenger of grace. When we look at life as a gift, we realise just how precious it is. I take nothing for granted.

I was never more upset when people tried to get at me than by trying to get at my family. Sometimes my children would pick up the phone, and you'd watch their bodies stiffen. These people were vicious — they were aware of the fact that



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Interestingly, the people we admire most in life are not necessarily the ones who are macho, or who are prosperous, it's people like Mother Teresa. You could have said many things about her, but being

they were talking to a child, where they would say, "Tell your father we are going to get him."

I've been married for 56 years and Leah has been very good at keeping my head the right size. Once I was driving and when I looked at her she looked slightly more complacent and self-satisfied than usual. When I wondered why, she showed me this bumper sticker that said, "Any woman who wants to be equal to a man has no ambition." The other day she stuck a notice just beneath the television set in our bedroom that said, "You are entitled to your wrong opinion."

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Interestingly, the people we admire most in life are not necessarily the ones who are macho, or who are prosperous, it's people like Mother Teresa. You could have said many things about her, but being

macho wouldn't have been one of them. Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, the Dalai Lama ... we admire them because they are good.

I would like my epitaph to say: "He loved, he laughed and he cried."

If I could relive any five minutes of my life, it would be hearing that I had just become a father for the first time. It was special because it made me feel like God (laughs wildly). Here you have been part of a process that has brought a whole human being into existence. It is the miracle of birth that you can hold in your arms the result of the love of two people.

The Boks are going to give as good as they get. I'm just amazed at our capacity: you would have thought these guys were long in the tooth, but that has worked in their favour because they do have a lot of experience. I think we have a very good chance of upsetting the Kiwis.

My biggest mistake in life was being cocky because I was right. Had I remembered that you catch more flies with honey than vinegar, I might have been less self-righteous. I was almost brutal, overly self-abrasive, in my vituperations. If I had been gentler we might have wooed more whites to come over to the right side sooner. I hope I've mellowed with age.

— Tiara Walters