

Bishop Margaret Vertue

Bishop of the Diocese of False Bay

Keynote address around Gender Based Violence at St Francis of Assisi Mandela Park, Khayelitsha

Theme: Beyond 16 Days of Activism for no violence against women and children

“Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards” (Søren Kierkegaard)

Dear People of God,

Beyond 16 Days of Activism- How will we help to create the future? May I suggest a six-point plan for us to commit to:

1. I will immerse myself in a complex world

I am no better than anyone else, and I am, somehow connected to everyone else.

I will keep my own feet dirty, making sure my team, my family, my church, my classmates, my faith group, my subordinates, my superiors or co-workers, know that I am one with them and let them know and what is required of them regarding the safety of women and children.

I will walk with my eyes open to the suffering and every-day struggles that unfold around me. I commit to remain in touch with the reality on the ground.

Our decisions have real impact in the community.

We cannot protect ourselves by saying, ‘I don’t know’ in cases where we should have known.
WE ARE ACCOUNTABLE!

2. I will step back for daily reflection

Set aside sacred space and time every day to remind ourselves that we are ‘people with a purpose’. People with values and beliefs.

I will be mindful and focused regarding what I will do, so as not to waste any moment in the combat against gender-based violence.

We can ask ourselves: What will be my attitude in the face of adversity?”

One of our senior male clergy, introduced the following in his parish:

- Story telling
- Men and Boy conversations
- Mentorship
- Listening to women

The same clergy person invites us to revisit cultural practices and identify whether they are still relevant in today’s climate of Gender Based Violence.

At the recent provincial synod of ACSA, the members were led in a brief liturgy of repentance by the male members present. This was concluded with women stretching out their hands in blessing and forgiveness.

We need to acknowledge our own guilt and ask ourselves whether we have done enough in the upliftment of women. Patriarchy signals to society that men are more valuable than women. Patriarchy perpetuates inequality

3. I will be a champion of justice and peace.

What this means is that I will be supporting of and promote an environment of justice and peace.

Taking particular note of the local, national and international scenarios.

- Gang violence
- Domestic violence
- Unemployed and unemployable
- Bullying
- Social media
- Xenophobia
- Human trafficking

99% of people trafficked are not rescued. Only 2% of perpetrators are arrested. Being unemployed makes people vulnerable and therefore susceptible to false job opportunities that are linked to the trafficking ring.

Those who promote peace and justice are very few, and this is why we need to band together to increase these numbers.

Evil men are like the restless sea, whose waves never stop rolling in brining filth, muck and destruction to the shores of their victims.

If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.

The root of peace is the right relationship between humans and God, between individuals, between families, between communities and between nations.

Sometimes it is best to give up what I think is my right, so that other do not feel wronged, because my words may be an imposition on that of others.

We can work together with police forums and other structures which guarantee women and girls justice when they are violated, abused, rape and murdered.

Across the world and in the Diocese of False Bay, the 'First Man Standing' movement is gaining momentum to transform relationships and the working together of people to end violence against women. The attitudes of men will have to change if we are going to see an end to gender-based violence.

4. Commit to know ourselves deeply.

In the case of language, we need to realize that in social and even in professional settings that words spoken by people in whose company we keep, are often offensive and derogatory.

Next, we have to identify our role in these situations, and this can be a truly defining moment. This is where we decide, make clear and well known where we stand on these issues.

Complicity, I know it is wrong, but I go along with others. Peer pressure and a broken self-image are a few of the reasons why we go along with others, if we take a stand, we can overcome peer pressure and repair our self-image.

5. Commit to the promotion of dignity in women.

We have to make every effort to renew our families. We should support others who are looking for help with overcoming particular problems in their families, like divisions, the need for reconciliation and healing.

If we work together to eradicate any mentality, norms or language that portray women and girls in negative stereotypes and does not accord with their dignity as persons, life bearers and children of God.

Promote an attitude of respect for women.

We can make people aware of this crisis by participating in Thursdays in black. As well as writing pastoral letters, lighting candles, making banners and having motivational talks in schools and tertiary institutions. Even in supper and support groups, many social settings we should make this crisis the topic of discussion.

Have consultations to look at gender, environment and poverty in a more integrated way.

This conversation is being had at provincial level in the Anglican church of Southern Africa.

6. Commit to lead with courage, compassion and conviction.

I urge each and every one of us here to take a pledge to lead with courage and compassion and conviction hereby opening new possibilities, revealing new horizons and create new realities to end abuse, humiliation and violence against women and girls.

Stand firm in your resolve, I believe in you. We look not to our own popularity, but to the good of all. Let all we do, be done in a peaceful and prayerful manner.

The RT Revd. Margret B. Vertue
Bishop of False Bay