

Good day beloved of God,

The Scripture reading is 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28. Hymn: Christ Triumphant, Ever Reigning.

This hymn is one of Bishop Merwyn's favourites. I can report that he is doing well. God bless him.

The letter to the Thessalonians, written around AD 51, is actually the first letter the Apostle Paul wrote to the churches. Paul is reminding the church to be vigilant. In our day, the church is feeling fear and vulnerability under the shadow of the Covid 19 lockdown. Our security and the things we hold valuable is being compromised.

Today I want to particularly thank our church leaders, our Archbishop Thabo and all the clergy of the Diocese. The challenges we face, on a daily basis, are very different from what they were before lockdown. We thank our leaders for carrying the burden of their communities. This pandemic has forced us into roles of being Psychologists, Sociologists and Economists. The first degree or diploma of our clergy, is theology but we have many diversities of roles. One of those roles that is being pursued more vigorously, is finding food to feed the hungry and destitute. We do this with humility, protecting the dignity of our people.

Christianity is a robust faith, empowered with a divine dynamic, and is to be lived out even in the most trying circumstances.

We thank our clergy who are finding new ways to pastor the distressed; to make God explicit in Word and Sacrament. As we find ourselves in different times and different space, the underground river of prayer, dedication and sacrifice is continuous for all of us. **'It is not in the moving of the lips, but in elevation of the heart to God, that the essence of prayer consists'** wrote *Lightfoot*. In a spirit of prayer we realize **our dependence** on God

For clergy and laity alike, for now we are more hidden, more contemplative, visioning what the church will look like after Covid 19. It is not going to be business as **usual** but business **unusual**. Let us all open ourselves during this time to receive new vision for new and different ministry and mission opportunities. Remember that it is God who has **calls** us. This is a timeless **call**. The faithful **Caller** will strengthen us for action (1 Thess 5:24).

These dark times will pass. Even in our trials and difficulties, God is teaching us valuable lessons. We turn our minds and hearts towards the light of the Risen Christ. The light is breaking through unexpected cracks. As we face whatever the day has in store, let nothing daunt your spirit. We are all working for the same goal, that of saving lives. We are learning new ways of staying united as a Diocese, being together even when we are apart. You are not facing the day alone – you are in the loving company of the faithful. **'We are already one,'** wrote *Thomas Merton*. **'But we imagine that we are not.'**

My invitation today, is for you to reach out with gratitude to at least two clergy persons, a deacon or priest, who you know.

For our Prayers: Prayerfully sing or say the hymn, the *Veni Creator*, addressed to the Holy Spirit. (APB, pg 392). Pray the Ember Day Collects (An APB, pg 331) Pray the Prayer at the conclusion of 1 Thessalonians, Chapter 5, vss. 23 – 28.

I am, because we are, because God is ... Opening Hearts to Heal God's world. Be assured that I hold you all in highest possible esteem and affection for the work that you do. **Amen**