

LOCKDOWN DAY 56 – 21 MAY 2020

Good day dear family and friends of False Bay Diocese,

Scripture: Luke 24:44-53 and Acts 1:1-11 Hymn: *Lord, enthroned in heavenly splendour*

The Western Cape, including our Diocese, remains the epicentre of the spread of the Corona virus. Despite this, I've experienced some of the **strongest light** coming from those who have **suffered** and are suffering greatly with the anxiety of being affected and infected by the Corona virus. As the darkness breaks their hearts open, they become compassionate. Walls of resistance, mental defences and tightly held securities fall away. Thank you people of False Bay that I observe this light in you.

Today, is **Ascension Day**, 9 days before Pentecost. I invite you as individuals, Organisations, Parishes and Archdeacons to join in prayer with **Thy Kingdom Come**, a global prayer movement that invites Christians around the world to pray from Ascension to Pentecost. The **Novena** prayer is also a prayer that is prayed for nine successive days or weeks at any time of the year but this period is also particularly set aside for invoking the Holy Spirit. Choose your intention and prayer and get praying at an agreed time each day.

The Way of the Cross has a 15th station – The Resurrection and a 16th station - The Ascension. As we **commemorate** the event of the Lord's going up to heaven let our hearts also go with him. If we are united with Christ, he will take us across this **troubled ocean** of **Covid-19**. We all claim to be **followers** of Christ, but at times we **lack confidence** in him.

For **the good news** of Jesus to be taken "to the ends of the earth" **two things** will be necessary: **divine empowerment** and **faithful human witness**. Jesus promises that God **will provide** the power necessary for this task, in the **gift** of the Holy Spirit and because the Spirit is **sheer gift** the disciples can do nothing to **trigger or prompt** it beyond staying put and waiting. But this **gift** will not override their humanity, which will be very much at work in the **acts of courageous witness** described in Luke's second volume, the Acts of the Apostles. Even though the **reality** of Covid-19 is devastating, we can experience the event of the **Ascension** in joyful trust, worshipping Christ as Lord.

It was necessary that the Risen Body of Christ should be seen to pass out of sight to establish the reality of his permanent spiritual presence, of which the Disciples became aware at Pentecost. The Jesus of the Gospels becomes the universal Christ of the Acts, of the epistles and of Christian history. After the **resurrection** and **ascension**, Jesus did not stop being human. All that he was, all that we are, was taken into the nature of God. It is **miraculous** enough that the Bible tells us that we are made in the **image** of God our Creator. The Ascension shows us that we are **closer to** God even than that, taken into his very being. Human beings were always God's creation, God's children, but the ascension casts us in a different light; now we are truly **in God**. That means that we share God's responsibility for the world; but also that all our struggles, all our weakness caused by the pandemic are acknowledged by God.

Ascension day reveals the full extent of **God's reckless plan** to give God's **love bodily form** in this world. If we say "yes" to our part in God's plan, we will discover that the ascended Jesus, now no longer physically visible in this world, is at work in and through us. The possibilities of what we can do are endless. Be optimistic. The sky is the limit.

Today, I encourage you to decide and **reach out** to those who you wish to invite to **connect** with you for **nine successive days** of prayer from today until Pentecost Sunday.

St Teresa, addressing the ascended Lord puts it perfectly: *"You have now no body on earth but ours; no hands but ours; no feet but ours. Ours are the eyes showing your compassion to the world; ours are the feet with which you go about doing good, ours are the hands with which you are now to bless the world"*.

Our Ephesians reading today (Eph 1:15-23) is also a prayer, one that I pray for all of you with much gratitude in my heart.

I am, Because we Are, Because God is.....Opening hearts to heal God's world. *Blessed Ascension Day!*