

## LOCKDOWN DAY 67 – 1 JUNE 2020

Good day dear family of False Bay Diocese and our dear friends,

**Scripture:** Luke 1:39-49 and Col 3:12-14

**Hymn:** *Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord*

We had glorious, joyful and inspiring Feast of Pentecost celebrations across the Diocese yesterday and heeded the call for a National Day of Prayer for the country. We see that Covid 19 recoveries are more than active cases of infections. There is hope, there is promise, there is light. It is a new day, it's a new week, it's a new month and we enter a new level of lockdown, level 3. Rest in the Spirit of the Lord.

There is a lot of confusion around the re-opening of schools today for Grades 7 and 12. We keep our Basic Education Minister, Educators and Learners in our prayers, without pointing fingers. We pray that the Holy Spirit, Advocate and Guide, will guide all concerned to reach a stage where all our learners will have equal opportunities to return to schools that are Covid-19 compliant.

Today, in our church's calendar is the feast of **The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary**. In March 2018 Pope Francis declared that a new obligatory memorial is to be celebrated in honour of our Blessed Mother under the title Mary, Mother of the Church, which will take place on the Monday following Pentecost Sunday, the birthday of the church. Honouring Mary as mother of the church on the day after Pentecost also highlights for Catholics that Mary was present with the disciples on Pentecost, praying with them as the Holy Spirit descended. Mary, "from the awaiting of the Spirit at Pentecost, has never ceased to take motherly care of the pilgrim church on earth." I encourage us to continue to pause at noon every day to pray **The Angelus**.

As the Holy Spirit filled Mary at her conception, so it filled her cousin Elizabeth, who became a living Pentecost long before Christ's mission was complete. The women shared their blessedness and mystery. They were in the presence of God in a way they had never experienced before. During her visit to the home of Elizabeth and Zechariah, Mary spoke the words which have become one of the best-known hymns of the New Testament and in Christian worship, the Magnificat. Having talked with Elizabeth, Mary knows that she is **blessed** and **rejoices in** what God has done through her. The Magnificat is **revolutionary** in its content. Mary sees that the **values of the kingdom of God** are the opposite of those of the world, where the rich get richer and the poor go hungry. How revolutionary is our message? The message of Jesus should affect our politics, our social ethics and economics as well as our theology. For example, are we speaking out against gender based violence and for other exploited people whose rights are daily violated.

As we are fighting the scourge of the Coronavirus pandemic, let us like these two women, even in their anxiety, remain utterly united in faith, anticipation, trust and hope. As we reflect on Mary and Joseph, Elizabeth and Zechariah, we learn that even when we do good and try to follow God's ways in everything, we may still experience great pain and suffering. What God asks of Mary puts her in very difficult circumstances, yet she says "yes" even as she questions, "How can this be." Mary is willing to serve the Lord and be the mother of this child but there will be shame involved as the people of the village will talk when her pregnancy begins to show. Often in our communities, the work we do for the Lord brings honour and status. Would we still do that work if instead it brought us shame and disgrace?

Contemplation, faithfulness, and trust are three essential virtues that Mary exemplifies for weathering difficult times, such as we are in today. To these virtues are added seven more: "*heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another, and forgiving one another.*" Then cap it off with love, which is like an **overcoat** that one dons over all the others. Be reassured that we are loved and valued so much that God would want to share our lives with us.

**Greetings** are an important part of our life. Every time we meet someone it involves some form of greeting. For now, it cannot be a handshake or a hug but it can be a wave, a smile, a bow, a cheery "*Hi*". It is worth noting that a **farewell greeting** of "*God be with you*" has been reduced to "*Goodbye*" and we rarely consider its real meaning when we use it. Mary and Elizabeth recognized each other's worth in their exchanges, they were life affirming for each other, each acknowledging the other's holiness. Their greetings said much more than "hello."

Today, I ask you to **reach** out to a few of your **cousins**. Let them be warmed by your special remembrance.

Our **prayers** today include the Magnificat (Pg 57 of An APB). Let us make a covenant with our Lord that we will not go to sleep at night during level 3 of lockdown, without praying The Magnificat or singing "*Tell out my soul.*" Today we also pray for Orphans and Children at Risk, particularly remembering the various Boards, staff and children in our Children's Homes in our Diocese and in our Community.

I am, Because we Are, Because God is ... Opening hearts to heal God's world. *Goodbye. God be with you.*