

LOCKDOWN DAY 69 – 3 JUNE 2020

Good day dear family and friends of False Bay Diocese,

Scripture: Hebrews 11: 32-40

Hymn: *Thine be the glory*

Yesterday, in our church's calendar, we commemorated a group of men, women and children in the south of France, who were put to death in the second century for no other reason than that they were Christian. Today we remember the **Martyrs of Uganda** who were, both Roman Catholic and Anglican, who towards the end of the nineteenth century came to Uganda to preach the gospel. These martyrs met with cruel deaths. Besides these heroes of the faith, our Scripture reading from Hebrews introduces many Biblical examples of men and women who risked everything for the sake of their faith.

Today, we ask ourselves how strong our faith is? We are not under threat of death for being Christian but at times relatively minor obstacles cause us to want to give up on our faith. During this Covid 19 pandemic, our faith is a way of holding onto what we hope for, being certain of what we cannot see. Please let us stand together in the power, strength and stamina of the Spirit. Faith inspires us **to act** in the present, but with a **view** to what is not seen yet. We wait for Christ to open a way through the scourge of the Coronavirus, where there seems no other way.

People of faith **choose justice** and **hate injustice**, because God himself does the same. Our reading speaks about specific kinds of **endurance and deliverance**. They *shut the mouths of lions*. In the case of Daniel it was God who shut their mouths, but **Daniel's own faith** is **prominent** in the story. The *slaying of lions* by both Samson and David are examples of **courage**, which was **fortified by faith**. The reference that they *quenched raging fire*, is again **attributed** to the faith of the men in God who *miraculously delivered them*. The third hazard from which deliverance came is described as the *edge of the sword*, which sums up a whole range of violent action.

We take encouragement from these marvellous deliverances. Our strength matures in weakness (2 Cor 12:29). As God said to Paul, he says to us today: "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." This **inner source** of strength comes only to **people of faith**. We are living amongst frightened people and we are to be the **faithful witnesses** of God in our context.

The whole list from history, over which our eyes roamed today, are men and women who **faced incredible odds** for God. Like them, we are invited to take risks; to cheerfully, courageously and confidently accept God-given tasks which on human terms, are impossible. In this journey of the lockdown, we have seen instances of **looming defeat** turned into **tumultuous victory**. The writer of the Hebrews is here **seeking to inspire us with new courage** and a **new sense of responsibility by making us remember the past**.

When we sing "Thine be the glory", we must want to believe that Jesus represents the answer to our hopes and prayers, while knowing that having faith does not protect us from life's problems. No matter how fickle our faith may seem, God accepts us through the crucified and risen Lord. So let us today be encouraged as well as challenged by our most holy Lord.

Please **reach out** today to **give hope** to someone who may be feeling **abandoned**.

In our prayers we pray for the vaccine trials in progress, to combat the Coronavirus. We pray for the United States of America amid rising tensions and polarisation following George Floyd's death, not forgetting many brutally killed in our own country. *Rest eternal grant unto them O Lord and may Light perpetual shine upon them*. We pray that peace and justice may prevail. We pray for wisdom and God's guidance for all involved to study the Judgment on alert level 4 and alert level 3 Government Regulations.

I am, Because we Are, Because God is...Opening hearts to heal God's world. *Believe it or not – God is always near.*