

## LOCKDOWN DAY 70 – 4 JUNE 2020

Molweni, friends and family of False Bay Diocese,

Scripture: Mark 10:13-16

Songs: *Jesus loves the little children* and *Jesus loves me*

We are in National Child Protection Week. Nelson Mandela said in May 1995 – “*There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way in which it treats its children.*”

The Red Cross War Memorial Children’s Hospital in Cape Town has cautioned that it has seen a steady flow of children coming through the facility that have been victims of abuse, neglect, and violence, even during the lockdown period. Many of our children experience poverty, crime, sexual harassment and neglect. Food insecurity, overcrowding, schools being closed, substance abuse and joblessness are contributing to an escalation in levels of stress and conflict in households. Children are witnessing domestic violence. Daily news reports highlight the vulnerability of children. During lockdown, parents are cut off from their usual support networks. Presently there is a court case pending of a mother who allegedly murdered her 6 year old child. The child of George Floyd will grow up without a father as he was brutally murdered.

As church and society we have to take a hard stand to respect, nurture and protect our children. Sadly, because of Covid 19, we have had to cancel our Holiday Clubs. Many children who would normally have been fed at school or at the holiday clubs, are now going hungry. We thank Parishes for stepping in with soup kitchens and feeding schemes and those individuals, partners and churches who are able to give donations to these programmes.

In today’s gospel reading, we sometimes miss seeing the faith and love of the parents who brought their children. The disciples made their Lord by no means easy of access. This is a lesson and warning to us today, lest we stand between children and Christ, instead of leading children to Christ. Jesus says *Children Welcome!* And that message must overflow into our homes and churches.

We see also how important children were in Jesus’ eyes. Although Jesus had much to do in the last few months before His death, He spent time with children and gave them happiness. In Mark 9:37 Jesus tells us “*Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me*”. Jesus tells us to serve others, especially those who are young and weak. Jesus did not only teach by word but He himself also put His arms with affection round one small child. Parents, Grandparents, Caregivers, we are to care deeply for our children and treat them very well. Please do not be chasing careers and money to the extent that you neglect your children. If they do not hear your gentle, affirming voice, there are many voices out there clamouring for their attention. Lead them not into temptation. Do not set a bad example. Do not underestimate the influence and abuse of social media

Jesus says **do not hinder** children. How often do we as adults say to our children **do not hinder me**, I am busy! In our Sunday Schools, children learn to love their teachers, then they learn to love their teachers Bible, then they learn to love their teachers God. Is this true at home as well? Do we have lowliness of heart? As you can hear I am crazy about the rights of children, I care deeply and I know they care for their Bishop. I easily laugh and joyously smile with children. All of us need to be kind to children, to value them. Do not break their trust. It is sometimes their trust and natural instinct to be obedient that leads them into danger. Ask your children whether you have loved them enough? Children generally do not bear grudges or nourish bitterness. It may be necessary for us to go down on our knees and ask their forgiveness.

On our website is a presentation on Children, Church and The Law by our Deputy Chancellor, Advocate Janine Boltman. Safe church regulations require of us, that anyone having access to children in our churches have to produce Police Clearance certificates and clearance that they are not on the Sexual Offenders register.

One last thing, a Pentecost object lesson for children: Find a large, durable, round, red balloon. Just as an uninflated balloon is purposeless, so all people by nature lack the Spirit of God. Let your breath represent the Spirit of God. When your breath enters the balloon it begins to take shape and fulfil its purpose. When the Spirit of God enters our lives, the Spirit brings many Spiritual gifts and we begin

to fulfil our God given purpose. Write each Spiritual gift on the balloon with a ball point pen as you gradually blow up the balloon.

Today, children please **reach out** to your grandparents and grandparents please reach out to your grandchildren. Also **reach out** to anyone who had a positive influence over you as a child.

We **pray** for the protection of our children. We pray for our schools and Sunday Schools. We pray for children in hospital or who have loved ones in hospital and cannot be visited. We pray for our Children's Homes. We pray that we may all be worthy stewards of the gift of the children that God has entrusted to our care. May our children sense our love and we pray that God will flood our hearts with patience, understanding and unlimited generosity. We ask this in the name of Jesus, who was a happy son in the home of Mary and Joseph. Amen

I am, Because we Are, Because God is ... Opening hearts to heal God's World. *Jesus loves the little children and so do I*