

## **LOCKDOWN DAY 125 – 29 JULY 2020**

Molweni beloved family and friends of False Bay Diocese,

Scripture: Matthew 5:1-12

Hymn: *Give thanks with a grateful heart*

The Beatitudes is the Common 8 reading in our lectionary to fit in with the remembrance of William Wilberforce, a philanthropist of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A philanthropist is a person who has the desire to promote the welfare of others and help them to obtain benefits.

As a young man Wilberforce wanted to be a priest but was persuaded that he could serve Christ more effectively as a member of Parliament. For forty-five years he used his position in the British House of Commons to fight for the abolition of slavery, dying one month before the final victory was won. A devout Evangelical, he gave himself unsparingly for the promotion of missions and many other Christian and humanitarian causes. He was an eloquent speaker, but the great influence for good which he possessed over his generation sprang rather from the personal holiness and deep moral conviction which inspired his words.

I dare to say, that Andrew Mlangeni, who has been laid to rest today, has been a Philanthropist of our time. He made a huge contribution towards democracy and the liberation of South Africa from apartheid. He is leaving footprints of courage, integrity and service for the people of South Africa. He was never not thick in the struggle in service of the people.

As we celebrate the lives and contribution of William and Andrew, we in like manner celebrate all those who have died during lockdown and are part of the great cloud of witnesses that now leap for joy eternally in God's presence. There are so many that they cannot be counted. People of every nation, race and tongue are there. The dead and we are bound by a variety of close bonds which even death cannot destroy, bonds of justice, love, gratitude and blood relationship. In all probability, among them are found our parents, brothers, sisters, relations, neighbours, friends, parishioners, associates etc. These are all the beloved children of God, whose family likeness to the Holy One is now revealed.

Referring to Matthew 5:1-12: They are the ones who have been poor in spirit, have mourned without comfort, have longed for their inheritance with meekness, have hungered and thirsted unsated for justice, have been merciful and clean of heart, have tried to build peace, and have suffered for all these choices. Their striving to live this way of imitation of Jesus has not always been perfect. They have stumbled and erred but have asked forgiveness and have tried again. They are the ones whom others may not have thought of as saints but who have placed their trust and hope in God, knowing that only be God's grace can they be washed clean and clothed in radiance. Many of our loved ones may have been surprised by joy to find themselves among this heavenly multitude.

Some of our senior citizens have more of their family people and relations in the next world than in this one. We are assured of a place within this great heavenly chorus when we accept the grace of being sealed as God's own and then choose to live in accord with that grace. We are also reminded that none of us is an only child. We belong to an immense family, a great cloud of witnesses, who constantly surround us and are in communion with us, praying for us and with us, urging us onward toward our final reunion with God and them.

Covid 19 have taken from us all too soon and unexpectedly friends, family and associates who we did not have an opportunity to take respectful leave of. Today we entrust them to the abiding love of God. We entrust to God all Covid 19 deaths and people who succumbed to a terminal illness. We entrust to God's love, children stillborn or miscarried. We entrust to God's abiding love those first responders who died trying to save lives and persons who took their own lives. We entrust to God's abiding love victims of war, violence and abuse of any form. We entrust to God's abiding love persons surprised by death during surgery. We entrust to God's abiding love all traffic accident fatalities, homicide victims and those who

suffered from addictions. We entrust to God's abiding love our loved ones who slipped away without warning having lost the battle to Covid 19. We commit to God's abiding love our own excruciating, unbearable pain.

Today we turn to God our Comforter and Sustainer of Hope. We remember the presence of those we knew. We lean on God, we receive God's comfort.

We ask for the grace to live the Beatitudes more completely. They teach us the important lesson that life on earth is a transit lounge. Let us walk the eightfold path of blessedness chalked out in the beatitudes. It is not an easy path. One has to trek, like going up a mountain – at times two steps ahead and one behind. But it is a very rewarding path for in the end we find nothing except God. In God we find everything!

Some of our Parishes have **Bereavement Support Groups**. I encourage all of our parishes to start one, even in lockdown. For now, it could be a whatsapp support group. These groups have brought much contentment and peace to members as they are a source of blessing to each other. We gather strength from abiding kinship with those whose hearts also ache with the absence of their loved ones.

Today, please **reach out** to anyone you know who is facing a difficult situation.

As **you pray** today, feel the great cloud of witnesses that surrounds you and upholds you. Feel the energy, the easy flow and grace of those who love you and believe in you. Once more we entrust them to God's abiding love and pray for our own peace.

Give thanks for having been 'sealed by the living God.'. See paragraph 56 on page 385 and paragraph 81 on page 393 of An APB. We remember our dear departed ones who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith.

In the Book of Ecclesiasticus, also known as Sirach, we read in Chapter 15:2: She will come to meet *us* like a mother and they will lean on her and not fall.

God, our Comforting Mother, take us into your arms and hold us close. Give us room to shed our tears. Help us to release the dormant, painful emotions and find solace and peace as we lean on your bosom. God, our Comforting Mother, let us embrace the left-over grief and unwept tears. God, our Comforting Mother, enfold us in your healing embrace as we bid farewell to those ancient sores.

We close our prayers with Common Collect 8 on page 323 of An Anglican Prayer Book.

I am, Because we Are, Because God ... Opening hearts to heal God's world. *Give thanks with a grateful heart*