

LOCKDOWN DAY 96 – 30 JUNE 2020

Molweni dear family of False Bay Diocese and our beloved friends,

Scripture: Matthew 16:13-19 Hymn: *All people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord*

Covid-19 Compliance fatigue is setting in. Please do not struggle alone. Talk to someone. Let **'each one reach one'** be our motto for July. There are presently 6 000 new infections in South Africa every day. God bless Africa, guard our children, guide our leaders, and give us peace for Jesus Christ's sake.

Last night our young clergy of the Diocese, we have seven under 40, recorded an Evening Prayer to share with the Diocese. Nurture them as they nurture us. Encouraged by them sharing their faith, I again pick up the theme of St Peter and St Paul. The example of these great apostles from the early church should be an inspiration to all of us.

The lives of Peter and Paul were changed dramatically when they met Jesus. They were transformed into being witnesses for Jesus. Let us ask God to give us courage to be his witnesses today. Each one has a mission that is specifically ours. It is for us to be faithful to the mission that God has given us. My prayer is that we will practice our faith with **holy joy**. See paragraph 77 on page 433 of the Catechism in An Anglican Prayer Book. It reads that the ministers of the church are firstly lay persons and then the ordained.

For Christians, faith is not an optional extra. We are the chosen people of God to evangelize the world. Evangelisation starts on home ground, in your own family and spreads from there to your Parish family. In a congregation we belong together as one family of God. We have a common goal, a common mission to evangelise. Sadly, some have the mentality of treating the church as a Petrol Service Station or a Restaurant. We go to church to fill up and go. At a restaurant we can choose from the menu what to take and what to leave and we have the same mentality at church. We get up and go and choose not to become involved in the mission of the church. Times have changed and this mentality has to change.

What we need to be **filled** with is some zeal for the spreading of the gospel message. The Coronavirus has taught us that our lives can be cut short. Have we achieved our God given mission? God's grace and strength is deeper than our frailty. God can and wants to use us to draw others to God. The church that is not **reaching** out, is **passing** out, is **dying** out. I thank God that False Bay is such a vibrant Diocese to the glory of God. We need you to keep it that way.

Peter and Paul are examples of faith for us to follow. Peter was restored after denying Jesus three times. Jesus asked him as he asks us *'Do you love me?'*. It is not about a warm, fuzzy feeling that we keep for ourselves alone. It is about becoming a shepherd to share God's love with others. Paul persecuted the church. He knew what he had done. He lived the rest of his life with a thorn in his flesh and we do not know what that was.

We ask ourselves today whether we are filled with pastoral zeal. Are we a witness to Jesus in our daily living? Without even opening our mouths, do others see the light and love of Christ in us? As we look back on our lives, we see many pieces of light. They have given us hope and comfort in our bleak and weary times. In this time of Covid-19 let our faith shine as brightly as stars in a dark sky. Along life's journey, the inner light of others, even strangers have warmed and welcomed our pain with a reassuring and loving smile or word.

You have heard it said that the church is not a museum for saints but a hospital for sinners. We receive healing and forgiveness in the hospital of the church. We are called to forgive others and by that I definitely do not mean forgive and forget. I pray that the wounds will become scars and that the power that others had over us may be released through our forgiveness. We do not need to have tea with them. In the Lord's prayer we pray *'Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.'* It is in the received forgiveness and power of the Risen Christ that we have the strength to forgive others. We cannot honestly pray this phrase of the Our Father unless we are prepared to forgive.

May we be a reflection of the apostles Peter and Paul of the early church. Let us not treat the church like a petrol filling station or restaurant. We probably have to bow our heads in shame and acknowledge that that is exactly what we were subconsciously or unconsciously doing. We were 'filling' up when we needed to without any thought of being a witness, an evangelist, a missionary. We pray for God's grace to be like Peter and Paul. If our relationship with God doesn't work, nothing else will. We need to get our priorities right. All of us must be Peter and Paul, missionaries and witnesses of the gospel, the good news of Jesus. The essence of Christianity is to share our faith to set others and ourselves free. It cost Peter and Paul their lives.

Listen to the voice of Jesus asking you today '*Who do you say that I am?*'. What is your answer?

Today, please **reach out** to our clergy or any member of your own or church family who are under forty.

We pray that like Peter and Paul, we will be instruments of God's presence. We pray for those who once believed but believe no longer. We pray that they may once more find the beauty of faith and return to the Lord. We pray for the ministers of the church being lay persons, bishops, priests and deacons. We pray for those who are persecuted for practising and professing their faith. We thank God that we have the dignity and freedom to express our faith. We pray for all who are sick at this time, including those infected with the Coronavirus. May they find healing and strength in their hour of need. We pray for our beloved dead, that they may be received into the happiness of eternity. Amen.

I am, Because We Are, Because God is ... Opening hearts to heal God's world. *Each one reach one.*