

**Introduction:**

Canon Luleka Nyhila, thank you for the world of welcome at the start of the service. Allow me to acknowledge the presence of the Methodist Bishop of the Cape of Good Hope Synod. Bishop Yvette Moses welcome to the Chrism mass. I also want to take this opportunity to thank you Clergy and people of God who were present at the service of consecration. I sincerely appreciated your presence, as you embraced me as your Bishop. Although we are diverse in our gifts, our personalities so different, yet, despite these cosmetic differences we are one in and through Christ. It is Christ who draws us together as one big family. *Show me a perfect family and I want to be part of such a family.*

Let us remember with love those who have been called to rest from their earthly labour ... they have run the race of life and rest "*sag in Jesus hoede*"... **Rest Eternal grant unto Them O Lord** and may light perpetual shine upon them.

**Quoting from the reading from Isaiah 61:1** "*The spirit of the Lord God is upon, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners*".

**Intro:**

When we read Isaiah 61, we must remember that it is part of third Chapter of Isaiah in which a message of hope is being proclaimed by the prophet. A reminder to the people of Israel that things will be different and less restrictive as they are in exile. The same message is being read by Jesus in the synagogue at the beginning of his earthly ministry [Luke 4:18]. Jesus meant that God's intention has come true in his Ministry to the poor, the blind, and the captives. This was Jesus' manifesto for his ministry, making a difference in the lives of the marginalised...the poor...the homeless. As fellow ministers we are called to follow the example of Jesus Christ ... When we are working amongst the poor, the broken hearted, the homeless, those who do not know what it is like to be loved ... those to whom we are ministering to must experience God's compassion through us, a warmth which cannot be described, when we ministry with people in their circumstances.

In our **Being obedient** I wish to reflect on my own experience ... My grandfather was a quiet yet a strict person; he had pigs on a small holding and as a young boy part of my responsibility, together with my younger brother, was to take food and

to clean the pig sty once a week, especially on a Saturday afternoon, as he was then working half day. I remember how he showed us where to start in the pig sty and how to work it to one end and how to be careful to not let them break out. It was on one Saturday afternoon, when we took the spades and the food to do our weekly job walking the pathway and not realising that he was following us in the distance to check whether we are doing what we are supposed to do. We got into trouble because we did not follow his instruction.

In Luke 10 Jesus calls the 70 disciples but not before they are being task what to take to take with them. In the same chapter, the disciples return from their task and had to give an account of their experience. How many of us (clergy) remember, as curates, how we were given a pastoral task to go and do it. I dreaded those moments because what if I did the wrong thing, said the wrong words, or even to be told that my prayer was perhaps too short. Yet, all of it was part of our learning experiences, we had to go through and then we were to learn not to make the same mistake again. In my own experience ... we learnt as young boys the hard way, through the means of getting a hiding from our grandfather, who had a no-nonsense attitude.

In the gospel reading for today, Jesus reminds his disciples that he has set the example, and they follow it.

### **Secondly, Following the example of Christ**

Jesus addressed the issues of injustice; Jesus was not afraid to be different. We as God's ordained have been set apart and are called to live Christ every day of our lives. We are called to not turn a blind eye to the societal challenges of the day. We are being challenged to address the moral decay in our society. We are called to set the example as Christ set the example for the disciples (John 13:15).

We called upon to amplify the ongoing injustice in Gaza, the displacement of people in the Sudan and other conflicts on our continent and the world at large. We are called upon to amplify the corruption which is happening in our government and its inability to provide basic services to the people of South Africa. We are called upon to tell political parties that our churches and pulpits will not be abused to spread their lies and to support their wanting to remain in power whilst neglecting those who put them in power. **Now is the time, sekunjalo.** We are called upon to decolonize Christ and the gospel message.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> lesson for today is to **Smell like the sheep** ... Pope Francis once made the comment that clergy should begin to smell like sheep.

Have you ever been in a barn where sheep has been kept or a kraal or any place where sheep has been kept? They stand close together and you must push to move through and its then when you begin to smell like the sheep. What did Pope means is that when we are beginning to smell like the sheep ... we, as shepherds of God's people, will get out of your comfort zones and get into the places where our people are staying, that we will smell like sheep.

Do we understand the anxiety of a parent whose child is caught up in drugs because the drug house is around the corner from their home. Do we understand the anxiety of our congregation when they tell us about the gunshots that is flying around their homes because of gang violence. Do we understand the loneliness of a senior citizen is going through because they have no children, as their children are abroad making a living and has forgotten their loved ones or has placed them in a care facility.

**Colleagues, do you smell like the people in your congregation ... The people must get to know your voice in your parish.**

### **Conclusion**

We are gathered here to renew our vows and to commit ourselves once again to serve God and God's people diligently. We received our mandate from the prophet Isaiah 61:1 in the same manner Jesus used it as the mandate for his ministry. Our people need to hear, see, and feel our presence in our parishes. Set the example the way Christ did it in John 13:15.... It's Christ agenda not mine.

Let us remain one in Christ because, ***“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all”*** Ephesians 4:4-6. Amen