

**Archbishop Thabo Makgoba**  
**Installation of Bruce Probyn as Head of Herschel School**  
**St Saviour's Church, Claremont**  
**12 May 2008**

---

Notes:

- 'Head's Welcome Letter' – see <http://www.herschel.org.za/about>
- Feast of St Simon of Cyrene, and the day after Pentecost

Readings:

- Eph 1:15-23 – St Paul's prayer we may know the hope to which we are called ...
- Mk 15:21-24 – St Simon of Cyrene carries Jesus' cross to Golgotha

(Quotations of Ephesians are from the Contemporary English Version of the Bible)

May I speak in the name of the One God, Creator, Redeemer, and Spirit of Life.

Yesterday was the Feast of Pentecost, when we celebrate God's gift to us of the Holy Spirit.

I realised that there are a lot of parallels between the work of the Holy Spirit, and the purposes of education!

In our first reading, we heard how St Paul asks God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ to give us his Spirit. And he says, the Spirit will make us wise!

What does it mean to be wise?

First of all, there is more to being wise than merely academic knowledge, the learning we need to pass exams.

The life of this school, which we are now entrusting to your headship, Bruce, is also about teaching girls and young women to deal wisely with life, on every level.

I was very glad to read the following words on the web-site, in the Head's Letter of Welcome:

We work tirelessly to create an environment in which every girl has the opportunity to thrive and in which she is encouraged to cultivate a passion for life, to become engaged in the learning process and to develop to her full potential.

God also wants this too. He wants you, wants us all, to thrive and flourish.

He wants us to have a passion for life – remember, Jesus said ‘I came so you might have life in all its fullness, in all its abundance’ (Jn 10:10).

God also wants us to go on learning through all our lives – working out what it is to live well, through all the different circumstances that we may face.

And he wants us to live to our full potential – to be successful.

Ah! But what do we mean by success?

Does it mean we should all be powerful, rich and famous?

By no means! And we should not worry about this, because every study that has ever been done, shows that power and money and status cannot buy happiness.

God wants us to be happy – to have a life that is deeply, deeply satisfying.

He wants us to know that we matter, and that we can make a difference.

First of all, we matter because he loves us. Each one of you is his precious and beloved child, unique and special, and he thinks you are wonderful. He made you so he could love you, and so you could know his love.

This is what St Paul meant, in our first reading, when he said:

My prayer is that light will flood your hearts and that you will understand the hope that was given to you when God chose you. Then you will discover the glorious blessings that will be yours together with all God’s people.

God wants to bless us, and go on blessing us all through our lives.

And, second, he also wants to make us a blessing to others – so that we share God’s love and make a difference for good in this world.

And this is what Herschel teaches too, I am glad to say, with its commitment to helping girls ‘develop a sense of social justice and compassion’.

This too is part of what it means for the Spirit to make us wise. True wisdom is about learning to judge what is the right thing to say and to do, in each circumstance.

Schools do their best at teaching us this sort of wisdom. Even now, sometimes in a tricky situation, I hear the voice of one of my old teachers saying ‘Thabo, be kind’ or ‘Thabo, speak up for the truth’ or ‘Thabo, do the right thing’.

Even more so, God's Spirit nudges us and encourages us in the right direction.

Of course, life is not always easy, and often it can be very hard to do the right thing. Sometimes it seems that we are carrying a heavy burden, like Simon of Cyrene, who carried Jesus' cross for him, on the way to his crucifixion.

This is why the second part of St Paul's prayer is so important. He says this:

I want you to know about the great and mighty power that God has for us followers. It is the same power that he used when he raised Christ from death ...

When God asks us to do something, through the Holy Spirit, he gives us the power, or whatever else we need, to do it. He is not going to ask us to do something impossible!

But he certainly promises to help us to live wisely, and to live the life of compassion and social justice to which he calls us.

In South Africa, we live at a time of enormous change. The future shape of our country, the society we live in, is very much in our own hands – and especially in the hands of the young.

Whatever you choose to do, however you choose to live, will influence the unfolding life of our country.

So, choose to be wise – to live with Godly wisdom – and God, by his Holy Spirit, promises to help you, and to bless you, and to make you a blessing to others.

And today we remember too, that his promises are also for Bruce, and for all who teach and work at Herschel. By the power of his Spirit, he will help you to be the best head, the best educators, that you can be.

So may he bless you, Bruce, and make you a blessing, as you also work to bring holy wisdom and understanding to the lives of others.

Amen