

**Archbishop Thabo Makgoba**  
**Chrism Eucharist Sermon – Diocese of Cape Town**  
**9 April 2009**

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May I speak in the name of God, who anoints his people to share his good news with his world.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ – dear bishops, clergy and people of the Diocese of Cape Town, I must admit that when I hear those words ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me’, my heart heaves a sigh of relief!

However heavy the responsibilities that lie upon me, however high the pile of papers on my desk, I remember this: it is God’s work – and he is the one who calls, who equips, who directs, who encourages, and who is ultimately responsible for providing solutions, for sorting out problems, for supplying the right word in the right place at the right time, and for bringing an answer to every other challenge I face.

In short – it is all down to God – it is not down to me.

The daily rhythm of the Eucharist and Offices enables me to relax into the loving arms of God. All this – it is all his business, and he is all-powerful. Let him take the strain! I need to recall him as the Lord of the work and not worry much about the work of the Lord. Of course, I still have to tackle the tasks, and process the paperwork. This recollection and rhythm of the Offices help me to tune into the right wavelength, so I can better listen to, and respond to, God’s leading and guiding in everything that comes my way.

It is a year and ten days since I was enthroned. You would be amazed at the quantity and variety of issues that I have been faced with since then. It amazes me too! And yet, when I pause to consider, some pictures are beginning to emerge.

What I want to do this morning, is to pause and consider these pictures with you. And then I ask you to go home and pause and consider them with your parishioners – so that you, and your pastoral charge representatives, can consider them further with me and with one another at the Diocesan Synod in August.

[And I will certainly ensure that you are all sent a copy of this sermon, to share within your people.]

One can only truly be a bishop, if one is a bishop in community – part of the family of God, the local church, with all the clergy and people whom one is called to lead and serve. In community, bishop, clergy and people together discern and live God’s call upon us. My hope is that at Synod we will together be able to enunciate our understanding of God’s priorities for our mission and ministry, for our vision and strategy, for the next 10 years, through to 2019! We

need a new vision, for this new chapter in our lives – for, as we know, where there is no vision, the people perish. (Prov 29:18 – Authorised Version)

So let us pause this morning and consider how far we have come in the last year in our pursuit of this vision.

You may remember that in my installation charge, I spoke of us being ‘partners in the gospel, as we seek afresh to discover what is it to be the body of Christ in our time, and who God is in Jesus Christ, for us here and now’. Over the last year I have continued to return to this question, and I want to ask it again today. What is God specifically calling us to be and do, as the body of Christ?

At Diocesan Standing Committee last May, and at our Family Day at Bishops in September, I spoke about how I see the challenges to Diocese as parallel to those of country as whole. Let me repeat this briefly – though I am sure that some of you are beginning to know these words off by heart!

The transition to democracy was a time of sweeping hope and promise. It was characterised by inspiring leaders, notably Madiba and Emeritus, and overarching themes like reconciliation, truth, new beginnings, healing and wholeness.

Then came institutional consolidation, the time of technocrats – for we need effective structures and mechanisms if we are to deliver on our promises. I dare to judge that our own Canon Bureaucrat, Archbishop Njongo, was rather more successful than his secular counterpart, the then President, Mr. Thabo Mbeki!

The next challenge was actually to do service delivery – and the government is about to be judged on its record, in the elections.

We, as the Church, have to face the same challenge.

How well are we doing spiritual service delivery? Are we making the promises of the gospel – good news to every sort of impoverishment, liberty from every sort of oppression, healing for every sort of broken heart – are we making these promises real in ways that can be tangibly experienced and that make a lasting difference, in the lived-out life of the Church of God; and in the life of the people of God? Are we bringing a real change to the parishes, congregations, communities, families, individuals, entrusted to our care?

Having shared this idea across the Diocese, I found myself shaping the question a little differently:

How do we resource and organise ourselves so that we can use our new Diocesan Acts for the spiritual service delivery to which we are called? In particular, how do we use the various Diocesan Resource Teams, for which we made provision in Chapter 20 of the Acts? We listed a great number of options there – recognising that we might not be able to go ahead at full speed with all of them at once.

Those of us at the Clergy and Lay Workers' Conference in Goudini last October spent some time discussing these – and further work was done afterwards. Last month, we took the emerging ideas to the Diocesan Standing Committee, and floated the idea of setting priorities in mission and ministry for the ten years ahead.

Being practical minded-people, DSC addressed the question of how we link vision to service delivery.

So we proposed a Remunerations Committee. This Remunerations Committee will explore how our old resourcing practices need to be altered to fit our new life, both as a smaller Diocese, and as restructured through the new Acts. A particular task of the Committee is to consider how we give life to Chapter 20, and enable the Diocesan Resource Teams to fulfil their calling.

This discussion led us on to our next proposal.

This arose from two developments. The first is Hope Africa's growth to take on a far greater Provincial focus. The second was the lesson learned from the xenophobic attacks – namely, how important it is that various Resource Teams can work closely together when necessary.

So we decided to pursue the question of setting up a Social Responsibility Board, to ensure we can bring about this synergy between Teams, wherever it is appropriate. The Dean is chairing a small group that is looking into this.

We then discussed how we keep this process of vision-shaping and vision-resourcing close to parishes. We need to keep in touch with one another, and feel we are sharing in all this together – even as we each do service delivery in the different ways demanded by our particular circumstances.

So our third conclusion was that we should look again at how budgeting works – though I will save the detail of this for another occasion.

One idea – which I invite you to interrogate – is to have 'Archdeaconry Bursars'. We have many skilled individuals within our pews, who could provide a level of liaison between the Diocesan Office and parishes. This would ensure a better flow of information on everything from the calculation of assessments to initiatives on stewardship.

We also know that money follows vision. Where there is no vision, not only do people perish, but finances are also likely to collapse! If people have no idea what their money is being used for, it should not surprising their enthusiasm for giving wanes. But, thank God, the reverse is also true. If we have a clear idea of what we want to do, and how we want to do it, it is far easier to find the money for it!

Remuneration Committee, Social Responsibility Board, Budgeting and Bursars, may not sound much like vision – but they are at the heart of making vision concrete!

So I invite you to share these developments with your parishes, and to consider what you see as God's priority in mission and ministry for delivery through these frameworks. Which Resource Teams are top of your list?

Remember that mission and ministry has a double focus:

- First, to love and serve God's Church, within the Diocese, and
- Second, to love and serve God's world, specifically the people of Cape Town.

So our first question to ourselves is about the Church, and the two-fold nurturing of clergy and laity – both in our knowledge about God (our theological understanding) and in our knowledge of God (our spiritual development). I want us all to be confident in our faith, and confident in talking about our faith – sometimes the Muslims put us to shame! What, then, are our priorities in congregational development - in equipping the laity so that the mission and ministry of the church is pursued by the whole church, the whole people of God? We also need to look at vocations, and ongoing training and resourcing of clergy.

At Goudini we discussed preparing a register of passions, gifts and skills, affirming the wide range of abilities of both clergy and those laity who are ready to make their time and talents available more widely for the work of God. These might be used in partnerships within archdeaconries, or in complimentary ways between very different parishes across the Diocese.

Some will doubtless serve our second area of concern – our mission priorities. These ranges from evangelism through to dealing with wider society, whether in social development or political engagement. HIV and AIDS remains a vital challenge, while tik and alcohol abuse also demand attention – as does crime. What of youth? What of women? Then how too should we help carry forward the healing of our nation from its past?

So, please consult widely in your parishes, and come to Synod ready to share in this vision for God's priorities in the ten years ahead.

And if you feel daunted, remember where we started today; 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me' – upon each one of us. Bishops, priests and deacons are here today because we believe – and the Church has affirmed – that he has called us and anointed us and sent us in a very particular way. And we will reaffirm our vows to respond faithfully, 'with God's help'. For this IS God's work – and he who calls and sends, also equips and guides, and ultimately it is all down to him.

So let us never grow tired of resting in his love, and letting him take the strain!

'May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen' (Heb 13:20-21)