

Archbishop Thabo Makgoba

World Aids Day *“change starts with me”*

1 December 2009
@ St George’s Cathedral at 1pm

Thanks to Rachael and organizers of today’s service and Sindiwe for your inspiring and challenging message. I am not giving a speech; Sindiwe has, but I want to encourage you in terms of today’s theme *“change starts with me”*. To do this, I want to use a portion of Psalm 42, to paint the context.

Psalm 42:6+7 captures the lament of the psalmist, if transposed to our context, this psalm resonates with many, especially the HIV positive and orphans. From the core of his/her being, deep within the soul, the psalmist cries, “why are you so full of heaviness my soul, why so unquiet within me – v6”

This sobbing, lament, yearning is a daily reality for many people of God who don’t know their status, or who know their status but have not disclosed or who know their status and have disclosed but are now being ‘stigmatized’. It is a lament of Beauty of Site C Khayelitsha, who attempts to deal with her status by teaching other HIV positive girls to sew and help them break the silence but is overwhelmed by physical illness from time to time.

Today at 10am, I called Beauty and asked if I could share her story, she said ‘Khululeka Tata’, be free, but ask them to pray for me. She continued..... over the last 3 days I had lost hope and was admitted to hospital.

Beauty struck me, “I had lost hope and was admitted”.

Today at this service, I commit to pray for Beauty, to create time in my schedule, during Advent, that is, the season of Hope, to visit Beauty – to share with Beauty the Christian Hope even in Jesus. Beauty touches many despairing, many HIV children and their young mothers. Beauty should not lose hope. Beauty cannot afford to lose hope.

For the sake of Beauty and all she represents - poor, HIV positive, unemployed, living in a tin house with a roof that leaks, I commit to support her I commit to support the government where it is helping Beauty and to challenge it’s inconsistency in good policy but bad practice where these fail Beauty. For the sake of Beauty, I pledge to work with Fikelela & the Anglican Aids and Healthcare Trust in finding

sustainable ways of training our support teams in this area, and in turning knowledge into action.

I pledge to join those who call for HIV to be declared a disaster in our country.

You may want to commit to testing, knowing your own status, being an activist, visiting or knowing one HIV positive person. As our prayer of commitment urge us, you also may want to commit to;

- 1) Treat your body and that of your partner with respect
- 2) Speak out against gender based violence and violence against children
- 3) Do something practical in the life of an orphan or person living with HIV

If you commitment and do it - your action will re echo the message of hope that this seemingly despairing psalmist ends with in verse 7;

“I will put my trust in God who is my deliverer”

May this hope sustain Beauty and all she represents!