

Archbishop Dr Thabo Makgoba
“Not to us, O Lord, but to your Name
Give the Glory”

Induction and Installation of
The Very Revd Michael Weeder
as The 15th Dean of Cape Town
22 May 2011

Psalm 115; Leviticus 8: 1- 12; Matthew 7:7 -14

May I speak in the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear people of God of the Cathedral Church of St George the Martyr, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, dear friends from near and far, I greet you in the name of the God who delights to give good gifts to his children.

What a joy and pleasure it is to share today with you all. Thank you for being here. I particularly welcome:

- brothers and sisters from the wider church – including deans from across our Province [*and beyond – we will check*]. I am glad to welcome his Grace, the Archbishop of South-East Asia, and the delegation from the Chinese State Administration for Religious Affairs, currently visiting South Africa.

I also welcome

- representatives of other faiths,
- members of the diplomatic community,
- and those from the worlds of politics and civil society; and the many other walks of life of this nation and this city.

[The politicians who are likely to be present, to be welcomed, keeps changing – we will supply a list on the day. Latest guess is Trevor Manuel; someone on behalf of Helen Zille; and either Patricia de Lille plus Dan Plato.]

Let me also thank everyone associated with the long and careful process of appointing the new Dean, and in preparing for today's service, and in particular:

- The Council for the Election of Dean, chaired by Chancellor Mpho Ndebele

- The wardens – Karen Alterthum and Williams Matthews – the councillors, clergy, cathedral staff and volunteers (and especially the verger, Eddie Esau; Ann Cox, the receptionist; and the Dean's PA, Ruvimbo Moyo)
- David Orr and Kyle Shepherd for their compositions, as well as Chris Petersen, the choirs, organists and musicians, and all involved in the music
- The Induction Service team, under the leadership of Revd Richard Girdwood
- Those who prepared the refreshments
- And the many others, too numerous to mention by name, who have helped make today's service possible.

I also want to pay tribute to those who have run the Cathedral during the interregnum, especially the core leadership team.

Let me mention the clergy in particular: the sub-Dean, Revd Terry Lester; and the former Precentor, Revd Bruce Jenneker.

I want to express special gratitude to Bishop Anthony Mledtsho, for agreeing to leave retirement to help us. Dear Brother in Christ, you have made for yourself a very special place not only in this Cathedral, but in our hearts. We shall be so sad to lose you at the end of the month. We send you back to your family in Pretoria, with all our thanks and our love and our prayers.

As my text this afternoon I am taking the first verse of our Psalm, which reads, in more modern translation:
'Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give the glory.'

One thing that Cathedrals are very good at doing, is putting on a show!

This is true of days like today, and the great feasts of the Church, like Easter and Christmas, as well as the many other special events that happen here for people and organisations from across Cape Town or farther afield.

Archdeacon Michael – soon to be Dean Michael – you will find that, whatever the occasion, you will be there, at the heart of it all, a focus for everything the Cathedral stands for.

It is a responsibility that you will also shoulder on far quieter occasions, at the early morning Eucharists; in the pastoral care of individuals; and through passing conversations with the many visitors to this wonderful place.

Whether events are great or small – whether directed inwards to the life of the Church, or outwards to city and beyond – these all illustrate the immense breadth that is typical of the ministry of our Cathedrals and their Deans.

And yet, the show that we put on is not about the place, nor about the person. It is not for our own benefit. It is not intended to draw attention to ourselves and the Anglican Church, nor to advertise the splendour of this building (though I must admit, we are keen to advertise the appeal for much needed repairs to the roof!).

But what matters most is this – that in all that a Cathedral and its Dean are called to be and do, above everything else stands the call to follow the Psalmist's words: 'Not to us, but to your Name, O Lord, give the glory.'

Cathedrals occupy a very particular place in the life of the Church, one that is both alike, and unlike, that of parish churches.

You are like our parish churches, in that this is the home of a faithful Christian community, who – day by day, week by week – offer up prayer and praises.

You gather together so that, feeding on the Word and Sacraments, you can build one another up as the Body of Christ centred upon this place; and encourage one another in the lives of worship, witness and service to which you are called, and to which you pledge yourselves, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in Confirmation.

You have all manner of groups and projects – from the choir and book-club, to the shop and outreach activities, especially in support to the homeless of the city centre, and to those infected and affected by HIV and AIDS. All this is much like any other parish.

For this is the Cathedral Parish of St George the Martyr; and you, Michael, are, first of all, to be its Rector.

So draw on all your years of experience in the many parishes in which you have served. It is wonderful to have them all represented here today.

Remember, Michael, that it is first of all, as Rector that I institute you; and it is as Rector that you are to serve the people of this parish – and to serve those to whom you and they together are called in ministry and mission.

So, in the life of this Cathedral parish, may your motto be, ‘Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give the glory.’

But Cathedrals, as I said, are also very much unlike most parish churches.

The Diocese of Cape Town looks to the Cathedral as our Mother Church. The seat of the Diocesan Bishop is here. And we look to the Dean as our Senior Priest, sharing in the collaborative leadership at the heart of our Diocese.

As Dean, and as Cathedral Parish, we ask you to exercise this position of leadership in the service of the Diocese.

We come to the Cathedral for the major events of Diocesan life – particularly consecrations and ordinations – and we will look to you, as our Dean, to be our host.

We also look to the Cathedral to provide both a central focus, and a place where every single member of our Diocese can come, and feel that they belong here, and feel welcome and at home.

So my prayer too is that in the life of the Diocese, God’s name will be glorified through the life of the Cathedral.

While Cathedrals are at the heart of the life of the church in a way that no other parish is, they are also on the edge of the church in the way no parish is.

For Cathedrals stand in that ambiguous place where the church meets the world and the world meets the Church.

This has been especially true of St George's, which has played such an enormous part in the life of our city and our country, over more than a century.

Everyone who comes within these walls should encounter the active presence of God.

Here people should find the dramatic embodiment of the mysteries in which we believe and trust, and by which we live.

They should know themselves to be in a place made holy by the habitual prayer of a faithful Christian community.

Those who enter this building must hear it declared, and not necessarily in words: 'Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give the glory.'

But we do not proclaim 'our God is God of all' only within these walls.

This Cathedral has a proud history of taking the initiative and proclaiming the lordship of God loud and clear to the city and nation.

Giving glory to God is the starting point, and the context, for the Cathedral's ministry and mission to the world around.

This was the basis on which it stood firm during the struggle years.

This is the place from which it speaks to the world today.

Whatever circumstances face us, whatever the situation that we find in the city around, it is God's message that we declare, in our words and our actions.

This is illustrated in our first reading. Moses received the command of the Lord, and he called the people together, and declared God's command, and carried out God's command.

In giving glory to the name of the Lord, we declare God's character.

He is the God of love, we proclaim to those who feel marginalised, excluded, rejected.

He is the God of hope, we proclaim to those who despair, who fear, who think their life has hit a dead end, or their problems are insoluble.

He is the God of healing, we proclaim to the suffering, the wounded, the broken-hearted.

He is the God of forgiveness, we proclaim to those burdened by their own wrongdoings, their guilt, their shame – as well as to those who bear anger and hatred.

He is the God of freedom, we proclaim to all who feel trapped – perhaps by circumstances, or drugs, or alcohol, or abusive relationships.

He is the God of peace, we declare to all who are troubled, anxious or in turmoil.

He is the God of justice, we declare to those who suffer discrimination, oppression, prejudice, unfairness.

He is the God of judgement too – and we are not afraid to proclaim this also:

- wherever there is injustice:
- wherever the rich exploit the poor,
- or the strong exploit the weak,
- or the powerful exploit the marginalised, the voiceless, the excluded.

God stands in very particular solidarity with people who are in any sort of need; and this Cathedral has a long history of being unafraid to stand where God stands.

This is why it has won the title of the People's Cathedral. May you continue to earn it.

This election week, we are particularly aware of the call to serve others with justice and dedication, that comes to all who bear elected office.

So, let me say to all those who are newly elected – we have you in our prayers as you take up the reins of office; and we will continue to uphold you in prayer in the months and years ahead.

But we also say to you, never forget that this power and responsibility is given for the service of the whole country:

- It is especially to be used for those in greatest need
- It is not for the benefit of those who are elected, their friends or family
- Nor is it to be used to advance the interests of one's own political party
- It is to be exercised with honesty, truthfulness, and hard work
- Promises are to be kept
- Services must be delivered
- And there must be accountability – the voices of the people are to be heard, not only at election time, but always.

This is the justice that the Cathedral will, I am sure, continue to pursue – often working together with other Christians, our brothers and sisters of other faith communities, and with other civil society organisations and individuals.

We pursue this, because this is a task we have received from the Lord.

And we know that what God calls us to do, he also equips us to do.

Our second reading spoke of how he delights to give his good gifts to his people, as they call on him.

Reliance on God's call, and on God's gifts, directed and empowered the Cathedral in the primary role it played in the struggle years.

Reliance on God's call, and on God's gifts, has directed and empowered the Cathedral in pioneering a ministry to those infected and affected by HIV and AIDS.

And now I say to you, Dean Michael, and to the people of the Cathedral: follow the lessons of this reading from St Matthew's Gospel.

Ask, and you will be given, search and you will find, knock and the door will be opened.

Tonight a new chapter begins in the life of this Cathedral, in the life of this Parish, and in the life of its calling to serve God's church and God's world.

Let God write that chapter for you. Let him direct you.

Let him empower you.

Ask for his leading, seek his guidance, knock so that he may open the door of the narrow gate – and be ready to walk through it, knowing that it is the pathway to life: life for the people of the Cathedral community; and life for the people to whom he sends you.

The gate is narrow, and the path may sometimes be strewn with challenges, difficulties and setbacks.

But be confident that as you journey with the Lord, he will give you all that you need.

For everyone who asks, receives; everyone who searches, finds; for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

May it be so – and how much more will our Father in heaven give good things to you, Dean Michael, and to this Cathedral, and through this Cathedral to the Diocese, to the city, to the country.

Amen