

## **ARCHBISHOP THABO MAKGOBA**

### **Remarks on receiving the degree Doctor of Theology (Honoris Causa)**

#### **Stellenbosch University**

*Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, students, staff and guests,*

*Ladies and gentlemen, Dames en here,*

My warm thanks you to for your welcome. I want to thank you, the representatives of this historic and distinguished university, for conferring this honour on me *today / tonight*. When I was a young person growing up in Johannesburg, people used to say of Stellenbosch that it was where the country's prime ministers were educated. Those days are gone for now, but if you are as successful as you aim to be with your transformation into a university fit for purpose in 21<sup>st</sup> century South Africa, I am sure those days can and will return, and that we will yet see a *Matie* as president of a liberated, democratic South Africa.

I receive this honorary degree on behalf of all the lay people in our respective churches, the people who are the pillars who hoist us up to meet the challenges of today. Many of them had the ability to benefit from a university education but were denied that opportunity. In the past that was often because of poor schooling or the colour of their skins; now it is still

often because of poor schooling or because they struggle to find the means to pay.

Since the honorary degree you have generously chosen to bestow on me is in theology, let me say a few words today about the doctrine of the Incarnation – the doctrine that holds that Jesus is both fully God and fully human, that he is the divine Son who was, as we say, made flesh – that he took on a human body and human nature.

What does the Incarnation mean in South Africa today? To me, it means that God is part of the contemporary world. So although the president and members of his Cabinet, or the captains of business and industry, or the leaders of universities and churches, may play important roles in our society, we should not be looking for God in the spaces they inhabit.

No, we should be looking for God in other places. Just as the wise men in the Christmas story found Jesus in a stable, we need to look for God among those the world regards as unimportant – those who are seemingly insignificant; those regarded as illegitimate, illiterate, defenceless, of no worth to the economy and of no consequence in society.

So as we celebrate all who graduate tonight, as you look back over the hard work and the support from your families and your sponsors which got you here, let's dedicate ourselves to serving our society in a way that will enable

those that are the least among us to live lives as full and as rich as those we aspire to live ourselves.

Congratulations to the graduates and to those who have supported them.

God bless you.