

Thursday, 3 October 2019

## An address to Taize pilgrims in Cape Town

### **Taizé Pilgrimage**

**28 September 2019**

Good evening. Bonsoir. Molweni. Guten abend. Dumelang. Boa noite. Goeienaand. Sanbonani. Buena noches. Habari za jioni.

A very warm spring welcome to all of you! Palaeontologists tell us that all human life as we know it started here in the southernmost part of Africa, so welcome home. You are all Africans!

Thank you, young people from across South Africa, from the rest of Africa and from other parts of the world, for coming on this Pilgrimage of Trust and for gracing us with your presence. I am sorry that I could not join you earlier – I have just returned from the three-yearly meeting of my church's legislative body. But you were in good hands.

Thank you to the host families and hosting congregations. Thank you for making us proud with your gifts and skills of hospitality! Julle skrik vir niks! Baie dankie. Enkosi kakhulu.

Thank you to the members of the Taize community – to Brother Alois, Brother Luc and your whole team (to Brothers Norbert, Claudio – I hear you have an angelic voice – to Paolo, Herve, Parfait, Kombo and all the others). Thank you all for your hard work over these last two years.

Thank you for what your community represents and for reminding us that we draw our strength from God's first language, which is silence. I know that these two years during which you have planned this Pilgrimage have not been an easy time for you. But you have laboured on despite the challenges. You therefore deserve a standing ovation.

There is a young man here from the Moravian Church who has given an enormous amount of his time to help organise this. His name is David Daniels. The Moravian Church provided the first Christian missionaries for South Africa and you are living up to that legacy beautifully. Thank you, David, for your hard work.

We also thank those such as Baruti Wilma Jakobsen and Chris Ahrends from South Africa and Mona Okelo from Kenya for their hard work in helping and encouraging the brothers in their work. Asante sana. Thank you very much.

Thank you too to my twin brother, Archbishop Stephen, for your constant

support – ke leboha haholo, Archbishop Stephen – and also a very special thanks to my brother Dr Gustav Claasen of the NG Kerk for your support and wonderful contributions – baie dankie, my broer in Christus. Thank you also to all the other church leaders. And a huge thank you to another very special brother in Christ from the Anglican Communion, Archbishop Sentamu, the Archbishop of York, who is very close to the Taize community and who brought a group of young people from the UK to this pilgrimage. Before I say anything more, please allow me to convey through you, our sisters and brothers from other parts of our continent, my profound apologies, and I am sure the profound apologies of other South Africans here, for the violence inflicted in recent times on migrants and refugees from other parts of Africa. We are appalled and ashamed by the actions of those of our compatriots who attacked your compatriots. All of us, including our government, need to adopt new attitudes and new laws so we can truly live the spirit of ubuntu. The church affirms that we are Catholic, in the best and widest sense of that word. We embrace all as Christ embraces all. Let us continue to aspire to that.

I believe that this pilgrimage has begun to re-energize us from below, so helping us South Africans to reimagine the ecumenical movement at the grassroots. I hope that the Church Unity Commission, the South African Council of Churches, the South African Christian Leadership Initiative and other ecumenical structures have taken note of what happened here this week. You, the young people have shown us what unity in Christ really means.

Unity in Christ cannot happen instantly, but is a movement of the Spirit. So we must ask:

Will the seeds that have been planted here fall on fertile ground and grow?  
Or will they fall on hardened hearts?

If we can grow them, are we ready to nurture the young plants? Or will our disunity be like weeds that strangle what has been started?

And is the church on this continent ready to be the answer to the prayer of Jesus in John 17: “Father, may they be one, even as you and I are one”?

The work of building unity is often approached with anxiety, as an issue of complexity. But what would happen if we rather approached it with simplicity, building friendships and trust, just listening to each other's stories? Can we imagine what might happen?

Please, young people, don't wait for the rest of us. Show us the way as you have always done. Show us what unity in action means. Show us what hope means. Show us what just economic relationships mean. Show us the way on climate justice. Show us that there is no Planet B. Show us that the poor will suffer most when water levels rise. Show us that serving Mammon will

only lead to our destruction and that we should speak out on behalf of the trees and the birds and the animals. Ecological destruction is all around us and if we are not careful, we will soon not have enough fish and clean air and clean water. Help us to defend and preserve this.

Young Christian men: you have a special responsibility to stop the violence against women. When God sees the violence being perpetrated on women and girls, then God weeps over God's creation. God has created us all equal: now live that out in your everyday lives. We must, through our lives and our love, make God smile again.

Christian young people: you have a special responsibility to build and strengthen community for other young people. Many of our young people are traumatised and wholesome Christian community is needed for their healing. If we don't do this in our schools, in our communities and on our campuses, we leave a vacuum which those with evil intentions will fill. We need to strengthen our youth ministries and young people must lead the way.

Thank you, Lord Jesus Christ, for the hope of the Resurrection! This is a hope that is not here today and gone tomorrow, but it is a permanent hope, which we will celebrate tomorrow. Just when we fear that evil is overwhelming us, God gives us new hope and new joy. Just recently, the Ndlovu youth choir from Limpopo raised our spirits by inspiring America with their story of hope and joy. They did so not representing only South Africa, but the whole of Africa.

We all can and must live that same hope and joy every day. We light candles where we are every day. Don't stop doing that even if you are not acknowledged. God sees your action and God rejoices. Be assured that such small acts will multiply and grow.

Please take our love back to your homes, your families, your friends and your congregations. Please pray for South Africa as we battle the forces that corrupt the vision of Nelson Mandela.

When he was inaugurated as our president, he declared that "never, never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another." Tonight, let us adapt and repeat those words as our declaration of commitment:

Never, never and never again must our disunity be a stumbling block for others;

Never, never and never again should we suffer corruption and the abuse of power in Africa or elsewhere;

Never, never and never again must one person think of him or herself as more important than others;

Never, never and never again must young people beg us adults to care for creation.

Always live the joy and the hope that Christ has planted in your hearts through the Resurrection. And let me conclude with a prayer we adapted from Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu:

God bless our world

Protect our children

Transform our leaders

Heal our communities

Restore our dignity

And give us peace

For Jesus Christ's sake,

Amen.

God loves you and so do I. God bless you, and travel safely when you return home.

**Archbishop Thabo Makgoba**