

Sunday, 20 April 2014

## Sermon at the Easter Vigil, St George's Cathedral, Cape Town

*Sermon prepared for the Easter Vigil at St George's Cathedral, Cape Town:*

Christ is risen! We are risen indeed, Alleluia!

Thank you all for being here on this most holy night, when we recall and celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. A special welcome to those with blisters after running the Two Oceans Marathon or those who choose the option of the much gentler Walk of Witness or even those who did both. Thanks to the Cathedral staff and the Dean and all the regular worshippers here, who ensure through their sacrificial giving, that we have such a beautiful place in which to worship God.

I now ask you to observe a moment of silence, as we call to mind our own Lenten journeys, our personal or communal journeys, up to this Easter vigil.

When I lit the fire earlier in the service, I prayed, "Father, we share the light of your glory, through your Son, the Light of the world. In flame us with new hope and purify our minds by this Easter celebration and bring us to the feast of eternal light."

What does this mean? What is the Easter message from us to the world and what are Word and liturgy as well as the sacraments tonight saying Easter is? For me, Easter is an opportunity for us to turn ourselves inside out and expose our body, souls and mind to Christ the light of the world. Because as individuals, as families and as society, we need healing, consolation and transformation. We need our lights to be rekindled so that we can re-imagine the feast of eternal light.

We thus enter this celebration cognisant of our Lenten laments but confident that new hope is possible. We are renewed and purified as we rise with Christ from the dead for we were baptised with him in his death.

Easter then is also the assurance that our pain, despair, hollowness, distrust, fear or anything that takes us away from the love of Christ is now in the grave, buried – and that the risen Lord, the Christ, like an earthquake that rolled the grave stone away, bursts anew into our lives.

Easter for me then is a celebration of restoration and transformation. It is a time of rebirth. Christ forgives us, the penitent; He heals our brokenness and refocuses our vision. (Luke 24:5: Why do you look for the living among the dead?) Easter is also a time for renewal and holy recall, a remembering or renewal of our minds.

Luke 24:6-8, states, "Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." Luke further tells us the women remembered this and they reminded the eleven disciples of it, but the men mistakenly dismissed the women's reminder as "an idle tale".

The women in Luke's Gospel powerfully demonstrate the message of Easter. Let us walk with them briefly in today's Gospel – from an act of service, they took the spices to the tomb, they encounter a transformed grave, they express their true feelings of fear, and emotions are then transformed and they too encounter the Lord when they are reminded of the Word. Then, renewed and with this knowledge, they go and share the news.

In this Easter celebration, as you share the light of God's glory, through the Risen Lord, the Light of the world, may you be inflamed with new hope and be purified to continue to take His message into the world until he brings us to the feast

of eternal light.

Today at the Walk of Witness from District Six to Parliament, I shared the Lenten laments that God's people bring to me; I wish also to share these with you, so that together we may bring them before the risen Christ for healing and transformation.

In the past six months, many people have said to me: "Your Grace, I'm so very tired of seeing the moral pollution. I am so tired of seeing the pervasive unethical contamination. It is so painful to see the inequality." They ask. They plead: "Archbishop, we should be joyfully celebrating the 20th year of democracy and liberation... but I've never felt so depressed by the crisis of distrust in our country's government." They ask, "Where do we go from here?"

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The welter of emotions to which their questions give rise is what the disciples and the women at the tomb might have felt. Using our language in South Africa today, the women at the tomb may have asked the authorities, "How much longer must we live out our daily existence, suffering from such a lack of transparency? When is President Zuma going to break his silence on the Nkandla report?" They could be asking, "How have we in South Africa found ourselves in such a void of morality? Why have we seen a collapse in the moral navigation our leaders are supposed to give us? And why has there been such a collapse of trust in government and political parties?"

As followers of Christ and the Easter Message, how are we to meet the demand that we go and tell that he has transformed our fear into knowledge and courage?

I want to pose tonight one of the questions I asked outside Parliament earlier today. On this most holy night, as I pray for the transformation of our country, especially at this time, I ask: Since our values should guide every decision made by our government leaders, and our historic Constitution clearly articulates our national values, what can our government leaders learn from the flawed decisions on Nkandlagate, that apparently didn't consider our national values?

As we prepare for the celebration of our 20th year of democracy and liberation, let us also hold a vision before us, of the resurrected Christ who has overcome. Let us approach those places and issues, the tombs, with renewed courage, and ask the difficult questions as we prepare to go out to inflame others with Christ our light.

Let us illumine this light not only in our country. On behalf of our brothers and sisters in Nigeria, where dozens are being killed in massacres every week, let us boldly ask: "Who is Boko Haram? Who benefits from their killings and the senseless kidnapping of young schoolgirls?" On behalf of our brothers and sisters in Ukraine, let us ask: "Is aggression to be rewarded? How should the international community respond to ensure the legitimate desires and demands of all the people of that nation are met?"

Let us in unison decry such atrocities as are being perpetrated in northern Nigeria, and seek such knowledge as the women in the tomb displayed, knowledge that will draw men and sceptics to the risen Christ.

To conclude, I want to make a call to all Anglicans in our country, to exercise their hard-earned privilege and right to vote. After prayerfully reflecting on the party you want to vote for, please go to the polls and vote. And vote we must: too many people have suffered and died for us to stay away from the polls out of apathy.

While nothing stops you from spoiling your ballot paper out of protest, in the coming week the Independent Electoral Commission is due to publish the full list of parties which are standing in the election. We will have dozens to choose from: let us examine their policies, their behaviour and the behaviour of their leaders. Above all, let us engage with our consciences and be guided by these

rather than by fear and blind loyalty when we make our mark on the ballot paper.

Christ is risen! We are risen indeed! Alleluia!

Amen

**+Thabo Cape Town**

Posted by [Thabo Makgoba](#) at 00:30 