

Tuesday, 24 March 2015

Homily for the Induction of the Revd Roger Cameron as CEO of ABESA

Archbishop Thabo Makgoba
Induction of the Revd Roger Cameron as CEO of ABESA
St Mary's School – Waverley, 17h00
24 March 2015

1 Timothy 1:15-17, Luke 6:43-49

May I speak in the name of God who knows each tree by its fruits and who separates the bad tree from the good one. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, let me repeat what a great delight it is to be with you and to be licensing and inducting Roger as CEO of ABESA tonight.

Roger, we offer you hearty congratulations on this appointment and we warmly welcome you and Ann to this key ministry of our Church.

Let me also congratulate the Board on this appointment, an excellent choice. We know that Roger comes with extensive experience in educational excellence and a deep mature, Christian faith. We look forward to harnessing these good fruits for both the Church and the nations of ACSA.

Roger, I am confident -- if I may paraphrase St Paul in 1 Timothy when he says, "the saying is sure and full of acceptance" – that as you serve God through ABESA, you will be an example to those who would come to believe in Christ for eternal life. As St Luke says, your leadership and development of ABESA will be characterized by good decisions, for the common good, as a viceroy for God's Kingdom here on earth.

The Lukan Jesus expects you to discern that which is life-giving and that which is not; that you participate with ACSA as we heed God's call to be a community of good persons, out of whose hearts good will be produced. Luke says that good decisions and good direction can only come from godly discernment. This should be rooted in and informed by an assurance and belief in God's abundant love and care for that which God has entrusted you: the care and nurture of His young. Elsewhere, we read that this is the God who out of the store of His treasure takes things that are old and new (Matthew 23:52).

Friends, like Roger and ABESA, we are called at this prestigious occasion to be "good persons who out of the treasure of our hearts produce good."

What might this good be? What is this treasure? Or, if you like, what are the good fruits, as opposed to the bad fruits, that we are expected to know? In other words what is the context in which Roger, and all of us, are called to serve? Are we able to read the signs of our times?

Allow me to paint my feelings about our context with the words of Dickens in the novel, "A Tale of Two Cities":

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way...

Dickens' message in this book is an optimistic one – a message about the possibilities of transformation for a better future. These possibilities are realized in the transforming contribution of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa within the education sector that can provide an enduring legacy. ACSA's past involvement and transformation of education is a metaphor for the transformation of the lives of the South Africans. We know that in spite of having lost a number of our Anglican schools to apartheid in the 1950s, some have overcome these adversities. They are now leading the pack, as among the best schools in Southern Africa. This is the good fruit that overcame the bad fruit – the policies that sought to make the black child inferior. Our schools stood up and against the odds admitted children of all colours.

But we can still do better. I believe that, and our Church believes that. This is the hope we espouse and the achievement we yearn for when we say in our Vision Statement, Anglican ACT :

BE

- **Anchored** – in the love of Christ
- **Committed** – to God's Mission
- **Transformed** – by the Holy Spirit

and when we also say in our Mission Statement, across the diverse countries and cultures of our region, that we seek:

- To honour God in worship that feeds and empowers us for faithful witness and service,
- To embody and proclaim the message of God's redemptive hope and healing for people and creation;
- To grow communities of faith that form, inform and transform those who follow Christ.

The missional priority, "protection and nurture of the young", is the key educational peg that makes our mission and vision statement a reality in educational provision. ABESA however, takes the priority from just an aspirational statement, in the list of six other priorities and unpacks it: what needs to be done, or perhaps what the church sees as an overarching job description for Roger and KPA for ABESA.

On my part, I desire that each young person may grow into a contributing member of society; an effective citizen of the world, who can be part of life solutions at every level, personal and professional – the good fruit and the sure Christian that

our lessons talk about. ABESA and our Province have articulated our objectives as follows:

- To support existing church schools,
- to galvanize parish and community involvement, and
- to establish high quality accessible Christian schools.

To quote the letter of the 25th of June 2014 written by the chairman, Bishop Peter Lee, and the CEO, Roger, they aptly and succinctly state that:

“We need to take courage under the banner of the Anglican Church and do what we can to make a significant difference to the lives of boys and girls throughout Southern Africa. Without doubt strong high quality accessible Christian Schools with teachers who have a sense of vocation, who create a disciplined learning environment and enable boys and girls to reach their dreams are an ideal and reality that needs to be achieved”.

They end by appealing for you to be part of this exciting initiative and for your support in achieving this vision. This is the undertaking that ABESA has placed before itself, all of you, and the nations comprising the ACSA. This is what we are licensing Roger to lead.

Our shared hope and prayer is that ABESA will develop young people intellectually, socially and spiritually, thus preparing them to take great responsibility in the world of possibilities and opportunities that Dickens talks about.

This vision and undertaking by ABESA’s Board and and the whole of ACSA prompts me to revisit two key questions:

- Firstly, what actually is the task of education; and
- Secondly, what, in the light of our answer, is the true vocation of schools within Southern Africa in the unfolding years of the twenty-first century?

The simplistic response might be that the role of schools is to pursue and disseminate learning. But this begs the question of what constitutes learning. As I said when inaugurated as Chancellor of the University of the Western Cape, it is of course far more than the accumulation and communication of information; facts and figures, opinions and arguments, practices and procedure. For theory cannot be abstracted from the human context of surrounding societies and the wider world. Elsewhere in my writings, I have contextualized this by calling for the “New Struggle”. In the New Struggle, we will work as a collective in defining and addressing the questions that face us today. The ‘we’ -- as opposed to the ‘me’ -- is necessary to guide us as we pursue the kingdom values, of which Ubuntu values form a part; as we take into cognizance the needs and the aspirations of our society. The New Struggle is about risk-taking and not tolerating “failure”. It calls for a national dialogue to recover and reach consensus on the values that we need to live

by if we are to hold each other and our leaders accountable. We need to teach those values to our children, or inequality of opportunity will continue to be pervasive in our society. Simply put, it is the right thing to do. The New Struggle is about acting with courage and it is to this that we are committing ourselves as the Anglican Church through ABESA.

What then is the task? The task of education should be understanding the world in which we live, the world from which our students come and to which they return. Education must fit us for engagement with such a changing world.

What we need then is beyond mere knowledge – understanding, perhaps, but what resonates for me best is to be rooted in the foundation – Jesus. This is what enables us to stand firm in the midst of the struggles and storms of this world; and enables us to be – so to speak – part of the solution and not part of the problem.

To paraphrase the lessons again, the parables of our Gospel readings denote wrestling with choices between good and evil. However, the mercy we receive from Jesus Christ enables us to obtain the wisdom of God in making correct choices in life. We have chosen to bear good fruits. So I want to encourage you to go beyond the evil of the past – the bad fruit, the apartheid system – and the current bad fruit – poor educational results – to producing good fruit – by supporting schools, assisting state schools and building new high quality, credible, Christian schools.

Roger and the ABESA Board, I want to assure you of the support of the Synod of Bishops and our Provincial structures in this work that you are undertaking. Remember that you will need to form good and credible partnerships to succeed.

Drink from the well of our current Anglican independent Schools, other independent schools, the Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa, and our public schools, as you establish new quality Christian and accessible Anglican schools.

Let us pray:

*Lord God of all truth,
Anchor us in the love of Christ,
Commit us to your Mission, and
Transform us by the power of your Spirit
So that we may live lives of faithful
Worship, witness and service,
For the glory of your holy Name.
Amen.*

Congratulations once again, Roger.