

ARCHBISHOP THABO MAKGOBA
Matlosane Diocesan Centre Dedication
17 February 2018

Readings: Gen.28:10-22; Ps 122; Rev 21:1-7; John 2:13-22

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

Bishop Steve, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, dear people of God:

It is indeed a great joy to be here for this significant milestone as we give thanks to God for this Diocesan Centre, and for all the work that has gone into fulfilling your dream by successfully completing the project. It is an honour and a privilege to have been asked to share the Word of God with you at this historic event in the life of the Diocese.

Thank you, Bishop Steve, the clergy, your leadership team and to the whole diocesan community for inviting me. Thank you everyone for your warm welcome. Thank you too to those who were involved in the preparations for today.

I thank God for all those faithful clergy and parishioners who have served your church and your community through years of unceasing prayer, witness and service.

We remember with special fondness the first bishop of this diocese, known to many in the wider church in Southern Africa – the much loved former bishop in this Province, the Right Revd David Cecil Tapi Nkwe. May his soul rest in peace and rise in glory.

Today I especially thank God for his faithfulness to you, and to the generations before you, who have made possible the development of this Centre, a holy place of prayer and worship. We express our gratitude to God for his sustaining care, especially through the tumultuous days of the past – and perhaps I should say also for the tumultuous days we are going through now – and for bringing you to this time of great hope and opportunity, as well as of great challenge. It was not always easy for our forebears – we know that it is not easy for us today – but we see that God walks with his people.

Look at Jacob. God is faithful to him – he meets him in a dream at a point in Jacob's life when he is in limbo, landless and rootless with no prospects for his future. God connects with him and reiterates the

promises that God has made to Jacob's ancestors, Abraham and Isaac, that God will be with him, even when he is traveling far away from home, entering an unknown future in an unknown land.

God reveals to Jacob that he will be the channel through whom the lineage of his forefathers will be transferred. God will bless him and his offspring and through them all the earth will be blessed.

There is no greater good news than discovering, as Jacob did, God's love for and faithfulness to us; that God's love is not just a general attitude towards creation and humanity, but it is for you and for me, for each of us personally!

Our knowledge and experience of God, and our ability to reflect his love and faithfulness to others, should keep growing throughout our Christian lives.

The Psalmist (Ps122) shares the joys and duties of the city of God. David, having been in Jerusalem, reviews his sense of privilege at having been in the city, meditates on what Jerusalem means, and calls for prayer. The Psalmist views Jerusalem as the source of joy; a place of fellowship; an object of prayer and a place in which to find solace with God – just as I hope this new centre will be for you. The house of the Lord is seen in this reading as a place in which tribes

find a common focus and meeting point. This unity finds expression in thanksgiving for God's self-revelation.

Jerusalem is both the city of the Lord and the royal city of his chosen dynasty, through which he protects and governs the nation. Jerusalem is the place supreme where God and his people meet together in fruitful union, the city in which the psalmist vows to seek peace.

Patterned on the example of the Psalmist, our lives also should be hymns of praise and thanksgiving for all God has done for us through his Apostles, through signs and wonders, through his defeat of sin and death and his promise of forgiveness and cleansing, healing and wholeness, justice and peace and new life to all who trust in him.

The Gospel (Jn2:12-22) presents to us Jesus in the temple, at the commencement of his public ministry. Here his great regard was for the pure worship of his Father; and the great design of his coming was to reform the abuses which had crept into the worship, so bringing people to have proper regard for the glory of God.

Although Jesus purified the temple at the commencement of his ministry, we see that a purification again needs to take place, and to be repeated. From this we may learn how soon people forget the

most solemn reproofs and return to evil practices. In the very temple, under the very eye of God, these men soon returned to practices for which their consciences reproved them and of which they knew God disapproved.

We see here how strong is the love of gain – the ruling passion of humankind. Not even the sacredness of the temple, the presence of God, the awful ceremonials of religion, deterred them from their unholy traffic. And we know all too well in our own country today how the love of gain – not only in our history but also stretching into the current administration over the last decade – corrupts us and deadens our concern for the least of God's children. In our reading today, Jesus speaks with authority and ensures that the temple of God is purified from all these things.

People of the Diocese of Matlosane, on this great day God's call to faithfulness comes in new ways to your congregations, to this Diocese and to our Province of Southern Africa. After more than two decades of democracy, fought for by Anglicans such as of profound integrity and Archbishop Emeritus Tutu – who might have walked on this ground – too many people still live and work in conditions that deliver neither human dignity nor economic justice. We are

challenged by a high rate of poverty, inequality of opportunity, unemployment and moral decay.

This is why we need good research and comprehensive policy initiatives like the National Development Plan, and the Church must lend its support to all who strive to bring about the “abundant life” that John's Gospel tells us Jesus promised to every child of God.

In our own Church, our Provincial Mission and Vision statement and your Mission and Vision Statement describes why you exist as a diocese. So as you move forward in considering what you believe to be your role in expanding the Kingdom of God, you could begin by examining the implications of these.

At a Provincial level, we say Anglicans ACT, ACT being spelled with capital letters. That is because we seek firstly to be:

Anchored in the love of Christ, revealed in Scripture. Secondly we seek to be:

Committed to God's mission, with compassion and joy. And thirdly we seek to be:

Transformed by the Holy Spirit, through discipleship and worship.

Again at a Provincial level, we have committed to pursuing the following priorities:

- Liturgical renewal for transformative worship
- Theological education and formation
- Leadership development
- Health, including HIV and AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis
- The Environment
- Women and gender
- Protection and nurture of children and young people, and
- Public advocacy

You of course as a Diocese will have your own priorities. Might a re-examination of those not be a good place to start as you look to the years ahead?

Let's go out and engage in mission for Jesus sake!

Congratulations, and God bless!

Amen

