

**Archbishop Thabo Makgoba**  
**Centenary Celebration – St Philip’s, Gordon’s Bay**  
**18 March 2012**

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Readings: Dedication Festival (APB p318) – read from the Good News pew Bibles.  
1 Kings 8:22-30; Psalm 84; 1 Peter 2:4-9; Matthew 21:12-16

May I speak in the name of God, who builds his temple of living stones.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, dear people of God of St Philip’s, Gordon’s Bay, I greet you in the precious name of Jesus our Lord and Saviour, who is the corner-stone of our lives. It is a great joy to be with you, and with everyone here today – the St Francis Family from Betty’s Bay chapelry, and all your friends and visitors.

Thank you for your invitation. Thank you for your warm welcome. And thank you to all who have made today’s service such a special occasion.

There is much to celebrate today, and much to say thank-you for.

We celebrate the centenary of the first Church of St Philip’s, here in Gordon’s Bay; and we also celebrate 50 years in this new Church.

And for all this we thank God.

Our first reading spoke of his faithfulness to his people.

So we thank him for his sustaining of all those who have worshipped here over the last one hundred years. We thank him for parishioners, past and present, who have maintained a faithful witness and lived lives of obedient service.

We thank him too for all the clergy who have served here; and for all who have been leaders within this Christian community.

We thank him for all the organizations, who have worked so hard to further the work of God in Gordon’s Bay and beyond – and we think not only of St Francis’, in Betty’s Bay, but also in Temperance Town.

Solomon prayed ‘Hear us, and forgive us’, and central to our thanks today is the way that God’s grace has dealt with his Church in South Africa through all the ambiguities of our past; through all those dark days when we could have done better.

He has taken our strengths, and helped them grow. He has taken our weaknesses, and offered us redemptive new possibilities – for us to acknowledge and to grasp.

For today is not only a day of looking backwards, it is a day of looking forwards.

A century of worship in this pastoral charge is ending; a year of celebrations is ending.

But endings bring beginnings – and our Scripture readings also offer us visions for the future ahead of us.

‘Come to the Lord ... as living stones, and let yourselves be used in building a spiritual temple’ writes St Peter.

We are to build our lives – to let ourselves be built – upon the cornerstone who is Jesus Christ.

We are to be caught up into the royal priesthood that is his – the redemptive sacrifice that he has made for us, as our Great High Priest.

And so we are to be those who share the good news of his salvation with the world.

As Archbishop Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury has put it, ‘Every vocation in the church of God is a calling to be a place where God’s son is revealed.’

He means that each one of us, and all that we do with one another, and all that we do as the community of this church, and as this Diocese, and as the Anglican Church of Southern Africa – all that we do should help the world around us to see Jesus more clearly: so they too may come to understand he is the Son of God, and their Lord and Saviour.

Let me say here that my heart is very full at the news that Archbishop Rowan will stand down as Archbishop of Canterbury at the end of the year, and return to academic life in Cambridge.

I look forward to the fresh contribution he will be able to make in coming years to the Christian voice in the public space, as he makes this move.

But, more than this, I want to pay tribute to someone who has been a great friend to us in Southern Africa, and especially to me when I was first appointed Archbishop and learning the ropes.

He has also been a great Archbishop of Canterbury, exercising remarkable gospel-shaped leadership during tumultuous times for our Communion. His commitment to consensus seeking, rooted in his refusal to take quick and easy solutions that fail to address the more fundamental issues, has shown great courage and deeply profound rootedness in the faith to which we are called.

Again and again he has returned us to the central questions of whose we are, and for whom we are to be.

These same central questions underline our New Testament passages today.

We belong to God, to Jesus Christ our Saviour who has bought us with the price of his blood. And he calls us to be part of his royal priesthood, following his example in loving, faithful, obedient, service of God, of God's church, and of God's world – in other words, of St Philip's Church, and of Gordon's Bay.

Now, it is not my job to come here and tell you how to do this!

This is your church, your community – and it is for you to discern, under God's guidance, where the Good News of Jesus Christ is most needed.

But it is my job to tell you – to remind and encourage you – that you can make a profound difference.

St Peter writes of how God called each of you out of darkness into his own marvellous light.

Now you are to be carriers of the light of Jesus Christ wherever there is still darkness.

It may be in the life of communities, in the life between communities. It may be felt in families, in relationships. It may be that individuals battle with darkness within themselves – their fears, their failings.

But wherever there is darkness, Jesus Christ has light to offer – and you are to be its bearers.

How will you carry his light?

You must stay close to him – building your life on him as your corner-stone.

Or, to follow the words of Jesus himself in our New Testament reading – individually and together, the temple into which you, as living stones, are built must be a temple of prayer.

Ground your lives in Jesus, through prayer.

Above all, develop ways of resting in him in prayer; and learning to love him more, through opening your lives to receive his love.

Learn to listen to him. (I often like to say God gave us two ears and one mouth, so we might spend twice as much time listening as speaking!)

So listen to him – not just asking for his answers to your questions; but just listening – ready to hear whatever he has to say to you.

Make sure your clergy pray; and make sure they teach you to pray, or bring in others to help deepen your prayer lives.

There are so many different ways to pray – try them out and find what works best for you. But whatever you do, keep at it.

All this comes first. All this is the way to root and ground yourselves in Jesus – knowing his love, so you can make it known; knowing his grace, so you can make it known, knowing his healing, so you can make it known; even knowing his judgement, so you can make it known where it is needed – seeing clearly what is holy and what is not, through Jesus' own eyes – and declaring it to the world.

And then comes the prayer of request:

- prayer for your church community,
- prayer for your clergy and leaders,
- and do please pray often for me; and of course your own Bishop, as he prepares to retire and for the choice of a godly successor in due course.

Pray also for the life of the community around you:

- pray for families, and schools, and hospitals,
- pray for the police and all involved in making our lives safe and well
- pray for businesses;
- pray for community leaders and councillors and all who hold any sort of authority and influence;
- and pray of course for any who are in particular need, within the church and beyond its walls.

For prayer will be the engine, which takes you forward, to walk in the ways that God has prepared for you, so you may not stumble, but confidently be the light of the world!

Dear people of God of St Philips, looking back, we can see that God is faithful.

So go forward into the new century before you, with confidence in that same faithfulness.

Remember St Peter's words, 'whoever believes in him – in Jesus Christ – will never be disappointed.'

And share that glorious good news with all of Gordon's Bay!

May it be so. Amen