

Archbishop Thabo Makgoba

Eucharist with the Society of the Sacred Mission

18 January 2012

The Confession of St Peter: Ezek 3:4-11; Ps 23; Acts 4:8-13; Mt 16:13-19

- We want to stand alongside St Peter, saying ‘You are the Messiah’
- I want to reflect on what it means for Jesus to be the Christ, on 3 levels:
 - in our mission to the world;
 - in our life within the church, especially within Community;
 - in our personal spiritual maturing.
- First - in our shared mission to the world – this means having eyes open to see where the kingdom is not, and ought to be.
- But it also means recognising we cannot do everything: “a need is not the same as a call”. We need careful discernment of where to focus energies.
- We should not be disheartened if we find, as God promised Ezekiel he would find, that the world around does not listen to us.
- We can be guided by this wonderful prayer of Mother Teresa of Calcutta:

“People are often unreasonable and self-centered. Forgive them anyway.
If you are kind, people may accuse you of ulterior motives. Be kind anyway.
If you are honest, people may cheat you. Be honest anyway.
If you find happiness, people may be jealous. Be happy anyway.
The good you do today may be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway.
Give the world the best you have and it may never be enough. Give your best anyway.
For you see, in the end it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway.” Mother Teresa
- Second – in the common life of the church, and especially in Community. We know that ‘issues’ will always arise between us, because we are ‘only human’. Acts and the Epistles are full of controversies and disagreements!
- But Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Saviour here too, if we are prepared to let him be. This requires us to be honest among ourselves, to name what is awry, and to bring it before him for his healing.
- Certainly, ‘there is salvation in no one else’. We preach this – we must live it too.
- An area of potential major spiritual battles. Christ will help us fight to overcome all attempts for our common life to be undermined by evil, temptation. Then, our lives preach gospel with conviction: ‘see how these Christians love one another’.

- And we must live with Jesus as Messiah in our personal lives also – in the inner world of our thoughts, our emotions, our reflections – daring to strive so our attitudes, our deepest instincts, are increasingly conformed to Christ.
- Dare I suggest some areas as illustrations
 - It may be about our day-dreaming, our imagination, even fantasies.
 - It may be our ambitions or our pride. (And this may be ‘thinking too highly of ourselves’, OR depicting ourselves always as innocent victim!)
 - It may be about how we play over old conversations again and again and again, or overly worry about things that never happen.
 - It may be about our gnawing on old bones of ‘what might have been’;
 - It may be feeding the fires of old resentments, old angers, old wounds.
 - It may be in our attitudes to others; perhaps the way we criticise them and pick them apart in our imaginations.
 - It may be about our sexuality; perhaps with the sexual objectification of others in our imaginations.
 - It may be in how we are critical, negative, pessimistic, within and without, instead of letting Christ’s hope flourish within and through us.
- In all these, we can aspire to be better. This is as much a spiritual battle, where we are called to faithfulness, holiness, as preaching gospel / working for justice.
- To echo Mother Teresa, here too it is ‘between you and God’. For it is only by letting Jesus reign as Saviour, committing ourselves to put our inner life under his sovereignty, that we shall manage to ‘do better’ – by his grace.
- Importance of good spiritual directors – ones who are demanding, and will not let us off the hook! Those exercising ruthless ‘tough love’ are generally the best!!!
- In inner lives, in community life, in life in the world - the power of the Holy Spirit at work in the disciples is the same Spirit that lives in us by baptism. Through the Spirit, Jesus can be the cornerstone of all that we do, all that we are.