



Ad Clerum

LEST WE FORGET.....



*“O sacred head, sore wounded
Defiled and put to scorn;
O kingly head surrounded
With mocking crown of thorn:
What sorrow mars Thy grandeur?
Can death Thy bloom deflower?
O countenance whose splendour
The hosts of heaven adore.....”*

My part in the Easter drama

The bells and celebrations of Easter are still echoing in our ears, the incense still in our nostrils, and we are revelling in the good news – we have been relieved of that fundamental human fear, the fear of separation from God by our sins; the fear of eternal death and hell. The mighty Resurrection of Jesus Christ our Saviour has delivered us from those sins, and we are able to stand before the Father, upright....Ransomed, Healed, Restored, Forgiven!!



In the context of all the many Holy Week readings and led devotions, we have been able to observe the patient suffering of Jesus, His compassion for the Thief on the Cross, His words to the Women of Jerusalem, His love of the band of Disciples at the Last Supper and His care for His Mother, even from the cross. Above all, we witnessed His courage and obedience to the will of the Father, and His submission in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Obedience, Love, Compassion, Humility, Courage, Determination, Strength, Perfection
....these characteristics of Jesus have been on full display throughout our Lent and Holy Week, guiding the church towards a glorious Easter Day.

Let me stop us now....and return to our Lent.

Lent is placed before us each year to allow us the spiritual space to develop those same characteristics shown to us in the life of Jesus Christ our Lord. Year after year, as Lent approaches, we become chillingly aware that our lives have regressed and *not* progressed as we had hoped, and that *the world, the flesh and the devil* have made gains in us that we had hoped to avoid.

I looked at the principal characters of the Passion critically this year, not to tear them down, but to learn from them, and what did I find? Amongst the group of Disciples, I found some of the worst human characteristics; betrayal, cowardice, ambition, a lack of commitment, uncertainty, spiritual blindness and even the love of money over loyalty! In the others, the Jewish leadership, Romans and the general population, I was shown cruelty, a fickle heart, a mob mentality, determination to rule absolutely, subtle undermining of those who are true of heart, and a hardness of heart to anything that was spiritually meaningful. I found the full array of human frailty at work in the characters of the Passion narratives.

Within the church, many of these poor characteristics of the human condition continue to dominate, especially those weaknesses that were displayed by the Disciple band, precisely because, like them, we lack the **discipline, obedience and humility** shown by our great Leader, Jesus Christ our Lord.

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Get the fundamentals He showed us right, and our churches would be very different places indeed, far better, and happier too!

The constant excuse that we are 'all human' is an unacceptable one for the people of God, who are exhorted by Holy Scripture to *'fix our eyes on the things that are above'*. We must take care.....

The beautiful and solemn hymn on the first page of this Ad Clerum, with music by J S Bach, reminds us that the *"Countenance whose splendour the hosts of heaven adore"* was marred by our actions, our sins and our excesses. There is no escape, and no justification for our indulgent behaviour. We have all played our part in that awful suffering of the Passion, and ours is a happy escape from the Judgement we so rightly deserve. The church, therefore, *has* to show a different face to the world; it cannot be the place where weakness reigns! The church is called by Jesus to be a completely alternative society, and not just a place where we beat our breast in sorrow for our sins, and then continue with more of the same..... Surely we hold our Saviour too dear to continue to batter His sacred face with the blows of our many sins?

Lent, therefore, pulls us back to reality, and alerts us to our 'spiritual slide'. Lent allows us a pause and a re-alignment of ourselves. Lent exhorts us not to return to the filth of our lives after Easter, but to build on the higher standard we have managed to achieve in the 40 days, and to use the energy and momentum created by Holy Week and Easter to carry us to a higher, holier, more spiritually attuned life – the life of a true believer, and not that of a person paying mere lip service to the demands of the Gospel.

My Easter message? The words of the Apostle Paul from the Epistle on Septuagesima Sunday; *"but I discipline my body, and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified."* (1 Cor 9:27) He is Risen indeed – but my life is now to reflect that glory!



May we be given the strength, in this holy Eastertide, to follow the example set by our Lord Jesus Christ, with utter determination to succeed in our quest for holiness. May the guiding hand of the Holy Ghost keep us strong and free from sin, and may we never to fall in our quest to be strong, dedicated and true Disciples of our Lord and Saviour.

May he bless us all.

+Michael

Southern Africa

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HOLY WEEK AROUND SOUTHERN AFRICA

Holy Week is a dynamic and fruitful time for all our parishes. The churches are filled with activity, and there are all night vigils, prayer meetings and many extra services that are well-attended by our people.

The clergy of the Diocese are devoted and our people are blessed to be served by such faithful men of God.

Here are images of our Holy Week, received from some of our parishes, for you to enjoy.

PALM SUNDAY is a wonderful celebration, with our people taking to the streets in towns and villages throughout the land.

We begin with our Pro-Cathedral, All Saints in Seshego, Limpopo Province; a strong Procession through Seshego (Fr John Selolo and Fr Paul Setati)



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Left: St Lawrence, Hammanskraal, Fr John Mashiane Middle/Right: St Stephen, Thokoza, with Fr Jo Mdelela



St Francis, East London, Eastern Cape Province, Fr Koliti, Fr Mandla and Fr Busani



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*Marching for Christ through the hills of Qwa Qwa – St Paul and St Mark, Puthaditjhaba, with Fr David Mpeshia.
The parishes are in the Drakensberg Mountain Range*



All Saints Parish, Kimberley. Fr Angelo Ericksen and Deacons Llewellyn, Paul and Vincent



The parish of St Mary Magdalene, Ga Rankuwa, Fr Isaiah Molemi on the left



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The Parish of St Monica, Motherwell – a real show of force!! Fr Jongikhaya Gwayi and his wonderful people.



The Altar Party



Fr and Mrs Gwayi with the Mothers Union



The people of the TAC moving purposefully through the beautiful hills of the Eastern Cape



St Mary the Virgin, Port Elizabeth



St Mark, Koffiefontein



St Andrews Mondeor



The people of the Traditional Anglican Communion on the move in Atteridgeville (St Cyprian the Martyr)



The clergy of St Cyprian's, Atteridgeville



Christ Church, Brackenfell, Cape Town

There are many other images, but this gives you an idea of the dynamic parish activity throughout the Diocese of Southern Africa

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Renewal of Priestly Vows and Blessing of the Holy Oils

This beautiful, solemn service took place at the Parish of the Holy Cross, Pretoria. It was well-attended, with some clergy travelling many hundreds of kilometres to join their brethren. A bus strike made it difficult for some of our brethren to attend. Thank you to the clergy from Eastern Cape, Polokwane and Kimberley for their dedication and sense of unity. After the service, all those present gathered for fellowship and lunch at the Bishop's house. It was a wonderful time of unity and focus for the clergy before the serious liturgies of the Passion began to unfold.



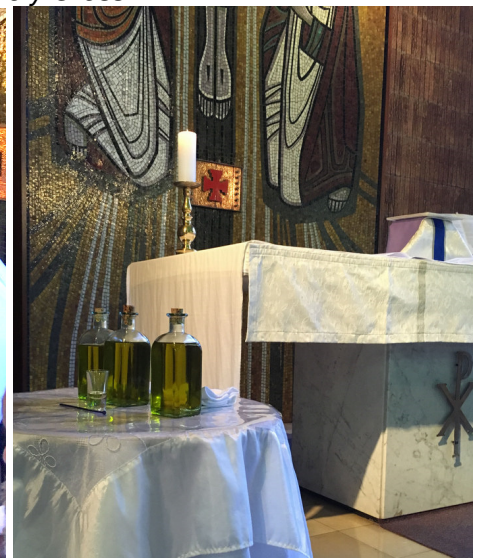
The clergy renew their Priestly vows at Holy Cross.



Bishop Michael with the Regional Deans.



Some of our faithful clergy.



The Holy Oils

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A glorious Easter.



Fr Diamond with the people of Jouberton



Altar Party at St Andrew's Mondeor



Beautiful Paschal Candles at St Andrew's Mondeor and Holy Cross (Fr Michael Phillips) and, below, Easter on the Gospel Express, a chapel on a train, with Fr Lionel Kuiper and Deacon David Purcell



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I leave you with this delightful picture from St Phillip's Parish, Mangaung, Bloemfontein, with Fr George Dimpane and his faithful people. Fr George delights in his ministry....and it shows.



The Light of Christ is truly burning brightly throughout the whole of the Diocese of Southern Africa. Our Priests and people are constantly working for the spread of the Gospel of the Good News of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. That is the task of the church, and we will be faithful in fulfilling it!

Please remember to keep all your brothers and sisters of the global TAC in your prayers. Pray especially for all of our clergy, and remember your Primate, Archbishop Shane Janzen and all the Bishops of the Traditional Anglican Communion College of Bishops throughout the world in your prayers before the Lord. We are a part of a wonderful family of God; all praise and worship to His most Holy Name in this joyous Easter Season!

God bless you and keep you

+ Michael Gill

Bishop Michael Gill
Southern Africa