



The need for a sense of purpose amongst Christians

My apologies if this Ad Clerum comes to you after a break in communication.

I began to write this Ad Clerum just before the October Paris attacks that so dominated the news, and that was followed by the Brussels attacks. It is interesting that Paris was chosen as a centre of vice and "of the Cross". I trust that you will enjoy both the piece on Christians and also the Diocesan news. +Michael, Southern Africa.

On Good Friday evening, I attended a most moving performance of J S Bach's *St Matthew Passion*, a brilliant, complicated work, sung by the South African Philharmonic Choir and orchestra. It was like observing a great piece of art or architecture, and realising that this is a part of our rich heritage as Christians.

I left the Linder Auditorium with mixed feelings. Firstly, the music had been very powerful, especially on Good Friday, but secondly, it reminded me that our church is in need of Christians who are passionate and have a sense of urgency about everything to do with their Faith. Let me tell you why.....

Wave after wave of Muslim people have been descending upon Europe, all seeking some kind of 'better life'. The Europeans have seemed powerless to deal with this flood of what are essentially illegal immigrants (*to use our terminology*). When some Orthodox Christian nations, Hungary and Macedonia, took a stand and closed their borders, everyone shouted at them as being nasty and discriminatory to the Muslim migrants. 2015 saw a concerted and well-orchestrated invasion by Islam of what were formerly Christian countries, and we would do well to take note of what is happening there. It made me wonder if, in a few years from now, Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, or Bach's *St Matthew Passion* won't be frowned upon as being too Christian, offending Muslims and other religions, and therefore undesirable pieces of music.....I don't think I will be wrong?

As a Christian, I am called to love my neighbour as myself, that I know, but as a Priest and Bishop, my first calling is to look after the flock of Christ. We have to begin to 'toughen up' our people, and make them aware of the huge machinery of international Islam that is pouring money into every part of the world and especially our beloved Africa, to bring about the downfall of the Christian Faith. Unless we, members of the Traditional Anglican Communion, together with other Christian churches, are prepared to give our all in the spreading of the Gospel, our children will grow up in a very different spiritual world. This really has become a desperate race for souls.

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Am I being melodramatic and alarmist? I think not. In the past few years we have seen the expansion of ISIS, or the Islamic State throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Large parts of Lybia and other North African regions are under their control. Throughout these areas of ISIS control, Christians of the “old churches”, the Syriac Christians, The Eastern Orthodox Christians and the Coptic Orthodox Christians have come under the most horrifying and brutal persecution. Men, women *and* children have been tortured and slaughtered by Islamic State fighters, many thousands of whom have grown up and been educated in liberal European countries! Children’s severed heads have been put up on poles, churches have been destroyed and whole communities decimated and displaced....these modern day Christians have found out, first hand, just how the so-called ‘*peaceful*’ religion of Islam does its business!



Above is an Icon, painted by *Nikola Saric*, a Serbian Christian living in Germany. It has been bought from the artist by the Coptic Orthodox Church. It depicts the beheading of 20 Coptic Orthodox Christians and their African companion, Mathew Arayiga, by Islamic State militants. The martyrs are in the customary orange overalls, and the Islamists in their black uniforms, faces obscured, knives brandished. They were beheaded in February 2015 – *not long ago* – for refusing to renounce their Faith in Jesus Christ, after 40 days of captivity by ISIS. It is a solemn reminder that following Christ could cost you everything....everything of *this* world, that is! A good reminder after the Easter liturgies.

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In the Second Century AD, there was a great persecution of the Christian faith. The Romans were brutal and cruel, and the religions of the day were fully involved in the murder and torture of many Christians. Ironically, it was the faith of the Martyrs of the Early Church that accelerated its growth, for the courage and steadfastness of our forefathers in the Faith became a shining example of great love and sacrifice.

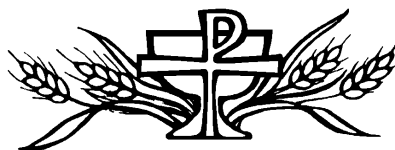
One of the greatest writers of that time was a man called Tertullian, an outspoken critic of the Roman authorities. He said, *"the more they cast us down, the more we will rise up....the blood of the Christian is the seed of the church!"*

"Jesus Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow in His steps..." These words of the Apostle Peter, remind us of the serious and radical nature of our calling as Christians. He, too, was martyred for his faith.

Men and women of God, your blessed Saviour has called you by name to be a true Disciple. The answer to that divine call is one of obedience and courageous faith. It is our time to show our mettle; what we as Christians are made of. My prayer is that your courage will be able to match your words.



All Saints Day, and All Souls Day reminded us of our place within the Family of the Redeemed. Easter reminded us of our eternal destiny. Remember before God, your faithful and courageous forebears, the Martyrs of the early church, and pray without ceasing for your 21st Century Christian Martyrs as they suffer for their Faith. They will receive the everlasting crown of glory from our blessed Saviour.



Some Diocesan news

Confirmation at St Andrews Mondeor

St Andrews is growing steadily, and one of its most satisfying areas is that of its Youth, where a group of deeply committed young Christians are active in both the church and the wider community. Ad Clerum 6.15 gave the reader a glimpse into their innovative and dynamic activities. The Confirmation at St Andrews welcomed some young and some older members to the church, and a joyous celebration was preceded by a dinner for all candidates and their families – a good and innovative way of welcoming people into the parish.



The Patronal Festival of St Francis of Assisi, East London and the opening of a new parish.

Ad Clerum 5.15 showed the growth in the Butterworth area of the Eastern Cape, and we travelled to that region again to celebrate the Patronal Feast of The Parish of St Francis of Assisi, East London, and to open yet **another new parish**, the **Parish of the Holy Spirit**, in the area called Mdantsane, a large urban settlement outside East London.

Fr Mziwonke Mandla will be the Priest-in-Charge of this new parish, and we wish him and his team every blessing as this ministry develops; we have high hopes for the area.



This was, in fact, a Diocese-wide celebration, as **Holy Cross** (Pretoria) and **St Andrews** (Johannesburg) had assisted with donations towards fabric and braid for the beautiful frontal, veil and burse sets made for the Parish of St Francis of Assisi, covering all the Seasons of the Christian Year. Our thanks go to those generous Parish Councils for

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assisting in ensuring that our churches throughout Southern Africa are beautiful and well-equipped.

Once again, the **Altar Project** has delivered high quality church requisites to our people and clergy. Particular thanks has to go to Dalene, who works tirelessly in the service of all the People of God in Southern Africa, producing altar linen, stoles and frontal sets. She is a faithful and true servant of the church.

The Patronal Festival itself was a splendid time, with well-prepared Confirmation Candidates and a vibrant fundraiser for the new parish. A Praise Singer (*see below*) added drama to the occasion, and Dalene was delighted and humbled by the ladies of the Mothers Union as they clothed her in traditional Xhosa clothing.



The Confirmation candidates, Dalene with Mrs Koliti and some Mothers Union members, and some of the Eastern Cape clergy



Fr Augustine Koliti and Bishop Michael congratulate Fr Mziwonke Mandla on the opening of the new Parish of the Holy Spirit, Mdantsane.

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Fr Augustine Koliti, Regional Dean for the Eastern Cape (seen above), has carefully managed the development of this region, and the fruit of his disciplined approach is plain for all to see. This area of the Diocese is poised for steady and sustainable growth. I ask for your prayers for the people and leadership of the Eastern Cape Region.



Vibrant worship at the Patronal Festival of St Francis of Assisi, East London



Some of the elders at the festival, front row are Mr Pyongi, St Monica's Butterworth, Chief Mtwesi of Nqonci, and Mr Mapoyi of Mtenthu.

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All Saints Day – All Saints, Seshego

The Chancellor travelled to All Saints Pro-Cathedral with the Bishop for the service of Confirmation and first Holy Communion on All Saints Day.

As the service began, the power went off, but Anglicanism can accommodate load-shedding, as the Altar candles continued to burn brightly, the acolytes' candles blazed and the thurible belched out clouds of fragrant smoke! It was a beautiful service!

Fr John Selolo (*seen left, below*) has concentrated on raising up lay ministries, and three men were Licenced as Catechists in 2013. On All Saints Day 2015 we Licenced a further six **Catechists** to assist throughout the region. I am convinced that we will now see growth and development in this area. Please pray for this parish and all its people.



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Lent 2016

With Easter so early in 2016, Lent was upon us almost before we had digested our Christmas dinner!

Our people were well-prepared for Lent in 2016, and we concentrated on the disciplines of deeper prayer and fasting for courage and strength in our Christian proclamation to the world.

“Prayer is the place of refuge for every worry; a foundation for cheerfulness; a source of constant happiness; a protection against sadness” St John Chrysostom

We used this and other verses to keep us focussed on our Lenten journey.

Palm Sunday was a beautifully kept Feast throughout the Diocese. Here are some pictures of just a few of the parishes.



Part of the procession at All Saints, Seshego



A rainy Palm Sunday in Seshego.

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Mdantsane, Port Elizabeth and East London on Palm Sunday



While in the newly-completed church in Nqonci, Fr Gwayi preaches up a storm!



This is the incomplete church shown in Ad Clerum 5 of 2015, page 4, now fully functional



Christchurch, Brackenfell, Cape Town on Palm Sunday morning



St Mary Magdalene, Ga Rankuwa with Fr Isaiah Molemi



St Augustine, Jouberton, North West Province, with Fr Hendrik Diamond



Fr Willie Meyers and Deacon Angelo Eriksen lead the people of Kimberley, All Saints.

Maundy Thursday saw the Renewal of Priestly Vows and the Blessing of the Oils at Holy Cross Parish, Pretoria. This moving service was attended by 25 clergy from all over the country. A strong contingent from as far as Eastern Cape attended, as did the clergy from Limpopo Province in the North and Qwa Qwa.

This was the largest number of clergy we have yet had for the Renewal of Priestly Vows, and many had travelled many hundreds of kilometres by public transport to be there. They arrived exhausted by their journey, and had to leave almost immediately to get back to their parishes for the Good Friday liturgies. This kind of devotion to God's Church is inspiring, and it shows the spirit of brotherhood and the deep commitment of our clergy.

We are a blessed community to have such men of God as our leaders. Please remember to pray for your clergy as they minister under difficult circumstances.



Bishop Michael addresses the clergy at Holy Cross, Pretoria. The Holy Oils are blessed



The Clergy gather for the Renewal of Priestly Vows, Holy Cross, Pretoria



The Concelebration at the Holy Mass

Below are some images of Easter in different parishes throughout our Diocese. Thank you for sending your images and for the obvious devotion and success of your services. As Our Lord Jesus Christ is worshipped and glorified by His people, and as His Name is lifted up high in our communities, we will indeed draw many men, women and young people to see His wonderful Light.

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Easter Baptism at St Andrew's, Mondeor, Johannesburg



The wonderful and devout people of the TAC in Southern Africa

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I do hope that you have enjoyed this insight into the vibrant spiritual life of the Traditional Anglican Communion in Southern Africa. We are a part of a global family of devout orthodox Anglicans, and we are a '*church on the move*'!



May Our Lord Jesus Christ bless, preserve and keep you.

In Christ

+ Michael Gill

Bishop Michael Gill
Southern Africa