

**Installation and Rededication Service of
Thabo, Archbishop of Cape Town and Metropolitan of the
Anglican Church of Southern Africa
30 March 2008**

“Sekgo sa Metse”

John 20:19-31

Let us pray: Loving Lord, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and those who are near: grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you, bring the nations into your fold, pour out your Spirit upon all flesh and hasten the coming of your kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Greetings to you all, in the name of the risen Christ, Amen.

It is an honour, a privilege, and very humbling to stand here today. I thank you, the people of the Diocese of Cape Town and of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, for allowing God in Jesus Christ to call me to lead and serve you. Thank you that you are partners with me in the gospel, as we seek afresh to discover what is it to be the body of Christ in our time, and who God is in Jesus Christ, for us here and now.

As I prepared for today, I chose the Sepedi phrase “sekgo sa metse” as my theme. Simply put, sekgo is a vessel and metse is water. Yet the two also have deeper meaning, just as living water, the Holy Spirit, does in John’s gospel. Sekgo sa metse not only provides drink for the thirsty; it also transforms various ingredients into sustaining nourishment; and having done so, it provides thlabego, the yeast, which catalyses the next meal to come.

In today’s gospel passage, dramatised so powerfully, we heard how the disciples were sent to be channels of peace, channels of the breath – the Spirit – of God and of his forgiveness. Christ said to them “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” In the same way, we, the baptized, the new body of Christ, are called through the Spirit of God to be channels or vessels, sekgo, of that same peace and forgiveness which we have received.

Christian thinkers from the liberation theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez to Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, insist that gratitude must be our first response to all we receive from God in Christ. So before saying more about how we are called to be channels of peace and forgiveness, I must record my own gratitude to those used by God to make today possible.

Gratitude

The list is endless. First of all, my special thanks go to Lungi; to Nyakallo and Paballo; and to Kedibone, my mother, for their love and critical support. They join me in thanking all of you for being here today.

Dean Rowan Smith, thank you for welcoming me into your Cathedral, and installing me in my new spiritual home. Thank you to all your staff, especially the Revd Bruce Jenneker and the team who prepared this wonderful service. Thank you to David Orr, the Director of Music, the musicians and

choirs – who are from not only the Cathedral, but also the Dioceses of Saldanha Bay and False Bay. A special thank you to the Erub children's choir. To Bishop David Beetge, friend, and Dean and Vicar-General of the Province, and to Diocesan Vicars-General Bishop Garth and Canon Suzanne Peterson, now succeeded by Dean Andrew Hunter: thank you for ably leading the Province, this Diocese, and the Diocese of Grahamstown in the last six months. Bishop Garth, I particularly look forward to working with you under the new structural arrangements of the Diocese of Cape Town. Rob Rogerson, together with Canon Nangula Kathindi, Gail Allen, Nobuntu Mageza, Maggy Clarke, Tony Hillier, the Revd Sarah Rowland Jones and Mpho Ndebele deserve particular thanks for a vast amount of hard work and organization. To all of these, and everyone else who has helped make today possible, let us give a round of applause.

I also want to thank our distinguished guests for joining us today. I am grateful for this support from the Presidency, the Province and the City of Cape Town; from MPs, members of Cabinet and other representatives of national, regional and local government; from heads of educational institutions; representatives of religious orders, and of the six nations that comprise the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, as well as funders and benefactors. I particularly thank those who have travelled long distances to be here, and I know there are many of you. Let me just mention his Grace the Archbishop of York representing the Archbishop of Canterbury; his Grace the Archbishop of the Indian Ocean and Chairman of the Council of Anglican Provinces in Africa; Bishop Scarfe, representing the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, and Canon Kearon representing the Anglican Consultative Council. I am grateful too for the presence of ecumenical partners and leaders from other faith communities. Di Oliver, the Venerable Erica Murray and Professor Njabulo Ndebele, friends and family, thank you for your encouragement and support. And last, but by no means least, I thank the Bishops, clergy and people of this Diocese and of this Province. Thank you for the enormous privilege you are bestowing upon me today.

Special gratitude goes to my predecessors, the bishops and archbishops of Cape Town who laboured in love through challenging circumstances. Their solid apostolic foundation, a foundation on which I pledge to continue building, has enabled God's people to participate in restoring this painfully broken and bruised world to God's loving embrace of justice and reconciliation. I am conscious that we follow the journeying pilgrims of the last 160 years of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, as we embark together on a new chapter in the life of the church within our rapidly changing world.

Called and Sent

Jesus' message to us today is the same as that to his disciples on the first Easter Day. This, to paraphrase the evangelist's words, is what he says to them:

Peace be with you. As the loving God has sent me, even so I, Jesus his Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit, am sending you – the baptised, the body of Christ, the Church, bearing your own scars as I bear mine – sending you on our behalf, in our name, to continue the ministry of calling all of creation back home, back to peace with justice, and of bringing freedom and hope to those trapped by fear and death.

Jesus' greeting is both an invitation and a summons. It demands a response from all who claim to follow him. There are three points to note.

First, in a situation characterised by despondency, hopelessness, bewilderment, death, destruction, locked doors and fear, Jesus ushers in peace, the shalom peace of God.

Second, he offers the marginalized and fearful sekgo sa metse, living water, as he breathes in God's

new, creative and life-giving Holy Spirit. He transforms their feeling of inadequacy and self doubt.

Third, he commissions them to forgive sins: that is, to loose the death-dealing bonds of sin, fear, anger, hatred, and all that corrupts humanity; to heal those damaged by these ills; and to reconcile God's people to God and to each other.

God's Model for God's Church

These three interrelated threads – shalom peace, the empowering of the Spirit, and reconciling forgiveness – illustrate the nature and saving acts of our Triune God. They also provide a template for the identity and vocation of the new body of Christ, the Church. They help us regain our confidence, which is not arrogance, for pursuing God's mission in the world. Our mission is the mission of Jesus, and we are to learn to do things his way, as we see him at work in the world to which he both calls and sends us.

The Moderator of the World Council of Churches said to the global Assembly in 2006, that “A self-sufficient and inward-looking church cannot survive in radically changing societies. Only a church that is liberated from self-captivity, which is a church in creative dialogue with its environment, a church courageously facing the problems of its times, a church with the people and for the people, can become a living source of God's empowering and transforming grace.”

He is right. The world is full of change and challenge, and we cannot take refuge in “my church, my parish, my pew.” From local community issues to questions about the global environment and our own carbon footprints, Christ calls us to join his Spirit-led mission of peace and reconciliation, of empowering and transforming grace.

This is what I pledge myself to pursue today. I believe myself called to be sekgo sa metse: a vessel for peace with justice and reconciliation, and for cultivating a “yeast” for healing the bruised, crushed and broken in God's world.

Yet I do not think it is a call only for me. In describing the calling of a bishop, the Prayer Book says “You will not do this on your own.” Bishops are to work with other bishops – and also with priests, deacons, and laity, as, and I quote again, we “lead God's people in their mission to the world”. God's mission is the mission of all the baptized. It is the life of worship, witness and service to which we commit ourselves in confirmation. The whole Church of God, regardless of denominational boundaries, and, dare I add, those of other faiths and none, are summoned to this work of God's healing action and reconciling love.

This is why the service today is called a service of Installation and Rededication. I am inviting all of you to join me in rededicating ourselves to be sekgo sa metse, Spirit-filled channels of peace with justice, and yeast for forgiveness and reconciliation, in whatever ways God calls us in this new chapter of our lives.

What might this mean for us?

Peace for the World

First, Jesus brought peace to those paralysed with fear behind locked doors. The world around knows such fear – from Zimbabwe to Darfur, from Iraq to Tibet. Yet from one end of Scripture to the other, God speaks this same message: “Do not fear.” As Paul writes to Timothy “God did not

give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline” (2 Tim1:7).

So we dare to participate in the mission of God to the world, even as we recognise this is always a risky business. We are to usher in peace, and actively bring to bear the healing presence of the crucified and resurrected Christ across all the nations of our Province. He has a message of shalom wholeness wherever there is conflict, fear, crime, ill-health, violence – especially against women and children – HIV and AIDS, landlessness, unemployment, under-development, poor educational provision, maternal deaths, impoverishment or any other burden of brokenness or oppression.

And we dare to participate as we are – aware of our own inadequacies, frailties and weaknesses – because Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit of God into us, the living water that flows through all the baptized. This is the second important characteristic of God’s channels of mission.

The Breath of God, the Spirit of New Life

The Lambeth Conference of 1968 declared: “Baptism is not so much the rite of a moment as the principle of a life-time.” All the baptized are constantly called and sent to live in the risen life of the crucified Christ, and to share it with God’s world. It is to this that we rededicate ourselves today. We have to be ready to breathe new life wherever God’s children, in the church and beyond its walls, have given up hope, or live in conflict, darkness and fear.

As you may know, I have been part of the Design Group preparing for the gathering of Anglican Bishops at the Lambeth Conference in July. It is my earnest prayer that our time together will rekindle this same life-giving spirit and bring a renewed confidence in Christ and his Spirit of reconciliation and renewal. I share my predecessors’ yearning to breathe peace, healing and wholeness into the painful divisions of our beloved Anglican Communion. I will never tire of pointing out, as our own diverse Synod of Bishops has affirmed, that those fundamentals of faith that unite us far outweigh all that divides us. Perhaps the Communion needs to know Christ’s breath in our own locked and fear-filled rooms.

This leads me to my third point.

Forgiveness

Archbishop Tutu, sitting over there, says forgiveness and reconciliation go hand in hand, and that true forgiveness deals with the past and makes the future possible. In other words, forgiveness is an act of faith in the future. The risen Christ, who still bore his crucifixion scars, acknowledges the scars we bear, and brings healing and restoration out of, not in spite of, our woundedness. Today Jesus invites us not to hide our scars, nor the scars of his church and his world, but to bring them into his restorative embrace, so that, as we are loosed from our bonds, healing and reconciliation may flow in us and through us.

We must be sekgo sa metse wherever old divisions of the past or new inequalities of the present rear their heads – whether of race, or wealth, or status, or power; whether in politics, or sport, or on university campuses, or even within our churches. Archbishop Clayton once said “The Church, the body of Christ, has a prophetic duty to stand for righteousness. She must do so... It is not her duty to be popular. It is her duty to speak the truth.” In this way, we bear a moral duty to ensure that the past does not destroy the future. This is as true of our spiritual lives as it is of the political and economic and social lives of our nations. All these need to experience God’s redemptive Spirit, to become part of his transforming and liberating vision for a just and reconciled world.

In conclusion

There is so much more I could say about the vision I believe God is setting before us. It is a vision we must seek through rootedness in Christ Jesus, and ever-deepening engagement with Scripture and Sacraments; through the discipline of daily prayer and Bible-reading.

It is a vision that will touch every area of our lives. Let me share where it is already touching mine:

It is a vision of the restoration of dignity of each person, created by God and precious in God's sight.

It is a vision of growing parish youth ministries, strengthened ecumenical ministry in tertiary education and Anglican schools helping address the skills shortages of our communities.

It is flourishing theological education, including through our residential college in Grahamstown and the Anglican House of Studies in Pietermaritzburg.

It is confident, competent, well-remunerated clergy, energising all God's people in mission.

It is parishes as centres of peace and safety, offering shelter and nurture the vulnerable, especially children and youth: whether parishes in Cape Town, across South Africa, in Angola, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia and Swaziland, or in St Helena and Tristan da Cunha.

It is churches working in partnership with governments and civil society to breathe hope and transformation into every aspect of our communities and common life.

It is an Africa without conflict, and without the unjust structures that fuel injustice; an Africa where the Anglican Church of Southern Africa plays its full role within the Council of Anglican Provinces in Africa, the All Africa Conference of Churches and religious leaders' forums, while conscious of the world wide Communion's need for unity.

It is a global community of justice and generosity, of economic fairness and special care for the poorest, that urgently tackles unsustainable growth in demand for oil, energy and other resources.

It is a world prepared to hear the words "Peace be with you."

People of God, dare to share this vision with me. Take the risk of answering Jesus' invitation to be called, and to be sent. Don't be afraid to be sekgo sa metse. He who calls us will strengthen and empower us to fulfil the tasks to which he calls us.

Let us pray: May the God of Peace make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.