

AD CLERUM - APRIL 2010

Dear People of God

Once upon a time, a long time ago, a young man heard the call of God and began preaching to the poor in the streets of London where he was working at the time. Excitedly he wrote to his father, who was a Lutheran pastor, to tell him of his call, and began studying theology, first in Holland, where he was born, and then in Brussels. But he struggled with his studies; his great love and success was in preaching and ministering to the poor. He dressed with the poor and lived among them. He was concerned for their needs; he washed their clothes, cared for the sick, consoled the dying and led many to Christ. His lifestyle and his ministry were Christ-like in every way. But the church leaders disapproved of what he was doing and he was expelled from college and forced to abandon his ministry. Discouraged he left the church, lost his faith, became an artist and eventually died at the age of 37 in a mental institution. The young man's name was Vincent van Gogh. Later in life he commented, "I must tell you that with evangelists, it is the same as with artists. There is an old academic school of tyrannical men who wear prejudice and convention."

It is a sad story, one that has haunted me ever since I first heard it, and I have spent many hours looking at his marvellous, yet tortured, paintings and wondering what was going through his mind as he painted, say, *The Potato Eaters* or *Starry Night*. His compassion for the poor still comes through, as does his sense of wonder and awe of God. But Vincent the artist is a very different person from Vincent the evangelist. His experience of God in the church so changed him and damaged him that he remained to the end of his life a broken man.

The story, coupled with his devastating words about "an old academic school of tyrannical men who wear prejudice and convention," always leaves me asking questions about the tyranny of a church bound by prejudice and convention. This question is even more poignant during this time of Holy Week; a time when Jesus himself, filled with the Holy Spirit and zeal for the Lord, was confronted by the power of "tyrannical men who wear prejudice and convention."

In the case of Jesus, those tyrannical men were the religious leaders of his day. They were devout persons appointed to preserve, uphold and promote the Jewish faith, but whose vision and understanding of that faith was so "bound by prejudice and convention" that they were unable to recognise the one whom Paul was later to describe as the visible image of their invisible God. In that they were little different from the religious leaders of Vincent's time; another set of devout men equally unable to recognise the ministry of the Holy Spirit in a man whose behaviour, though unquestionably Christ-like, did not meet their prejudices and their narrow conventional expectations.

It seems to me that it has always been so; men and women who have not fitted into the prevailing prejudices and conventions of their times or their leaders, have always been ridiculed and rejected, and have suffered at the hands of those who wield the power. Power

has always been used to entrench the prevailing truth – even when, as in the case of that first Good Friday, their truth is the antithesis of truth. And that has been as true of religious power as of political power, and the tyranny of both the religious and the political are to be seen in the events of Good Friday.

Reflecting on the van Gogh story in the light of the Passion narrative, I find myself bombarded by questions; “To what extent does our desire for the truth blind us to the one who is the Truth? When do our prejudices and narrow conventions damage, hurt, and even destroy those whom we are called to nurture in the knowledge and love of God? When do our rules and regulations become life sapping rather than life giving? None of these questions are easy to answer, if only because we are all too often blind to our prejudices and perceive our narrow conventions to reflect the Truth. And because we perceive our truth to be the Truth we are often too quick to rationalise and even tyrannically defend our behaviours and practices without pausing to examine them or question them, or checking to see what damage they do to others – and especially to those who neither fit into nor conform to our prevailing truth. As we journey with Christ through the last moments of his life, perhaps we all need to spend some time at the foot of the cross thinking of those whom we have rebuffed, hurt, and perhaps even driven away through our lack of sensitivity and caring, through placing law above love. And then, still standing at the foot of the cross and gazing up at the crucified one, we need to see the ugly truth of what our prejudice and convention does to others.

But by the grace of God the story does not end on the cross; the desolation of Good Friday and Holy Saturday give way to an eruption of grace and love on Easter Day. The tyrannical power of both religious and political prejudice is defeated and where they have brought death, God gives life; resurrection life.

I have spent many hours studying the paintings of van Gogh; a man whose passion and love for God was broken by the church of God and who spent the last years of his life drifting in and out of insanity and depending as a poor person on the same generosity and love that he had once tried to show to the poor. In the tortured pictures that he painted, I still see a hunger and a yearning for the Truth and I believe that, even though he may have lost his faith in God, God never lost faith in him. And as I gaze upon the genius of his art, I rejoice in the power of God to transform even the evil tyranny of our prejudice and convention into something of awesome power and grace.

For self reflection:

1. Van Gogh speaks of “...an old academic school of tyrannical men who wear prejudice and convention.” Explore the values and behaviours that you consider to be right and expect others to abide by. How do you respond to people who do not share your values? When in your dealings with others (at home, work, or in your church and social life) is your behaviour unreasonable and tyrannical? What changes do I need to make to my life to model my relationship with others on the example and teachings of Jesus?
2. Where do I know myself to be prejudiced? What steps do I need to take to break the chains that that keep me in bondage to my own prejudice?

For group discussion:

1. Are we a people more shaped by the prevailing norms and values of our society and leaders than shaped by the teachings of the gospel? Discuss. How can we as a Christian community be shaped more by Jesus than the world? Discuss.
2. Review the values and practices / rules in your parish. When could they become harsh, unyielding and tyrannical and so cause hurt to the people of God and turn away those seeking Jesus?

3. What are the signs of resurrection life in your parish and in your own life?

May this Easter make resurrection life visible in our lives



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Renewal of Vows and Blessing of Oils

Service times and parking arrangements have already been sent out, so this serves simply as a reminder to you of the service. While I am aware that it comes at an awkward time in respect of traffic around the Cathedral and during working hours for parishioners and those who are self-supported clergy, it is, nevertheless, an important service and I would encourage all clergy and as many parishioners as possible to attend and be part of this important and special service.

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Parish Council Training Workshops

Rodney Taylor has scheduled a number of training workshops for parish councillors. The training is different from that of previous years and we would hope that all parish councillors and churchwardens made arrangements to attend one of the dates; ideally as a parish council group. Please see the attached document for more details.

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Spiritual Formation

Clergy Day: The next Self Supporting clergy day will take place on Saturday the 17th of April at St Thomas, Linden.

There is no Clergy Day scheduled this month. The next Clergy Day will take place on the 4th of May at St Joseph's.

Bishop's House Quiet Day: The next Quiet Day will take place on Tuesday 13th April. I encourage you all to take advantage of this time to come apart after the frenetic rush of Holy Week and Easter.

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Reading Recommendations

Although perhaps too late for use this year, there are a number of excellent books on the passion narratives. Timothy Radcliffe has written a simple, yet profound book entitled "Seven Last Words," which would be valuable for those parishes whose 3 hour service is based on the 7 words from the cross.

A very different book, and one that will certainly illuminate and challenge your thinking is the book, "The Last Week" by Marcus Borg and John Crossan. It is a careful, detailed and insightful study of St Mark's day-by-day account of the week leading up to Easter. While you may well not agree with everything they say (I didn't) it will offer valuable new insights.

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Diocesan website

To date only 8 parishes have contacted Martin Louw to arrange training for the new website. As I said in the last Ad Clerum, each parish and Diocesan organisation has its own portal and we are asking you to take responsibility for maintaining and updating it. Incomplete portals reflect negatively on the diocese and our website. Please contact Martin Louw at martin.louw@anglicanjoburg.org.za to arrange training and to learn how to make your section work to your best advantage. Please also visit the website at www.anglicanjoburg.org.za.

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Vestry 2010

I would like to extend a very heartfelt thank you to all of those parishes who successfully conducted their Vestry meetings within the stipulated timeframes. The level of professionalism in the preparation for and conducting of Vestries has risen enormously and I commend all of you who have been faithful stewards in this regard. Just by way of reminder; parish returns are due in within 7 days of vestry. If you have not submitted your return, please do so ASAP. We need your financials in order to prepare figures for Synod.

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Provincial News

- Please pray for Bishop Joseph Tsubella, Assistant Bishop of Diocese of Highveld who is seriously ill with cancer of the liver. I know that a number of you have visited him and I thank you for showing your love and concern in this way. Please hold him and all his family in your prayers.

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Diocesan Family News

- We would like to welcome all the new Diocesan members of staff; **Ivy Matthews, Phumza Ntuli and Noxolo Sihlongu**. Please note that the Diocesan office will be closed from 12h00 on Friday the 16th of April for a team building exercise.

- It is with sadness that we announce that **Francina Mekgwe**, the youngest sister of Lucas Mekgwe, passed away this week. The funeral will take place at St George, Fouchville.
- **Parker and Fezeka Monala** are delighted to announce the birth of their grandson Tumelo Melusi Motlhabi.

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Moves and Appointments

- **Lynda Shimmin** as been made Priest-in-Charge of the Parish of St Augustine, Orange Grove with immediate effect.
- **Michelle Pilet** has tendered her resignation as the Diocesan Coordinator of the Liturgical Committee. I would like to thank Michelle for all her wonderful work and wish her God's every blessing as she moves forward in ministry.
- We welcome **Susan van Niekerk** who has accepted appointment as the Diocesan Coordinator of the Liturgical Committee. Susan has some exciting plans for future work of the board, so if any of you are passionate about liturgy and would like to be involved, please give her a call.

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Birthdays and Wedding Anniversaries

Please remember the following persons in your prayers as they celebrate birthdays and anniversaries this month:

APRIL BIRTHDAYS:	
May the good Lord bless you all with many blessings on your special day	
1 st	Cecil Lamb
3 rd	Nigel Mollink
7 th	Tshepo Maloka
7 th	Nelly Ramoabi
8 th	Martin Louw
10 th	Peter Wilson
11 th	Cyril Halkett
14 th	Oupaki Moruthane
15 th	Mothusimang Makata
15 th	Paul Saiki
16 th	Doug Wessels
16 th	Loreen McDoughall
16 th	Liziwe Moreo
17 th	Bill Salter
17 th	Bikitsha Njumbuxa
17 th	Mmalerato Molwantwa
20 th	David Edwards
21 th	Paul Letlala
23 th	+ Duncan

23 th	Mary Maboe
25 th	Dikeledi Malema
26 th	Lynette Paxton
28 th	Pauline Molefe

APRIL ANNIVERSARIES: “ A successful marriage requires falling in love many times, always with the same person” German Greer	
3rd	Joe & Mary Maboe (36yrs)
4th	Kenneth & Hilary Owen (46yrs)
5th	Morgan & Lynette Ellis (42yrs)
5th	Doug & Vanessa Michael (38yrs)
10 th	Tim & Rosemary Gray
18 th	Cecil & Pamela Lamb (46yrs)
20 th	Fred & Merle Robb (53yrs)

MAY BIRTHDAYS: Wishing you a blessed Birthday!	
5 th	Gerard Sharp
6 th	Makhosi Lenkoe
8 th	Andrew Phillips
8 th	Sue Ray
12 th	Motlale Namo
12 th	Gerald Hick
13 th	Maureen Rowland-Aitken
17 th	Corney Mphaki
19 th	Vicky Moroa
20 th	Gwyn Slade
22 th	Margaret Steward
23 th	Pearl Makgohlane
24 th	Charles May
25 th	Nosipho Matubatuba
25 th	Dolly Lethoko
27 th	Yvonne Payne
28 th	Ntombi Molefe
28 th	Tsepo Matubatuba
30 th	Yasmille Smith
30 th	Rhoda Dove

MAY ANNIVERSARIES: “Our wedding was many years ago. The celebration continues to this day” Gene Perret	
25 th	Mlanjeni & Motlalepula Mosima (32yrs)
28 ⁿ	John & Amy herbet(50yrs)

Although we endeavour to keep our records up-to-date, experience tells us that we often miss out on special dates. If you are celebrating a special occasion in the coming month that is not on the list please email Phumza at phumza.ntuli@anglicanjoburg.org.za so that we can update our lists.

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Dates for Diary

APRIL		Diocesan	Bishop
Thursday	1	MAUNDY THURSDAY Blessing of Oils & Renewal of Vows / Last day for Annual Returns/Financial Statements to Diocesan Office	Blessing of Oils & Renewal of Vows
Friday	2	GOOD FRIDAY	
Sunday	4	EASTER	
Monday	5	FAMILY DAY	Retreat
Tuesday	6		Retreat
Wednesday	7		Retreat
Thursday	8		Retreat
Friday	9		Retreat
Saturday	10	Good Governance Workshop / Diaconal Training/ FOX	
Sunday	11		Pastoral visit: St Mark, Westonaria
Monday	12	Independent / Government Schools Return	
Tuesday	13	Bishop's House Quiet Day	Bishop's House Quiet Day
Wednesday	14	Synod Planning Advisory Committee Meeting	Synod Planning Advisory Committee Meeting
Saturday	17	Good Governance Workshop / Ordinand Training / Transformers / Self Supporting Clergy Day / Anglicare / Archdeaconry Region 5 Meeting	Self Supporting Clergy Day
Sunday	18		Pastoral visit: St James Dieploof + baptism
Wednesday	21	Closing date for final motions for Synod / DFB	
Saturday	24	POST / Saints Lay Training	
Tuesday	27	FREEDOM DAY	
Thursday	29	Discernment Panelist Meeting St Georges	

MAY		Diocesan	Bishop
Saturday	1	WORKERS DAY / FOX	
Sunday	2		Pastoral visit: St George, Fouchville
Tuesday	4	Clergy Day	Clergy Day
Wednesday	5		St Benedict AGM 15h30
Friday	7	Apologies for Synod	
Saturday	8	Good Governance Workshop / Discernment Conference / Diaconal Training / Transformers	Transformers
Sunday	9	Discernment Conference	Pastoral visit: St Andrew, Pimville / Discernment Conference Panelist meeting
Tuesday	11	Archdeaconry Region 1 Clergy Day / Diocesan Office Synod Planning	Diocesan Office Synod Planning Meeting
Thursday	13	ASCENSION DAY	

Saturday	15	Archdeaconry Region 2 Meeting / AWF meeting / Good Governance Workshop / Ordinands Training	
Tuesday	18	Bishop's House Clergy Quiet Day	Bishop's House Clergy Quiet Day
Wednesday	19	Archdeacons Meeting	Archdeacons Meeting
Friday	21	Synod	Synod
Saturday	22	Synod	Synod
Sunday	23	PENTECOST	Pastoral visit: Dobsonville 50th Anniversary / PM Sophiatown Mosaic Unveiling
Friday	28		LEAVE
Saturday	29	POST / Saints Lay Training / Anglicare	LEAVE
Sunday	30		LEAVE
Monday	31		LEAVE

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General Notices

- The Parish of St George, Parktown will be hosting a 7 week **Marriage Alpha** course from 19h00 – 21h30 starting on the 7th of April. Please see the attached document for more details on this excellent course.

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Diocesan Directory Updates

- Please update the email address of the Parish of St Aidan, Yeoville to parish@staidans.co.za
- Please update the personal email address of Neo Motlabane to neo@staidans.co.za