

AD CLERUM – April 2008

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ

One of Spike Milligan's shortest, but most poignant poems reads,
*God made night, but man made darkness
I am afraid of the dark.*

Night is natural, but the darkness of which he speaks is not. Because we cannot see at night we feel more vulnerable than we do in the day, but when rolling electricity blackouts deprive us of light and police warn that criminal elements which are already rampant are capitalising on the situation, we are plunged into a darkness that evokes our deepest primal fears and insecurities. In that darkness we know that no matter how much money we have, no matter how many weapons we own, no matter how sophisticated our security systems, life is fragile and unpredictable. The inescapable truth is that we are all vulnerable and, no matter how hard we try, some things are just forever outside our control.

'Load shedding', coupled with unacceptable levels of crime, has battered our confidence and we in this country are infected or affected by an all pervasive fear that has triggered the primordial fearfulness that lies at the centre of our very being. It unleashes in us the most primitive and instinctive of reactions: fight or flight. Both reactions spawn a myriad of coping mechanisms that protect us in some way from the threats we face and so enable us to live between the extremes of complete escape (flight – the brain drain and the 'Packing for Perth' brigade) or inhuman violence (fight – eg. road rage and other displaced acts of irrational violence). But ultimately these coping mechanisms are deceptions, often endorsed by society, that create the illusion that we are in control of our lives. With time these coping mechanisms become so deeply entrenched in our lives that the very thought of stripping them away that fuels the age-old dread of vulnerability.

The truth is that no matter how powerful, strong or careful we might be, we will always be vulnerable. Vulnerability is woven into the very weft and warps of our being because nothing can protect us from harm, heal our primal fears or mend our brokenness. Until we acknowledge our vulnerability and face our fear of it we will be obsessed with safety and security. And it may well be that the unintended consequences of our quest to control and secure our lives are isolation, alienation, narcissistic self-absorption, and an erosion of concern for others that ultimately increases the very anxiety that we are seeking to avoid. Our dread of vulnerability that feeds our desperate need always to be in control may ultimately do us far more harm than good.

Vulnerability is not primarily a matter of political, social or economic stability; it is at heart a spiritual matter for it relates to our being created in the image of a God whose own vulnerability is revealed on the cross. The cross is a symbol of something radically new, radically other. It is the visible image of a God who is all powerful, but is crucified in weakness; a God impassable in glory, but manifested in a vulnerability that frees us from the need to fear our own vulnerability. No wonder the gospel tells us: 'Be not afraid!'

Faith does not free us from the vicissitudes of life nor affords us some kind of magical protection from harm. As Kerry Walters in his book, 'Jacob's Hip' says: "... God isn't a place of unassailable security, a divine fallout shelter. God ... is ground zero. God is the bull's eye in the target." If God is the bull's eye in the target, the lightning rod that attracts the lightning to itself, then our journey into God is a journey into the radical vulnerability of God and an invitation to embrace our own vulnerability. "When we shy away from Christ's invitation to vulnerability," says Walters, "we become underground creatures who give up sunshine and fresh air for the sake of a false security. We enclose ourselves in subterranean bunkers that may look impregnable from the outside but are dank and suffocating on the inside." It is not that, as Christians, we are invulnerable – in fact, as followers of Christ the opposite may well be especially true - but because we are Christians we can accept and embrace our vulnerability as part of the vulnerability of God, a part of our human condition, and a part of what it means to live by faith.

The choice before us is either to follow Christ in the way of vulnerability or to try and protect ourselves against our human frailty. The protective barriers we erect to save ourselves take many forms, but the most common ones are wealth, power and false spiritualities in which God becomes the ultimate, fail-safe protective barrier. But whatever the form of our protective barriers, they are ways of unbelief, an attempt to avoid the way of the cross. Authentic spirituality is the way of radical dependence on God. It is a letting go of all the false securities of life until that we are able to live in total obedience to the vulnerable God who lives with us in all the frailties and uncertainties of life. Oscar Romero spoke in very uncompromising terms of this spiritual journey of self-detachment or self-forgetfulness:

“The poor person is the one who has been converted to God and puts all his trust in him, and the rich person is one who has not been converted to God and puts his confidence in idols: money, power, material ... Our work should be directed towards converting ourselves and all people to this authentic meaning of poverty.”

All too often the events of everyday life loom so large in our minds and evoke those primal fears to such an extent that we lose our sense of perspective. The primal fear that evokes the instinct of ‘fight’ or ‘flight’ is ultimately an act of faithlessness. God has placed us in this country at this time in its history to be God’s agents of healing and transformation. It was the event one day in AD 33 – still remembered as Good Friday - that forever changed the world. And we who are baptised into that death and subsequent resurrection are witnesses to the redemptive love of God revealed in vulnerability; witnesses that God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom; God’s weakness stronger than human strength; and the vulnerability of God, echoed in our own fears, is the only security we will ever know.

In a world of despair we live in hope – *“Christ in you the hope of glory”* (Col 1:27).

“God made night, but man made darkness

I am afraid of the dark.”

“And the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.”

May our lives shine in the darkness to the glory of God’s own vulnerability

+ *Brian*

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Spiritual Formation

Clergy Day: Our next Clergy Day will take place at St Mary’s Dobsonville from 09h00–12h30 on Tuesday 1st April. The topic for the day is “HIV and AIDS” and the Speaker is Canon Desmond Lamprechts.

Clergy Quiet Day: It was good to see so many of you at our last Quiet Day. I look forward to seeing even more of you at our next Diocesan Quiet Day which will be at Bishop’s House on Tuesday, 15th April 2008. Prayer is central to effectiveness in ministry so please plan to make this day a part of your spiritual life.

Clergy Marriage Course: This course will take run from 18h00–20h00 on Sunday evenings beginning on 13th April. It is a course intended to deepen and enrich your marriage and I encourage you to take quality time for yourself. There are still a few places left. Please book your place now.

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Reading Recommendations

Ronald Rolheiser is always worth a read and his latest book, “Secularity and the Gospel,” is no exception. It was written as a result of 4 symposia held by the OMI to look at how the Church is losing ground in the secular world and how we could be missionaries to our children, many of whom no longer walk the path of faith. The book contains the texts of some of the talks at those symposia together with his reflections on the subject. It will challenge your own pre-conceptions as well as your practice of ministry. It is a worthwhile read for everyone who is serious about growing the Church.

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Vestry 2008

By all accounts, Vestry 2008 was a smooth and peaceful process – a far cry from many of the Vestries of the past. As far as I know, only one parish failed to complete Vestry before the deadline. You are all wonderful people and I am immensely proud of you all, and honoured to be your bishop. Thank you.

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Diocesan Conference on Biblical Giving – 12th 2008

We are hard at work preparing for the Diocesan Conference on Biblical Giving and I hope that it will be a valuable and fruitful day for us all. Please check that all those who are supposed to attend have all the necessary information. I look forward to seeing you all there.

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Meeting of Rectors and their Self Supporting Clergy

In the last Ad Clerum I announced the meeting of Rectors and Self-supporting clergy, but despite giving the place and time of the meeting omitted to give the date. I apologise for my stupidity. You should all have received a correction which was sent out within a couple days of the Ad Clerum. The date of the meeting is Saturday 3rd May and will be held from 08h30–12h30 at St Thomas', Linden. As I said in the last Ad Clerum, it is a meeting of obligation and I look forward to seeing everyone there.

This meeting will lead into the 4 Saturday morning training sessions for self-supporting clergy for 2008 (24th May; 5th July; 23rd August; and 6th September). These self-supporting clergy trainings are also of obligation.

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Farewell to the OHP

Some years back the OHP realised that they would eventually have to hand over their ministry here in South Africa and began looking at a process for handing over their work at St Benedict's. Sister Maureen's illness and her return to England have accelerated the process by more than a year. Sister Erica and Pam will return to St Benedict's at the beginning of April to finalise the hand-over. Many of you will want to be in contact with them and to say your farewells. I encourage you to do so. I just ask that you be sensitive to their needs in what for them is an immensely difficult and painful time.

Two dates are important and I ask you to diarise them now:

A Day of Prayerful Discernment will be held at St Benedict's from 09h00-18h00 on Tuesday, 8th April 2008. The purpose of this day is to seek to hear and discern what God is saying to us in respect of St Benedict's and how God wants us to proceed with its work. This is an important day and I encourage as many of you as possible to be there. You are all welcome to take part in this event; just contact Helga on 011 435 3662 to register and to receive a copy of the prayer guidelines for preparation. Those who are unable to attend are asked to participate in a process of guided prayer, the details of which Michelle Pilet handed to all clergy present at the service for the Renewal of Vows last week. (Contact Michelle Pilet on 011 880 8570).

The second date is Saturday 10th May when there will be a Farewell Eucharist for the OHP. This will take place in St Peter's Priory Church (St Martin's School) Rosettenville at 14h30.

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Family News

Provincial News:

- Please pray for **Thabo Makgoba** as he leads his first Episcopal Synod from prepares for his installation as Archbishop on 30th March. Please keep the family in your prayers as they adjust to their new life in Cape Town.

- **Sarah Breytenbach**, wife of Bishop Martin, has successfully undergone surgery and is back at home. Please pray for her ongoing healing.
- **Sister Maureen** is back at the Priory in Whitby after a horrendous return journey. She is very frail and weakening rapidly. She was recently admitted to hospital with a broken collar bone (a result of the cancer in her bones). Please keep her and all the OHP community in your prayers at this time.

Diocesan News:

- **Tim Gray** has been invited to represent the diocese and province at an International Conference on Ecological Theology and Environmental Ethics to be held on the island of Malta from 2nd to 6th June 2008.
- **Stephen Ratshefola** has been in hospital and recently underwent stomach surgery. He is now out of hospital and recovering at home. Please pray for him and Patricia at this time.
- I don't know whether it is something in the air at Carletonville, but **Joe Maboe** was also admitted to hospital for emergency stomach surgery. At the time of writing he is still in hospital, although expecting to be discharged at any moment. Sadly Joe's younger sister, Eleanor Sekano, also passed away earlier this month so please keep Joe and his family in your prayers.
- **Stephen Damien-Walker** is back in hospital for further cardiac surgery. Please keep him in your prayers.
- It is with sadness that I must report that, following a disciplinary hearing, **Thembi Maseko** has had her licence as a deacon revoked and will not be eligible for reinstatement until such time as she fulfils the requirements laid down for her by the Ministry Formation Portfolio. Until then she may not exercise any ministry, not wear clerical garb, nor present herself as a clergyperson to others. Please keep her in your prayers in what is for her a very painful time.
- The Ntsoelengoe family would like to thank everyone for their faithful and earnest prayers during the time that **Rantopo Ntsoelengoe** was in hospital for an eye operation. Rantopo is doing well and recuperating at home.
- **Bikitsha Njumbuxa's** son, Scott will be getting married to Lele Ledwaba at 10h00 at Christ the King Coronationville on Saturday 19th April. All are welcome to attend. We wish the whole family joy and blessings on this wonderful occasion.
- **Bikitsha Njumbuxa** also extends an invitation to everyone to attend his Retirement Farewell on Thursday, 1st May 2008 at Christ the King Coronationville at 10h00.

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Dates for Diary

April

Tues 1 st	Clergy Day: Topic: HIV/AIDS - St Mary's, Dobsonville	09h00-12h30
Wed 2 nd	Ministry Formation Portfolio: St George's, Parktown	09h30-13h00
Sat 5 th	SfM: Ordinands' Programme: Preaching – St Joseph's Diocesan Centre	
Sat 5 th	ALPHA: Holy Cross, Orlando West	14h00-16h00
Sat 5 th	Diaconal Year Programme: St Michael's, Weltevreden Park	09h00-15h00
Mon 7 th	Final date for submission of Audited/Verified Financials to the Diocesan Office	
Tues 8 th	St Benedict's Spiritual Formation Group	09h00-12h00
Wed 9 th	Ministry Leadership Team: JP Centre, Bishop's House	08h30–13h30
	Portfolio Leadership Team: JP Centre, Bishop's House	12h00–17h00
Thurs 10 th	Bishop's Archdeaconry Visit: St Luke's, Orchards (Rosebank)	12h30-14h30
Thurs 10 th	Discernment Panelists' Meeting: St George's, Parktown	18h00
Fri 11 th	<i>Independent Schools Close</i>	
Sat 12 th	Diocesan Conference on Stewardship: St John's College, Houghton	08h00-17h00
Sat 12 th	STILIM for Lay Leaders: St Thomas', Linden	09h00-12h30
Sat 12 th	A.M.F: AGM – St Andrew's, Pimville	09h00

Sun 13 th	Bishop's Archdeacons Visit: St Luke's, Orchards (Rosebank)	
Mon 14 th	<i>Government Schools Open</i>	
Tues 15 th	Bishop's House Quiet Day: Bishop's House, 4 Crescent Drive, Westcliff	09h00-15h00
Wed 16 th	Retired Clergy Tea: Bishop's House, 4 Crescent Drive, Westcliff	10h00-12h00
Thurs 17 th	Bishop's Archdeacons Visit: St Luke's, Orchards (Rosebank)	17h00-19h00
Sat 19 th	Discernment Conference: St Mary's, Bekkersdal	08h00-17h00
Sat 19 th	Parish Minister's Workshop: St Luke's, Orchards	09h00-12h30
Sat 19 th	Anglicare: St George's, Parktown	09h00-11h00
Sun 20 th	Bishop's Archdeacons Visit: St Catherine's, Bramley (Rosebank)	07h30+09h30
Sun 20 th	Discernment Panelists' Meeting: St George's, Parktown	14h00
Wed 23 rd	Diocesan Finance Board: JP Centre, Bishop's House, Westcliff	16h30
Sat 26 th	SfM: FoV Programme: Ministry Formation – St Joseph's D.C.	09h00-17h00
Sat 26 th	A.M.F: Diocesan Council Meeting – St Cyprian's, Doornkop	09h00
Sun 27 th	FREEDOM DAY	
Sun 27 th	Bishop's Archdeacons Visit: Manche Masemola (Rosebank)	09h00
Sun 27 th	SfM FoV Worship Training: St Mary's, Bekkersdal	09h00
Sun 27 th	SfM Ordinands' Worship Training: St James', Diepkloof	09h00
Mon 28 th	PUBLIC HOLIDAY	

May

Thurs 1 st	ASCENSION DAY (ALSO MAY DAY)	
Fri 2 nd	PUBLIC HOLIDAY	
Sat 3 rd	Rectors/Self-Supporting Clergy Meeting: St Thomas', Linden	08h30-12h30
Sat 3 rd	SfM: Ordinands' Programme: St Joseph's Diocesan Centre	
Sun 4 th	Bishop's Archdeacons Visit: Sophiatown	
Sun 4 th	B Mizeki: Renewal of Vows – St Michael's, Alexandra	14h00
Mon 5 th	Ecology Conference: St Mary's, Dobsonville	08h30-16h00
Tues 6 th	Ecology Conference: St Mary's, Dobsonville <i>Independent Schools Open</i>	08h30-16h00
Tues 6 th	SAINTED: "Formed by the Word" (Mark's Gospel) – St Luke's, Orchards	19h00-21h00
Wed 7 th	Ministry Formation Portfolio: St George's, Parktown	09h30-13h00
Sat 10 th	+B's meeting with Wardens: St James', Diepkloof	08h30-12h30
Sat 10 th	STILIM for Lay Leaders: St Thomas', Linden	09h00-12h30
Sat 10 th	Diaconal Year Programme: St Joseph's Diocesan Centre, Sophiatown	09h00-15h00
Sat 10 th	A.W.F: Executive & Diocesan Council Meeting – All Saints, Rabie Ridge	09h30
Sat 10 th	Parish Governance Workshop	
Sat 10 th	Emergency Response Training (2): St Luke's, Orchards	08h30-16h00
Sun 11 th	PENTECOST	
Sun 11 th	A.M.F: Renewal of Vows Service - Good Shepherd, Tladi	13h00
Tues 13 th	SAINTED: "Formed by the Word" (Mark's Gospel) – St Luke's, Orchards	19h00-21h00
Wed 14 th	Management Team Meeting: St Joseph's Diocesan Centre, Sophiatown	08h30-16h00
Thurs 15 th	Bishop's Archdeacons Visit: Sophiatown	
Fri 16 th	B Mizeki: Executive Meeting - Manche Masemola	18h00
Fri 16 th	Mothers' Union: Workshop	
Fri 16 th	Boundaries Course: St Luke's, Orchards	19h00-21h00
Sat 17 th	Boundaries Course: St Luke's, Orchards	19h00-21h00
Sat 17 th	P.O.S.T: Eucharist / 1 st Communion - St Margaret's, Bedfordview	09h00-16h00
Sat 17 th	D.S.R.T: Bi-monthly Meeting - 45-22 nd Street, Craighall Park	10h00
Sat 17 th	Parish Governance Workshop	
Sat 17 th	Mothers' Union: Workshop	
Sun 18 th	Mothers' Union: Workshop	
Tues 20 th	SAINTED: "Formed by the Word" (Mark's Gospel) – St Luke's, Orchards	19h00-21h00
Fri 23 rd	Boundaries Course: St Luke's, Orchards	19h00-21h00
Sat 24 th	Boundaries Course: St Luke's, Orchards	19h00-21h00
Sat 24 th	Self-Supporting Clergy Day: St Thomas', Linden	08h30-12h30
Sat 24 th	Parish Governance Workshop	
Sat 24 th	Anglicare: St George's, Parktown	09h00-11h00
Sat 24 th	A.M.F: Diocesan Quiet Day - Walkerville	09h00
Sun 25 th	Bishop's Archdeacons Visit: Sophiatown	
Sun 25 th	Anglican Choirs' Festival	
Mon 26 th	Retirement Housing Committee: St Martin's, Rosebank	16h00

Tues 27 th	SAINTED: "Formed by the Word" (Mark's Gospel) – St Luke's, Orchards	19h00-21h00
Wed 28 th	Trustees: JP Centre, Bishop's House, Westcliff	16h30
Fri 30 th	New Wine Festival: St Luke's, Orchards	
Sat 31 st	New Wine Festival: St Luke's, Orchards	09h00-17h00
Sat 31 st	Sfm FoV Programme: St Michael's, Bryanston	09h00-17h00

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Moves, Appointments and Vacancies

- **Mpho Chaane** has been made rector of St Peter's, Krugersdorp. The Parish of St John's, Roodepoort graciously released him so that he could begin ministry in Krugersdorp in time for Holy Week and Easter. Please pray for Precious and the children as they play 'catch-up' with the suddenness of their move. Pray for them all in this new ministry.
- **Japé Heath** has resigned from the diocese and ANERELA (where he was its General Secretary) to take up an appointment with INERELA, the international wing of ANERELA. His appointment is with effect from 1st April, so he will sadly already be in England by the time you receive this notification. We wish him every blessing in his new ministry.
- **Nigel Mollink** retires as rector of St Peter's, Auckland Park at the end of April. Nigel and Wendy have been valued members of our diocesan ministry team and we are sorry to see them go. Nigel intends taking a sabbatical for the first few months, but has indicated that he would then love to continue ministry as an assistant somewhere. We thank them for their ministry and wish them every blessing in what does not sound too much like a retirement.

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Birthdays And Anniversaries:

Please remember the following persons in your prayers as they celebrate birthdays and anniversaries in the coming months:

APRIL

1 st	Cecil Lamb
3 rd	Joe & Mary Maboe (W/A)
3 rd	Nigel Mollink
4 th	Kenneth & Hilary Owen (W/A)
5 th	Morgan & Lynette Ellis (W/A)
5 th	Doug & Vanessa Michael (W/A)
7 th	Tshepo Maloka
7 th	Nelly Ramoabi
8 th	Martin Louw
10 th	Tim & Rosemary Gray (W/A)
10 th	Peter Wilson
10 th	Keith & Pam Berning (W/A)
11 th	Cyril Halkett
14 th	Oupaki Moruthane
15 th	Mothusimang Makata
15 th	Paul Siaki
16 th	Doug Wessels
16 th	Loreen McDougall
16 th	Liziwe Moreo
17 th	Bill Salter
17 th	Bikitsha Njumbuxa
17 th	Mmalerato Molwantwa ?
18 th	Cecil & Pamela Lamb (W/A)
20 th	Fred & Merle Robb (W/A)
20 th	David Edwards

MAY

5 th	Molebe & Motlalepula Mosima (W/A)
5 th	Gerard Sharp
6 th	Makhozi 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
18 th	Zodwa Khumalo
19 th	Vicky Moroa
20 th	Gwyn Slade
22 nd	Margaret Steward
23 rd	Pearl Mokgohlane
24 th	Charles May
25 th	Mlanjeni & Nokwezi Dodo (W/A)
25 th	Nosipho Matubatuba
27 th	Dolly Lethoko
27 th	Yvonne Payne
28 th	John & Amy Herbert (W/A)
28 th	Ntombi Molefe
28 th	Tsépo Matubatuba
30 th	Doug & Lynette Wessels
30 th	Yasmille Smythe
30 th	Rhoda Dove

