

The Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist

(The Anglican Church in Limpopo Province)

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Ad Clerum: Manche Masemola 2012

To All Clergy
Copies to all Churchwardens
Copies to Diocesan Organisations

Please share this with God's people in your parish!

Dear Friends in Christ,

By the time you get to read this the Olympics will be in full swing, and we will have celebrated the 25th birthday of the Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist at the Manche Masemola Pilgrimage, with our first Bishop, Philip Le Feuvre as our guest preacher.

Last week we had a wonderful, joy-filled Celebration Banquet in Polokwane, where our guest speaker was Professor Barney Pityana, Rector of the College of the Transfiguration in Grahamstown. **We have good reason for joy: although we face many challenges, God has blessed our Diocese!** I have had a number of very encouraging parish visits in the last two months, which left me feeling full of hope, with thanks to God and the leaders of those parishes.

At the Banquet I shared some thought about the vision of the Diocese and the way forward as we start the next 25 years. This is what I would like to share with you in this "Ad Clerum".

Growing in Mission and Ministry

1 The Purpose of the Church

It is important to start by understanding the purpose of the church. It is **not** to raise enough money to pay the Parish Pledge to the Diocese every month! It **is** these important spiritual principles:

- ✦ Make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20)
- ✦ Proclaim the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:15)
- ✦ Bring good news to the poor (Luke 4:18-19) – holistically: spiritual, economic, healing, relational...
- ✦ Continue the mission & ministry of Jesus (John 20:20-23) – "As the Father sent me, so I send you."

In the Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist we are called to work towards this purpose in a challenging context. We have an overwhelmingly rural population who do not have easy access to health facilities, good education, running water or sewerage. Many of the people in Limpopo suffer

as a result of poverty and unemployment. I passed the offices of a big company at lunch time today – they were obviously accepting applications for jobs, and I saw about 300 people standing there with forms to hand in – probably for just a few work opportunities.

Despite the vast improvement in Government treatment programmes, HIV & AIDS is still rampant. Families also seem to be disintegrating. When I was growing up it was normal to have two parents – now it is the exception!

An on top of all this, Limpopo is one of the worst in South Africa when it comes to ineffective government. The Department of Basic Education textbook disaster is just a symptom of incompetence at many levels.

It is in **this** context that God calls us to live out and proclaim his reign of justice, peace and love.

2 We Have a Vision

How can we do this? Our Diocesan Vision points the way:

To **make disciples** in vibrant, self-sufficient congregations established and linked to each other by sharing in:

- ✦ Resources
- ✦ Ministry and Service
- ✦ Outreach and Evangelism

Disciples of Jesus are people who live like him, minister like him, reach out like him in God's mission... and do it all in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The most important thing we can do is encourage and help our people to grow as disciples of Jesus – because they will then impact their world in transforming ways. Research by Christian Schwarz has identified 8 qualities that are present in growing, effective churches, and I have added a 9th that is essential in our context:

- 1) Empowering Leadership – where leaders do not cling to power, but hand over to others and help them with training and support.
- 2) Every Member Ministry – where all members are encouraged and helped to discover their spiritual gifts and use them to serve God.
- 3) Passionate Spirituality – where the members of the church are excited about their relationship

with God and are growing in prayer and understanding the Bible.

- 4) Inspiring Worship – where services are an opportunity to encounter God personally and receive his strength for lives of service.
- 5) Effective Structures – where parish administration and finances are done correctly, and there is no doubt about what is happening to church money.
- 6) Holistic Small Groups – where many of the people meet regularly to study the Bible (e.g. Rooted in Jesus), support one another and grow as disciples.
- 7) Loving Relationships – where the members of the church really care for one another and enjoy being together. There is much laughter and joy.
- 8) Relevant Evangelism – where the church is always finding ways to share the Good News of God's love in Jesus with the community.
- 9) Caring Community Development – where we are using our facilities to serve the community (e.g. food gardens, drop-in centres).

I have written about these things (many times) before, so I won't do it again in any detail here. All I need to say is this: ***your weakest quality as a church will limit your growth and effectiveness.*** Think about that! It will give you a clue about what you need to do next.

3 Challenge to Each Parish

As I have thought and prayed about our vision over the last 12 years, God has impressed on me some important things that each parish can do to help it come true. The list keeps expanding, but I believe it is very much in reach for every one of our parishes.

Please make these items a matter of serious prayer, thought and planning in your parish! Each parish should aim to have:

- 1) A Stipendiary Rector – to oversee vision, training, ministry and mission and serve as Team Leader.
- 2) A Team of Community (or self-supporting) Priests & Deacons – to lead the sacramental, pastoral and preaching/teaching ministries of the church.
- 3) A Parish Youth Pastor – to lead ministry to youth and young adults. This will also help us to identify future clergy and start training them.
- 4) Many Lay Leaders – there is more than enough room for **all** the leaders who emerge: in church councils, as lay ministers (Worship Leaders, Preachers, Pastoral Carers, Evangelists...), leading groups and organisations.
- 5) Ministry of All Believers – encouraging **all** our people to be involved in ministry, whether formal (organised by the church) or informal (spontaneous).
- 6) Using our Land to Create Work – let's lead the way in our communities by using the resources we have to create work. (Organisations like Operation Hunger are willing to partner with us).

The best way to make progress in these things is to set a concrete goal for the next year – perhaps in only one of the above – and then budget and plan to make it happen.

Some of our parishes also have special challenges. An important one is to **multiply** into more parishes that are smaller and more manageable. In 2007 we had only 12 parishes in the Diocese. In 2012 we have grown to 23, some of which are making great progress! We set ourselves the goal of having 32 parishes by 2017 – they will still be big, because we have about 190 chapelries and congregations in all. The focus for multiplication in the next few years will be, I think, on Sibasa, Sekhukhuneland and (perhaps) Thathaganya. Baken-Matji mission also has the goal of becoming the parishes of Bakenberg and Matjijileng in the not-too-distant future.

Then there is also the challenge to all of us to **plant churches** in communities where there are none – and there are many places like this! For example, I can think of parts of Polokwane, New Pietersburg, Ga Chuene, Lephalele and many "RDP villages" throughout Limpopo. In some of these places good things are already beginning to happen thanks to established churches with a heart for mission.

Synod 3rd Sitting

I was disappointed at the non-attendance of some clergy and Parish Representatives at the 2nd sitting of Diocesan Synod in June. If you fail to attend, you are letting down your church and betraying the trust they placed in you!

Please make every effort to make sure that those who should be there are present for our 3rd Sitting on Saturday 1st September. It is an important session, which will include the following:

- ✦ Third and final reading of Diocesan Rule Changes;
- ✦ Presentation of the Draft Diocesan Budget for 2013;
- ✦ Debate of motions that were submitted in time (by 3rd August).

God bless you as you give yourself to God in a life of prayer, worship, ministry, service and mission.

Yours in Christ,

† Martin: St Mark the Evangelist

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