

BISHOP'S CHARGE

Greetings

My dear brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ, members of Synod, Bishops, honoured ecumenical partners, Members of the Provincial Order of Simon of Cyrene, Members of the Diocesan Order of St Alban, distinguished guests and friends of the Diocese, greetings and welcome to this 85th session of the Synod of the Diocese of Pretoria.

Synod Theme

After much prayer, reflection, careful listening, and consultation, I have been led to choose the following theme for this address, known as the Bishop's Charge:

We'll drink from these wells.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teachings and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers (Acts 2:42)

I wish to begin by sharing with you some of the thoughts that informed this choice of theme and focus.

"Spiritual life is like living water that springs up from the very depths of our own spiritual experience. In spiritual life everyone has to drink from his or her own well".

This quotation comes from a work by St Bernard of Clairvaux, titled *De Consideratione*, in which he indicates that we must all think, pray, and work in the place from which our nourishment comes. We are mindful as we consider the words of St Bernard, of the words of our Lord to the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4:14, *"Those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give them will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life"*. The Samaritan woman had an encounter with the Lord at that spring that changed her life, and what happened there stands as the beginning of her spiritual journey.

Gustavo Gutierrez, the father of Liberation Theology, used the wise counsel of St Bernard as the title of his book *"We drink from our own wells"*. In it he describes spirituality as the starting point for Latin American liberation Theology. For Gutierrez, the experience that comes from the Spirit is found in the midst of the Latin American people's struggle for liberation, a struggle in which God's gifts of faith, hope and love make people disciples.

Henri Nouwen, in writing about discernment, writes that drinking from our own wells has nothing to do with abstract opinions, convictions, or ideas, but it has everything to do with the tangible, audible, and visible experience of God. He states that by dipping into the well of our own lives, we can discern the movements of God's Spirit in our lives. That well is the place from which we ourselves should drink. It is the place that our ancestors in the faith drank from. It has brought us here. It is summed up in theological parlance as the tradition that nurtures and sustains.

My predecessor, Bishop Jo Seoka, blessed us at the last Synod with a theme that started with the word Encounter. The full theme, to remind you, was: *Encounter and conversation with Jesus Christ: Put out to the deep water and let down your nets for a catch. (Luke 5:1 – 11)*. In the course of our reflections on that theme we learnt that Jesus not only set out to fish in the deep water of the lake to bring in a miraculous catch of fish, but He was particular about fishing in the deep depths of Simon's soul, because at the end of that encounter, Simon would fall down at the feet of Jesus and call Jesus, "Lord". There is a marked progression in Simon from the beginning of the text to the end: He goes from calling Jesus "Master", to calling Jesus "Lord". The miraculous catch was in fact Simon, more than the large haul of fish. Herein lies the deeper meaning of the text: Fish, you see, is a commercial commodity. When fishermen make a good catch, they see money, food, and other material benefits. What is described in this encounter goes way beyond that. Jesus was interested in much more than material gain. The miraculous catch of fish brings in Simon, who is blessed with a spiritual experience that contributes to the beginning of his spiritual journey. Here is an encounter that would inform Simon's future conversations with Jesus the Christ. It is quite profound that Simon's "capture" by Jesus Christ took place in an environment Simon was utterly familiar with and worked in every day of his life. That Simon's encounter was so powerful that he left his nets to follow Jesus.

And as we consider one of Simon's spiritual experiences, *"we must remember that our relationship with God is nurtured through our encounter with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in word and sacrament. These experiences enrich and shape our understanding of God and our communion with one another"* (Signposts, TEAC).

"At the root of every spirituality there is a particular experience that is had by concrete persons living at a particular time", wrote Gutierrez. The spiritual experience becomes the source which continues to inform the spirituality of the followers. It becomes the well from which the followers (and future generations) drink. It is the link from the past to the present, the intangible cord that binds generations together. It is what makes life meaningful.

The core idea communicated by St Bernard in referring to drinking from one's own well is obviously that unique and renewing encounter with the living Christ. The core idea also raises the question: from what well do we / can we / should we drink? Hence my adaptation of the words of Bernard of Clairvaux and linking it to the description of the earliest Christian community.

The description of the earliest Christian community in Acts 2: 41-47 stands like a lighthouse in the midst of thick fog. It is the guiding sound when sight fails, it is the source to which we must return, it is the well from which we must drink, if we are to be true to our vocation, which is to be *"a chosen race, a holy nation, God's own people"* (1Pet. 2:9).

I invite you to briefly consider the chronological order that precedes the description of the life of the earliest Christian community. It started with an activity of God, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, that event which came to be described as the birth of the Christian Church - the Pentecost experience. The Pentecost experience was followed by the earliest Christian sermon, given by he whom Jesus named Peter –

he who was the first to confess Jesus as the Christ. Peter would now lead others to the same confession, and his sermon led to the inquiry: "*What should we do*", which was followed by the instruction: "*Repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*". Baptism followed for those, who accepted Jesus as Lord, and finally living in the life of the Spirit. The life in the Spirit is described in the following verses: "*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teachings and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers. They were together and had all things in common; they praised God and were held in high esteem by all the people*". It all started with an encounter with Christ that led to conversion and baptism, then living a life in the Spirit, on a journey to the Father.

The well from which the Christian community would drink on their journey with God is described in verse 42 of Acts 2. "*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teachings and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers*". Much of the Epistles that were penned by Paul, Peter, James and John are devoted to referring the early Christian communities to this – almost as if they wanted the people of God to continue to drink from that well, and drink correctly. Those Pastoral Epistles are significant for another reason: They mirror the life of the early church – a life not much different from ours – a life of struggling with sin, divisions, and false teachings that contest the orthodox teachings of the apostles.

The teachings of the apostles, fellowship, the Eucharist, and prayer, are also the sources, the wells from which we are to drink, if we are to be true to our vocation in our ever-changing world. We need a scholarly engagement with the well itself, while we, at the same time, are sensitive to our ever-changing context which calls for fresh expressions of a scripturally informed faith and spiritual life.

We live in what Brian Stiller in a book called "Preaching the Parables to a Post Modern Society" calls post-modernity. He writes about how, from first-century Palestine through to the 17th century, *revelation* was the primary means by which life was to be interpreted. During that pre-modern age, he says, the Church in the Western world dominated. The pre-modern age also saw the collapse of the early church with the advent of Islam, it saw the Great Schism, the East/West Divide of the Church, and the birth of the Eastern Orthodox Church. That pre-modern age was marked by controversy and schism. Nonetheless, exploration, intellectual inquiry, and political rule found authority in the Church.

During the Renaissance, a philosophical starting point other than God took root. Revelation was replaced by *rationality*. From the perspective of ecclesiastical history, the Reformation itself can be seen as a product of the age of Reason. *Reason* became the cornerstone of the Renaissance, and God was replaced as the primary source of truth. But then during the first half of the 20th century rationality itself as the cornerstone of the modern era, was challenged, as centuries before revelation had been challenged.

So we live in post-modern society in a time of *plural truths*, a rejection of the notion that truth is an objective construct. Your truth is not necessarily my truth, the dictum goes. And as a result, the metanarratives – the stories that give meaning to life and

serve to answer the questions of human existence are rejected. Political correctness is the mantra in our post-modern era. As truth is relative, all ideas are considered to be of equal value. And finally, Stiller argues that post-modernity is driven by a concern for the *therapeutic*. Personal well-being is all important, and finding ways to shape one's self into well-being is the pre-occupying concern.

In an electronic conversation with Prof. Pityana about the realities of our post-modern age, he alerted me to the work of Prof. Mouton of the University of Stellenbosch. She reflected on the post-modern age in South Africa, and argues that the present moment in South Africa bears the promise of a new, more accountable hermeneutic awareness, which ironically often seems to *strengthen* the deeply entrenched sense of alienation among and within people. A potentially constructive yet dangerous consequence of a secular society and post-modern thinking, for example, is that it leads to a breakdown of the hegemony of truth claims. For instead of celebrating the richness of plurality and complementarity, of *sharing* one another's identities and stories of joy and pain, the post-modern attitude for many becomes synonymous with a certain *disintegration*, with a *loss* of orientation and cohesion, the *loss* of a collective moral identity, memory and destination, and consequently, the *loss* of a corresponding (corporate) ethos of dignity and respect for life, of responsibility and involvement, with a general attitude of "*who cares?*". For many this means a loss of trust in all forms of leadership – including church leadership. Due to such detached and disinterested attitudes, extreme post-modern thinking fails to cultivate a sustainable agenda for transformation.

This is where we are today, as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, in a world of plural truths, of contesting beliefs, even contesting religious beliefs, and of people seeking *therapy*. How do we stay true to our vocation? How do we remain faithful to the God who called us into being, in whose name we were baptised. What do we need to do to be the holy faithful people of God, a chosen people, a holy priesthood?

The Good News is that God in his providence has already blessed us with a well that we can drink from to stay true to our calling. It is summed up here in one verse: the teachings of the Apostles, fellowship, the Eucharist, and prayer. These four activities are often regarded as the elements that characterized a Christian gathering in the early Church. Together, they assure a rootedness in the walk with God. At the same time they have sufficient merit to stand on their own as spiritual disciplines.

Allow me to briefly say something on each of these important elements. I want to suggest that we unpack these themes in our parishes, our Guilds, our Bible Study Groups, our Ward meetings, in order to drink from the living water that our Lord provides us with. This is a call to return to the basics, to that, which we hold dear in the Anglican family of Christians.

The Teachings of the Apostles

Firstly, there is the teaching given by the apostles. They were called and qualified for this task by their companionship with Jesus. This is important to note. Each of the apostles sat at the feet of Jesus, they absorbed his teachings, and they were

later commissioned by Jesus for their mission. They, as a senior priest in this Diocese used to say, were properly cooked!

The teachings of the apostles were the teachings of Jesus. It is essentially the teachings of the entire Bible. Even in changing circumstances, the apostles sought to remain true to what they perceived to be the way of Christ. St Paul would write to the church in Corinth and say: "For no one can lay a foundation other than the one that has been laid: that foundation is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). So even in our world of plural truths and contesting beliefs, we need to stand firm on the teachings of the apostles, which essentially is Scripture.

Now our Church is a priest-centred church. Yes, lay people are important. The children and young people are important. But the life of the Anglican Church is so structured that if you have a priest, at ease with his/her vocation in Christ, and whose formation and training was done properly, then the rest will follow. The priest will relate in a meaningful way to God, and the laity will follow suit. The converse is also true. If our clergy are not well trained, they and the people whom they lead will drink from wells that are contaminated.

It is a sad indictment on religious bodies like ourselves to see the need for an agency of government through the work of its Cultural Religious and Linguistics Rights Commission, which seeks to regulate churches and the appointment of clergy who preach and minister to God's people simply because of the abuses of some pseudo self-styled prophets and pastors who own churches, and have a following. It is sad because religious leaders are abusing the freedom that we have in Christ. It is sad because religious leaders have strayed from the basic teachings of the apostles. It is sad because we, who know better, are not doing enough to protect the people of God from unscrupulous religious entrepreneurs, who are leading the people of God astray. It is sad because we, our clergy, are often seen to be lazy, seen to be ill prepared for basic things like preaching, celebrating the Eucharist, and providing pastoral care for the people of God. The belief of the Psalmist in Ps. 23 is that the Lord God leads him to green pastures – a part of that pasture today is the assembly of the faithful, where we who are members of the clergy provide leadership. It is sad when the people of God arrive, and are met with indifference, and by clergy who are ill equipped to respond to a people who are desperately in search of making sense of their world. Clergy who seem to take matters of desperate import casually and laconically.

The priest-centred church can only work, if the priest himself/herself drinks from the well of the apostles' teachings. Our clergy need to know the teachings of the apostles, and the tradition of the Church, which stretches over more than 2000 years and which complements Scripture. Our clergy need to know how to position themselves theologically and spiritually in response to those teachings. In one of the signposts of Anglicanism on the Anglican Communion website, we find this very apt reminder of how we relate to Scripture: *"As Anglicans we discern the voice of the living God in the Holy Scriptures, mediated by tradition and reason. We read the Bible together, corporately and individually, with a grateful and critical sense of the*

past, a vigorous engagement with the present, and with patient hope for God's future".

It remains one of my aims to equip and support the clergy, so that they can excel, be competent in the sacred ministry entrusted to them, and be a source of pride and excellence in the Church. We need to invest in our clergy, more so than we have done in recent years. To this end we shall send two ordinands to the College of the Transfiguration (CoTT) for residential training and formation next year. We shall also send three clergy persons to the CoTT for short stays at the College next year to complement their formation and training. In addition, we wish to offer sabbaticals to full-time clergy, who wish to take time off so they can enjoy the experience of some disciplined reading and reflection. These initiatives are an act of faith, because as yet we do not have the funds to finance these lofty ideals. But we are determined to do this, and we trust in God to provide.

Investing in the clergy will see us move from mediocrity to excellence. Investing in the clergy will see us move from maintenance to mission. Investing in the clergy will contribute to the growth of our church, it will see us having clergy who are properly cooked!

The Fellowship

Secondly, the earliest Christian community is described as a community who enjoyed fellowship. The word means sharing (*koinonia*), and while it could refer to the sharing of goods described in verses 44ff, it is more likely that it refers to the holding of a common meal or to holding together in common a common faith and a shared tradition of beliefs, and spiritual values. But it carries a lot more weight than just sharing. In 1 John 1:3 the apostle John, describes the relationship between the apostles and Christ as fellowship, and he invites Christians into a similar fellowship. Paul thanks God for the active fellowship of the church in Philippi with the Gospel, and later refers them to his fellowship, even with the suffering of Christ (1.5 and 3:10).

There is good fellowship in many of our parishes and Archdeaconries. This is something we are good at. At the same time our fellowship has been largely reduced to the warm feeling of relationships with one another. While this is not to be neglected, we must strive to go beyond the merely social fellowship which we enjoy as people who get on well with one another, people who enjoy being members of the same Guild or parish. We must go deeper than the superficial sharing of expensive drinks and designer beers. This is what some of our worshipping units have come to after the sharing of the Eucharist. How do we return to a true participation in the fellowship with the Gospel? How do we ensure that the fellowship with God and one another in the Holy Eucharist should be the true reason for our assembly, rather than what happens after the Eucharist? We must return to the well, that's what we must do. We must have more fellowship, filled with the Holy Spirit, with each other around the Word of God in Bible Studies than we have around a glass of wine or a beer, even though such fellowship is also a signal or symbol of the sharing of good news.

The Breaking of the Bread

The Breaking of the Bread is Luke's term, for what Paul would call the Lord's Supper. The Breaking of the Bread refers primarily to the act with, which a traditional Jewish meal would open, but has now gained a new significance in view of the actions of Christ in the Upper Room on the night before he died, and also when he fed the multitudes.

The little booklet *Saints and Seasons*, reminds us of the various titles given to this sacred act.

"Eucharist – the peerless act of Christ's praise and thanksgiving in which we are privileged to join;

Lord's Supper – the commemoration of the Christ's prophetic acceptance of his death;

Holy Communion – the fellowship meal which knits the many of us together in the one Body of Christ;

Holy Sacrament – the pledge of Christ's real presence among his people; and

Holy Mass – the identification of ourselves with Christ once for all in an act of sacrificial obedience which He eternally presents to His Father in Heaven".

The preface to the Holy Eucharist in the Anglican Prayer Book states that: *"Each celebration is a fulfilment of our Lord's command to do this in remembrance of him; his presence is made real among us, and we lift up our hearts as we are caught up into the worship of heaven."* It goes on to say that we need to approach each celebration of the Eucharist with joy, reverence, and awe.

The spiritual and liturgical tradition of the Anglican Church is essentially a sacramental one, with a particular leaning on the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. In the Eucharist, we thank God for making present in liturgical form the meaning of the whole act of God in Christ.

It has become the primary reason why people fill our pews. As we reflect on the importance of the Eucharist for our spirituality, I wish to ask clergy and churchwardens to be mindful that this is a sacred act in which we give thanks to God for his work in Jesus Christ. Our Eucharist services often become occasions for fundraising, or for long drawn out notices and discussions about projects and parish affairs which can really take place elsewhere. So often we lose the sense of awe and of worship through the things we add to the Eucharist. The fact that we have a 'captive audience' does not give us the right to squeeze a few more Rands from their pockets, or to subject the people of God to a monologue from a priest or warden. We must be more creative in how we lead our people to improve on their giving, rather than allowing the dignity of the Eucharist to be compromised. Our clergy and lay leadership must return to the well of the apostles' teachings, to the basic understanding of this sacred act of worship.

The Prayers

The last of the four essential elements in the religious practice of that early Christian church are the prayers. Biblical commentators argue that the first Christians observed the set Jewish hours of prayer, as Peter and John were doing in Acts 3:1. They learnt about the importance of prayer from their Lord and Master, who would be seen praying, whether in the Temple or not. Jesus took time to set an example of prayer, He not only taught his disciples *to* pray, he also taught them *how* to pray, and never *what* to pray! The apostles built on the example of their Lord, and now set a similar example to those who have come to faith.

Prayer is the lifeblood of the Christian. It is not, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminded us, *“a free will offering to God, it is an obligatory service, something which He requires”*. *“Prayer”*, writes Richard Foster, *“is the key to the home, the heart of God”*. This after he has taken time to explain what we will find in the various rooms of the home of God: the living room of the heart of God, where we can share freely; the kitchen, where the conversation is light; the dining room, where we can feast; the study, where we can draw from God’s wisdom and ask all the questions we want; the workshop, where we can be co-labourers with God, the bedroom, where we can be ourselves, naked and vulnerable and free.

Our churches must be houses of prayer. It is a dream of mine that our clergy will lead prayers, say the offices and celebrate the Eucharist in their churches on a daily basis, and invite their parishioners to join them in these acts of worship - that our priests will lead the way! Too often the parish church is seen to be open on Sundays only, and only used during the week when the Guilds are meeting. The apostles observed set hours of prayer, after the example of Jesus and their Jewish tradition. That is the well from which, we must drink. That is the example from which, we must draw.

These then, friends, constitute the well to which, we will return in the next three years. It is the foundation which Christ and the early Christian community have blessed us with. It defines what it means to be the Body of Christ. A renewed focus on these foundational elements will disciple our newcomers, and remind the old guard of the depths of our existing gifts in Christ. We have everything we need to move towards a deeper spirituality and a closer walk with God.

We undertake to source and develop suitable material on Scripture, the Eucharist, Prayer, and Fellowship for discussion and reflection in parishes, Guilds, and the various ministries of our Diocese.

State of the nation

We meet in Synod at a time when our political and economic life fills us with a deep sense of anxiety, even despair. The dream of our Rainbow Nation seems to be over. The Benedictine Sister Joan Chittister wrote recently while reflecting on her American reality: *“There’s a pall hanging over the country these days. And it’s everywhere”*. It is true of our own land as well. The disappointment of the premier liberation movement on the African continent to do the right thing is disappointing, to say the least. Ours has become a land in which our national discourses are

dominated by tales of corruption, state capture, service delivery protests, student mass action, junk status, crime, indebtedness, and increased racial polarisation. In the midst of all these, we battle to shed the legacy of the Apartheid era and colonialism – the triple threats of inequality, poverty, and unemployment. In the midst of these, our political and economic leaders do not inspire confidence.

We have much to be worried about. Perhaps the most worrying thing is that civil society seems to have lost its voice and muscle. And the prophetic voice of the Church seems to have been compromised and become somewhat silent. Large segments of the Church and civil society seem to have been co-opted, carried along in the dash for material gain, with little regard for the poor and those on the margins of society. We've been "captured" ourselves. The Church has become a PTY Ltd. entity. Clergy exercise a profession, rather than a vocation. This is why we see religious entrepreneurs spray gullible people with Doom, and making them eat snakes and grass!

A return to the well, a drinking from the well of living water of Christ, that well that promises life in abundance, will ensure that we ourselves do not get co-opted, and will give us the depth we need to stand firm in the face of these anxious times. Here we refer especially to what some theologians call *"the preferential option of the poor"*.

I am mindful here of the remarkable phenomena in the story of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. When the rebuilding was done, the people sat down and had the Word read to them. The Word was interpreted by a host of priests and scribes. One gets the sense that there was hunger for the Word, but more than that, a hunger to make sense of the Word in their changed circumstances. Nehemiah Chapter 8 describes a people who have always had the Word of God, they have had the Word of God as a people during their long exodus, during their time as conquerors, but now they return to the same Word as the conquered. Herein I see our task, to help the people of God make sense of the disappointment of our failed national dream, and especially to help our people to rise again. A return to the teachings of the apostles with a new hermeneutic will help us in this task.

Like Nehemiah and Ezra, we need to commit, together with the people of God, to rebuild the walls of that which have now been shattered by corruption, state capture, and the sense of entitlement that characterise our nation at this time.

We must not underestimate the power of the well from which we are invited to drink. Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu is known for his daily Eucharist, the study of Scripture, prayer, and meditation. His spirituality, and the leadership that was informed by these spiritual disciplines, had helped to overthrow the giant that was Apartheid. We see the same when we read about the life of the late Archbishop Oscar Romero. They drank from the well that we read about in the life of the early Church. We will do well to drink from that well also.

Reflections on the life of the Communion and the Province

The Anglican Consultative Council has called on every Province, Diocese, and Parish in the Anglican Communion to adopt a clear focus on discipleship by having a

Season of Intentional Discipleship. At our last Provincial Synod, *Growing the Church* was asked to train, provide resources, and co-ordinate this important calling. While we recommit at this Synod to the teachings of the apostles, we are mindful of the words of our Lord: *“If you continue in my teachings, you are truly my disciples”* (John 8:31). We await the material from *Growing the Church*, and commit to participate fully in the Season for Intentional Discipleship.

A resolution at Provincial Synod on the varied practices of funerals resolved that all Anglican parishioners should be received for burial in church without discrimination; all funerals should be conducted by clergy or under their close oversight; and that no improper demands should be made either at the time of death or at any other time as a prerequisite for access to a funeral in the parish church. While this resolution is welcomed, I think it still falls short of the Gospel ideal. Our churches should offer its services to all (not only Anglicans). In this way, we are closer to the heart of Jesus, who had a very special place in his heart for those who did not belong.

The revision of the Anglican Prayer Book is on-going. The Provincial Liturgical Committee continues to develop what is currently known as *“A Prayer Book for Southern Africa Today – Under Southern Skies, In An African Voice”*. The Liturgical Committee was affirmed in its work to develop liturgies that are aimed at transformative worship.

The motion on human sexuality generated the most discussion and made the news headlines. It was not passed at Provincial Synod, but the Archbishop has since set up a task team to continue reflections on this important focus. The overall objective of the Archbishop’s Task Team is to develop material that can be used for reflection in parishes. The process design will include principles of inclusion and participation and the reflections aim to involve the Church in a journey to hear and discern God’s will for the Church at this time. The envisaged outcome is to table a motion at Provincial Synod in 2019 to amend Canon 34, which will enable ministry to those in Same Sex Unions and the LGBTI Community. We were requested to provide a Liaison Committee consisting of two members to work with the Task Team on our behalf, and to facilitate conversation within our Diocese. This has been done, and we resolve to engage with this subject until we are in a place where we are at peace in our conscience before God.

The Way Ahead

I have already spoken at length about the focus of our ministry for the next three years. There are two more important focus areas that I wish to address.

Firstly, the continuous development of the Western part of our Diocese into an autonomous Diocese. I fully support this dream and wish for us to continue to build on the wonderful work that has taken place so far. Financial giving has increased substantially, and the appointment of a Rural Dean and additional clergy have improved ministry and mission in ways that have not been seen before. We must assess at this Synod whether the growth in that region has reached its peak, or whether we should continue to invest there. The hard reality is that the region is as yet unable to be financially sustainable. A further reality is that the resolution of the

last Synod to appoint a Rural Dean proves challenging to continue with in view of the poor state of our Diocesan finances. We have been led to ask for a postponement of the visit of the Provincial Task Team. They would have come to assess the feasibility of the new Diocese, and would have found us wanting. We have asked the Synod of Bishops to wait until we invite them to come. In the meantime we will have to continue with our efforts to grow the region. Discussions with three neighbouring Dioceses are ongoing in a bid to have parishes from across our borders becoming part of the new Diocese.

The second additional focus concerns the environment as a missional priority. At the Provincial Synod of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa (ACSA) in 2014, a motion was passed to call on parishes in ACSA *“to include creation care as an essential component of Christian mission and encouraged parishes to become part of the eco-congregation movement in order to inspire, encourage and assist congregations to become centres that demonstrate sustainable living as they seek to fulfil their responsibility to God to care for life on this planet”*.

The Synod noted amongst others that *“to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and to sustain and renew life of the earth”* is one of the five marks of mission of the Anglican Communion.

Some of our parishes have taken up the call, and it is wonderful to see the various initiatives in our Diocese. The collection of bottle tops under the Tumelong banner, the collection of glass bottles in skips on church properties; the placement of special containers on church premises to recycle glass, plastic and paper; the inclusion in pew leaflets of tips to recycle, reuse, and reduce; all add up to our collective efforts, and are found all over the Diocese. We praise God for this initiative.

So we have moved to formally acknowledge and organise this ministry. A Chaplain was appointed to bring the various ministries under one umbrella, and to encourage and initiate this special ministry in parishes where it has not yet taken root. It is my intention to appoint a Canon in the Cathedral Chapter with this specific focus.

Disgracing the Church and Defaming the Bishop

I borrow this title from the Synod Charge of my predecessor in 2014, because it is true that the conflict between the Cathedral and the Diocese has caused considerable reputational damage to all who were caught up in it. It has dominated discussions at the Diocesan Synod in 2011 and 2014. I hope we will not see a repeat of that here. It has been a priority of mine since I took office, to lay these matters to rest, and to remove the obstacles that prevent us from genuine reconciliation in Christ.

To this end, I have been in conversation with individuals and groups; I have, at the installation of the Dean in February this year, withdrawn the charges against the late Dean Lubabalo Ngewu; I have lifted his suspension; and I have offered the apologies of the Church.

Last month the High Court (Gauteng North Division) succeeded in what years of painstaking work in this Diocese and the Province could not achieve, in that the

parties to the conflict agreed to offer their apologies to each other.

All of this goes a long way to do away with the distractions which compromised our focus in mission and ministry over the last six years. We will continue to work to restore relationships.

Gratitude

This is my first Charge to Synod, and I wish to use the opportunity to record my gratitude to God for this very special ministry. I remain unworthy, and am entirely dependent on the grace of God, and your prayers.

I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to Bishop Jo, my predecessor, for the enormous work that he has done in developing the Diocese. I am fully aware that I stand on his, and the shoulders of his predecessors.

The institutions of our Diocese deserve a special mention. St Mary's Diocesan School for Girls, St Albans College, St Augustine Diocesan School, Irene Homes, Bousfield Lodge, and Tumelong Mission continue to be sources of pride. Please accept the gratitude and appreciation for the sterling work that you all do. The extent of the racial polarisation in schools has manifested itself in some of our schools recently, and it is assuring to know that proactive work in St Albans and St Mary's is taking place to sensitise learners and teachers about racial diversity.

We must also thank our Diocesan staff. They are there to support us, and they do.

The Chancellor, the Registrar, and their deputies, the Bursar, and the Bishop's Warden, put in many hours to assist us with wise counsel. Our deep appreciation is extended to them as well.

Finally, allow me to thank you, lay leaders and clergy, for your ministry. Allow me to repeat what I shared in a DSC meeting: You're the ones who raise the funds, who preach the Word by word and deed, who visit the sick and bury the dead, who disciple God's people in catechism and baptismal preparation classes, in home groups and special discipleship courses, who reach out to the destitute, you're the ones who get your hands dirty in the course of doing God's work. It is through you that the mission statement of Jesus is seen to be implemented: to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the imprisoned, to provide sight to the blind, and to announce the acceptable year of the Lord. This work takes place out there in Mabopane, in Mamelodi, in The Reeds, in Saulsville, in Mogwase, in Motlohung, and all over the Diocese. You are doing the essential work of the church. You are at the forefront of this work. This work does not take place at *KwaMalusi* or 802 Pretorius Street. I and others, who sit here with me, those of us at the Diocesan office, we are there to support you. To support you with our prayers, material assistance and strategic guidance. Our role is to inspire and encourage you, to enable you to be the best you can be. Our role therefore, is not to 'lord it' over you, but to be alongside you, encouraging you, supporting you, challenging you, so that we all respond as well as we can to the love of God in Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

My prayer for us all at this Synod and beyond is a simple one. That we may drink from the living waters that our Lord Jesus Christ provides for us, so that we may return to the basics of Christian life, and be renewed for worship, ministry, and mission.

To God be the glory.

Amen.