

Jesus, Thuma Mina and you...

25/2/18

I speak in the name of Jesus the Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God the Father.

Amen.

I would just to take the opportunity this evensong to formally welcome the Reverend Reeva Mulder from my side, as the Assistant Priest here at St Paul's. You are a real blessing to us all and to me, in particular, as being a non-stipendiary priest who holds down a full-time job is no easy challenge.

Reeva and I go back quite a few years. We entered Fellowship of Vocation together back in 2010, if I am not mistaken and journeyed together for two years. It was during this time that we realised that we had a lot in common. We were both studying towards our Honours degree, Reeva in Theology and myself in Education, we both had a passion for working with children and we were both Deputy Principals. Furthermore, Reeva then went on to spend a year in Grahamstown, when I had also spent many years there as a student at Rhodes University.

Reeva, I regard it as a privilege to work alongside you. Thank you for your dedication and ministry, as well as how gently you have taken up your role as Rector. We all look forward to many years of being together as part of the Church of God here in Rondebosch.

I am not particularly astute when it comes to politicians and politics. Yes, I have been known to dabble and read up on current issues, as they occur both here at home and abroad but I generally leave the politics to the politicians. Having said that, I am aware of my responsibilities as a Priest to call for social justice, democracy and equity. However, it is also not my role, as a Priest to politically align myself publically.

You may be wondering why the alluding to politics this evening?

There have only been a few politicians who have stood out for me over the years, as outstanding orators and sharp thinkers who were or are able to think on their feet, no matter the pressure. One of them was Winston Churchill.

Unfortunately, I never had the privilege of listening to Winston speak publically, but I have heard recordings of his speeches and they were moving. Some historians go so far as to suggest that the words of Winston played a big role in actualising a nation to stand together as one and to fight for victory.

The other politician who really stood out for me was a leader of the New Labour Party, Tony Blair. While I realise that Tony does not have a perfect political record (let's be honest, which politician does?) I used to love watching him handle Prime Minister's Questions, which used to be aired live on Sky News. Tony is witty, sharp, knowledgeable and an outstanding orator. He was able to reply to difficult questions in a blink of an eye, be polite yet firm and stand his ground without being aggressive or dismissive. Tony brought the Labour Party to a landslide victory over the Tories and was, in fact, elected as leader for a second term, as well.

Moving closer to home, like many of you perhaps, I became very disillusioned with the leadership of our government here in South Africa. For a few years I had even given up on watching the State of the Nation address. This year, however, it was different. I decided to give the new President a fair chance and listen to what he had to say. Here, once again, I felt immediately inspired by what Cyril Ramaphosa had to say. He spoke clearly, with conviction, passion, and sincerity and with integrity...

What really inspired me about Cyril Ramaphosa's speech was the conclusion... it even brought a tear to my eye...

Cyril quoted a famous song entitled Thuma Mina written by Hugh Masekela.

I wanna be there when the people start to turn it around

When they triumph over poverty

I wanna be there when the people win the battle against AIDS

I wanna lend a hand

I wanna be there for the alcoholic

I wanna be there for the drug addict

I wanna be there for the victims of violence and abuse

I wanna lend a hand

Send me

When I heard these words spoken by our new President, I was astounded. Not only did the words gel with my calling to the ministry, but the final line, “Send me” spoke of conviction, making a difference in the world and the offering of ourselves...

As Christians, we are called to take up our cross and carry it. Fr Isaias preached on this exact same idea this morning. During this time of Lent we are called, as Believers, to remind ourselves of what our calling is. We ALL have a calling. Yes, some of us are called to the ordained ministry BUT no ministry, of any sort, is more important than another. We ALL have gifts that we are able to share within the Church of God if we so choose. This is the challenge we should be facing this Lent, to take stock of our lives and the gifts that God has bestowed upon us. We are called to use our gifts to the best of our ability for the glory of God to enable His light to shine further and brighter. I cannot emphasize this enough. If we all contribute our gifts, whatever they may be, we will continue to establish God’s Kingdom here on Earth. This is called a realised eschatology, building God’s Kingdom here and now, to make a difference in society, to uplift the poor, feed the hungry and nourish souls so that they know the love and peace that Jesus brings to all.

Just like the Psalm we heard this evening, “Renew my life in your righteousness.” By staying engaged with God and sharing our gifts and talents, we will be renewing our lives in righteousness.

John reminds us in Chapter 5:24, “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”

Jesus spent forty days in the desert seeking the will of His Father. He came out of the desert with a strong conviction that said, “Send me...”

Reeva spent two years in Fellowship of Vocation, a year at COTT and three years in various curacies... when Bishop Garth and Chapter asked Reeva if she would be prepared to become Rector of St Paul’s, she replied, “Send me...”

Fr Isaias was approached by our Archbishop to consider becoming the Chaplain to UCT. He replied, “Send me...”

I spent years struggling with my calling. I eventually found the inner strength needed to complete my journey leading up to ordination. Part of that training was spending a year in Langa being part of a Xhosa parish. When Fr Jim Harris, who was my Dean of Studies at the time, telephoned me at school to say that I was going to Langa for a year, I replied, "Send me..."

Jesus is calling you too.

What will your response be?

May God bless you this week ahead as to reflect upon your God-given gifts and how you can best use them for the glory of His Name.

Amen.