

Lenten letter 2019

Introduction

“So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.”

Isaiah 55:11, 12

Dear friends in Christ,

Lent is the time which prepares us to celebrate worthily the celebration of Easter and it is a time which encourages us to purify ourselves and review our relationship with God. Thus in this way we shall be able to share in Christ's passion and death through a desire to please God and to live this belief that in Jesus we have eternal life.

Every year through the Lenten letter, the Church invites us to enter into this period of 40 days in order to renew our baptismal vows, through the mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ. The Church, the body of Christ, has the task of guiding each baptised person into becoming a disciple who is more faithful to the Gospel, guiding them to make prudent choices, and guiding them to correct their faults. The experience of Lent should be beneficial to each of us, for it should allow us to identify the weaknesses of our life as a Christian and motivate us to rediscover our joy of living according to the divine promises. So, the Christian has the duty to witness these promises established by Jesus, Son of God, Saviour of the world and Word made flesh.

From the perspective of the 12th diocesan Synod, held in 2018, the Anglican Church recognised that the Church must be visible and living at the heart of a society which finds it difficult to become familiar with the presence of God. It is a stake which should concern us since our loyalty to God and our belief in His existence - are gradually being

eroded. The question which follows is pertinent and is the subject which we will deal with in this letter.

What is the Church for in the face of uncertainties?

And when we speak of the Church, this includes those who are baptised: children, the youth, the elderly, men and women.

In the face of these uncertainties and the erosion of trust in God, this pastoral teaching could make us become aware that the future of the body of Christ is crucial in a constantly changing world.

We are facing new pastoral challenges.

Parental indifference to the religious education of their children.

An ageing population.

The concept of the parish should be revisited.

The need for the Church to be closer because of the hazards of social life which are creating more dehumanizing situations.

The older population remains attached to the tradition of the Church whilst the younger generation seek a different more contextualized Church.

It is important to understand the need to prepare the future. It seems to me that we all have the duty to undertake the required steps for the life and progress of our Church.

“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” ***Philippians 3:13, 14***

This is the time of preparation which is offered to us in order to deepen our spiritual maturity, to ask God to reveal His will to us, so that we may engage in the work of and face the challenges of evangelising.

“For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!” 1 Corinthians 9:16

It is important that, as witnesses of Christ facing this world where uncertainty dwells -uncertainty which springs from a culture which is distancing itself from God - we meet this world. This is the purpose of the Church today just as it was in the past.

How can this be done, as our predecessors in Faith did, but within our present context?

The Lenten letter will guide us in reflecting on who we are: Light to the world, whose lives and deeds will allow others ***“to give glory to God.” (Matt.5:16)***. It will allow us to rediscover that the Church gives visibility to the resurrection of Jesus. The first thing which is required of us is to be truly Christian.

“My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.” 1 John: 3, 18

The aim of this Lenten letter is to reassure us and to encourage us despite our limits and our weaknesses. The people that you are in this diocese are called to holiness and every Christian is to be an evangeliser.

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.” John 17:20-24

Chapter 1

God's Plan

“Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:” Isaiah 46:9-10

As the prophet Isaiah affirms, God has a plan for his people, which he will establish. This is put into practice through circumstances which are controlled and through persons who are chosen. Above all, His Plan is accomplished through the life, death, the resurrection and the second coming of Christ.

This Plan is about us and cannot be aborted.

“A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.” Proverbs 16:9

First of all it would be right to establish the reality of God and His existence before understanding His Plan for the world. It is true that there is an increasing number of people who, nowadays, categorically deny the existence of God; and others who do not deny His existence but refuse to do His will. It could be that those who belong to these two groups are only interested in satisfying their own ambitions. It is also possible that they do not have that aspect of the human personality which dares to imagine that we are not created for this earth alone. However, one must recognise that since the beginning of time generations of people have shared experiences which go beyond social and material reality. And when such an experience is expressed it touches the spirit and opens us to recognise the reality of a supreme being.

Our own experience leads us towards a living God who is with us. This is confirmed by the Bible, which is the primary source of our knowledge

of God. The psalms which speak of the real experience of man with God affirm his glory is revealed to us in heaven and on earth.

“By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations. Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.”

In this divine plan there is order and perfection. This order is sustained by God the Universal Creator. The Bible tells us that God saw that all is created was good and that we men and women the crowns of creation, should live in communion with Him and do His will.

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.”

Jeremiah 29:11-14

What, then, is God's Plan?

Observing what happens in the world, we see a distressing sight. The huge progress in different aspects of life is not insignificant; but we do not expend our energy towards making a world which is more just and more brotherly. The temptations to look after ourselves rather than serve others seems always to win, and it is difficult for us to resist

them. It is easier to speak ill and scorn others, to take revenge and to allow ourselves to be consumed by bitterness.

God's Plan carries us towards a fulfilling quality of life. Thinking about the present condition of the world, we discover that the Bible speaks of God's divine adventure. It is the story of the Salvation and the Restoration of the world which had been separated from God because of our lack of respect for the divine order. God invites man to participate in this project of restoration. He chose a people which would be His instrument and help Him to carry out His Plan for humanity.

“But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.” Isaiah 41: 8-9

The story of Salvation and the history of the people of Israel are thus intertwined. One must remember that the relationship of this people with God was tense and difficult. They often disregarded God's will and had to be repentant from time to time. Yet, God always expressed His faithfulness to them, His chosen people. He often reminded them, through the voice of His prophets, that they had made a covenant with Him, promising to obey His commandments.

God always asked people to cleave to Him, to glorify Him, for they would find rest only in Him. God's Plan was that the chosen people should work with Him to promote his reign, one of love and justice, mercy and generosity. It is from this perspective that the people of Israel has been considered as a community called to be a light for the nations so that the whole world should recognise and accepts God's Plan.

“For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.” Deuteronomy 7, 6

God spoke to the world through the prophets; but because of the erratic behavior of His people, he spoke to the world through Jesus Christ, His Son. The Gospel of John speaks of Jesus Christ in these terms.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:”

John 1:1, 10-12

From this time the story of Salvation takes another dimension; for Salvation is now possible through Faith in Christ; and the new Israel is Christ's body, the Church which is light to the world and salt to the earth.

The principal task of the Church, God's Elect, is to proclaim the Gospel and to show people a model of life which expresses the values of service to the Kingdom of God, values which Christ adopted throughout his ministry. Jesus, the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Prophet, the Priest and King, gives people the possibility of new, brotherly relationships which are crucial to the development of this world created and saved by God.

This plan of God's, realised in Jesus, foretold and established by the Church, gives us new perspectives. God's mission entrusted to His Church demands that we participate actively in both social and political levels. So, it is important to encourage Christians to take part in the social and political life of our country in order to establish God's Plan. The spirit of service which emanates from Jesus should restore its nobility to Governance. The Christian mission has potential life, energy

and power which come from God. These qualities from God respond concretely to the needs of a world seeking life, love and justice.

God's Plan shows that conversion requires not only transformation of the individual, but that of the world and its social and political structures.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

Romans 12:1

How can the Church be useful in the depth of our uncertainties?

God's Plan

Food for thought

“The first thing demanded of us is to be real Christians!”

1. What is it that defines you as Christian/s? (Ephsians 2:8-9)
(1 John 2:4-6)
2. As member/s of the church, to what extent does your witness offer to the world “a life model which expresses the values of Service of the Kingdom of God”? (Isaiah 42:1, 6-7; Romans 12:4-7)
3. ***1 Corinthians 1:5-7 “ That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:”***

Following discords in the church at Corinth, Paul wrote a letter full of truth about God, about the work of Jesus Christ and its implications and about the way Christians ought to live as members of Christ's body.

Reflection: What should our church really do so that it should really be light in the world and salt in the earth?

4. Let us pray for our ecclesiastical community to be filled with Jesus' Spirit

Chapter 2

Called to be a bearer of God's plan

“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.” John 15.16

God's plan revealed in Jesus Christ has been entrusted to us today and it would be good to see if we have been faithful to this mission. In the time of renewal of baptismal life given to us by Lent, we should revisit our engagement; for we disciples are called to be light in the world and salt in the earth.

In the Acts of Apostles the church which we form today is presented as “the community of the saved” and we are told to announce Christ as Saviour.

“Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” Acts 2.47

The vocation to serve God and his people is not limited to deacons and priests. God's call to live in spiritual maturity in Jesus is addressed to all those who put their trust in Christ:

“Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” Colossians 1.28

So the faithful who live in parish communities must make an effort to preserve what they have received according to Christ's gift, in order to achieve perfection. Made in God's image, we are all called to carry out his will so that the Church radiates Christ's light we must apply ourselves to glorifying God and serving our neighbour.

For the church to be the Church, Jesus Christ must be visible in it through us. In order that Christ's face should shine in his church it is not enough to be respective people with good intentions. All the faithful must deeply desire to be light in the world and salt in the earth. A condition which would make our church an evangelising one would be that Christians live their Christian life more intensely.

“My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.” 1 John 3.18

So what must be done?

Many of us say that we try to live it but it is not easy. How to reply to these opinions which often encroach on our conversations?

1. If we do not live in constant communion with God and with those who make up the parish community then we cannot be faithful to our baptismal undertaking ratified at our confirmation.
2. We cannot take part in the building of the church if we do not support one another.
3. Necessarily our life itself must change if we are keen to share the good news with other people.

Let us not forget that all Christians people, aided by priest and deacons, are called to be holy and to evangelisation.

Light in the world and salt in the earth

From the history of God's people and the Holy Scriptures, I discover Jesus' expectations of his disciples. He expresses it very clearly in the sermon on the mount, using the compassion of salt and light in this teaching.

“Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.” Matthew 5.13-16

Christ uses familiar images since they are very much present in everyday life. This shows the influence which he expects from his disciples within human society.

The disciples were few but they were called to be light and salt in the world.

Two key elements come from these images used by Jesus.

(a) The Christian must be different.

If salt does not retain its taste, it is worthless if light does not shine it is ineffectual. So we, Christ’s disciples, are called to be in the world but retaining convictions, values and a lifestyle which reflect Christ himself. Christ calls us to an honesty of life, a deeper devotion and to the noble ambition to seek first the Kingdom of God. It is thus that we will retain the effectiveness of light and salt.

(b) The Christian should be all influential person

Our behaviour and our undertaking as people having the fear of God should keep us to plead for a society which is fair, more loving and more dependant in God.

The Holy Scriptures remind us of our duty to work towards the transformation of the world. The command given to us is divine. The world in which we live makes us anxious, for uncertainty surrounds us.

There is a great need to improve the resources to provide an adequate and effective health system, a housing plan which improves the quality of life of some of our fellow citizens and an education system which would dare to find room for those whose talents are not necessarily academic. Family unity is threatened today by social networks which limit sharing and dialogue. God's work, creation, is sullied by our incapacity to preserve it.

Thus it is necessary that we should seek to occupy spheres of influence so that God's will should be done. It must be done by God's grace.

“Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.” 1 Peter 2.12

How to do it?

I will encourage you to adopt certain aspects of life which are essential if you wish to live according to Christ's expectations.

1. Live by the power of prayer

James says this in his epistle:

“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” James 5.16

and Christ affirms the power of prayer in his teachings:

“Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.” Matthew 18.19

Prayer and intercession will permit us to align ourselves with God's plan so that his might is manifested. Prayer is an important and indispensable element if we wish to please God.

2. Testify the power of the Gospel

Our responsibility as Christians is to respond to God's call and to earnestly put to use the gifts that God has in his grace offered to us. Love for one's neighbor will be visible if we place the interests and needs of others before our personal priorities. Christ is the model whom we ought to follow, for word and deed went together in his earthly ministry. Our faith in Christ should stimulate us to be of service in the world.

From our witness God's truth will appear and we must be imbued with courage and fear of God.

It is true that God uses us to realise the plan he has for the world. We are called upon to rejoice for although we did not think ourselves capable, God has confidence on us; for he has given us the power to change the world.

“For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.” 1 Thessalonians 4.7,9

Called to be the bearer of God's plan

Food for thought

Very often we hear members of our church say that they don't know how to recognise their calling of their gifts.

1. Think about your vocation. Give it a name. Let yourself be guided by Romans 12: 1-8 in this course
2. Think about the harvest of your vocation and thank God for it.
3. Reflection: How does your vocation fit in with the mission of your church/parish? How can you be proactive in your church community?
4. Group discussion: This chapter emphasises the basis of our communal life. How can we become a more loving church? Discuss.
5. "Our faith in Christ should encourage us to be at the service of the world". Discuss how this can be a reality through your professional or social engagement.
6. Pray that your church community becomes a more loving church.

Chapter 3

Chosen to be a steward of God's plan.

“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” 1 Peter 4.10

When we recognise that we are called and chosen by God we must consider ourselves engaged to live a new life in Christ.

This new life makes us disciples of Christ and stewards at the service of God and his people.

The disciple is an apprentice who observes and listens to the Master. Matthew's gospel tells us that Jesus, our Master and Lord has called his people.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” Matthew 11:28-29

A disciple is an apprentice throughout his life who tries to put into practice his Master's teaching.

In the Gospels Jesus calls us to spend time with him and to learn from him; for he sends us into the world to be his ambassadors, to be steward of the plan of God, his father.

As stewards, that is people responsible for the administration of someone's affairs, we are sent into the world to speak of God's kingdom and to establish deeds which show the power of God's love, power which heals, reconciles and transforms.

At the end of his Gospel, Matthew indicates that Christ entrusts his mission to us. As a disciple engaged to obey his master the Christian has the responsibility to succeed in the mission which has been put in his care.

If properly undertaken, this responsibility becomes an attitude and a lifestyle which honours God: the offering of our whole lives.

In the book of Chronicles, King David says it clearly in these words:

“But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.”

1 Chronicles 29:14

These words David’s makes us realise that our offering is not limited to a financial contribution. It involves all that we are and all that we have, ever our time.

In his first letter Peter, the apostle of Christ exhorts that the disciple and steward of Christ lives in the world and serves it. God’s plan, the salvation offered to the world should not be kept for oneself in a selfish manner.

He exhorts us to become more and more engaged in service for others whenever we are. The challenges and the economic and ecological stakes are many: what can we do as Christian in the Anglican Diocese? Can’t we contribute to the development and the welfare of the whole Mauritian community? Are we really welcoming, ready to learn from the Master, to love and cherish as the diocesan project suggests: ***“Together on the road to Emmaus”?***

To be a church that lives in the world and that lives in Christ, word made flesh, it would be good if each of us could share his faith in Christ, be hospitable and ready to serve.

In this way, in the exercise of our function as stewards of God’s work, we will glorify Him.

To be active stewards of god’s plan we must revise our priorities and act not according to the capacity of our purses but according to our hearts and our love for God.

“Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all.” 1 Peter 4.11

The two greatest activities of the church, according to the apostle Peter, are the Proclamation of the Word of God and Service.

The two important aspects of our responsibility as stewards of God’s plan are:

To proclaim the Word

This word of God of which the Church is the trustee comes from the Holy Scriptures and from Jesus himself. St Peter has just reminded us that if we have the responsibility to share the Word, we must make sure that we don’t offer our own opinions, nor make propaganda based on our own, sometimes erroneous perceptions. We must present God’s message.

A great preacher said this:

“First one listens to God, then one speaks to men”

At this Lenten time god’s word will be a spring of water which will refresh us. It will allow us to examine our thoughts and words. It will encourage us to revisit our role as stewards by consolidating our relationship with Jesus.

Is the shared world derived from Christ or is it directed from some other passion?

Does my heart burn like that of the disciples of Emmaus?

We should not be embarrassed or be ashamed to be Christ’s disciples

Romans 1:16

The objective of any Christian activity is to serve our neighbour. We must do it with the power which God bestows. With this attitude we will serve without any pride or arrogance.

One of the characteristics of serving as a steward of God's plan is the duty to be welcoming. Without hospitality the first Christians would not have been able to increase Christ's body and to make known the goodness and generosity of God revealed in Jesus. The New Testament insists vigorously on this important aspect of our lives as disciples and stewards of Christ. We are called to love, to welcome, to take care of and accompany other people, even strangers.

Matthew 25:34,35

We should offer all that we have as gifts to the community. The church needs every gift that the Christian possesses. It could be the gift of words or music, the capacity to visit people or creativity.

It is important that each Christian considers himself as a steward of God. A steward is an important person in an institution. He distributes and organises everything needed for its administration. It is also important to note that we are not owners since everything belongs to God. Every decision and act must serve God's interest and we are responsible to God.

“I came not to be served but to serve” Jesus says.

To be Christ's disciple and steward at the service of God and his people.

Food for thought

“disciple”, “stewards”, “service”. These 3 words challenge us throughout this chapter.

Disciple is an apprentice who watches and listens to the Master. Jesus said: ***“submit yourselves to my teaching”***

The project “Ansam lor Sime Emais” invites our church and all its members to develop and adopt a culture of apprenticeship. – “A more teaching church”

1. Make a list of all the activities through which the teaching of God's word is carried out in your parish. Discuss these teaching activities and evaluate their impact on the parishioners young and not so young.
2. In the framework of your parish how and when can you pass from the status of disciple to that of ambassador and steward (you can make a personal witness)
3. “And I am with you as one who serves” Jesus' words in Luke 22.27. What culture of service is there in your church community?
4. Pray for your parish so that the teachings may bear fruit for the glory of God and for the advancement of the Kingdom of God.

Chapter 4

Our talents and gifts at the service of the Gospel

(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) 1 John 1:2

What is this purpose of the Church?

It is used to bind us to our neighbour's by using the gifts and talents of those who make up its Body.

By baptism and confirmation we undertake, by the strength of the Holy Spirit, to make fruitful the talents given by God. These gifts and talents are put to the service of the Gospel. Children of God, it is our duty to work for the welfare of God's family.

In this letter to the Ephesians, St Paul encourages us to take part in the divine work by using the gifts which God himself has given us.

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:10

To participate in God's work in the world it is important that we, Christians, should appraise with honesty our undertaking in the good works prepared in advance by God.

The first thing to do is to bring about significant changes to our present way of life in order that Christ should be totally and naturally at the centre.

The life that we lead is not ours, it is God's.

“(A Psalm of David.) The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.” Psalm 24.1-2

It is our duty, young and not so young, to bring profit to our church from our personal changes by putting to its service all our gifts. It is sometimes regrettable that, even in church activities, our talents used only for our personal satisfaction.

To live the Gospel in Jesus' way the Bible shows us the path to take. The parable of the talents in Matthew's Gospel (25:14-30) is rich in information and could arouse in us the desire to invest in without hesitation in God's work.

This demands a decision from us. We must define our priorities and recognize the means to succeed in this. To plunge into establishing God's reign. We must use the standard which God gives us, in the light of what St Paul says in his letter to the Galatians.

“Each should put to the proof his own work”

Plunging in, we must adapt ourselves to different situations placed before us and develop our ability to learn from them. We should not neglect the aid of the Holy Spirit, for it will be the strong counsellor in everything we undertake.

In using these gifts of ours to encounter other people, we should in no way allow ourselves to be caught in pharisaical traps. As mentioned in the diocesan plan “Ensam lor Sime Emais” our presence, our welcome and our respect for the poorest and most vulnerable are essential, if we wish to speak of God's Kingdom.

For us to become good stewards, whether we are children, young people, adults or old people, or whatever our aptitudes are, we must simply live according to the Agenda of God's mission which resounds with Christ's Good News.

Justice, pity and a spirit of humility are life's operational areas which we are instructed by the Gospel to establish. These life qualities can be

perceived as an ideal to be realized but can become a challenge to accept when we face a person who demands to be heard, understood and loved.

This agenda of God's mission entrusted to us was expressed from the 8th century before J.C by the prophet Micah during a period of economic prosperity when people went about their activities indifferent to religion.

“He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” Micah 6.8

To be a faithful steward of the Gospel we must do justly.

There are grey clouds on the horizon when we discover unjust situations which rage around us every day. These clouds blacken when, based on God's word, we discover that some active and sincere Christians allow unjust situations to persist in their areas of responsibility.

In the business world and in politics where many Christians are engaged it should be possible that we manage to initiate Christ, who managed to reverse unjust situations, as the Magnificat, Mary's Song, says:

“He has put down the mighty from their seats and has exalted the humble and meek, he has filled the hungry with good things.” Luke 1,52

This is the greatest challenge made to us by God's mission.

1. Love of faithfulness

In certain versions of the Bible this phrase is expressed as : love goodness Gods asks us to practice a Faithful Love, impartial, founded on the treaty of love made by Christ's sacrifice on the cross Christ's teaching parables often deals with pity. Jesus visit

to Zaccheus, an unscrupulous tax collector, is a lesson in Friendship, love and repair.

Being able to love allows us to change people's life styles and to introduce God to those who don't yet know him.

Plural Mauritius must surpass itself in order to get rid of corrupt situations and inhuman discrimination. Let us then make Christ's Good News a social plan because it encourages us to love deeply but with respect.

2. Vigilance in your walk with God

If we wish to walk humbly with God we should be disposed to learn from him and from his church. We should assume a joyful attitude when we submit ourselves to the divine will in Jesus Christ.

I am very inspired by the attitude of Philip, Christ's apostle, who, in a spirit of humility spread Christ's gospel in Samaria.

“And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the

eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.” Acts 8,26-40

When he had preached in a town in Samaria, an angel of the Lord told him to meet a eunuch, a minister of Candace, the queen of Ethiopia. We discover here Philip’s willingness to humble himself to God’s request.

Can we hear the master’s voice which says to us:

“The harvest is great and the workers are few.”

At this Lenten period the scene of Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem makes me ask questions since less than a week later he was treated as a vulgar prisoner. And it was Simon of Cyrenia helped Christ to carry his cross, despite the spitting.

And so the Prophet’s exhortation and the cross of Christ should help us to become Simons of Cyrenia in our time: to be willing to serve the Gospel.

***“You are my friends if you do what I ask of you”
Jesus tells us.***

Our talents and gifts at the service of the Gospel.

Food for thought

Adelina Dominguez was 114 years old when she died in August 2002. Her death deserves to be noticed because according to the Guinness book of Records. She was the oldest person alive in America and the second oldest in the world. Interviewed on the secret of her longevity, she gave all the credit to God and His plan for her life. “ I knew that God had one aim for my life” she said. She was known to have been a woman of passion and conviction, which led her to carry out missionary work, and she became a dynamic pastor who evangelized in the street.

1. What differences does it make for us and for the church when we know God’s plan for our lives?
2. In Chapter 2 “called to be a bearer of God’s plan”, you were invited to find out your vocation (if you don’t yet know it) and to give it a name so that you can be an ambassador for Christ.

In this 4th Chapter we are reminded that we are good dispensers or administrators of God’s many graces and, as God’s children. “it is our duty to work for the well-being of God’s family” and to make “a special project of Christ’s Good News”

Personal or Group reflection:

- i. Think about and discuss the transition from disciple to ambassador then administrator.
- ii. God gives us gifts and resources so that our engagement within the church is impregnated with power and spiritual authority.

Meditate on the words of Jesus and of St Paul. Read John 14 12-13 and Ephesians 15-19.

iii. God never leaves us alone; he completes our needs and our lacks through other people (Isaiah 41:13)

How do you allow others to help you?

How do you keep those who need your help?

3. Make Christ's Good News 2 a social project." In the context of the project "Ansam lor Sime Emais" discuss a plan of action for your parish.

Pray to receive the direction of the Holy Spirit so that you may imbue our competencies with confidence.

At the heart of the human dream, the church reveals God's Plan

Chapter 5

“Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.” Proverbs 15:23

Lord Jesus send his church to continue the work of Salvation initiated by God himself. The objective of the church, Christ's Body, is to invite the men and women of our generation to consider God's dream as a life plan, in agreement with God's plan.

This dream of god was realized by Jesus who, in coming into the world, offers to all humanity a fullness of life of eternal extent.

Through its obligation and its competence the church, through the Anglican Diocese, is the sign and at the same time the assurance of that exceptional ability to be the transformed human being. Hence the need to be accompanied, advised and supported.

The Salvation offered by Jesus completely affects the man or woman we are and so lets us live with dignity. So the church must make sure that the dignity of any individual is protected.

“For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving:”

1 Timothy 4:4

The mission of the church demands that we are in the world and the church must be our companion on life's way and live the same experience as us.

Thus the church is the leaven of human society and similarly must be renewed in Christ and transformed within God's family. Our task as the

Body of Christ must be not only to communicate the advantages of divine life but to cause God's glory to shine out in the world.

“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.”

Ephesians 1:11-12

Jesus, who gives us the task of continuing His Mission, gives us the privilege and the responsibility to evangelise so that the world should be sanctified and liberated by his active presence. This mission transcends the religious domain because it is also concerned with supporting social and economic progress, progress which favours personal development.

The coming of God's son into the world has an impact not only on the religious domain but it also affects one's material and social life. In his teaching on the last judgement he claims that all will depends on what we did for the most vulnerable.

Matthew 25:31-46

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came

unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”

The church encourages Christians in their uncertainty to undertake the task so that justice and peace might help the most fragile to taste the joy of creation and salvation offered by the cross of Christ.

The years pass and they tell us how much we need others and how we are linked to one another.

The church’s mission must be holistic and must define the Shalom which God extends to all creation and especially to the men and women created in his image this peace must surround us and it is offered to us by God in Jesus.

In the evening of his resurrection, the words which follow are the first which he spoke when he met his disciples:

“ I give you my peace, I leave my peace with you.”

So for the human dream to form part of god's plan, we, Christ's disciples in our parish communities, must be there for others to say that beyond our uncertainty there is hope and that our actions brings healing, repair and liberation.

At this time of Lent we Anglican Christians must revise our presence and activity in Mauritian Society. In order to be credible and effective we must:

- (i) Be with Jesus and establish relationships with others which favour a feeling of belonging. Christ's disciples are called to give and to receive. Like Mary, Martha's sister, who chose the better part, we must constantly acclaim Christ's presence and live close to him. This is essential evidence of the Church's mission.
- (ii) Preach the Gospel of God's Kingdom. The message of the Gospel must be proclaimed so that it can be known, understood and responded to. We Christians must share the Good News of Christ because it is these words which will become reality in the Church's Mission. If Jesus is not proclaimed what use is the Church? If Christ is not at the centre of our mission, our mission is no longer a Christian mission.
- (iii) Healing and deliveries

Well-being and fullness of life are infinitely necessary. Christ gave a great deal of energy and time to be with those who suffered or were needy. In acting like this Jesus gives clear and precise indications about the Mission he entrusts to us. We must recognize the sufferings of the world and undertake that the people we meet experience a presence, love, healing, repair and celebration. Such an experience becomes the sign of the coming of God's kingdom. It is the announcement of the possibility and the need to be transformed.

Work towards justice

The justice which Jesus promises is not only an ideal. It is a concrete reality because it recognizes and suffers from its absence. Our country on the road to progress must be imbued with this desire to oppose the injustices produced by exploitation, oppression, suffering and idolatry. If not it will sink into a culture of lawlessness and corruption. We must proclaim justice and promise actions which could produce a movement of change, and make our human dreams realities in life in which we will freely taste milk and honey.

This Lenten period is time for us Christians to fall in love with this God of Justice who freed the world by his son Our Lord Jesus Christ.

“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.” Isiah 61:1-3

Within the human dream, the Church reveals God's plan.

Food for thought:

(1) The nature of the Church

The first paragraph of this chapter begins with the following message:

God's dream reveals itself in a life plan. His dream is realised in Jesus Christ whom he established as "supreme head of the Church". Where "dwells the fullness of him that filleth all in all" Ephesians 1. 22-23

What are your feelings about what God has given to the Church, Body of Christ, as well as all the members of this Body?

Read John 1:16, Colossians 1:19.

(2) The function of the Church

The Bible commentator, F.B Meyer, says this about Ephesians 1:22-23 "Head of the Church which is His body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all."

This position of our lord concerns each member of the Church as much as the whole body. We are linked only because we are linked to Him. We are first of all members of Christ, then members of one another in Him. Christ first, then the Church. So we should receive the impetus of our lives from Jesus Christ and not act like autonomous persons, following our own plans, thinking our own thoughts or carrying out our own activities. We must always be obedient to His will.

(i) According to St Paul what should be the main characteristics of the church, Body of Christ?

(ii) How can these characteristics reinforce our determination to build a church which is more welcoming, more teaching, more loving?

3. The Mission of the Church

Acts 10:38

From Christ's life and from the writing of the apostles, social action appears as one of the principal functions of the Church. As well as worship, teaching and evangelisation the Church devotes a great deal of its energy in breaking down the barriers which prevent progress towards peace, justice and the brightening up of mens' and womens' lives.

God gave us justice in His Son Jesus Christ. How can our church community and ourselves extend the same justice to others?

- Defending what is right?
- Filling in the needs of the poor and the marginalised?
- Being agents of transformation in our society?

Prayer and Worship

Colossians 3:15

Hymn 190 (C.E)

We travel the roads

Announcing to all our brothers

Your Word of light

Lord, take us by the hand

Conclusion

In this Lenten Letter 2019 I have discussed in five chapters God's work revealed through His Plan of Salvation realised in Jesus Christ. God's Plan is still current and we are the bearers and executioners.

I am aware that in several parishes, numerous believers are participating in movements which reveal the joy of knowing god, to others. They are regularly involved in parochial activities: raising funds, sharing meals with the homeless, visiting the sick, and helping victims of drugs. Many have organised home-based groups to study the Bible and pray.

In the last two years, through the Emmaus project we have strived to extend our activities at both parish and diocesan levels. This year, Lent will give us many opportunities to initiate plans which will encourage a more active participation by parishioners to share and explain the Emmaus project as part of God's Plan.

We should never forget that along with the Priests and Deacons, God's people, men, women and children, the old and the young, are agents of close Pastoral Care which could respond effectively to this pertinent question:

What is the use of the Church in the midst of our uncertainties?

Thus, we are called and invited during this Lenten Season, to intensify our life as disciples of Christ. We cannot accept to be mediocre and lukewarm or to be just consumers on the spiritual level.

The challenge for each of us: Bishop, Priests, Deacons or Laypersons, is to become personally involved and to make use of three essential aspects of our life with god in Jesus.

- Fasting: To control our desires.
- Prayer: To strengthen our relationship with God.
- Sharing: To put into practice our responsibility towards the poor.

May this period of Lent 2019 be a time of spiritual growth.

Brotherly Greetings.

Deliver us o Lord

From our hindrances

From our lusts and complacency

From our vanity and wealth

Deliver us from the heart's squalor

From envy, ambition, hypocrisy.

Deliver us from spite

And from afterthoughts

From the spirit of calculation and rivalry

Deliver us from anger and aggressivity

From pride and vanity

Deliver us from urges for violence

Deliver us from torture and murder

Teach us, Lord, to love one another

Teach us to persuade rather than to conquer

Teach us silence and patience

Teach us to calm ourselves

For we know, Lord, thanks to you

That we only triumph through love