

AD CLERUM

February 2009- No 1

“RECEIVE THE CURE OF SOULS WHICH
IS BOTH MINE AND YOURS”

Dear brothers and
sisters in the Lord,

Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

1. Message for Lent 2009:

“For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich” (2 Cor 8:9).

By the time you receive this first Ad Clerum of 2009, we will be at the beginning of another season of Lent, a time of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. During this blessed and holy season, we remember Jesus who, in obedience to the Spirit fasted forty days and forty nights in the desert. Over and above this, we ourselves are called to do likewise and “discipline ourselves that we may press on towards Easter with eager faith and love” (Collect for Ash Wednesday, p. 62 APB). This spirit of discipline will strengthen us inwardly and, by God’s abounding and unmerited grace, make us triumph over evil and sin.

I am making it my duty as your bishop to propose some specific tasks to accompany us in a concrete way in this process of inward renewal. I therefore wish to spend some time reflecting on the practice of almsgiving, which is meant to represent a specific way of assisting those in need and, at the same time, an exercise of self-denial to free us from attachment to worldly goods. Almsgiving helps us to overcome the constant temptation of trying to serve both God and mammon (Lk 16:13), teaching us to respond to our neighbour’s needs and to share with others whatever little or much we possess. This is the aim of the Lenten envelopes that we traditionally make available to all our congregations during Lent and which will be handed back on Good Friday. It is a gesture of ecclesial communion whereby all together and through our lenten self-denial we stretch a helping hand to one of our congregations who needs our support to achieve a specific goal.

In many instances in the Gospels, Jesus explicitly warns the one who possesses and uses earthly riches only for self. In the face of the many people who, lacking everything, suffer hunger, the words of St John take on the tune of a stern rebuke: ***“How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?” (1Jn 3:17).*** Giving generously during the season of Lent is a duty of justice even prior to being an act of charity. This act of justice and charity must be a concrete expression of Jesus’ love for humankind, for us, who dying on the cross, gave his entire self for us.

The Word of God also teaches us that there is more joy in giving than in receiving (Acts 20:35). When we do things out of genuine love, we express the truth and nature of our being; indeed we have been created not for ourselves but for God and our brothers and sisters (2 Cor 5:15). Every time we, for the love of God, share our goods and possessions with people in need, we discover the truth about ourselves and realise that the fulness of life comes from love and all is returned to us as a blessing in the form of peace, inner satisfaction and joy. Our Father in heaven rewards our almsgiving with his joy. St Peter even includes among the spiritual gifts of almsgiving the forgiveness of sins: ***“love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Pet***

4:8).

Almsgiving teaches us also the generosity of love. In this context the Gospel story of the widow who, out of her poverty, cast into the Temple treasury **“all that she had to live on” (Mk 12:44)**, becomes all the more significant. Her tiny and insignificant coin becomes an eloquent symbol: this widow gives to God not out of her abundance, not so much what she has, but what she is. Her entire self.

In conclusion, Lent, through the practice of almsgiving, should inspire us to follow the example of Jesus. At Jesus' feet, in his school, we can learn to make of our lives a total gift to God and to others as Jesus did in the most perfect and unique way on the cross. I invite you all during this Lent to deepen your life of prayer, keep the practice of fasting on Ash Wednesday and, at least, all Fridays of Lent, and give generously and joyfully.

I wish you all a blessed season of Lent and a joyous Easter.

(This short message can be made available to your congregations in any way you may think fit. Thank you.)

2. **The Ven B. Monareng:** was collated as Archdeacon of Nkandla on Wednesday 28th January in the Church of the Good Shepherd, KwaMagwaza. We congratulate him on this appointment and assure him of our constant prayer and support as he begins this new ministry.
3. **The Revd Canon I. Zwane:** has been appointed priest-in-charge of St Matthew's, Dlebe. We wish him, Nomsa and family all of God's blessings. I also invite you all to keep Nomsa constantly in your prayers as she tries to cope with the challenges of poor health. May the healing power of Jesus be upon her!
4. **Members of Synod Advisory Committee:** The Bishop, the Dean, The Ven PS Ntombela, the Revd M. Makhanya, Advocate W. Gwala and Ms Sipehelele Mdakane (a young lawyer and daughter of our former Diocesan Registrar Mr Siphon Mdakane).
5. **Diocesan Synod 2009 Task Team:** just to remind you that, during our recent Clergy School, we have identified the Revd Monument Makhanya, the Revd Canon Justice Mhlungu and the Revd Maggie Hamalainen. Our Diocesan Council will propose the names of three lay persons who will join the Task Team. The Dean will be an *ex officio* member and the convenor of this small team.
6. **Ordination to the Diaconate:** to be held at St Cyprian's, eThalaneni, on Sunday 21st June 2009. The Revd B. Mtshali will lead the Ordination Retreat and preach at the Ordination Service.
7. **Ordination to the Priesthood:** to be held at St Joseph's, Ulundi, on Sunday 13th December. The Ven CC Mchunu will lead the Retreat and preach at the Ordination.
8. **Elections 2009:** during our recent Synod of Bishops, many issues pertaining to the life and ministry of the church have been discussed (see The Bishops' Pastoral Letter attached). We also looked at the forthcoming general elections scheduled for April 22nd and expressed our support to the Independent Electoral Commission and its Chairperson, Ms Brigalia Bam, and endorsed their plea that we offer ourselves as mediators

in places of conflict. We have been also invited to urge our people to offer themselves as election monitors wherever this is needed.

I therefore wish to encourage you to get involved in your local municipalities and/or districts and offer your qualified assistance whenever and wherever possible so that this critical time preceding the elections may be without intimidation or violence and the elections may take place in a climate conducive to an outcome that will be accepted as free and fair by everyone.

9. **Chrism Eucharist and Renewal of Priestly vows:** on Wednesday 8th April at the Cathedral Church of St Michael and All Angels, Eshowe. Tea will be available from 09H00 to 09H30. The Bishop's address will begin promptly at 09H30 and will be followed by a time of quietness and reflection. The Chrism Eucharist will follow at 12H00. Since it will be a concelebrated Eucharist, I would expect all clergy to wear the appropriate liturgical vestments i.e. chalb and white stole (not three point stoles!). Members of Chapter will wear a cope.

I also expect all self-supporting clergy to attend this most beautiful celebration as agreed upon in our private conversations last year.

I take this opportunity to wish that this our fast of forty days may work our profit and God's praise. Have a blessed Lent.

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