

Dean's Letter, 26 November 2017

Dear Cathedral family

There is a real sense of the year coming to an end! I know just how much many of our Rhodes students are longing for home – even if, as one of our CSM students put it, it means being scolded for not doing the washing up!

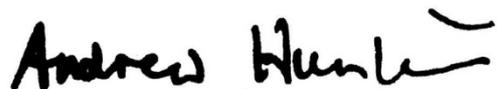
The focus for this Sunday is The Reign of Christ. It is the Sunday of Christ the King, the last Sunday of the church year, the Sunday before Advent. It is a time to return to our roots, to celebrate the enduring love of God in the midst of all that is happening. And the ultimate triumph of good over evil, life over death, joy over sorrow, the victory won for us through Jesus Christ. Sometimes it is hard to believe this. The turmoil in Zimbabwe is a case in point. Why all those years of suffering and oppression and misery? Where was God? Why not a divine intervention much, much sooner? Was God absent? Asleep? Had God forgotten those who were suffering?

We get confused, I think, with the nature of the reign or rule of Christ, and the work and presence of God in the world. Yes, we look to the final coming of God's kingdom in power and glory, when good shall finally triumph over evil. But until then, the kingdom of God is in each one of us, as we open ourselves to the Lord, to be His instruments for justice and healing and peace and forgiveness, and reconciliation. If there is poor governance, or dictatorship, or cruel rulers, it is because those responsible have removed themselves from God's kingdom, God's reign – and because they have chosen a path of selfishness and greed and corruption and cruelty.

The parable of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31-46), which is the gospel reading for today, doesn't – perhaps surprisingly – ask deep questions about our lives, our motives, our hearts, our doctrine. Instead, the king simply asks, "Did you care for the hungry, the thirsty, clothe the naked, visit those in prison, the sick, the stranger?" And he says, "Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me." How have we looked after those on the margins? The powerless? The vulnerable? Those who are easily forgotten or ignored? Are we people of compassion?

Some of you may have seen a rather savage article in the Sunday Times, two weeks back, featuring the Anglican church, with accusations of racism and unfair dismissal, and portraying senior leaders of our church in a very negative light. There have been some angry comments on social media. As Archbishop Thabo Makgoba said, there is no place for racism in our society, in the church, in our schools, in our communities. But he also said, let's not make up our minds on a matter based on one newspaper article. Certainly there is more to the matter than the article indicates. Let's continue to hold our nation, our churches, our leaders, and our schools, in love and prayer. What can we do to break the cycle of anger and outrage and fury? Can we choose to be people of compassion?

My love to you all

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Hunter". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.