

## Dean's Letter, 5 May 2019

Dear Cathedral family, brothers and sisters in Christ

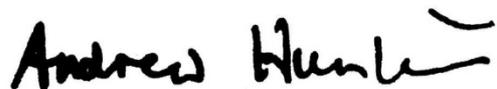
Our Gospel reading for today (John 21:1-19) has many layers to it. The disciples have gone back to their old ways, their old occupation of fishing – which was where Jesus had first found them, and from which Jesus had called them. They had chosen to go back, to walk away from the dream, from the vision, from God's call. Their efforts to catch fish are, like so often before, fruitless. Nothing has come their way. A figure on the shore of the lake calls them and tells them to cast their nets again. The nets are filled to overflowing – again, this has happened before in their time with Jesus and they are reminded, powerfully, of this. They realise that it is Jesus who is waiting for them on the shore. He invites them to come and eat with him.

It is a Eucharistic encounter with the risen Christ: the bread and fish at the lakeside are an image we find elsewhere in the gospels, with the feeding of the 5000. It becomes also a meal of forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration. There, around the coals of the fire, Jesus speaks to Peter. The last time they were around a fire, it was in the courtyard of the High Priest, during the trial of Jesus, when Peter had denied three times that he knew Jesus. Now, once again around the coals of the fire, Jesus asks Peter, three times "Do you love me?" Three times, to erase and wash out and reverse the three-fold denial. And three times, Peter answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." (Different words are used by Jesus and Peter for "love" in the various questions and answers, but that is for another time.) And with each answer, Jesus commissions and charges Peter, "Feed my sheep." In happier times, Jesus had designated Peter as the rock on which he (Jesus) would build the church. Now, having gone through failure and denial and death, Peter is restored to ministry and leadership. But it is a renewed calling, based no longer on his own courage or strength, but in the profound knowledge of his weakness, and the love and grace of God. A good place to be, and a good place from which to start. A resurrection encounter for Peter and for us.

The Sub Dean and I were among invited guests at last Saturday's Freedom Day celebrations here in town, with the visit of President Cyril Ramaphosa. The Cathedral was well-represented: Tandiwe, Asakhe and Bayanda were all part of the massed choir that sang, and which Keba conducted; there were Anglicans from all over town there; it was good to be part of a superbly organised event. At the same time, the event took place in the context of a struggling town, with our ongoing issues of water, rubbish, potholes, broken sewerage pipes and general sense of decay, and the last-minute patching up of broken infra-structure in preparation for the event was obvious. We have a long way to go.

With our elections on Wednesday, we pray for IEC officials, our political parties and their leaders, for voters, and for our country.

My love to you all

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Hunt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.