

Dean's Letter, 19 July 2020

Dear Cathedral family, Brothers and Sisters in Christ

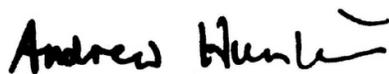
The address to the nation by President Cyril Ramaphosa last Sunday evening had some hard things to say about the irresponsible behaviour by people, in the light of the Covid pandemic. Partying, socialising, huge funeral gatherings, and the resultant rise in infections. I am relieved that we were not returned to Level 4 of lockdown, but it is clear that we are in for the long haul. It seems that we can expect the different provinces in our country to reach the peak in infections at different times. We hold all who are infected with the coronavirus, in our prayers, together with their families. Let's also continue to pray for our health care workers and all who are caring for the sick. And let's do all we can to curb the spread of the virus. Wear masks. Keep social distance. Wash hands regularly.

It was an eye-opener to learn that the resumption in the sale of alcohol led to a spike in the national levels of injury, trauma and death, to the extent that the government has seen it fit to reimpose the ban on the sale of alcohol, so as to keep our hospitals and health care facilities available for the treatment of Covid cases. A local undertaker spoke of having seen a 30% *drop* in their business during the months when the alcohol ban was in place, i.e. significantly fewer deaths when alcohol was removed from the daily lives of people.

Our gospel reading for today (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43) is in two parts. We hear the original parable, which Jesus tells to the whole crowd (vv 24-30); and then in private Jesus explains the parable to the disciples (vv 36-43). The weeds and the wheat are mixed, living and growing in the field. The children of the kingdom of God and the children of the evil one live side by side in the world – whether as neighbours, or co-existing in the same community, in places of work, or within the same household or even in the life of the church. How wonderful it would be to get rid of the negative influences and evil forces amongst us, sooner rather than later. But that judgement and final separation is done only at the end of the age, when “all causes of sin and all evildoers” will be collected out of God's kingdom and thrown into “the furnace of fire”. It seems from this that good and evil co-exist even in the kingdom of God.

As with the parable of the sower and the seed, the interpretation of the parable is a picture of the community of the believers. We long for the perfect church, purified from all that is wrong. But perhaps we need to look at ourselves, through the eyes of the gospel. We are constantly called to repentance, to become more like Christ. We have to face our own failures, whether personal or more broadly, including gender-based violence, or the legacies of our past, or the abuse of power. The church can never be more than a pale reflection of the kingdom of God. As much as we long for the church to be that perfect community, it will always be a mixture of saints and sinners, weeds and wheat.

My love to you all

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