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| <b>Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2018</b><br><b>St Mary's, Kwalini</b><br><b>9 a.m.</b> |            | <b>10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ordination –</b><br><b>Canon Noluthando Gixana</b><br><b>Advent &amp; Emberide</b> |
| Isaiah 61:1-6a  | Ps 132:1-9 | Acts 20:28-35  |
|   |            | Luke 4:16-21   |
|   |            |  |

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has sent me to preach good news to the poor...” (Isaiah 61:1)

## **INTRODUCTION**

Greetings from Bishop Ebenezer, mama Noncedo; from Nozolile (looking after our daughter following an operation); Sub Dean Mzinzisi; the Cathedral community; from the diocese

To Canon Noluthando; to Archdeacon Prof Peter Mtuze in absentia, Bishop Beth, members of Chapter, clergy, spouses, guild leaders... the people of God...

## **CANON NOLUTHANDO GIXANA**

We are here today to give thanks for 10 years of ordained ministry:

Noluthando the mother – Xola, it is good to see you

Canon Noluthando, the priest: your calling, your ministry.

Your years at COTT, the Cathedral, St Paul's Zeleni, St Alban's East London; Canon on Chapter; Chaplain to the Guild of St Vintcent.

You are known for your love and compassion; your prayerfulness; your faith and trust.

We thank God for you!

## **OUR READINGS**

We heard words of inspiration and challenge in our scripture readings:

Isaiah 61:1 “the spirit of the Lord is upon me...”

Acts 20:28-35 “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock...”

Luke 4 “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing...”

Words of calling, words that are a reminder

## **ANNIVERSARIES & CALLING**

Anniversaries such as this help us to rediscover and reaffirm our calling...

10<sup>th</sup> anniversary: We have gone through the initial excitement and newness. We have begun to face some of the tough realities; the ups and downs of ministry; bumps, joys and sorrows, disappointment and failure, success and fulfilment. We understand the nature of ministry.

After 10 years, we are here for the long haul, the duration. We have survived the “7 year itch”. We have been through the fire. We have been tested. We are here to stay.

Our calling is affirmed in us. We can't stop there. We are on the road of growth, deepening prayer, learning and study, discovering and fulfilling our potential.

Perhaps we have begun to see, in these ten years, the possibilities, the way God opens doors, gives strength to the

weary, gives grace in times of need, provides water and food in the wilderness, enables us to keep going in times of desolation...

**A 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary such as we celebrate today invites us to do two things:**

**- IT REMINDS US:**

To be a sign and living witness of good news. To care for the flock of God, and for ourselves. To be with the broken-hearted, those in prison, the oppressed – those on the margins of our community, the forgotten ones.

**- IN REMINDING US, IT ALSO WARNS US – THAT IT'S NOT ABOUT US:**

It's about those we serve and minister to; that Christian ministry is not meant to be a place of power and privilege; that the priest and pastor is to follow Jesus Christ to the cross, not to the palace; that we are to fulfil our calling with reverence and humility. Recent times have seen the office of priest or pastor discredited almost beyond belief: the trial of Pastor Timothy Omotoso; the immense wealth of tv evangelists and pastors; the "seven angels church" at Ngcobo; the church is increasingly seen by many as an institution of abuse, led by dishonest people; as a place of oppression, where women and children are not safe; as a place of control and power, rather than a community of life and hope. The attempts by the Commission for Religious and Cultural Rights to bring faith communities, and in particular the various churches, under the control of the state, are a warning to us all.

When we as church leaders are known for our wealth and privilege rather than our holiness and life of prayer; when we who are ordained are viewed with suspicion and distrust, rather than being respected for our wisdom and learning; when people experience our ministry as abusive and domineering: then I suggest that we have lost sight of our calling.

Indeed, as Bishop Ebenezer wrote in his most recent Umbuliso letter, we are called to bring hope and life and the good news of Jesus Christ to those who need it most: our angry, hurting communities, families, young and old. To be instruments of the reconciliation brought by Jesus Christ.

## **CONCLUSION**

We thank God for Canon Noluthando!

Let us hear the call of God!

Let us be those who carry good news!

Let us be messengers of reconciliation!

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December 2018