

<b>Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2020</b>		<b>Epiphany 4</b>	
<b>Grahamstown Cathedral</b>		<b>EDUCATION SUNDAY – BACK</b>	
<b>9.30 a.m.</b>		<b>TO SCHOOL SERVICE</b>	
Micah 6:1-8			
		Matthew 5:1-12	

“He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8)

Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” (Matt 5:9).

Let us begin by some moments of silence to remember Enock Mpianzi, the Grade 8 boy at Parktown Boys High School who drowned on a school camp, and who was buried yesterday. Thank you.

A very warm welcome to the Cathedral and this Back to School service. Thank you for coming, for being here this morning. This act of worship has been designed and planned BY young people, FOR young people. And so I thank Kupa and Tandiwe, and all of you who have been involved in any way, for putting this service together.

And thank you to teachers and educators, parents and family members, all who have come along today. Our focus is on our young people, but you as adults and mentors make it all possible. Thank you for what you do in the lives of our young people.

This is one of the very few occasions when people from across our city gather for worship. Normally schools meet on the sports field, as opposing teams. Today we meet as brothers and sisters in Christ.

## **EDUCATION SUNDAY**

A Grade 1 child came home from school at the beginning of the new year. His mother said to him, “so how was school? What did you learn?” the boy replied “Not enough. I have to go back tomorrow!”

The teacher asked the class of Grade 4s what they wanted to do when they grew up. One girl said, “I want to be an astronaut and be the first person to land on the sun!” “You can’t do that – it’s too hot!” No, it’s ok, I’ll go at night!”

School can be fun – the place where we make our best friends. It can be terrible – we meet our worst enemies. We laugh and cry on the same day. It can be the best time of our life, and the worst.

It has already been a rocky year. We have acknowledged the tragic drowning of Enock Mpianzi; there have been horrific scenes on social media of a school girl bullying and assaulting other girls – thankfully the department has intervened and the girl has been suspended; last year was the terrible murder of Uyinene Mrwetyana, just out of school.

And so we say, let things be different in our schools. Most of us have a strong sense of right and wrong. We are angry when we see unfairness, or injustice, or the abuse of power.

## **BULLYING**

Our schools – are they happy places? Are they good places to be? Do you feel safe when you go to school? I hope so! A number of our schools are scary places, with gangs, drugs, violence and sexual assault all too common. Large classes and overloaded teachers make life incredibly stressful.

So our prayers are with all our schools; teachers; university students; parents; academics; the department of education.

One of the big issues that all schools face is that of bullying. The stats on this differ. One study says that 70% of all school children have witnessed someone being bullied. Another says that 57% of children at school say that they have been victims of bullies. Have you been bullied? Have you seen someone being bullied? Are you a bully?.

What is bullying?

There are four types of bullying:

### 1. Physical bullying

...is when someone kicks you, or hits you, or spits at you, or you make mean or rude gestures at someone else, or someone throws your belongings at you, or onto the floor

### 2. Verbal bullying

...is when someone calls you names, or insults you, or teases you , or teases you the whole time, or threatens you, or makes racist comments, or makes inappropriate sexual comments

### 3. Social bullying

...is when people lie about you, or spread rumours, or embarrass you in public, or they laugh at your mistakes, or they tell others not to be friends with you – they socially exclude you.

### 4. Cyber bullying

...is when you post harmful texts or videos or voice messages about someone on facebook, or you spread nasty gossip or rumours about someone else, with your phone.

Bullying can destroy a life. It can make someone's school life a misery. If you have been bullied, you know what I am talking about.

If you have done some of these things to others, you might be saying in your mind, but it doesn't cause harm, I am simply playing a game, it won't hurt them. If that is what you are thinking, then you are wrong. You are dangerous and you need to change your mindset and change your behaviour.

## **MICAH**

The prophet Micah said something very important about fair play, about justice, about treating others correctly, even about bullying:

“He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8)

To do justice – that refers to how your school is run, its rules. Making sure that everyone is treated fairly. Looking after the younger children. Protecting them. Making sure that people are not bullied or mistreated.

To love kindness – that refers to how each of us should relate to others. We are to be kind. Show respect to teachers, to one another. Be polite. Don't swear at one another. Watch your language. Especially when we talk about race, or culture or language, or how boys and girls treat one another, or if a boy or girl says that they are gay or lesbian – let us be kind to one another. There was an explosion at one of our schools last year, with accusations of racism, all over social media and the press, people got very angry – and it wasn't true. Be kind.

To walk humbly with your God – look to God for strength and help. Realise that you need God's guidance in your life.

Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” (Matt 5:9). Will you be peacemakers?

**AND SO...**

A vegetable garden of lettuces:

Let us remember that...God loves each one of us

Let us love one another

Let us make our schools a good place to be.

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Dean of Grahamstown  
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