

<b>Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2012</b>		<b>16<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Year B</b>	
<b>St Philip the Deacon,</b>		<b>Admission of Church Officers</b>	
<b>Grahamstown, 9.30 a.m.</b>		<b>Collect &amp; Readings pg 335 AAPB</b>	
Joshua 1:1-9	Ps 133	1 Cor 12:27-13:3 [4-7]	
		John 15:4-11	
<b>LEADERSHIP</b>			

Greetings to the assistant priest, Fr Mluleki Mize, and spouse; to Fr William Seku and family; to our brand new out of the box deacon, Revd Milton Quntu, and spouse; to churchwardens and parish council; lay ministers; students from the College of the Transfiguration who are here on parish placement; our guild leaders – Mothers Union, AWF, Bernard Mizeki, Youth, Altar Servers – and all your members; to our mothers and fathers, our young people.

We congratulate Revd Milton and his family on his ordination to the diaconate last Saturday; and we extend our deepest sympathies to him and his family on the sad death of his daughter Nomphelo Quntu. We also extend our deepest sympathies to Fr Mluleki Mize on the sad death of his sister Lungiswa Maizana Mize. We also remember before God those who died in the school bus/taxi accident outside Cradock yesterday. May the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace and rise in glory. And may all who grieve know the love and presence of God during this time of sadness and loss.

Our scripture readings today are those for the Admission of Church Officers. They help us reflect on the nature of Christian leadership: leadership in the life of the Church; leadership in the community.

### **Leadership tensions and challenges**

Our country South Africa has been greatly blessed by the leadership of former President Nelson Mandela. This past week, people from all over the world joined in saying, “Happy birthday, Tata” as we wished Madiba a very happy 94<sup>th</sup> birthday, and congratulated him on 12 years of marriage to Graca Machel. I think we all dread the day when he

finally passes on. As long as he is alive, we feel in touch with the qualities that he embodies, and the example of leadership and reconciliation that he has given to us. We salute him and thank God for him.

History was made for us as Anglicans, on Madiba's birthday, 18<sup>th</sup> July, with the election of the first woman as a bishop in our Province. She is the Reverend Ellinah Ntombi Wamukoya and she was elected as Bishop of Swaziland at their Elective Assembly last week. This comes twenty years after the ordination of women to the priesthood in our Province, here in Grahamstown Cathedral.

Anyone in leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century faces questions and challenges about the nature of leadership. What makes a good leader? What do we expect from our leaders? We experience some tension between hierarchy and democracy: on the one hand, hierarchy and obedience; on the other hand, democracy and accountability.

We are a hierarchical society. Our culture and our tradition ranks us one above the other. We believe in order. We say, "Listen to the one at the top. Obey those in authority. Do what you are told. Respect those over you."

In past years we have often thought of our leaders as placed there by God. They hear the word and voice of God and act accordingly. Kings, chiefs, bishops and priests, even deacons – we listen to them as if we are listening to God. And there is plenty of precedent for that. In our first reading, the Lord says to Joshua, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. Be strong and courageous, for you shall put this people in the land..." (Jos 1:5-6) – a picture of a leader called, set apart, guided, by God.

But our society, including our church, is changing rapidly, and the nature of leadership is changing as well. We are now a democracy - government by the people. We elect others to represent us and govern us. The right to elect those who have authority over us has been won

in SA only after much struggle. The power has shifted away from those in authority to the people who have placed them there. We are developing a democratic tradition. It is no longer acceptable for leaders to be a law unto themselves. We do not want leaders to operate in an autocratic manner. We have no time for leaders who are dictators. We expect our leaders to be accountable to us, to be transparent, to be open to review. Leaders can no longer force their will on others, or bully others, or oppress those under them. Leaders now have to persuade people, reason with them, convince them that this or that path is the right one to take.

## **Christ-like leadership**

It is in these changing circumstances that we are called to exercise Christ-like leadership.

What is Christ-like leadership? It is when in our leadership we follow the example of Jesus Christ, who came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. He washed the feet of his disciples (Jn 13:1ff). He said, “Those who would be great amongst you must become the servants of all.” He said, “Among the Gentiles, their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you.” (Mark 10:42-45)

Christ-like leadership exercises its authority with care and with love. It is leadership that is raised up and called by God, yet is accountable to the community it serves. It is hierarchical in that we have different levels of responsibility. Yet we are all of equal value and worth in the body of Christ. We are also intensely democratic – and we exercise those democratic rights when we speak and vote at vestry, at synod, at elective assembly, in the governance of the church.

At the same time, we respect our leaders, we support them, we affirm them, we do not undermine them.

Our reading from 1 Corinthians shows something of that hierarchy and also the value and worth of each person. It reminds us that we have been given different ministries, different responsibilities, which we must use in a spirit of love. I want to suggest a re-reading of the text, to apply it to us here at St Philip's.

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first bishops, second priests, third churchwardens and parish councillors; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing (perhaps our lay ministers come in here), forms of assistance (perhaps our deacons come in here), forms of leadership of our guilds and organisations, various kinds of speaking. Are all bishops? Are all churchwardens? Are all lay ministers? Do all have the same gifts and abilities? But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

If I preach with wonderful words, but do not have love, I am like a tin can blowing against a fence. If I know everything there is to know, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give my whole life for the service of God and the church, but do it with anger and resentment and bitterness, I gain nothing.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. (1 Cor 12:27ff)

### **And so...**

All of us are given gifts, ministries, to use for the upbuilding of St Philip's. All of us have a part to play. Everyone is part of the body of Christ.

“Strive for the greater gifts.” Don't run away from responsibilities. If you are asked to do something, if at all possible, say yes. Help to realise the vision of ACSA – that we be anchored in the love of Christ, committed to God's mission, transformed by the Holy Spirit. Do what you can to restore St Philip's and its grounds and buildings to their

former glory. Ask God to guide you as a parish in your outreach and witness. Adopt a local school. Encourage the teachers by praying for them. Visit the school and offer to minister there on special days. See if there are children in need of uniforms or books. Help with the school feeding scheme.

Do everything, not in a spirit of competition or desire for status, nor to boost your ego or pride. Instead, do everything in a spirit of loving service.

Let us lead by example – how we conduct ourselves in the world out there; even how we drive our cars.

Let us love one another. Love will help us avoid the clashes and arguments that can weaken a guild, the parish, the whole church. Let's delight when others do well. Let's affirm and encourage one another. Let's thank one another for work done. Let's support one another, and carry the load together.

## **CONCLUSION**

Well done on all that you have achieved this year. May God bless your leaders, and you all in your life together.