

AD CLERUM - AUGUST 2011

My dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

It was a chance remark that got me thinking and that resulted in my scrapping a half completed Ad Clerum reflection in order to write this one.

As many of you will already know, my family has been in the wars recently. It began about 10 days ago when my grandson was attacked by a tiger cub and had to be rushed to hospital for plastic surgery to repair the damage to his head. At the same time my father took seriously ill and has spent the past 10 days in ICU with bronchial pneumonia in both lungs. On the following day, my daughter-in-law fell off the roof of their home (don't ask) and had to be rushed to hospital for surgery. Just as things seemed to be getting back to normal, my granddaughter fell at school and put her teeth through her lower lip and had to be admitted to hospital for plastic surgery. And then, later on the same day, as I was visiting my father in hospital, a traffic control boom hit me on the head and hand leaving me with a severely bruised and painful hand.

One of our clergy, on hearing this litany of woe said to me, "Bishop, if you were in Soweto, people would say that you had been bewitched." At the time we all just laughed, but in my prayers later in the day I found myself reflecting on, and praying about those words. I am not suggesting that anyone has actually attempted to bewitch me or to cause either me or my family harm, but it did remind me that the scriptures are very clear that our lives are lived out in the context of spiritual struggle for the soul of the world.

In saying this I am not endorsing some kind of Manichean dualism, but neither do I subscribe to the view of many liberal theologians that "principalities and powers" are archaic concepts that do not belong in a modern worldview. Nor do I want to add to the thousands of books and articles that have been written on the problem of evil in the last 10 years. I am simply saying that evil is a reality in our world and that it cannot simply be explained away in terms of human sinfulness or as an absence of good. "Evil," says Tom Wright in his book "Evil and the God of Justice" is "... a reality which stalks our streets and damages people's lives, homes and property." And, as my own family events illustrate, it is not always simply random, but often focussed and specific.

Tom Wright, in the book mentioned above speaks about what he considers the "*new* problem of evil". Unlike the past, he says, in our post-modern world:-

- we largely ignore evil when it does not hit us in the face;
- we are surprised by evil when it does; and
- we react in immature and dangerous ways as a result.

While this thesis is truer of post-modern western culture than of African culture, nevertheless, the pervasiveness of the western mindset even in our own country is such that his comment warrants further consideration. One of the immature and dangerous patterns of response that Tom Wright highlights is one that I believe is very prevalent both in our church and society. When we encounter evil, he says, rather than recognising and addressing the larger spiritual battle going on we polarise the situation and create an "us /

them” dichotomy in which “we” are good and “they” are bad / evil. We see this over and over again in parish conflicts and have seen, and continue to see it, in the ANC political power struggles. The result is that, instead of addressing the issue, we attack and demonise individuals in ways that are hugely destructive of persons, but which fails to resolve the real issue.

Related to this is the belief that we can destroy evil and make it go away. An example of this is the belief that “...we can make evil go away by using our smart bombs on terrorists and other enemies before they use their dirty bombs on us”. In doing so, both sides are drawn into, and become part of evil while legitimising their actions and demonising those of the other. Both sides, while claiming the moral high ground, have become part of the problem. Some words that have remained with me ever since I first read them are the words of Martin Luther King who said: “Unjust means can never bring about a just end.”

I think that if we are to talk about a Christian response to evil then it must be said that God’s way of dealing with evil in creation is not to destroy, but to redeem and renew through the cross. God’s action is redemptive rather than destructive and the question that confronts us, as Christians, is how the restorative justice of God can be brought to bear upon the present world in human lives and societies.

The starting point must be a clear recognition of the nature of evil and how it is at work in the world. This is not, as it always becomes when we approach the matter from the wrong end, a case of “seeing demons behind every bush”. Rather it begins, as it did for Jesus, with quality time spent in prayer and a deep desire to discern and know God’s will and purposes. Only then can we have eyes to clearly see those things that undermine and thwart what God is doing in our lives and that of our community. And only when we can see evil though they eyes of God can we begin to see how to respond in ways that are redemptive rather than destructive.

For self reflection:

1. How much time do I spend, as a leader in the things of God, in prayerful discernment of the ways God is at work in my life and that of the community?
2. How much time do I spend, as a leader in the things of God, in prayer seeking to discern God’s greater plans and purposes for the community and for me?
3. Where is evil at work in my life and community? How do I respond in ways that are redemptive?

For group discussion:

1. What is God’s greater plan and purposes for our parish? To what extent is our answer to this question the result of corporate prayerful discernment?
2. How are we seeking to implement God’s purposes for our parish?
3. Where is evil at work in our parish, seeking to undermine and destroy that which God is doing?
4. How can we respond in ways that address the problem rather than demonise people and in ways that become redemptive?

May we more clearly see God’s redemptive power at work in our lives

↳ Brian

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Spiritual Formation

Clergy Day: The next Clergy Day will take place on Tuesday the 2nd of August at the Church of the Resurrection, Meadowlands. The topic for the day will be the 2011 Lenten Course which the Diocese is currently developing.

Please note that because the August Clergy Day is only a one day event and not a 3 day workshop as envisioned in the Yellow Pages there will be a clergy day in September. You will be advised of the venue in due course but please ensure that Tuesday the 6th **September** is booked in your diaries. Attendance at Clergy Days is compulsory.

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Reading Recommendations

For those of you who would like to read more deeply around the theme of the problem of evil, may I recommend the book mentioned in my reflection above: "Evil and the God of Justice" by Tom Wright. Another excellent, weighty book is Greg Boyd's book, "Satan and the Problem of Evil."

A more contemplative book is "Uncommon Gratitude" by Joan Chittister and Rowan Williams which one commentator described as an "... inspiring and timely message of hope in the midst of so much fear and violence. It speaks prophetically about God's plans and purposes in the face of evil.

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Diocesan Conference

The Diocesan Conference to discuss the findings of the Salary and Allowances Task Team will take place at St Joseph's on Saturday the 15th of October.

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Provincial News

- We are sad to inform you that **Bishop Joe Tsubella** passed away in hospital during the night of the 26th of July. His funeral will take place at St Peter's Chains, Katlehong beginning with a requiem mass at 07h30 on Thursday the 4th of August prior to departure to Alberton North cemetery at 11h00.
- Rev. **Nyamazane Edward Sithole** will be installed and instituted as second Dean of the Cathedral of the Resurrection, Ikageng – Potchefstroom in the Diocese of Matlosane, on 31 July 2011. Please keep him and his family in your prayers at this time.

- The Biography of **Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane** “*From Robben Island to Bishopscourt*” is out and due to be launched at St George’s Cathedral on the 4th August 2011 @ 18h00 in the Dean King Hall. This book by renowned writer Sindiwe Magona gives a unique insight into the man behind the Archbishop’s mitre.

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Diocesan Family News

- Please find a copy of the **August Prayer Diary** attached.
- Please keep **Nancy Tshabalala** in your prayers as the family mourn the loss of her mother’s sister Isabel who was like a mother to Nancy. Nancy is in Swaziland with the family at this time.
- Please continue to pray for **Charles Germond** who remains in hospital in a serious but stable condition.

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Moves and Placements

- **Lankiri Thaba** has been appointed Rector of the Parish of Holy Cross, Orlando with effect from the 1st of August. His institution will take place at 15h00 on Sunday the 14th of August. Please keep Lankiri and Makananelo in your prayers.
- **Neo Motlabane** has been appointed as Rector of the Parish of Christ the King, Sophiatown with effect from the 1st of September. Please pray for Neo and Motshabi as they prepare for the move as well as for the Parish of Sophiatown as they prepare for a new Rector.

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Birthdays and Wedding Anniversaries

We would like to wish the following people a very happy birthday and wedding anniversary:-

Date	August	September
02	Stewart Basson Dan Ngqumeya Michelle Pilet	
03	Phillip Louw	Lynda Shimmin
04	Trevor & Gwyn Slade(38) Gerald Margaret Steward(32) Gaby Tucker	John & Irma Warren(46)
05	Mandisa Nxumalo	
06		Irma Warren
07	Ian Stevens	
08	Archie Motaung	
09	Samuel Moloi	Lankiri Thaba

10	Alinah Mohomane	
11	Geoff & Christine Lowick(46)	Olga Raphoto Chris Viljoen Susan Germond
12	Koto Moloji	Monica Xinwa
14		Ian Thorburn Buyile Montjane
15	Meshack & Nombuyiselo Nhlapo(38)	
16		Priscilla Everson
17	Bradley Moloji Tshepo & Mamosebetsi Maloka	
18		Patricia Lane
19	George Boyce Lynette Wessels Abegail Tserere	
21		Phyllis Mggquba
22	Wouter Uitzinger Sue Waldron	Barbara Collins
23	Gerald Steward Ian & Wendy Macintosh(53)	Ray Bewsher Christian Uitzinger Mothusimang & Boitumelo Makata(5)
24	Jeremy Jacobs	Ian & Diana Thorburn(28)
25	Zanele Mtshali	Thokozile Motaung
26	Molebe Mosima	Monica Ngombane Amy Herbert
27	Roy & Barbara Collins(45)	Greg & Bev Longbottom(36)
28	Rusty & Paddy Seller(46)	Eno Mhlongo Wendy Macintosh
31	Motshabi Motlabane	

We appreciate feedback – especially when we’ve forgotten someone’s special day so please do contact Noxolo at the Diocesan office with any updates or amendments.

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Dates for Diary

AUGUST		Parish	Diocesan	Bishop
Tuesday	2	Clergy Day	Clergy Day	Clergy Day
Wednesday	3		Strategic Management Planning	Strategic Management Planning
Thursday	4		Strategic Management Planning	Strategic Management Planning
Friday	5	Independent Schools Close	Strategic Management Planning	Strategic Management Planning
Saturday	6		FOX I	
Sunday	7			Pastoral Visit: Sunninghill
Tuesday	9	NATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY	National AWF Prayer Day	
Saturday	13		FOX II / Parish Minister Training	FOX II 13h45 - 16h00
Sunday	14			Pastoral Visit: St Thomas, Kagiso / Institution of Rector at Holy Cross

Tuesday	16		Archdeaconry Region 1, 2 & 4 Clergy Day	
Wednesday	17		Management Meeting	Management Meeting
Saturday	20		Ordinands / Transformers / Archdeaconry Region 1 Council Meeting / Anglicare	Transformers
Sunday	21			Pastoral visit: St Barts, Kagiso
Saturday	27		JDACF Elimination / POST / SAINTS	Self Supporting Clergy Day
Sunday	28			Pastoral visit: Meadowlands (Feast of Dedication) 50th anniversary
Monday	29			Diocese of Natal Elective Assembly
Tuesday	30			Diocese of Natal Elective Assembly
Wednesday	31			Diocese of Natal Elective Assembly

SEPTEMBER		Parish	Diocesan	Bishop
Saturday	3		FOX I	FOX 1: 11:30 - 13h00
Sunday	4			Pastoral visit: Bekkersdal
Tuesday	6	Independent Schools Open / Clergy Day	Clergy day	Clergy Day
Saturday	10		FOX II / Parish Minister Training	LEAVE
Saturday	17	Budget Presentation	Ordinands / Transformers	Bishop meets with Churchwardens, Bryanston 08h30 - 12h00
Sunday	18		Choir Fellowship, Fochville	Pastoral Visit: Rangeview
Saturday	24	HERITAGE DAY	POST / SAINTS	
Sunday	25			Synod of Bishop's
Monday	26			Synod of Bishop's
Tuesday	27			Synod of Bishop's
Wednesday	28		Trustees	Synod of Bishop's / PSC
Thursday	29			Provincial Standing Committee
Friday	30	Government Schools Close		Provincial Standing Committee

Bishop's diary is always very full. Should you have any special events in 2012 I would encourage you to submit those dates now to ensure that Bishop is available to attend.

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General Notices

- The Parish of St Margaret of Scotland, Bedfordview had a **laptop stolen** from their Sunday School during communion. Please would all parishes be vigilant and ensure that valuables are locked up when rooms are unoccupied – in the case of St Margaret the theft took place in minutes and, because the perpetrator was well dressed, no one questioned what he was doing in the Sunday School area.
- That there will be **Archdeaconry Region 4** Clergy meeting on the 16th August at St Augustine's Brixton from 10h00 to 11h30.

- The Parish of St Paul, Mohlakeng is hosting a **Code of Conduct Workshop** led by Advocate Ronnie Bracks on Saturday the 20th of August from 12h00 to 15h00. To book your place please contact the Parish Secretary at stpaulmohlakeng@telkomsa.net or phone 011 414 5337. A donation of R30 is requested.

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Directory Update

- The Parish of St Augustine, Orange Grove has a new email address: staugustine.orangegrove@anglicanjoburg.org.za. Please update your directories accordingly.

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