



# FROM THE OFFICE OF THE ANGLICAN BISHOP DIOCESE OF JOHANNESBURG



Our Vision is: To Achieve the Practice of the Ministry of All Believers

## PASTORAL LETTER

Vol 2

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Dear Saints

### **Theme: Standing in the Shadow of the Cross**

As the Shadow of the Cross begins to fall over us at this Eastertide, a man named Elvis Nyathi was barbarically killed in Diepsloot, north west of Johannesburg. He did not even have a mock trial, as Jesus did, but a craven crowd, drunk with violence, dragged him out of his house, beat him, and then set fire to him and burnt him to death.

This was part of the ongoing xenophobia right in our midst, some proponents of which might well be sitting in our pews. I wonder how the police and others felt while they witnessed this deadly attack on someone made in the image of God? Did they watch in silence, or did they shout out a modern-day version of “Crucify him! Crucify him!” Or did they feel like a lone Roman policeman who stood at the foot of Christ’s Cross on the miserable hill of Golgotha on that first Good Friday?

“And when the centurion, who stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God’.” (Mark 15:39).

I doubt that any of our police members would have entertained such thoughts at that wicked scene in Diepsloot. Neither I suspect, did the people standing by who witnessed the latest in a series of horrific actions caused by the sin of xenophobia that is now deeply rooted in our midst. It is worth noting that there was xenophobia present at Golgotha as the Romans made sure the threat from this itinerant rabbi was removed– with the blessing

of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish elders of the day, who had dragged him before Pontius Pilate to be tried and killed for blasphemy for claiming that he said he was the Son of God and the King of the Jews.

As I reflected on the words of the centurion, I was astonished to realise that just as the people of Palestine in the time of Jesus allowed suffering and violence to permeate the very depths of their society, so do we. When we feel the moment is right, we wave our palms in the air as we did this past Palm Sunday and we sing the praises of our iNkosi, uJesu Kristu. We cannot allow the spirit of Ubuntu to desert us or go as far as Judas Iscariot and betray our King. Thankfully Modimo warona, through his passion and resurrection, can restore that spirit of humanity.

Thus, as we reflect on the Easter journey and participate in a celebration of Christ's Resurrection, let us remember that our meditation must include prayers and actions based on the reality of the society in which we minister. Recognising that Jesus is still the Son of God, we must take courage and inspiration from Jesus and follow him as our Risen King, living out our discipleship in words and actions.

In South Africa this means that where there is violence, we must seek peace, and we must practice and promote non-violence. Where there is corruption, we must display integrity and honesty, and encourage others to do so too. Where there is opposition to reforming the cancer of violence, corruption, and crime in our midst, each one of us, every parish and diocesan structure, must act in a spirit of Christian conviction to bring about righteous change. There must be zero tolerance for the violence of xenophobia and the murder of people like Elvis Nyathi. We are a community of people who hold fast to the Resurrection and the transformation that it brings. As Christ's followers we are charged to act and work for a society in which everyone can live without fear in harmony with others, whoever they might be.

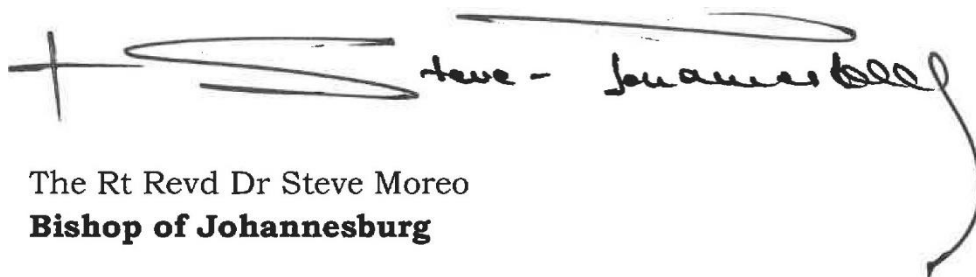
This is my prayer as, with you, I stand in the Shadow of the Cross on Golgotha and await the sight of the Empty Tomb. Take courage from the words of Charles Wesley that millions of people throughout the world will sing on Easter Sunday:

Love's redeeming work is done:  
Fought the fight, the battle won:  
Vain the stone, the watch, the seal:  
Christ hath burst the gates of hell.  
King of glory! Soul of bliss!  
Everlasting life is this.  
Thee to know, thy power to prove,  
Thus, to sing, and thus to love.  
Hallelujah!

It is in the knowledge that love always overcomes as it did as Jesus was nailed to the Cross and rose to be with all people, evermore, that I bless you as one of the saints of this Diocese at this Eastertide.

Liziwe joins me in good wishes of love and grace.

Yours full of Grace



The Rt Revd Dr Steve Moreo  
**Bishop of Johannesburg**