

Miktaav Yod (Letter 10)

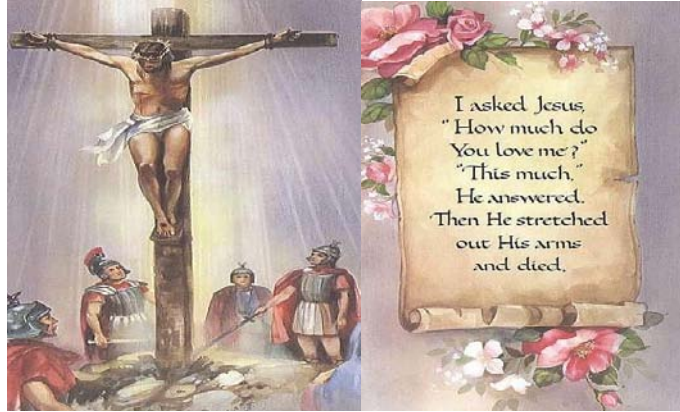
Dear Reader,

The co-incident of the culmination of Sunday Judica (cf. Ps 43:1 Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people; from deceitful and unjust men deliver me!) and Human Rights Day in South Africa, is a double call to seriously consider our relationships with our neighbors.

We need to become alert whether we undermine the dignity of others or whether we allow others to do so? May indeed the longing be to be more Christ like in our actions and words cause us to reach out to others, to bring their cause before God and human beings who have the authority to make a difference.

This newsletter derives from media reports and dissatisfactions on so many fronts that are disturbing to our minds as our democracy was supposed to bring about or at least raise the quality of life. When this is not forthcoming we are all affected and challenged to play our part to find sustainable solutions.

Blessed is the one who takes the time to read this newsletter.

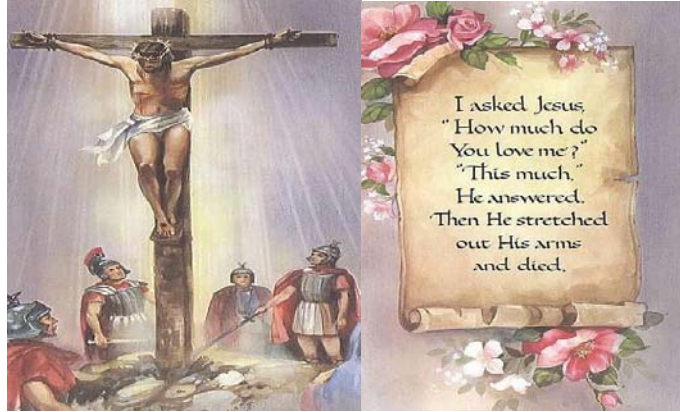


1. Walking in the light

Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord Almighty (Zech.4:6)
Violence begets violence. This is the unfortunate reality where people use this option to change the situation that becomes unbearable? Jesus' earthly life, particularly his last three years or so, were dedicated to establish the kingdom of God and to leave a legacy that humans can imitate if they are open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was very aware of the oppressive circumstances under which his people were living. He could not tolerate it, as it was against His goals and wishes for His people.

The distress calls that went up daily against the Roman oppression and the daily prayers that arose concerning the oppression and exploitation never went unanswered. Jesus' strategy however did not follow the violent annihilation of people as was foremost in the minds of the oppressed. In their desperation and frustration they sought these people to be eradicated. Jesus reaches for a better conclusion to the dilemma, with a better solution. He used various methods to destroy those opposed to His Kingdom by incorporating the opposition through a process of transformation.

Amongst others, the calls of Matthew the conversion of Zaccheus, are God's style to liberate His people and to answer their call for justice. Abraham Lincoln would centuries later echo the same sentiments when he asked: Don't I destroy my enemy



by loving them? So let us consider: Do I enhance people lives? Do I bring joy or sadness?

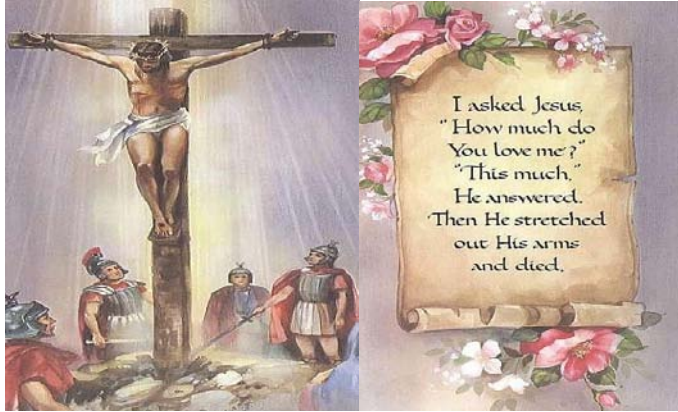
Do people appreciate my contributions to society or hate me? Am I loved or feared? Do people intercede for me or pray for my destruction to a God of Justice? Let us take the appropriate action to always align ourselves with the kingdom of principles.

2. What shall we say about all these?

{Reflections on the current national and international news events will be mirrored by/in the Word of God to console, direct and challenge (where needed).}

We may never *really* know, we cannot *really* tell what pain it took to bring about a change in South Africa and to have the current human rights on the Statute books today. We need to be very grateful for the various sacrifices people had to make through the decades besides the ultimate sacrifices which pushed us into democracy. A disturbing question pops up however now and again: Was it all worthwhile? Did we achieve what we set out to achieve? Or was the process hijacked? Is it possible that we poured new wine into old wineskins and now we have the resultant consequences?

What is the human rights reality on the ground? Was there really a concerted effort to say never again to the abuses, and if so, what happened to undermine this quest?



Is it possible that there was concurrent with the quest, a counterforce who wanted to maintain the status quo at all cost or who diluted the quest of dignity for all?

These are difficult questions, because wherever the finger points counter claims can be made in defense.

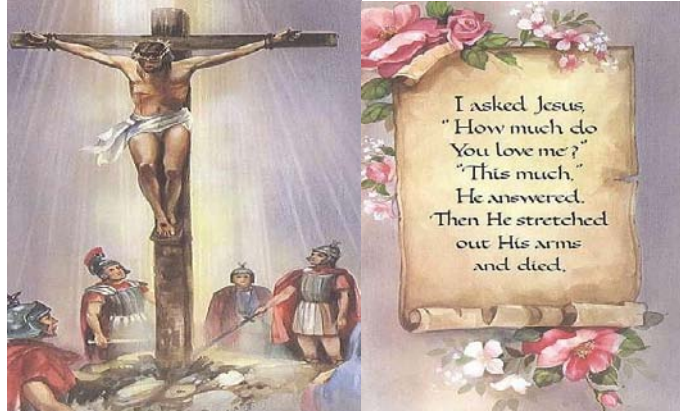
It is sad to see that instead of human rights entrenched on and in all spheres; it has become a selective commodity. Some are more equal than others and must be treated likewise.

Why should certain rights be only for a select few? Why does it come to the people on the periphery in drips and drabs and only after lots of noise and destruction and violence?

We really need to consider the place and impact of greed, favoritism and selfishness in South Africa. These aspects can and are undermining the human rights culture we are trying to establish. How long before Jesus' message will be fulfilled in our hearing:

"Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

..... "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord " (Luke 4: 18,19).



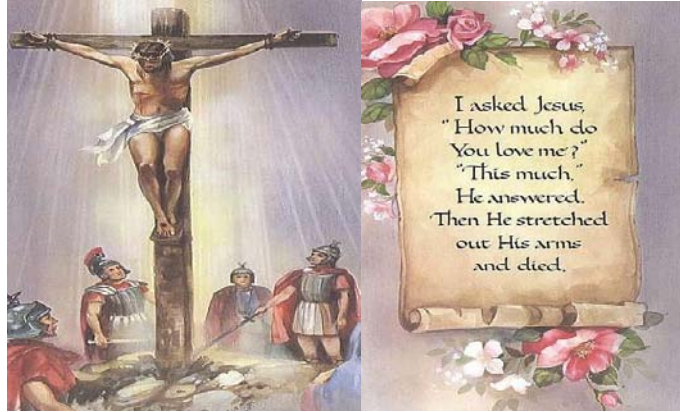
3. Joy with the sorrow.

It is very unfortunate that this heading refers to a similar tension that we experience yearly towards the conclusion of Lent with the huge number of travelers on our roads.

The coming and current holidays will again see people traveling to various destinations and their family members. It is supposed to be a time of joyous reunion, but in her wake is also the possibility of grave sorrow due to reckless behavior on our roads.

We call upon all readers who will be traveling to be extremely careful and responsible. We are called upon to reflect on the extreme discomfort and outcry at the death of four students due to a silly street race a week ago and this need to keep us vigilant and respectful of life so that we do not make the same grave mistakes and need to face the brunt of the Law and society.

May we show each other the necessary courtesy and respect on the road and may we obey the standards put down to preserve life. Here to may God have mercy on us all!



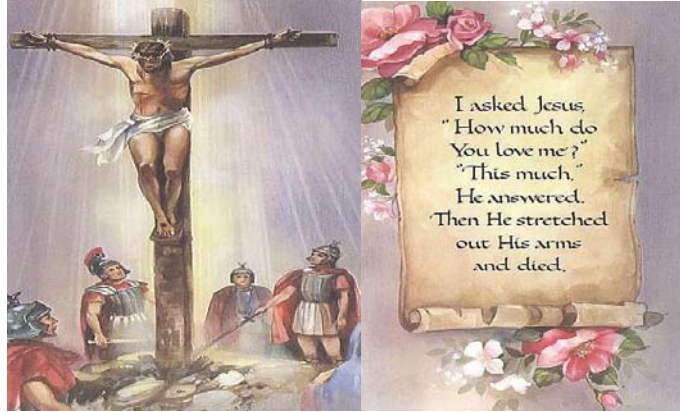
4. Chess (nee *GYURGY*) moves: Bishop ...

{All the movements of the Bishop (and deans), where they sow, plant, water will be made known so you can pray to God for these ventures at your Prayer groups and during Worship services}

We implore all congregants to intercede for the proclamation of the Word especially during the next two weeks.

May the Holy Spirit give wisdom and authority to underpin the preaching so that many hearts will be touched and transformed, that lives will be empowered and that hope for the future will be revived due to the Victory of the Lamb.

We intercede also for Rev T.A. Khunou and his team as they embark to re-energize the Diocesan youth programme. We pray God's blessings on their meetings and deliberations this coming weekend.



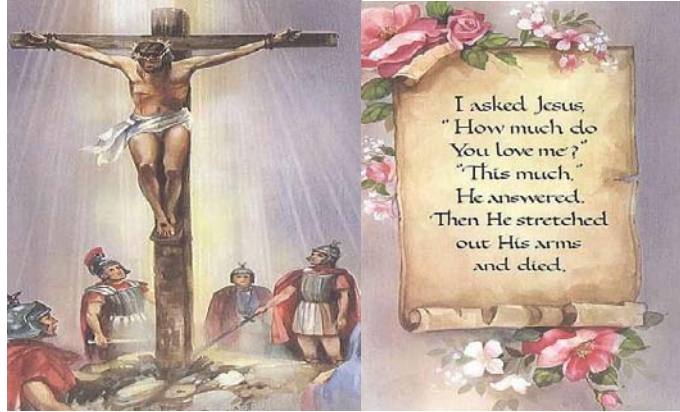
5. What about....

Making a difference -in the local congregation- this Lenten season.

We have thus far called upon the Holy Spirit to transform us and steer our faith into action (as called upon by St James) in our relationships at home, at work and today in **the local congregation**.

The focus can for example, be on my utilization of my talents, time and tithes to support the local ministry, but it can also be directed at our interaction with those who we consider backsliders or those who do not belong to our fold who show interest. If we are called upon to equip one another (Eph. 5:10) do we really play our part? Is my puzzle piece closely linked to my fellow congregants to enhance our Christian witness?

Am I involved or a mere observer, or worse still am I such critical observer that destruction and despair follow my comments? We are called upon to be become a living bricks in the Church of Christ, built on the true Foundation, but that will only come about if I take up my place and are interlocked with my brothers and sisters.



Another facet that needs attention is our perceptions of persons outside our fold. Do we have insiders and outsiders and do we want to maintain the status quo, instead of breaking down the dividing wall?

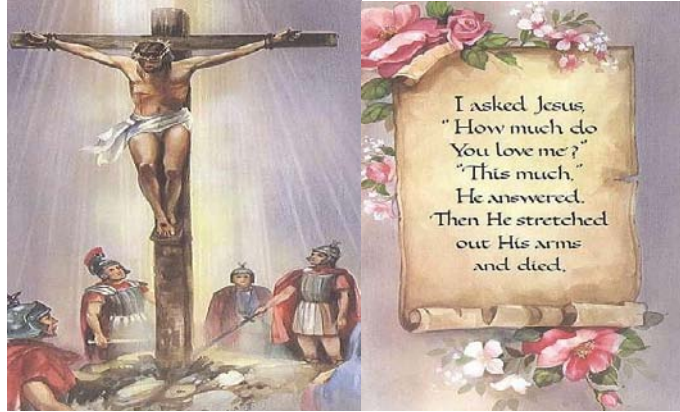
Do we feel more holy and privileged than others? Do we keep the prodigal sons and daughters outside as they must not contaminate us? We have the example of the true Shepherd who prayed to God constantly to bring about life changing experiences in the lives of people and then allowed them to join Him.

With God we need to rejoice about the one sheep that has repented and is returning to the fold as we are who we are through grace alone. We must never forget that our current position and privilege in the Church is due to the mercy of God and we must never become pompous. Rather remain grateful to Christ and His intervention on my behalf, which enabled me to be part of His fold. I hope you will care for your congregation and build it up, but more so reach out to those who are not so privilege to know Christ as their Saviour fully yet.

6. Spotlight on.... The Feet-washing ceremony

Pride versus humility. Who will be the least amongst us? Who will take the position of a slave to wash our feet after a hectic day of preparations?

This was one of the key issues for the disciples on the first Maundy Thursday when a slave was needed to do the traditional washing of the feet. No-one wanted to be cut to size. Servant hood was inappropriate in the ranks of the twelve.



Jesus had to break the deadlock and set the example to the disgust of Simon Peter when he realized what happened due to their stubbornness and pride.

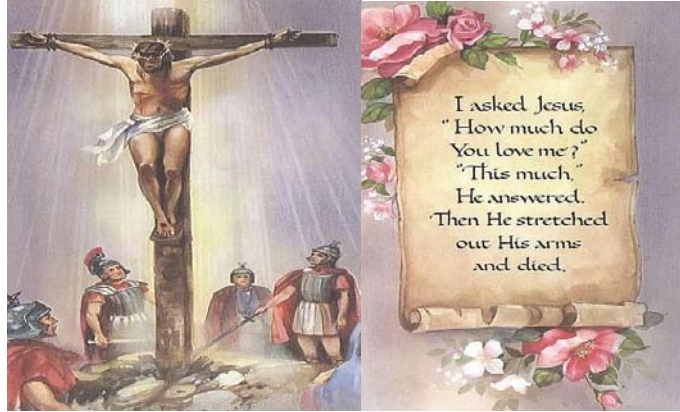
Where are we? Do you have such a ceremony? How is it approached? What do we want to achieve? Who is prepared to go on his/her knees? Is it enforced on the pastor or leader and now he/she needs to play along? Is it a momentarily act, a spiritual stunt, a photo shoot or really a genuine attempt to imitate Jesus?

True servant hood is a daily occurrence of respect for everyone with whom we come into contact. May your feet-washing experience centre on Christ's humiliation and His preparedness to surrender all for us. May this inspire us as we interact with our neighbours.

7. What's in it for me?

Tell us about your Maundy Thursday activities in your congregation/parish. How are you currently celebrating the feet-washing? Do you have other special events or approaches on the day? Share your stories and suggestions.

The **Message Board** is waiting to capture your views and discussions (and on anything else!) Handy spiritual books are up for grabs for the ones posting the most creative views! Your efforts here can just stimulate others (even internationally to embark on your suggestions and enhance the lives of many!)



Wishful thinking

Encouragement is the oxygen of the soul. Please encourage others to subscribe to our newsletter which aims to inform, stimulate, to involve and to grow the visitors to our site. It is still my wish to hear from you. Please volunteer to contribute to any of these regular features. You also need to tell us your needs and whether these regulars are sufficient and cater for your expectations. Any other brilliant ideas will be gladly accommodated.

Eagerly waiting to hear from you!

The editor can be contacted at newtonbrandt@gmail.com



I asked Jesus
"How much do
You love me?"
"This much."
He answered.
Then He stretched
out His arms
and died.