



ANGLICAN BISHOP DIOCESE OF JOHANNESBURG



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My dear fellow disciples,

I write to you in this week preceding Palm Sunday with deep concern about the state of our country. I write not only as your Bishop, but as a Christian and a taxpayer. I note this last status of mine so that there can be misunderstanding of the seamlessness between being a Christian and taxpayer: Christians are part of the body politic and, just as they did during the apartheid years, they have a duty to be prophetic and to call for relevant action in times of great national stress.

The dismissal this past week of several Cabinet ministers, including, of course, Mr. Pravin Gordhan as Minister of Finance, and the drama surrounding his recall from London, has sent shockwaves politically, socially and economically through our country. Many have already pointed out that it is the poor who will suffer as a result of the immediate negative economic consequences of these unprecedented actions by President Zuma. One would have thought that South Africans were now done with politicians playing loose and fast with their future. Clearly this is not the case.

I am aware that there are many outstanding servants of the state who serve in government. Unfortunately, however, their leader is not acting as a good steward of the country's resources. This is sad, but his failure to act in the interests of all South Africans has been identified by bodies no less august than the Constitutional Court.

As a result, we are all losers. In my recent pastoral letter to the Diocese, I quoted Dr Mawudor who said at the recent Synod of Bishops of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, "When money is lost, something is lost. When health is lost, more is lost. When integrity is lost, everything is lost." We, in South Africa, are in danger of losing everything.

As Christians, we should not be surprised that politicians play loose and fast and stop acting with integrity. After all, this coming Sunday we will mark the day on which Jesus Christ entered the gates of Jerusalem to the jubilant shouts of "Hosanna to the King of Kings." And then, during the days that follow in Holy Week leading to Good Friday, we will recall how those in power played loose and fast with Jesus.

There are many calls by many bodies, such as Save South Africa, for our citizens to participate in various protests, marches and the like, aimed at encouraging President Zuma to do the right thing, which is to step down, so that government can achieve a renewed equilibrium. I encourage my fellow Anglicans in the Diocese of Johannesburg, and Christians generally, to follow the lead of their conscience in this matter.

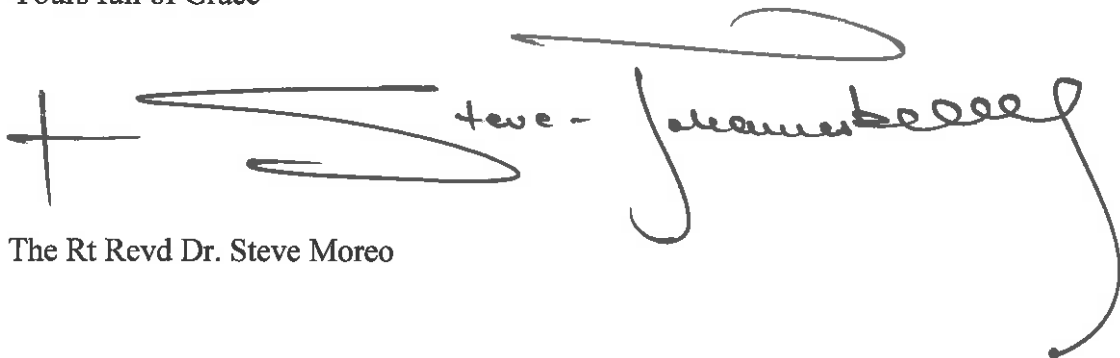
However, I call on all our Anglican Parishes in the Diocese of Johannesburg to do something in this respect on this Palm Sunday. Traditionally, parishioners in our churches re-enact the Palm Sunday procession. This Palm Sunday, let us do so with extra verve and meaning.

Understanding that the jubilation of that first Palm Sunday soon turned into the diabolical and heinous trial and execution of the Saviour of humankind, I ask my fellow Anglicans to make their procession this Sunday one that recognises the parlous state of our beloved land, South Africa. For we are in the midst of our own trial.

Use banners proclaiming the King of Kings, but also convey the message that our God is a God of the poor, the oppressed and the marginalised, and that their servants (ministers of state) should not act in a way that retards their progress as happened with the Presidential action last week. Wave your African palm tree fronds in our autumnal breeze to signify that we as Christians require fundamental change in South Africa.

May our Lord bless and keep as you prepare for Palm Sunday. Be assured that He will walk with you as you process on that day.

Yours full of Grace

A handwritten signature in black ink. It begins with a cross symbol on the left. To the right of the cross is a large, stylized, cursive signature that appears to read 'Steve - Johannesburg'. The signature is written in a fluid, connected style.

The Rt Revd Dr. Steve Moreo