



Your Excellency, thank you to the Archbishop and to the Provost, for the invitation to speak. It is now 43 years since my first visit to this Cathedral, aged 18. In 1974 I spent 7 months teaching near Karatina at Kiburu Secondary School, during which I first saw the reality of Christian life and the Lord Jesus began to call me.

This building has existed for 100 years, and it has gathered memories. Cathedrals are a place of memories, of promises and hopes. Think of the history that has passed it by. It was built in the early years of the colonial regime, and stood above the demonstrations for Independence and then the violence of the Emergency, as a nation called for independence, for freedom and the right to choose its own future.

It was there for the celebrations of that Independence, for the prayers and the services. In it prayers have been said for freedom, for democracy, for hope. It saw the first time a Kenyan was enthroned as Archbishop. Under the great Archbishop Gitari, it witnessed bloodshed and violence as the police attacked those seeking a new and democratic Kenya. They pursued demonstrators in here, and not finding their main target attacked others so savagely that the Cathedral was closed for a week while there was cleansing, both physical and spiritual.

The Cathedral has been a place of quiet prayer for visitors with heavy burdens, and of joyful celebration for a country finding hope. It has plans that will enable its children to be educated in following Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, it looks back, it witnesses to the present day and it looks forward, and is a sign of the faithfulness of God to the Kenya that is not yet known, but is the dream of its people.

As a place of memories of hopes and of praises it is part of the family of great cathedrals worldwide. For Cathedrals often come to tell a story of their communities.

I wear a cross made of nails that comes from the Cathedral of Coventry in the UK. In November 1940 that Cathedral, built in the 14th century, was bombed during World War II. The City and the Cathedral burned, and the casualties were huge. Six weeks later the Provost, speaking on Christmas Day on the BBC, spoke of the hope of a world after the war, a more Christ like world, and from the end of the war Coventry Cathedral, still in ruins, became a centre of reconciliation. Those who worked there wore a cross made from the nails that had fallen from the mediaeval beams of the old Cathedral. In 1962 the rebuilding was complete, with the new Cathedral linked to the ruins of the old, a sign of death and resurrection. It tells a story to this day.

It speaks of the horror of war, of the cost of reconciliation and of the hope of peace in Christ. It is powerful, like here. I have seen hardened police officers, not even Christians, weep as they look at it and see in its shapes and symbols the sign of all that was important to them in life, and more than that, of the offer of reconciliation from Christ.

Canterbury Cathedral, built in the 1100s, has a place where its then Archbishop, Thomas, was murdered in 1171, one of five of my 104 predecessors to be murdered. Each year, on the anniversary of his death, whoever is Archbishop stands on the very spot of the killing, as the

words of those there over 800 years ago are repeated, the story is told. It is an emotional moment, but it is a symbol of the call for church leaders to be faithful to Christ first, even when, as with Thomas, they face the power of a tyrant. Uganda tells the same story every year of a modern martyr, Archbishop Janani Luwum.

Some people might argue that a museum tells a story, and in Europe you do find Cathedrals that feel like museums, simply places that speak of a spiritual life long since having left the place.

What is different about these great buildings which are Cathedrals?

First is that they do not speak of human beings alone, but of human beings who love and who are loved by God. The difference is everything.

When I came to Kenya for the first time in 1974, I saw human beings like other human beings in most respects. They had houses, families, farms, cattle. Far more than that, though, the East African Revival had touched their lives and they lived with Christ as an ever present reality.

To witness to history is important, but to witness to God at work in history is to make a statement is far more important: it is to say that what we see is not all there is, that times of trouble and fear are not random, nor are they beyond the control of God.

In the first reading, from Deuteronomy the theme is “do not forget”; “For what other great nation has a God so near to it as the Lord our God is whenever we call to him?” says Moses to the people of Israel. They are not just to remember they are a great nation, because they were not. God says to them he did not choose them, as he does not choose each of us, because we are important, but because he loved them. They are to remember that God is close to them and that they have his law. In other words, they are to remember that they have a relationship with God.

“Do not forget”. This building says that to Kenya, to all who pass it, to all who enter it. Kenya is a great nation, and the building is a great building, but it is not saying “remember you are a great nation, for why else would you have a great Cathedral”. It is saying “remember God”.

The Israelites in the desert remembered that God had brought them freedom. Certainly that had been a struggle, but they remembered that it was because of God that freedom had come. This building reminds us that Kenya is free, can argue, is able to disagree, can go to court, can demonstrate, can cheer its rulers or criticise them, because freedom is the gift of God. When we forget that all we have comes from God we forget all constraints and we act as though God does not exist, we become proud, because we imagine that what we see around us is of our own making.

Moses was calling the people to action in obedience to the law God gave them. The law was the sign of their relationship with God, as the gift of the Holy Spirit to the church and to each believer is the sign and seal of our relationship with God. They had to live within the law, to love their neighbour across all the 12 tribes of Israel, to pursue justice, to care for the poor, to worship in truth, to turn from all other gods, to be faithful,

never to steal, never to bear false witness, never to covet, never to kill. These were the signs of being the people of God. They were to be different.

Kenya has beauty in its lands, rich farming, wise people, a great history. It found freedom and reconciliation after the Emergency, it is at the heart of the great East African Revival. It has received hope and strength and a people who are an example in Africa. These things are the gift of God, and the building says to us “remember the scriptures and do not forget, be different”.

Cathedrals tell us another story as well. They say “remember not only that you are a people, but more than that, you are a people in relationship with Jesus who have been changed”. The second reading, from Ephesians, speaks of the change that Paul was telling the church in Ephesus to remember. “remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” (12-13).

Do you hear the key word again? “Remember”.

Remember that you have been made something new, old barriers have been broken. This is a message from Paul to the people of God in Ephesus and to us. The laws of God in the 10 commandments that Moses called Israel to remember express the will of God for all people always. But they could not keep it, and because the law was a sign of God’s holiness but because of sin became an accusation of failure, God acted to change not the law, but to change us.

What an amazing God we serve! He knows what is right. When as human beings we cannot keep the rules we are tempted to make them easier. But God does not make the rules easier, he makes the people new.

You and I are new people, if Jesus is our saviour. We were far away from God, but he has brought us near. We were bankrupt in Spirit, not just poor, and he has made us rich and full of the Spirit of God. We had no hope of heaven, and no knowledge of the presence of God. In ancient England the people used to think that life was a trip from darkness to darkness. They had halls with no glass in the windows and a fire in the middle of the room, and birds at night would fly in one side of the hall to the firelight and out of the other to the dark. Without God and without hope our lives are like that, we go briefly from darkness to light, but then back to darkness.

But this building says remember, you are not what you were, all has changed. Now there is, for those who are rescued by Christ, as we may all be, hope and light forever. Death is no end, but the beginning of life without tears and without fears, surrounded by love, full of joy, with no rivalries and failures but only future and celebration.

The building says “remember”, you are not who you were.

I wonder if there are any Liverpool supporters here? When someone changes teams in the English Premiership, they move to a new club and they get new shirts and new colours. Perhaps quite soon they find themselves playing their own club. But everything has changed, and so must their game. They play with their new team, in a new way.

Paul is saying to the Ephesians that God has created a new nation, and that all Christians have dual nationality. They are Kenyan, or British, or French or whatever. But first they are Christian, and they must live like Christians. To do that they need to remember that God has changed them.

Throughout Ephesians Paul reminds us to be being filled with the Spirit, for the Spirit reminds us that we belong to Christ and we must live in the new way. We cannot and must not divide our lives up and say “this is how I live at home with the family, I command and bully, I am unfaithful and cruel. This different way is how I live at church, I am well dressed and polite, I am kind and make sure I look very Christian. This is how I live at work, I take advantage, I take money and steal, I bribe or am bribed. I go out and get drunk with my colleagues, I plot and scheme to get ahead and I betray in order to push down my colleagues. This is how I am with my friends. I tell stories and gossip. I try to make myself look important.”

That is how the Ephesians were often behaving, for they were people like us. But Paul says “remember, you have been changed and brought near to God”.

To be changed by Christ is never invisible. The night I finally gave my life to Jesus, in a room in Cambridge on October 12th 1975, I was very worried what my friends would think. So I said to the person who led me to Christ, “please do not tell anyone”. Big mistake! I left the room, a little after midnight, and bumped into one of my friends. We spoke for 15 seconds about nothing in particular, and he said “have you just become a Christian?”. How did he know? I have no idea. But God ensured that I told him, after all I could not deny it. He saw something. It is impossible to imagine that we can meet Christ, find forgiveness and eternal life and be filled with the Spirit of God and not be changed. It is ridiculous even to think it.

But quickly the world around us pressures us to conform back to what we were, to forget our dual nationality, to live only as citizens of this world. And so often Christians look just as they used to before they were changed.

At one point the ACK was called the Church of the Province of Kenya and because the Archbishop at the time spoke so often about social justice, about freedom or corruption, it became known as the Church of Politics of Kenya. That was not because it was a political party, but because it cared for the nation and that it should live as God wants, in righteousness. It was intended for insult, but was a title of honour.

I am often accused of being political in England. When I speak of injustice and inequality I am told to stick to religion. God forbid! For if we feed the hungry we are doing right, but we must also ask why the economy permits so much hunger. In Nehemiah 8, when Ezra read the law as the people celebrated rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, and celebrated being together and hearing the law, they took gifts of food to those without food. To misquote a Roman Catholic South American Bishop, we feed the hungry and people say that is good. But when we say that there should not be hunger for some and riches for others we are told we are being political.

If God has changed us and made us a new people we will be changed and that will affect everything we say and do. This Cathedral has seen the church be faithful to God and it says “remember, you have been made citizens of heaven, live with the new lives that you have been given”.

Deuteronomy says, “do not forget”, Ephesians says “you are not what you were, you have been changed”, and Matthew says “you must live to change the world”. It is the third thing that the Cathedral calls us to remember, we belong to God, he walks with us. We are a new people, we must be different. We have a mission, to be salt and light, so that God may be glorified.

Salt gives flavour and preserves, it keeps things from going rotten. Light reveals truth, sunlight is a powerful disinfectant. When I was a very small child I was frightened of the dark. One night, I must have been just 3 or 4, I woke and saw a dark shape in the middle of the room. We had been to the zoo in London that day and I was sure it was a lion. I am not sure how a lion could get into a first floor flat in central London, but we all know that very small children do not always think things through. I eventually reached the light switch and turned it on and there was a chair with my clothes on it. Light reveals truth.

Where I spent much of my youth was on the coast of England with my grandmother. The coast there was dangerous for ships and had been for hundreds of years. The church in the village was 600 years old and had two towers, one at each end. In one there was a light, and sailors knew that when they saw the light they should keep far from the dangerous sandbanks on the coast. Light reveals danger and trouble.

When we look round this Cathedral we see beautiful glass. At night the colours are invisible, but when the sun shines through then the glory of the windows is revealed. Light reveals God

A church that is light will reveal truths. It will show the truth around us, it will show up the dangers in society and it will show the glory of God.

The church is also out in society, in the world. It only needs a few Christians to make a difference in place of corruption for there to be a change and preservation. They are salt when they stop things going wrong by their witness and by their courage.

In England, at Lambeth palace where I live we have a community of young people who live with us, about 15 of them, for 10 months, with a new group coming every September. It is called the Community of St Anselm. They are from all over the world, different churches, very bright, and

they spend the time learning to pray, to study how to live, in service to the poor, and living in Community. One of those from the first year may be here today, and we have a Kenyan in this year. They are wonderful. The aim is that whatever they do in their lives they will have learned to be salt and light, for it is something that takes time and discipline. Jesus is saying that Christian discipleship is not part of our lives but is all of our lives, and the Cathedral reminds us, “remember to learn to be disciples so that you may change the world”.

To put that into action the Cathedral has plans for training through its wonderful plans for extending its work for children and young people. In so doing it will be creating a group of people who will aim to live as Christians all their lives, changing the world around them.

But what does a nation look like where the people of God, the disciples of Jesus are truly salt and light? At its heart will be a capacity for reconciliation. I am choosing my words carefully. Reconciliation is not the same as mediation or arbitration , let alone trickery and abandoning principle. It is the transformation of violent and destructive conflict into lives in which disagreement is dealt with peacefully, for the common good.

Reconciliation is the gift of God through Jesus, for he alone reconciles us to God. It is the call of the church to be a reconciled people who love one another, even when we differ, for that is the miracle of Pentecost. Reconciliation is given by Jesus to Christians and to the church in so much abundance that when they are salt and light it overflows massively into society and transforms the world.

A Christian people will be reconciled reconcilers. They will deal well with disagreement, they will know how to forgive, how to stand for truth and not to hate or fight, how to rule or to oppose and make a nation whole and healed.

It is profoundly rare, unknown in most countries and even in the church, but it is the call of Christ. “Be reconciled to God” says Paul to the Corinthians (II Corinthians 5), and in so doing become ambassadors of reconciliation. It is deeply costly, a cost seen in the death of Jesus on the Cross. It means putting ourselves as less important than the common good, it means suffering so that others may live. Perhaps its high cost is why it is so rare in societies, and we prefer competition.

To quote a major and very serious British magazine in an article this week about our growing incapacity globally to deal well with difference:

“In 1962 a British political scientist, Bernard Crick, published ‘In Defence of Politics’. He argued that without decent civility and conciliation, societies resolve their differences by resorting to coercion.”

There is a need for reconciliation to become part of Kenya’s DNA. I am not talking about results and outcomes of elections, that would be interference by me as an ignorant outsider, but I am talking about how disagreements are dealt with, because that is the call of the pastor, as has been shown by the churches and many others here. I am not calling for mediation, but for the steady and long term work of building structures

of reconciliation, the capacity to deal with the nation's challenges in a way that brings peace and a future even where there is deep disagreement. Since independence Kenya has been a model in Africa, without coups d'états, without civil war, with many problems and trials, but for the most part keeping the peace. Such an example is needed not only in this country, region and continent, but over the whole world. There is a deep hunger for an example of great differences handled well. Kenya is the site of the first human beings. Can it be the site of the renewed human society that can learn reconciliation?

With its great heritage, its immense courage, its history of faith symbolised for Christians here among other places, can Kenya be a country unusual in these times around the world that rises to the call of God to be overflowing with reconciliation? It will cost greatly, but the rewards are the flourishing of the nation.

This Cathedral says remember. Remember your history, and that God has walked with you. You have never been on your own, but God has loved and accompanied you. He shows his will and law so we know what holiness is like. Remember that you have been changed; if you belong to Christ you can no longer behave as you used to, says Paul to the Ephesians, and to us. Remember, says Jesus, that you are salt and light and that you must not lose your flavour of salt, or your illumination as light. In salty faithfulness to Christ you preserve the nation. As bright lights shine out to bring hope, reveal danger and glorify God.

In this year of the Centenary, looking to the past preserving the present building for the future, the cathedral witnesses in stone and glass to the call of God, Do not forget - you are not what you were - and you live to change the world.

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