

**ADDRESS DELIVERED BY  
THE DEAN OF JOHANNESBURG  
THE VERY REVD XOLANI DLWATHI  
AT THE MAYORAL BUDGET LEKGOTLA  
HELD AT MOUNT GRACE HOTEL MAGALIESBERG  
ON WEDNESDAY, 15<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2017**

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## **Objective**

*“Moral Responsibilities of government to provide clean and accountable Governance”*

## **Theme**

The time has come!

For Transformative & Morally Grounded Governance!

A Call for Public Servants with a Social Conscience

## **Text**

*I will give you a new heart and a new mind. I will remove from your body the stubborn heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my laws and be careful to observe my commandments. Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors; and I will be your God. I will save you from everything that defiles you. I will increase the yield of your fruit trees and your fields, so that there will be no famines to disgrace you among the nations.*

(Ezekiel 36: 26-30)

## **Introduction**

### **Greetings**

- The Executive Mayor - Mr Herman Mashaba
- The City Manager -
- The Members of the Mayoral Committee
- The Directors of Departments
- The Head & Management of Departments
- Invited Guests and Participants

I greet you all in the wonderful Name!

## Context of Invitation

Firstly, let me take this opportunity to thank the Mayor and the leadership of the City for inviting me to be here today to be part of the reflection and conversation during the budget process within our city. It is an opportunity I am humbled to be given and thus I do not take it lightly. In the language of the Church, we would say, Jerusalem, the City of God's Law, is entering into dialogue with Rome, the City of power and governance.

Secondly, let me make a disclaimer. I am here today as a Church leader who stands at the crossroads where the hopes and aspirations of ordinary citizens intersect with the fruits, or lack thereof, of government on whom they have put their trust to deliver on those hopes and aspirations. I don't come as a member of any political party or advancing any ideological agenda. I am simply a servant of the Church.

In my ministry and vocation as the Dean of Johannesburg, I stand on the shoulders of my predecessors, such as French-Beytagh, Bishop Simeon Nkoane, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, wherein our ministry has always been focused on being at the cutting edge of giving the nation a new moral perspective, being a prophetic witness and a saving presence for the people of God within our city and beyond. Thus, mine is to work with any government, all political affiliations and all other stakeholders, for the betterment of the lives of God's people within our City. We hold that the Church has a particular role in shaping the moral formation of the nation.

It is within this context that my message and reflections today should be understood.

## Focus of Today's Message

The focus of my message today arises out of the pressing need and importance for transformative and morally grounded governance. I am convinced that the achievement of transformative and morally sound governance is highly dependent on positive values that should undergird the calibre of the human resources employed and deployed in the various sectors of any institution. The emphasis on moral renewal runs through scripture and the history of the Church. And what this history teaches us is that a nation that gets comfortable with moral decay, disregards ethics and whose moral choices are not life and the other affirming, soon collapse into the dust heap of history.

This means **each institution can only be as good as its human resource**, including its **leadership and staff**. It is for this reason that I believe each institution be it government, church, business, etc., has to reflect more deeply on the kind and quality of human resources, especially the leadership, it employs and deploys if it takes its vision and mission of building a better tomorrow seriously. As we know everything rises and falls on the quality of the leadership.

It is within this context therefore that *the purpose of today's message is to advocate for public servants and leaders who are rooted and grounded on Servanthood and Moral Ethics.*

## **Setting the Scene – Contextual Realities**

The socio-economic, political and religious contextual realities are deeply disconcerting to many of us, and I hope to all of us here today. Yes, we do live in a democratic dispensation in which, ideally, all God's people should be experiencing abundant life and equality of opportunity, and yet that is not yet a reality for many. I always wonder if it will ever be a reality to many people in our lifetime. As a people, we seem to have lost the plot and our moral compass is dysfunctional. Sidukuza emswaneni, as it would be put in isiZulu. And this state of moral crisis calls for the reinvention of a common vision.

The reality is that, despite the strides being made by some government entities and business; the people of God still live under severely impoverished and inhumane conditions. Access to housing, sanitary living conditions, basic services, health care, good education and economic opportunity are still but a distant dream for millions of people in our city.

I am sure the above reality is not foreign to our eyes and ears. Just take a drive through the streets of Johannesburg and its surrounding townships and suburbs to witness the experiential realities of our time.

The National Planning Commission's *Diagnostic Report*, released in June 2011, reflecting on South Africa's progress since 1994, noted the following realities and/or challenges:

- Too few people work
- The quality of school education for black people is poor
- Infrastructure is poorly located, inadequate and under-maintained
- Spatial divides hobble inclusive development
- The economy is unsustainably resource intensive
- The public health system cannot meet demand or sustain quality
- Public services are uneven and often of poor quality
- Corruption levels are high
- South Africa remains a divided society.

As a priest, I deal with these effects and impact of poverty daily as I journey with the communities I have served throughout my ministry. I come face to face with the pain and the scarred bodies of our people in my interaction with parishioners. Many people are apt to say, in the words of Dr John Kani, "*Don't tell me about heaven when I am already living in hell*" (e.g. preachers about heaven – suffering on earth)

I give thanks to God for the gift of investigative journalism which also brings out the realities of our time by reporting them. My brothers and sister's poverty and suffering are not a movie but a living reality for many of our people. The sad thing is that many of these problems are deliberately caused and perpetuated by people. Many of us seem to feed on the misery of other people.

Since 1994, drawing from our constitution, various legislative, structural and financial mechanisms for interventions have been put in place to redress the living experiences that were bequeathed to us by our apartheid past. However, the experience of our people suggest that these initiatives have failed to solve the problems of poverty, hunger, working poor, limited access to services that should enhance their lives and human dignity. What is even more tragic is the way our people seem to be resigned to this state of deprivation.

The collective hope for a different future that characterised 1994, at the dawn of our democracy, was eaten up by their lived experiences. As one Minister of Finance once said that the problem is not 'money', but the will to deliver to people. Professor Barney Pitso, in an address on Good Governance, described the issue succinctly when he said,

*Quote "It should not be that South Africa continues to experience the extreme levels of poverty and chronic unemployment that so many of our citizens are subjected to as their daily experience. You know and I know that it happens not because we do not have the financial resources, and human expertise; and it is not because we do not have the legal structures and systems in place to make a difference. It happens, I submit, because of a deep-seated culture of corruption in the body politic, and because of a lack of political will to address it decisively." Unquote*

It is common cause that at the root of our national crisis is governance in a context of crumbling moral and ethical values. What is more serious is that some of our public servants seem to have lost their moral perception or have simply allowed themselves to operate in a moral vacuum. How else can one explain a situation where corruption is incorporated into our budgeting processes, whereby the 10% yentshontsho (kickbacks) is regarded as a legitimate business cost of a product? Some officials even get called 10%.

It not simply an anecdote that money could be budgeted for services, gets invoiced and paid-out, and yet the product was never delivered. This indicates that the whole supply chain has been corrupted. Such immoral actions inevitably deprive communities' access to decent living, the right to health, happiness, freedom and personal safety; for corruption is not just taking from the public purse but it is also diverting resources away from where they are needed and people deserve.

Values such as integrity, honesty, service, responsibility, dedication to duty, accountability and respect for others evaporate. We become at home with ethical practices that are

driven by the view that, 'the end of self-enrichment justifies the means.' Pilfering and misuse of organizational resources graduates into looting of government resources.

With people such as yourselves, handling millions of Rands, vulnerability to temptation is an ever present risk. *(To those of us who are not too religious, temptation is not only about looking at the dress of another person, other than your spouse, is wearing).* Temptation always starts small, with smallanyana skeletons and then grows rampant like a virus in the body. It is thus that today I want to suggest to you that to reverse the moral rot we need to marry ethical principles into our planning and activities. Others have called it managing by values. For if we don't, whatever efforts, plans, systems, structures and resources we put in place, shall be in vain.

*One of the reasons in one of the parishes I served as a rector we started with the initiative entitled "rasing visionary servant leaders" was because of being inundated with the need for pastoral and counselling support for members of the congregation who were in position of leadership both in government and business. Many of them have found themselves ethically challenged by some of the activities and actions they were either required or expected to execute by their principals. Thus they had come to me for confession and spiritual guidance as they found these expectations in conflict with their faith values. Also I have read reports and listened to frightening stories being shared of people who have real experiences of the consequence of corruption.*

However, I was greatly encouraged by the growing discomfort of society and the establishment of the relevant institutions aimed at addressing this disease of corruption. We need to have a collective restlessness and disdain to this acting without ethical restraints.

## **Transformative & Morally Grounded Governance!**

I strongly hold the view that enough is enough. The suffering of our people must come to an end. The time has come and it is now. We need to call for transformative and morally grounded governance. This can only be realised when we have public officials with a social conscience. These are public officials whose behaviour and actions in their daily execution of duties should be rooted and grounded on Servanthood and Moral Ethics.

South Africa in general and the City of Johannesburg in particular is desperately longing for a different breed of public officials. We are crying out for public officials with the heart and commitment to service of others. We need Public Servants who are bruised by the pain of the people they serve and are capable to empathise with them in their misery. That is possible only if you are able to look away from yourself. Thus for the sake of God's people, we need aggressive means of ensuring that those entrusted with public office embody the character traits of Servanthood undergirded by moral ethics.

## Servanthood

Servant leadership is increasingly recognized as key ingredient in being a transformative leader. Dr. Crawford Lorritts holds that *'Servanthood is not a strategy but an identity.'* This means Servanthood should be reflected on how you *'live your life.'* He goes on to say *'the core quality from which Servanthood flows is authentic humility....Humility is the acknowledgement that life is not about you, and that the needs of others are more important than your own.'* This is about being willing to serve someone who holds no prospect of doing something for you in return. Before delivery of a service you don't first ask for *'imvul amlomo,'* or for a meeting at the coffee café first.

Peter reiterates this point when he said, *'Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another,' for grace is given to the humble. (1Pet. 5:5) 'In humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you not look to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.'* (Phil. 2:3b, 4)

In the bible we see in Jesus another example of servant leadership where he clearly displayed a willingness to move from a position of Lord of Lords; demonstrating the need to empty himself to being a slave of all. There is another interesting story told of two brothers who were part of the disciples, (read equal) who sneaked to Jesus to demand that they be given a place of significance in heaven. Yha ne, the propensity to want to be better and higher than others, which predisposes us to corruption. Drive a better car and live in a bigger house than my colleagues. Jesus tells the brothers, James and John, that whoever wishes to be great should become the slave of all; and that they should look at his example that he has come not to be served but to serve (Mark 10 vs. 35-44).

Thus being a servant leader involves making a choice between;

- either being motivated: by self-interests, self-serving and thus looking at the world with, 'give little but take a lot' philosophy; or
- Community interests – serving others and thus putting the needs of those being served first.
- Having a disposition of being capable to be bruised by the pain of others.
- It is about living an 'other regarding' ethics

My brothers and sisters our call as public officials is to serve and not to be served. Our call is to serve God's people so that they may experience a better and abundant life in their lifetime through fully accessing basic services. As president Thabo Mbeki said; *We must ensure that today is better than yesterday and that tomorrow will be better than today.*

Our responsibility and vocation, therefore, as public officials in all sectors of society is to transform people's hell moments and experiences into heavenly moments and experiences. Our duty is to build a society that cares, is willing to share and have a commitment to lift those who find themselves in the shadows of opportunity.

## Grounded in Ethics

In all government departments, from National to Local Government, there is a code of Ethics that is always displayed on the wall;

- Integrity
- Transparency
- Honesty
- Trustworthiness
- Accountability
- Batho Pele

But given the prevalent practices, one is left wondering whether these have any effect on public servants' daily activities and decision making. To what extent do they govern their behaviour? The various King's Reports outline the Code of Ethics that they regard as the embodiment of the values of Good Governance.

The responsibility before all of us in the public space is to make visible and tangible values and behaviour driven by ethics, and to always endeavour to make this part of our planning processes. That would include integrating ethical values into our budgeting processes. This would give full embodiment to the standards contained in Chapter 10 on Public Administration in our Constitution, where it says:

- *A high standard of professional ethics must be promoted and maintained.*
- *Efficient, economic and effective use of resources must be promoted.*
- *Public administration must be development oriented.*

*I wish to congratulate the leadership of our city especially our mayor – Mr Mashaba for ensuring that the conversation of ethical values is incorporated in this budget legotla for 2017.*

In other words, those values and principles enshrined in our Constitution should drive Good Governance: transparency, accountability, responsiveness, impartiality, accountability and respect. It is within this range of general standards that Professor Pityana can justifiably say that:

*... every institution of state should subject itself to an annual ethics audit, even if it is as part of the annual audit process. An ethics audit should reveal the prevailing ethos of the institution, and the culture and calibre of leadership, and shortfalls between policy pronouncements and practice.*

To incorporate ethics into corporate planning activities and choices will introduce a shift to:

- Socially responsible plans
- Builds trust among yourselves and engenders cohesion
- Builds trust with the people you serve because it provides experiential well-being.
- Engenders commitment among the staff
- Increases shared organizational mission and purpose
- Builds mutually beneficial relationships with other stakeholders.

It is with this kind of ethical environment that the organization will flourish and not be a laughing stock and disgrace of other nations. This counter culture does not just happen. Top managers must set the example as they are important in setting the moral tone of the organization and can influence the organizational forces. They need to nurture self-discipline and embrace a willingness to be self-denying. It is not an easy task to operate in an environment that is devoid of moral perception, where corruption thrives because it's embedded in the very fabric of the organization.

At the centre of our commitment is the acknowledgement of the inherent dignity of all people, with inalienable rights to respect and actions that promote their well-being. In our ministry, we believe that the eternal has touched history to redeem it, to bring healing and sustain hope among God's people; nurturing communities of trust, mutual support and transforming our humanity to community that respects the common good. Nothing can change without us. And I say to you, together, we must embody the values of the change we want to see. Let us be the light that stands on a hill.

### **Concluding Remarks**

My brothers and sisters in conclusion quoting President Nelson Mandela

“It is in your hands...”

President Obama said;

“Yes We Can...”

We have all the necessary and relevant resources but only need man and woman of your calibre who have a social conscience.

It's up to you! The choice is yours! But Every Choice has its consequences.

**I thank you!**