



ARCHBISHOP EMERITUS DESMOND M TUTU

O.M.S.G C.H D.D F.K.C

## ON THE 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN

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Dear sisters and brothers

There is no space for prejudice or discrimination in God's family.

Imagine if we said people couldn't become teachers unless they were over six feet tall, only those with short noses could be doctors, and the priesthood was restricted to blondes?

It would be utterly preposterous, wouldn't it? I may have had to dye my hair!

Yet, in 1992, when we voted to include women in the ranks of the Anglican priesthood in Southern Africa, it was by no means a cut and dried decision. Indeed, at the previous synod the proposal had been – very painfully – defeated.

Twenty-five years later, the sky is still showing no signs of falling on our heads.

Quite the opposite: Our clergy have been significantly enriched by opening our doors to a wider pool of talent; our community has been enriched through knowing that men and women are of equal worth in God's eyes; and our society has been enriched through the unstitching of regulated discrimination – as it benefitted from the unstitching of apartheid.

How could we have been so stupid for so long?

Well, they say that hindsight is an exact science, and that may be true.

But when we look back at the exclusion of women priests, we do not berate ourselves for our history and traditions. We do not criticise our parents for adhering to the conventions of their parents.

No. We celebrate our ability to reason and to change; our potential to improve, and keep improving; our adaptability and resilience.

And, certainly, we celebrate the potential of women leaders to do a more considerate job – a better job – than history records that men have done.



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We thank God for equipping us with the means to evolve our thinking; for open, inquisitive, reasoning minds that can be persuaded to change and accept change. These gifts from God – together with love and compassion – enable progress.

God is not stuck in the past, rooted to the spot, as it were, in Biblical times. God is here today, the mother and father of all, fervently hoping we take the fairest and most sensible decisions in our ever-changing world.

*Beloved, let us love one another, because love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. (1 John 4:7)*

After that historic vote of our Provincial Synod, we rushed back to Cape Town and there in a glorious service in St George's Cathedral ordained Wilma Jacobsen and Margaret Vertue to the priesthood. Margaret is today the bishop of False Bay. Need I say more?

God bless you all.

**Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu**

Hermanus, South Africa

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