

The Anglican Church of Canada



L'Église anglicane du Canada

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Today the world mourns the passing of one of the greatest men of our times. Nelson Mandela's life is the story of the prisoner who became the president of his beloved country. He is the icon of South African's long road to freedom from apartheid. He is "the father of our nation", writes Desmond Tutu, "the pride of our people."

Mandela only ever looked back to remember those who had been so sorely oppressed, who suffered and died. He looked ahead and with a strength of spirit that was unwavering. He pressed for truth and reconciliation in his homeland. So impressive was his foresight that it inspired the same kind of work so necessary in numerous other countries as well.

Mandela stood tall among his people and he gave them hope for a better future. He spoke as one in whom wisdom had made his dwelling. He acted with a humility that had about it a sense of authority the world will never forget. All his labours were a wonderful reflection of a life given to the teaching in the Beatitudes, perhaps most especially the one that reads "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they will be satisfied." (Matthew 5:6)

Mandela loved much. Who can ever forget his wonderful smile? For his family and his people he lived, and in their great love for him he died.

"We pray that nothing good in his life will be lost but be of benefit to the world; that all that was important to him will be respected by those who follow him; and that everything in which he was great will continue to mean much to us now that he is dead." (Prayer of Thanksgiving, The Funeral Liturgy, p 602, Book of Alternative Services)

Mandela is destined to be remembered in the calendar of holy men and women through the ages. To give ourselves to the work of "transforming unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind, and to pursue peace and reconciliation among all people," (the Fourth Mark of Mission) will be to truly honour his life and his labours.

*Living the Marks of Mission*

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