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Our Premier of Gauteng, Ntate Panyaza Lesufi

His Grace Comforter F L G Modise; Ntate wa Rona, kere Khotso, Morena. Happy Fathers to you and all the Fathers.

Mme Warona Masechaba, MmaModise

Priest MK Mohlala, Chair of Council

Priest AJ Wessie, Chair of EXCO

Priest Makwana, Secretary of EXCO

Leaders of all structures of the Church, Baholo BaPhaphama, Baholo BaboMme Difate, (Iena ke Ngwana wa Iona, motswadi waka ene ele Sefate), Baholo

BaboMme Dinaledi, Baholo BaYout (Badisa) our special celebrants the new graduates and of course the old who are encouraging the Comforters vision.

Deputy Minister, Pinky Kekana

All the Priests and Members of the Congregation;

Friends,

Sechaba sa Modimo, Re a ledumedisa!

Ke tšea e le tokelo go ba mo le lona gape ge re kgobokana mo mobung wo o mokgethwa. (*I consider it a privilege to be here with you once more as we gather in this holy ground*).

As in the Psalm of David, I was overjoyed to receive an invitation to be present at eSilo, because there is no greater place to be than in the house of the Lord. We are in the midst of Holiness.

This is where I belong; IPHC is my spiritual home and has been for decades; as I said that my mother was a devoted member of this congregation, and it will remain my home.

Allow me, your Grace, to begin by thanking you for allowing us together with my wife Humile, Premier Lesufi, and Deputy Minister Kekana and the team from my office to come and worship with you during this special day as you mark 30th Annual IPHC Graduations and Thanksgiving ceremony.

This annual graduation ceremony takes place during the significant month on our calendar, as we commemorate the youth uprising of 16 June 1976. This is the month in which we honour the spirit of

courage, and the spirit of love for freedom and peace.

Because of them we have an education system in which everyone, regardless of ethnicity, social background, or gender, has access to quality education and subsequently economic opportunities.

Their sacrifice were not in vain. Today we are pleased that young people like you, the Graduates that we are honouring today, continue to value education as did His Grace our Comforter Ntate FS Modise.

We indeed want to commend the IPHC for designating this month as a memorial in honouring the youth of 1976.

Let us not forget His Grace Ntate F S Modise's words, *"ka moso, e tla re he re re ngwana wa kereke ye ha a rutega e be at least a nale Matric... ke yona a better future ya rona..."*

To honour his Grace, we must now surpass matriculation and aim for higher. Like the graduates of today I urge you to go on to acquire more skills and knowledge so that you can contribute to the growth and development of our nation.

As government we will continue to avail more funding for young people to enrol in colleges and universities.

We are committed to working with the Church so that together we can proceed and create opportunities for the youth.

Do not let anyone or the difficulties that you're facing right now discourage you. As 1 Timothy 4:12 states, *"Do not let anyone look down on you because you are young, but be an example for the believers in your speech, your conduct, your love, faith and purity"*.

Just like when we stood together and were determined to fight against the apartheid government, we must likewise, continue to work towards finding solution to our societal problems. Among the many issues that our youth face, we need to address the following:

- Poverty and unemployment,
- The quality of school education;
- Crime, including women and child abuse;
- Drug and substance abuse;
- Corruption which undermines state legitimacy and service delivery;
- Housing and the persistent problem of backyard dwelling within our communities; and
- Teenage pregnancy and high HIV infection among young people.

These issues cannot be solved by one group or community. Instead, it takes a collective effort from all members of society, including religious communities

As Government, we are the first to admit that while we have made significant strides to change the country for the better, there are also areas which need to be improved upon.

We, therefore, urge the church as a moral and social leader to collaborate with us to address these and other societal challenges.

Fellow worshippers, let us use this thanksgiving ceremony an opportunity to re-dedicate and recommit ourselves to peace, human solidarity, and the values of a non-racial, non-sexist, free, democratic, and prosperous society, united in its diversity, as enshrined in our Constitution.

As Government, we remain committed to the spirit of Ubuntu, which underlies our democracy and is embedded in our Constitution, whereby we dedicate ourselves as a nation to among others;

- Respect the worth of all individuals, irrespective of social origin, race, gender, age, status or class.
- Fight against the physical and emotional harassment of women that results in gender-based violence and other forms of abuse.
- Eradicate the abuse of children brought about by social ills such as malnutrition, child labour, drug trafficking, and other forms of exploitation.
- Care for all who are weak and disadvantaged: the poor, the aged, and all those unable to care for themselves.
- Overcome discrimination on the basis of status, custom, culture, and tradition.

Our Comforter

We all have the responsibility as government and churches to help in restoring progressive values.

We will consolidate partnership with you and across society to strengthen social cohesion and ensure that our nation achieves the moral values of a caring society.

Let us all work together to create a more cohesive and united society where love and mutual respect prevail.

By promoting understanding, compassion, and collective action, we can create a better world for all members of society (*Ka go tšwetša pele kwešišo, kwelobohloko, le tiro ya kopanelo, re ka hlola lefase le le kaone go maloko ka moka a setšhaba*).

On behalf of Government and the people of South Africa, we congratulate this year's graduates for their achievements and wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

Thank you to the entire congregation for invite us to worship.

Lebitso lemodimo alebokwe

Khotso Morena wa Barena.

Ke a leboga