

BEATIFICATION OF BENEDICT DASWA

13 SEPTEMBER 2015

Emeritus Bishop Hugh Slattery MSC

Today we have had the simple but beautiful ceremony of the beatification of the Servant of God Tshimangadzo Benedict Daswa as a martyr for the faith. The Lord has blessed the church in Southern Africa in a special way by giving us such a holy man and courageous witness to the faith handed down to us by the Apostles. Our hearts are filled with joy and with gratitude to God. We rejoice with Benedict's mother and the whole Daswa family whose sorrow has been turned to joy. We all need good people like Blessed Benedict Daswa to inspire us, to pray for us and to make up for our weakness and cowardice. He is a great role model for the church and for our country.

During his short life, Benedict touched the lives of many people in his own village and in the surrounding area. He loved and respected everyone and helped many through his acts of charity, his work in the church and in his school and through his involvement in the local community. He was above all a good family man. He was always guided by the church's teaching on marriage as a true and equal partnership of love and life. The husband makes a total gift of himself to his wife and she makes a total gift of herself to her husband.

Through the beautiful sacrament of marriage the Lord blesses their union in a special way. Both husband and wife welcome the gift of children from God and are always there for them. Often nowadays parents give their children everything they need except God. For Benedict, God always came first in his life and he wanted the same for his children. In the family he prayed with them, taught them the faith, took them to church and gave them a good example on how to live the faith.

His great love of God nurtured in the home overflowed into the other areas of Benedict's life. He was a very active member of the Catholic community and was also very active in helping the local village community to develop. Here his Catholic faith led him to openly confront the cultural world of witchcraft, muti and ritual murder. He saw all this as not only opposed to his faith but also as against the welfare and true development of the people. It arouses fear and mistrust among

people and sometimes leads to violence and death. Benedict could never go along with this evil. With his deep faith, his passion for truth, and his great love for the Lord and for all people he had a great respect and reverence for every human life. This eventually led to his martyrdom.

Benedict continued to touch the lives of people after his death as his relatives and friends kept his memory alive. Each year on 2nd of November, All Souls Day, they gathered at his grave to pray for him. In the year 2000, they invited the priest to say a special Mass and afterwards went in procession to where Benedict was ambushed and attacked. His widow laid a flower on the spot. After this we decided that the Diocese should investigate this man's life and death in the hope that he might have been a martyr for the faith. We approached the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome for advice on how to proceed. They were very helpful and encouraging. I would like to thank them and especially their Prefect, Cardinal Angelo Amato, who kindly came here to Venda to do the ceremony of Beatification.

I have no doubt that as the years go by, Blessed Benedict Daswa will touch the lives of more and more people not only in this country but throughout the African Continent and even throughout the world as one who stood up for the sanctity of life. Through his example and his intercession he will inspire and help many people not only in the struggle against witchcraft but also in the wider struggle against the culture of death in our world. He was truly an apostle of life. He was able to pay the ultimate price of sacrificing his life for the truth because in the words of one of his friends, "He knew who he was, what his faith was and therefore, come what may, he was ready for anything".

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