

• Subject: Re: Deputy President Ramaphosa beatification speech Limpopo

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REMARKS BY DEPUTY PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA ON THE OCCASION OF THE BEATIFICATION OF THE SERVANT OF GOD TSHIMANGADZO SAMUEL BENEDICT DASWA

TSHITANINI, LIMPOPO
13 SEPTEMBER 2015

I offer my warmest greetings to:

Bishop Joao Rodrigues, Bishop of the Tzaneen Diocese,
His Eminence Cardinal Angelo Amato SDB, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, and representative of His Holiness Pope Francis,
Cardinal Wilfred Napier,
Archbishop Stephen Brislin,
The Daswa family,
All celebrants at this Beatification Mass,

It is an honour to be with you today at this very special celebration. The Roman Catholic family and all South Africans are witnessing history today with the Beatification of the Servant of God Tshimangadzo Samuel Benedict Daswa. On behalf of the Government and people of South Africa, I extend our warmest regards and congratulations to the Daswa family on this historic occasion. This is an occasion in which millions of South Africa will share with deep faith and affection. This is the first time in the history of the Catholic Church of Southern Africa that a South African man is being recognised as a Blessed Martyr of Christ.

This is, therefore, a special honour for the Church in this region; and we thank the Eminence, the Pope and indeed the Catholic Church for bestowing this honour on one of our own, one of those who has come from this country, one who has come from this region, from this area. We thank you deeply.

But it is also an extraordinary honour for the Daswa Family, who tragically lost a 43-year-old son and father on the second of February 1990. Benedict Daswa died after being ambushed by people opposed to his outspoken rejection of witchcraft and witch-hunts. He paid the ultimate price for his beliefs on the same day that the then President FW de Klerk announced the unbanning of our liberation movements and the release of our beloved father of the nation, Nelson Mandela. Such is the often dramatic confluence of events in our beloved country that on the day that he was killed, South African was witnessing a new birth, a new beginning as all of us looked forward to the ushering of democracy on the same day the Daswa family was mourning the loss of their beloved son.

Today we remember Blessed Tshimangadzo Benedict Daswa as a man who led a holy life, not in isolation of the social realities around him, but rather deeply engaged with these realities. He was a good family man, a hard worker and active member of his community, inspired by his faith. His fearless ministry cost him his life, but has caused the Church – 25 years after his death – to accord him the status of being part of “the great cloud of witnesses surrounding us”, as it is described in the Letter to the Hebrews.

This is a day of mixed emotions and thoughts. It is a day of profound faith, and a day of remembrance, sadness and pride. And may this also be a day when we as South Africans, when we,

as the members of this Province, and we as the Venda-speaking people commit to building a society free of ignorance, intolerance and violence.

May this day be a day when we take out a leaf from the life of Blessed Tshimangadzo Benedict Daswa and say “NO” to witchcraft, “NO” to ritual killings. May this day be a day when we say ritual killings must come to an end, witch hunts must come to an end, and what we should begin as good South Africans is to open a dialogue and a discussion about why we continue to have ritual killings in a peaceful country like South Africa. This is the time when we should engage in discussions amongst us.

A few months ago, as Chief Mphaphuli was saying, we engaged in a discussion amongst us as South Africans after a few of us started attacking nationals from other countries, after a few amongst us as South Africans started expressing their hatred towards people from other countries, we decided collectively to engage in a discussion which ended up with all of us saying “no more attacks on people from other countries”. We decided collectively to say “NO” to Xenophobia. We decided to say collectively that we will not attack people from other countries because they are human beings just like us. And today we honour the memory of Blessed Tshimangadzo Daswa. As the people of this country, the people of this region, let us dedicate ourselves to engaging in a discussion, a discussion which will be about ritual killings, witchcraft and witch-hunts because ritual killings, witch-hunts and witchcraft do not define us as South Africans. In fact they debase us as South Africans. They make us sub-human. We are human beings and must respect the lives of other human beings.

Daswa should not have died in vain. His life should not have been taken in vain. Let us honour his memory. Let us honour the life of Blessed Tshimangadzo Daswa. Let us respect him today as we applaud his life, as we remember him. Let us dedicate ourselves and say “NO MORE RITUAL KILLINGS, NO MORE WITCH HUNTS, NO MORE WITCHCRAFT”. Let us live as human beings following the values of our Constitution.

This should be a day on which we set out to replicate the mission and the passion of Blessed Benedict Daswa in the lives of millions of people in our country and on our Continent.

In doing so, we will hopefully rid our society of the evils that led to the untimely and horrific death of this youthful patriot and community builder. Daswa wanted to continue working for our people, building our community, and his life was cut short because people who did not share his faith decided that he should be taken out of this world.

Let us commit ourselves anew to a better life for all of us. A better life for all of us means that we should get rid of violence amongst us. A better life for all of us means that we should not be attacking those that we do not agree with.