

**SPEECH BY CHIEF VHO-GOLE MUSIIWA MPHAPHULI
IN THE ASSEMBLY HONOURING THE LATE
BENEDICT DASWA
WHO WAS KILLED FOR HIS FAITH**

“We will miss Benedict DASWA all the times; but we can also cling on what he believed when he died.”

Programme Director, and all nephews and nieces of Vele la Mbeu, Dyambeu, Dimbanyika and Thohoyandou the hunter and fighter, I greet you. You the offspring's of the tribes from the great lakes of Ha-Nyabanga, of Central Africa, the Heroes of Munumutape, I greet you all.

Before I continue, let me first remind you that today ‘Thavha-Mutumbuka-Nyika, ene Maila-u-sumbwa’ of the whole of Venda is here amongst us today. I, as Chief of the Mphaphuli chieftaincy wish to first request all Masingos to join me in unison saying: “Ri a u resha iwe Duhulu la Makhado, dadzwane la Tshilwa-vhusiku tsha Ha-Ramabulana”. (Salutations) Kha ri luvhe! Mifhululu!

I also want to greet all these clans: “Dzindou dza Vhatavhatsindi; Vhasina-Ndevhe vha tshi vhona; Vhanyai-Vhakalanga, Maguluvhe a Luonde, a Vhakwevho, Vhaluvhu vha u bva Ha-Mashamba; Vhandalamo; Vhalaudzi; Vhatwanamba, and all whom I cannot mention because of time; visitors from around and abroad I greet you all.

To all believers in God gathered here today, in particular the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church, and servants of Government, including youth, I greet all in the name of our Creator, our Protector, Jesus Christ.

Today, I want to express my feelings and that of all institutions of kingship according to the gathering of today. We will remember that we are here because one of us took a stance of his faith. He showed us openly his faith to the One whom he chose to believe while he was still alive, the One who is God Almighty.

Programme Director, there is a Tshivenda song which says, “Ndi wanga Murena! (“The Lord is mine!”). Going further, it says, “Ndi do fa ndo mu nambatela!” (“I will die clinging on Him”). The One mentioned here is the Lord Jesus Christ, King of Kings. To us this song is an ordinary song because we are used to sing it. But to the Hero Benedict DASWA, this song stands for his life on earth and again stands to his departure on earth. May his soul rest in peace!

Programme Director, Psalm 126, verse 5 says: “The Word of God says, ‘Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy!’” Today we are all witnessing that. To the DASWA Family and the Catholic Community at large, I say, “You sow in tears” when you lost the one you loved with all your hearts; you lost him because he stood for his faith in our Lord and Protector Jesus Christ. He shared that faith with you while he was still alive. Today we are witnesses by the grace of God when reaping with shouts of joy. You are reaping from enduring faith of Jesus Christ where Benedict DASWA carried as a crown, and proclaimed the glory of God by giving out his life.

We are greatly honoured to see the DASWA Family and the Roman Catholic Church at large having something to be able to show when the Catholic Church realised the unwavering faith Benedict had while faced with death; which is unusual and should be appreciated, and should be published and be a lesson to those who will witness it, more especially to those who believe in this same Jesus whom Benedict died for.

Programme Director, I don’t want to make a show off, and I don’t take this as a licence for my salvation; but the truth is, history has it as I learnt it from my grand-grandfather, that it was Chief Makwarela Mphaphuli who gave the permission to one Reverend Schwellnus, assisted by some elders in the royal family, to translate the Bible in Tshivenda language. By this initiative I believe the one Benedict DASWA benefitted fully, as after his conversion to being a Christian, he read the Word of God from the Bible in his own language; this has been a great foresight of Chief Makwarela, “Pesa la nwenda; line u kherulwa la tanganya vhafhefhe na vhahedana”.

I believe that Benedict DASWA must have read the Word of God, and even read Romans 8, verse 35. He must have read it and understood it; when it asks, “What can separate us from the love of Christ?” Benedict DASWA must have had these questions from life: “Whether stones; whether tree logs; whether swords or being beaten? Can all these separate you Benedict DASWA from the love of Christ?”

Fellow brethren, know that Benedict DASWA’s response to all those questions is what has gathered us here today. I am saying this because Benedict DASWA has answered with a big NO!!! “ALL THESE CANNOT SEPARATE ME FROM THE LOVE OF MY CHRIST”. Today also myself as a Chief of the MPHAPHULI tribe, I take off my hat for him. As a subject of Mphaphuli tribe, who is a “mushavhi a sa shavhi mbudzi vhukwembe” (“a trader is not afraid of bad goats”); as a citizen of the Republic of South Africa, Benedict DASWA showed us the real life of Christian faith regardless of circumstances.

My wish is that the brutal death of Benedict DASWA should teach us a lot that violence and killings is not the proper way of sorting our differences of beliefs and practices when we come to disagreements. There is an old Venda Proverb which goes like “u amba livhi ndi uri livhuya li wane vhudzulo”. (“To say bad things, is to make way to good things”). It further says, “muamba livhi ha vhulawi” (He who speaks evils should not be killed”. Or “thunwa a i vhulawi”. (“Don’t kill a messenger”). Truly speaking, let’s also look at the following: Benedict DASWA should not have been slaughtered like a lamb the way we saw it. I am saying this because he wronged no one except sticking to his faith.

I know and understand that as Vhavenda people, when we do not believe in God, we seek advice about the cause of death in a family from diviners who will charge enormous amount of monies and left us penniless. In our Venda culture it is unknown and is taboo to brutally torcher and burn people. I do not condone that. They say with Vendas if you are sniffed out as a witch they will cut or shave only a small part of your hairs from your head. Sometimes they would expel that person from the village. Now, where do killings and burnings come from? From which nation do these come from – the nation that lacks humanity? Is that what contributed to our children to believe badly and cause them to be mentally insane? Let’s do self-introspection and come back to our senses.

But let’s rejoice because Benedict has fought a good fight. He has finished the race. He has kept the faith. The crown of his righteousness has been rewarded to him, as Saint Paul said in 2nd Timothy, Chapter 4, Verses 7 and 8.

Programme Director, let it be borne in mind that from the Mphaphuli Chieftaincy, the tragedy of the late Benedict is not just a folklore from one person to another. It must be remembered that at that time the Thohoyandou Police Station yard was full of elderly men and women chased from their villages suspected of witchcraft by people without any truth in that; people who created lies in order to terrorise and persecute other people.

We of the Mphaphuli Chieftaincy say that the brutal killings of people like Benedict and others hurt us and has broken our hearts. We are again saddened to again witness the same diabolic spirit and cruelty like that of a cobra emerging once more from our youth. When will these killings come to an end? When will the burning of the houses of other people come to an end, and ill-treating children and women? When will hiding laziness by suspecting others who are working by their hands and say they are using zombies, whereas it is pure lies, come to an end? When will ritual killings, stealing, burning the houses of others, hiding the truth and protecting evil doers come to an end?

I say, may God help us and clean our hearts by following what is good and right. May we seek peace together with all the Saints, and seek holiness like what Benedict DASWA did when he sought the Creator by deeds. He read Hebrews, Chapter 12, verse 14.

Programme Director, a man of faith like Benedict DASWA is a light to the nation. His deeds should teach all of us to follow the right ways. I say we will always long Benedict DASWA. We will always remember what he did. I say if we want we can live a better life like what Benedict DASWA taught us; and he offered his life because of his faith. I say Benedict DASWA, “WE WILL ALWAYS MISS HIM; BUT WE TOO CAN CLING TO THE ONE BENEDICT DASWA DIED BELIEVING”. That ONE is the Lord of the Lords; King of kings; Omnipresent, Peacemaker, whom in the book of Isaiah 42, verse 3 says, “A bruised reed he will not break”. That One is Emmanuel – “God is with us!” that is Christ who was Crucified.

I conclude by giving thanks to the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church who allowed Pope Benedict XVI (16) to promulgate that the work of the Beatification of the Saints not only be done in the Vatican. That is why the celebration of the Beatification of Benedict DASWA is done here today.

As a Chief of this area I say, “And you Mbahe in the area of the Mphaphuli, under Gole (title), under Maila u 89sumbwa (the one who is not pointed by finger) of the whole Venda, Tony RAMABULANA - you are not the little to all Venda Headmen. Because from you a Hero of faith has emerged from the family of DASWA as it is written in Matthew 2, verse 6.

Let us praise God of Heaven. He is worthy for praise and worship. May God create many Benedict DASWAS so that we can stand firm on his way! Amen!

Ndaa!