

Viering van die lewe en nalatenskap van prof H Russel Botman,
wyle rektor en visekanselier van die Universiteit Stellenbosch (18/10/1953 – 28/06/2014)

Endlersaal, Konservatorium, 13:00 Di. 22 Julie 2014

**Huldigingsboodskap deur prof Leopoldt van Huyssteen,
bedryfshoof en waarnemende rektor**

Good afternoon, everyone. Molweni. Goeiemiddag. Dankie dat u hier is om hulde te betoon aan ons ontslape rektor en visekanselier, professor Russel Botman.

Just over three weeks ago (28 June), the University was rocked to its foundations when news broke that our Rector had passed away in his sleep. Since then, condolences have streamed in, and dignitaries came from far and wide to attend his funeral (5 July), all of which shows that Professor Botman was held in high esteem – not just by us, but by many people across the world. Let me use this opportunity to thank everybody for their support. It means a lot to us.

Ons het dit goed gedink om hierdie geleentheid te reël vir personeellede en studente en ander persone wat tydens die vakansie weg was. Maar dit gee ons ook die kans om Russel se vol en vervullende lewe te vier as mens, akademikus, vriend, ouer en eggenoot. Ons is hartseer hy is nie meer met ons nie, maar ons kan ons troos aan sy ryke nalatenskap.

Nou, as daar vir my een ding is wat uitstaan, dan is iets wat mens hom dikwels hoor sê het: “Ons doen wat ons doen nie vir onself nie, maar vir die volgende geslag” – en die saal sit vanmiddag vol van die volgende geslag. Verder het hy ook gereeld gesê, ons werk vir die volgende bestuur. Vandag het dit vir ons baie betekenis.

I think this – more than anything else – serves to demonstrate why Prof Russel was regarded as such a “visionary leader”. Not only could he see the future, he had the wonderful ability to share his excitement and take others along with him.

Daar word mos gesê ’n goeie leier is iemand wat nie net voor loop nie, maar wat ander mense saam met hom op pad sien as hy rondkyk. So ’n mens was Russel was. En dis hoekom daar nie nou ’n troostelose leemte by die Universiteit is nie.

Ja, ons gaan sy wysheid en leiding mis, maar hy laat vir ons ’n gedetailleerde padkaart om ons na ons bestemming te neem. En dít word saamgevat in die Universiteit se Visie 2030 wat verlede jaar onder sy leiding aanvaar is. Hiervolgens wil ons meer “inklusief, innoverend en toekomsgerig” word, ’n “plek van ontdekking en uitnemendheid waar sowel personeellede as studente denkleiers is wat kennis in diens van alle belanghebbendes bevorder”.

It was Prof Russel's vision that Maties should become ever more "inclusive, innovative and future-focused" and that we should do so by broadening access to the University, maintaining our excellence, and deepening our impact on society. We are sticking to this vision; we are not going to deviate from it.

Prof Russel worked very hard to set this University on a sound course, and he made co-pilots of all of us, so to speak. That's why we are now able to carry on where he left off and to do so with confidence.

Daar is ongelukkig nie tyd van almal om vandag te praat nie, en ek het dus die Raad en die Konvokasie en die Institusionele Forum geraadpleeg, vir insette en oral was die boodskap dieselfde: die rigting wat ons ingeslaan het en die pad wat ons reeds 'n ent op geloop het, gaan nie verander nie.

Die Uitvoerende Komitee van die Raad het gister die proses begin om 'n nuwe Rektor en Visekanselier aan te wys. Maar selfs wanneer ons 'n nuwe rektor kry, skep die Universiteit se "Institusionele Voorneme en Strategie, 2013 tot 2018" vir ons 'n stabiele platform en raamwerk vir die afsienbare toekoms. En vir die jare daarna het Russel in sy versindheid vir ons 'n "Visie 2030" nagelaat.

Ladies and gentlemen, when Professor Botman was inaugurated as Rector in 2007, he said the challenge for this University would be to "move from success to significance". There can be little doubt that he helped us do exactly that.

By his example he taught us when confronted with turbulence, rise above it. Without his vision and leadership we would have been blind to opportunity.

The HOPE Project, which he championed, has shown the world how important it is for a university to be relevant. And at the same time, Stellenbosch achieved new levels of excellence under Professor Botman's leadership. Now it is up to each one of us to keep this legacy alive.

After all, as Russel said, "We do what we do not for ourselves, but for the next generation." And the next generation of Maties – staff and students – deserve a university that is truly a welcoming home to all. That would be the best monument to Russel Botman. I thank you.