

community

The New Apostolic Church around the world

02/2016/EN



Victory with Christ

The fear of God and trust

Divine service in Brazil:
Professing our faith

Catechism:
The sacraments

Catechism:
Life after death

New Apostolic Church
International



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The fear of God and trust

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The motto for 2016 is “Victory with Christ”. This also applies, and maybe even primarily so, to our day-to-day lives. Such a motto has many aspects, and I would like to focus on one of the key aspects here: to be victorious with Christ requires the fear of God and trust. To fear God means to have respect and profound reverence for God, our Creator and heavenly Father. Let us trust Him as long as we live, even on bad days.

Following are some examples from the Bible to illustrate this:

- Joseph’s fear of God helped him to triumph over sin. He was devout and knew that God saw him and was with him. When Potiphar’s wife tried to seduce him, he resisted her advances. Even in prison, forgotten by everyone, he remained faithful to God. Finally God intervened and he was released.

We know that God sees and knows everything. Let us therefore avoid sin and trust Him. He will not forget us!

- Moses was a man who had complete confidence in everything God did. He waged a battle against Pharaoh that initially appeared futile. Moses asked the Egyptian king nine times to let the people go, and every time he refused. But Moses continued to trust God. Finally, Moses gave the order for the people to get ready to leave Egypt. Everyone obeyed and God liberated them.

What about today? How often have we not already experienced the power of God! Despite all the attacks of the evil one, let us trust God and obey Him. Soon we will escape the evil one once and for all.



■ NAC International

- Paul had to undergo a complete transformation. Everything that had been so important to him was called into question all of a sudden and became irrelevant. But he believed and put His trust in God and continued to be an instrument in God’s hand, leading the church of the Lord to redemption. The Son of God Himself commissioned Paul as an Apostle to go and proclaim the gospel to the world.

Things are similar for us today. God sends us into the world to proclaim the glad tidings of the resurrection of Jesus, His ascension, and His return. Christ will return. This is what He has promised!

Let us obey God out of deep reverence, and do so in all situations throughout our lives. We know that God sees and knows everything. We can trust Him. This will bring us the victory with Christ!

Together with all the Apostles around the world I send heartfelt greetings,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a stylized 'J' and 'S' connected together.

Jean-Luc Schneider

We profess our faith despite challenges



■ NAC Brasília

Mount Corcovado, at 710 metres, is a granite peak that is situated just west of Rio de Janeiro's city centre and offers a fantastic view of the city. The hill is best known for its huge statue of Christ the Redeemer. Chief Apostle Schneider celebrated a divine service in Rio, Brazil's national capital, on 28 October 2015.

1 Corinthians 16: 9

*"For a great and effective door
has opened to me, and there are
many adversaries."*



My dear brothers and sisters, today's Bible text was written by Paul and addressed to the Corinthians. He is speaking about the work he plans to do in Ephesus. He was on a trip and stopped in Ephesus, where he decided that he wanted to create a congregation. And then he wrote to the Corinthians: "I am here in Ephesus, and I have the feeling that there is a great opportunity to do some effective work, despite the fact that there are many adversaries." I was thinking about this over the last couple of days and found it very interesting and wanted to know more about this. The story of how he founded this congregation is reported in the Bible, in chapters 19 and 20 of Acts. When I read that I thought about you, my brothers and sisters here in Brazil, because the situation here is very similar. I thought this would be a nice word for tonight.

Let's see. Paul came to Ephesus and seized the opportunity to establish a church there. He professed his faith and proclaimed the glad tidings to the inhabitants. Ephesus was a huge city, one of the biggest at the time. It had more than a hundred thousand inhabitants, and only twelve people accepted his testimony. Not a hundred, not fifty, only twelve (Acts 19: 7). That's it! And yet Paul saw this as a great opportunity. He did not lose courage, but thought, "Seeing that God sent me here, I have to do something here." And this in spite of the fact that many were against him.

First he went to the Jews. There was a group of very devout Jews there. He told these people about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and about his mission as an Apostle of Christ. In the Bible it says: "Some were hardened and did not believe" (Acts 19: 9). They were rooted in their tradition, and did not accept the tidings that Jesus is the Son of God and that Paul was an Apostle of Christ.

I am aware of the fact that the number of God's children here in Brazil is small compared to the population of this country and city. You make an effort to profess your faith, but many faithful Christians are not prepared to accept this new message. They are rooted in their faith and their traditions. And when you tell them that we have living Apostles, that Jesus will come back, and that He offers salvation to the souls in yonder world they say, "No, that is completely foreign to us. It is too new and strange, something we cannot believe. We will stay with our faith." I think there is no

point to insist. You know that better than I do. They are rooted in their faith, and we have to struggle with this kind of attitude. So Paul's first problem was that only a few were prepared to accept this new message.

Secondly, those who were rooted in their faith wanted to stay with it. And then he turned his attention to another group. Among the Jews in Ephesus there were some who travelled around and drove out evil spirits, using the name of the Lord Jesus to do so (Acts 19: 13). For Paul that was a big problem. They misused the name of Jesus Christ.

I think we are aware that many people today misuse the name of Jesus Christ to supposedly improve the lives of people. They promise them, "If you come to our church and follow Jesus Christ, you will become rich. All your problems will be solved. Your life on earth will be blessed." That

is a problem, because that is not what it says in the gospel. That is not the reason why Jesus came on earth. But this is the kind of thinking we have to deal with. And when we are then asked, "Do you perform miracles? Do you pray for miracles?" we have

to say, "No, we prepare souls for the return of Christ." It is difficult to bring them our message.

Paul had a third problem in Ephesus. He got in the way of some businessmen. There was a flourishing business in Ephesus. Miniature models of the temple of the goddess Diana were made and sold, and this yielded a big profit. The silversmith and those working for him were very rich. He called them all together and said, "We cannot accept the preaching of this man, he's jeopardizing our business," and they wanted to chase him out of the city.

We are familiar with this kind of spirit, the spirit who is always out looking to make money. Many say, "We have to go and make money so we can save some. You know, we have to work hard to make money. We have no time for God." For others the gospel even poses a danger for their business, because they think: "You cannot live according to the gospel of Christ and run a business. Don't tell me that I have to be honest. Don't tell me that I have to tell the truth. Don't bother me with these kinds of things, I want to make money." The gospel becomes an obstacle in their business dealings, so they do not accept it. This was the situation that Paul had to deal with.

We have been given a great opportunity to do something for the work of God. This applies everywhere in the world.

Basically, he could have said, “Oh, in this context what can I do? Nothing! It is too difficult. Most of the people want to stick with their traditions and will not accept the new message. Others are interested in Jesus Christ only because they hope for an improvement in their lives. And still others are just interested in making money.” Knowing all this it is interesting to see how Paul reacted, because he said, “For a great and effective door has opened to me.” He saw all this as a great opportunity to do missionary work. His great faith made this possible. He figured, “Seeing God has sent me here to this city, He wants me to do something!”

Brothers and sisters, the same applies to us today and here. We have been given a wonderful opportunity to do something for the work of God. This applies everywhere in the world. Some might ask now: How can I say something like that? It is quite easy to explain: Jesus Christ has not come back yet because there is still work to do.

He sent Apostles on earth and commissioned them with a task. Once this work is accomplished He will come back! And as long as Jesus does not come back it means that there is still work to be done. The fact that the Apostles are still active on earth is the sign that it is still possible to do this kind of work and to proclaim the gospel. It is still possible—and it is the will of God—for people to become children of God. As long as Apostles are active on earth, this





is possible. And because Apostles are active here in your country I think—and I believe—that this can still be done also here.

Now let's see how Paul managed to do his work. First, he did not stop talking about the Lord Jesus and professing his faith. God wants us to do the same. Let us profess our faith. I am not talking about going to the beach to tell others about your faith. Nobody would listen to you; they would laugh at you. But in our day-to-day dealings with people we can talk about our faith as something completely natural. For example: "You know, I think that God helped me. Remember the problems I had last week. I went to church and in the divine service God gave me strength and comforted me." Nobody will laugh at you when they notice that you were sad last week and are much more cheerful now. Why? Because we went to church. We can also talk about our experiences of faith in a natural way. That is a seed we sow, you know.

Let us do as Paul did. For him it was completely natural to speak about his faith, his experiences, and how the Lord helped him.

Paul did something else. God performed unusual miracles through Paul (Acts 19: 11). People said, "He does incredible things. He must be a man of God." I know that none

of us—and this applies to me too—has the power to heal. But that is not the kind of miracle that God expects us to perform. The miracles we can do are those things that people think cannot possibly be done. These include such extraordinary things like being peaceful and confident

even when we have to weather storms in our lives, being thankful and faithful to God even when everything goes wrong in our lives. That is something that people cannot understand. And they say, "He has reason to be sad and discouraged, and yet he is peaceful and confident." For many people this is a miracle. All faithful children of God can perform such miracles.

*Let us prove that
with God nothing
is impossible.*

It is a miracle when people who are very different are one in faith and in love. When people look at our congregations they sometimes wonder, "All these people are so different. There are rich and poor members, very educated and less educated members, and yet they are one. How do they manage that?" Especially in our days that is a miracle, something people do not understand. It is beyond them how we manage that. So in a sense we can perform miracles too. For most people it is absolutely extraordinary when we forgive someone who has hurt us. Some might even say, "You are crazy? That's not possible. A normal person would not do that." We can answer, "Yes, actually it is impossible, but with my God it has become possible." Let us prove that with God nothing is impossible. That is exactly what Paul did.

There was something else he did. He was in Ephesus for three years, and while he was there he shared the joys and sorrows of the people. He even cried with them. That is also a wonderful way to profess our faith and the core message of the gospel. In a world that is becoming more and more selfish we are able to share the joys and sorrows of our neighbour. When we see their suffering, let us try to comfort them. Let us help them by bringing them lasting joy and peace.

Paul did that for three years. And it did not go unnoticed by the people: "This man not only preaches a new theory, but he is actually here and shares our sufferings and cries with us." That is how we can profess our faith, by helping to carry the burdens of those around us, even if they are not New Apostolic. I really think that our world needs such people who are prepared to help bear the suffering of others.



*In a world that is
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of our neighbour.*

There was a fourth reason for Paul's strength. He said himself later on, "I've proved to you that I did not do this to protect my own interests. What I did, I did not do for money or glory." And people must feel that it is the same way with us. They must know that we are not just interested in increasing the membership of our Church or the income of our Church. And that really is not our primary concern. What we want is to share the glory of the Lord with our neighbour; and this is something we do out of love. That is our only motivation.

Some people think: "If I invite many people and they become members in our Church, then my soul will be saved." Is that the right motivation? I don't think so, for two reasons. First, these people have the notion that they can earn salvation. But nobody can earn salvation, not even if one hundred people become New Apostolic through us. Secondly, God expects us to love our

neighbour. If my only motivation is my own salvation, then I am misguided because I am acting out of love for my own soul and not out of love for my neighbour. The future bride of Christ is filled with love for God and her neighbour: I love my neighbour; I want him to have what I have; I want him to be as happy and blessed as I am. And I am absolutely convinced that people can feel that. They can feel: "Many people want me to join their church for various reasons, but these people want me to be in their church because they want to share Jesus with me. They want to share their blessings and the glory of God with me; they love me."

Actually, we are in a very similar situation as Paul was. And the message of the Holy Spirit tonight is: "Don't be



The Chief Apostle called on District Apostle Rüdiger Krause (Germany) and Apostle Reinaldo Milczuk (Brazil) to assist during the service. Here the Chief Apostle and Apostle Milczuk (left) are in conversation with a sister



Chief Apostle Schneider, Apostle Milczuk, and the District Apostles Krause and Montes de Oca (left to right) say goodbye after the service

discouraged. Believe in the activity of the living Apostles. As long as they are active on earth we can still find souls desiring salvation—in this world and in yonder world.” Let us talk about our faith, about our experiences of faith, and what we experience in the divine services. Let us do miracles, in other words, those things that people think are impossible to do but which we can do. We are joyful even in hardships. We are full of confidence. We are able to forgive. We are able to bring sacrifices even if we have nothing. And we are one despite our differences. With God nothing is impossible. And then we want to share the sorrows and the joys of our neighbour and prove to him that we are not motivated by our own interests, but that we are acting out of love.

CORE THOUGHTS

Let us profess our faith in word and deed despite the challenges this poses for us. May the awareness of our task and our love for our neighbour be our motivation. Apostle Paul is an example for us.

- Paul would not allow himself to be deterred from professing his faith.
- God performed miracles through Paul.
- Paul shared the joys and sorrows of the people.
- Paul was motivated by love and not by his own interests.



Michael Voigt

Embracing the grace of God

More than 18,000 members took part in a divine service that Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider celebrated in Zwickau in Germany this past November. The service was broadcast throughout Central Germany, Poland, Belarus, and Slovakia. The Chief Apostle placed two Apostles into retirement and ordained a new Apostle.

The Chief Apostle began his sermon by focusing on the core of the Bible text: “Rest your hope fully upon ... grace,” saying that we should place all our hope and trust consistently upon the grace of God in all circumstances and until the end.

Setting our hope on grace

The Chief Apostle then went on to explain some of the aspects of grace.

- The grace of knowledge. “Jesus is the Son of God, who has died for us, has resurrected, and has gained the victory over hell and death.” To know this is grace, because this has not been granted to everyone. “We trust in Jesus Christ. He will win. He will gain the victory!”
- The grace of our election. “We are privileged to be children of God. We are being prepared for the coming of the Lord by the Apostles. We fully place our trust in this grace. God will also complete the work He has begun in us!”
- The grace of the forgiveness of sins. Neither good works nor our faithfulness to the Lord can erase our sins. “Because we put our trust fully in the grace of God, we make every effort to attain it. For this reason, let us continue to improve. For this reason, let us forgive.”
- The grace of full redemption. “We hope for eternal glory, for eternal fellowship with God. This will surpass anything we could ever imagine. It is worthwhile to remain faithful.”



Using our mind

“See to it that your mind does not deter you from following the Lord or from serving Him.” It was with these words that Chief Apostle Schneider interpreted the statement: “Gird up the loins of your mind” from the Bible text. “You need your mind, but see to it that it does not become an obstacle to you.”

“We still live in the time of faith, not of sight,” he explained. “There are certain things that we simply cannot comprehend. We have to believe them. Although reason may call many spiritual things into question, whatever comes from the Spirit must also be grasped with the mind.”

Processing things correctly

“What does it mean to be sober?” asked the Chief Apostle, in reference to the Bible text. “This means we are to process things correctly and act accordingly.” This includes the knowledge that as long as the earth exists, there will be war, suffering, misfortune, and injustice: “It is not God’s plan to rid the world of these things. He plans to create a completely new world ... Those who follow Christ must also battle and pick up their cross. We take the strength we need for this from the Lord.”

But above all: “Spreading the glad tidings of the gospel and letting our light shine is a concern for each and every Christian. And as children of God we have also been given another message: the Lord is coming soon! Let us be prepared. You have the opportunity to be there too!”

At the end of the service, the Chief Apostle placed the Apostles Gerald Bimberg and Achim Burchard into retirement and went on to ordain District Elder Helge Mutschler as a new Apostle.



The Chief Apostle with the retiring Apostles Bimberg and Burchard, and the new Apostle Mutschler (clockwise)

CORE THOUGHTS

1 Peter 1: 13

“Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

- We trust in the word, love, and victory of Jesus Christ and yearn for His grace.
- Our human reasoning must not get in the way of our following Jesus Christ.
- Let us concentrate on what matters: serving the Lord.

Seven stumbling blocks and a guiding principle

Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider celebrated a divine service in our Dinwiddie church in Johannesburg (South Africa) on 11 October 2015. Nearly 1,500 members followed the service in Dinwiddie directly, while another 27,000 throughout the District Church of South East Africa were connected by audio-visual transmission.

“This stone is Jesus Christ,” the Chief Apostle said and explained the historical context of the Bible text. “Jesus was sent by His Father in order to save Israel. But they would not accept Him.” – “How could Jesus Christ ever become a stumbling block for us?” the Chief Apostle asked, and launched into an answer. “Let us take a look at a few examples.”

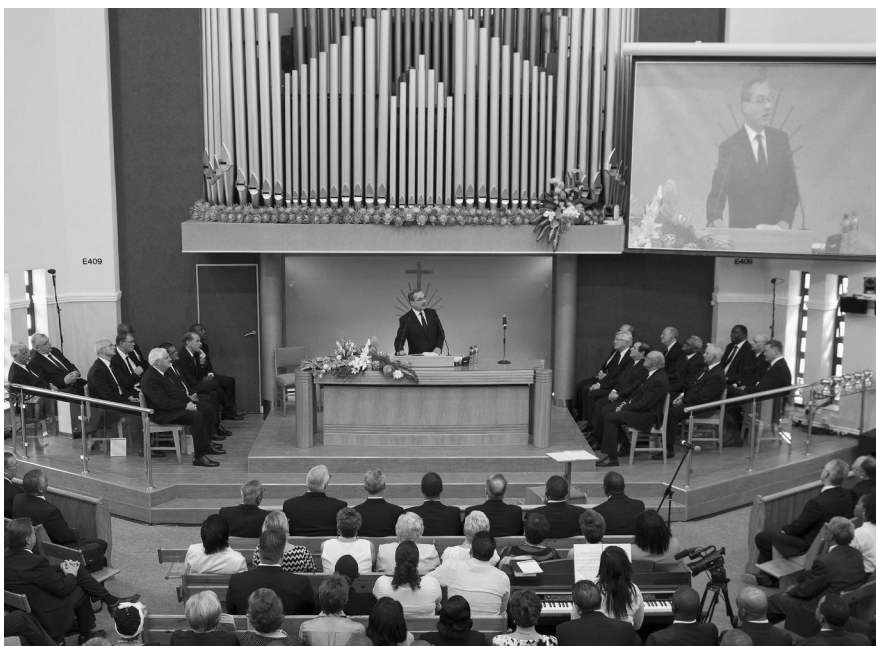
Stumbling blocks

“The people of Israel were disappointed at first that Jesus did not meet their expectations,” he explained. “He did not free the people from the yoke of the Romans nor did He heal everybody.” It is not any different today, he said. “Sometimes we wish that the Lord would solve all our

problems. But if this help does not materialize and our life situation does not improve, we tend to be disappointed.” “But,” he continued, “His salvation consists of showing us the way to eternal life. We keep on walking.”

Some people were irritated at the time of Jesus because He insisted that He was the only way to salvation (John 14: 6). “Many people today think: God is not that tiny. He has other ideas,” the Chief Apostle said. “They take offence in the words of Jesus. But we Apostles cannot teach something other than Jesus Christ taught us. We need His word, His grace, and Holy Communion.”

“Jesus Christ was very demanding. This was a stumbling block for some,” the Chief Apostle explained, and referred





Top: Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider addresses the new Apostle Siphosiso Moganane

to the parable of the rich young man. “Under normal circumstances it is not so hard to reconcile our everyday life with our life of faith and our goal.” But sometimes God asks us to choose: “Do you want salvation or is your top priority earthly success?”

“No matter what we do—even if we were the best person on earth—there is nothing we can do that will entitle us to the kingdom of God. It is grace,” the Chief Apostle said and mentioned another stumbling block. “Sometimes we are just a little irritated when we see that someone else gets just as much as we do although he may have done less than we.” But salvation is salvation. When it comes to that there is no such thing as a little bit more or a little bit less.

“Some were irritated because Jesus refused to answer their questions.” Such as the question of His return. “For some the short answer: ‘Only believe, the Lord’s return is imminent,’ is a cause of annoyance. But we believe that Jesus Christ is the truth and we trust Him.”

Sometimes it is more important to proclaim the gospel than it is to help the poor. This is how the Chief Apostle interprets the anointment of Jesus at Bethany (Matthew 26: 6–13). This also applies to the way the Church deals with the offerings: “The first mission of the Church is to make sure that the gospel is taught, and in a second step we take care of our neighbour. For some this is a stumbling block, but ... we believe in the mission of the church.”

Jesus’ family background as the son of a carpenter from Nazareth or Paul’s past as a persecutor of Christians ... For many people it was difficult to recognize the Son of God or His messenger. “Today the Lord has also chosen servants.” These men are not perfect. And some are irritated by this.

“Please accept those whom God has sent—despite our failings and weaknesses.”

The guiding principle

“Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame,” the Chief Apostle said in conclusion, quoting the Bible text once more. “This is a divine promise and every one of us can experience it.”

CORE THOUGHTS

Romans 9: 33

“Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offence, and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.”

Our faith keeps us from stumbling and falling over them. We believe

- in eternal life.
- that Jesus Christ is the only way to God.
- that He does not expect too much of us.
- in His grace.
- in the word and promise of Jesus.
- in the mission He gave His church.
- in the sending of His servants.

More than just consumers and spectators ...

On Sunday, 22 November 2015, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider celebrated a divine service in Phnom Penh, Cambodia's national capital, with 500 brothers and sisters. He placed nine Apostles into retirement and ordained five new Apostles in this service. He based his sermon on a passage from Acts.



“After Jesus had commissioned the first Apostles they went out and preached and baptized. But before long they met with resistance from the religious leaders,” Chief Apostle Schneider summarized the happenings two thousand years ago. But the Apostles were not afraid and did not allow this to shake them. They asked the congregation to help them fulfil their commission.

Actively involved in the plan of salvation

The Apostles of today also have to deal with difficulties in connection with their commission. The congregations help them in their work. They pray for the Apostles and bear witness of the gospel through word and conduct. With this the Chief Apostle quoted indirectly from the *Catechism of the New Apostolic Church*, where it says in chapter 7.1: “It is also important to distinguish ministry from the call that has gone out to all believers, namely to serve the Lord by following Him ... Just as the Apostles bear witness of the gospel through word and conduct, reborn Christians do

the same in fellowship with them, thereby supporting their great commission.”

“A child of God should not be content with just being a spectator or a consumer in the Church. We have to support the work of the Apostles,” the Chief Apostle said. “Members of the congregation are not customers who come to church when they need something, buy it, and then go home again. We are actively involved in the plan of salvation,” he said.

The difficult mission of the Apostles

The congregation at the time of the first Christians shared the Apostles' concerns. “They came together, worshipped God, and prayed that the Apostles would be able to fulfil their commission. It was surprising that they did not ask God to help them solve the problem by killing their adversaries or changing the situation.” No, the first Christians prayed that God give the Apostles the strength needed to fulfil their commission.



The Chief Apostle asked for support. “It is the task of the Church to support the efforts and the mission of the Apostles. How can we do that? We support the work of the Apostles when we gather for divine services. The first congregation already gathered to worship God, and so do we.” The congregation prayed a second time, the Chief Apostle said: “God, give us strength in this difficult time. Strengthen us and Your servants so that we can fulfil the mission despite all difficulties.”

After they had prayed the place where they were assembled was shaken. This was God’s answer at the time and an indication of His presence. Also today God is present among the faithful—in His word and in the celebration of Holy Communion.

Actively and with the joy in Christ

“Let us support today’s Apostles by following the example set by the first Christians,” Chief Apostle Schneider said, and listed five ways we can do that.

- Declaring what we believe. “Let us proclaim the word of God with boldness and courage. We can talk about it in our everyday life, for example, by telling our neighbour, ‘I cannot agree with you in this.’ We just cannot say and do everything.”
- Being one in heart and soul. “When people watch our congregation and notice: ‘Just look at these people. They are all so different. Some are rich, others are poor. Some are young and others are old. Some are educated and others are not ... They are all so different, but they love each other and are one,’ then this congregation is a testimony of the Apostle ministry’s capacity to produce effects.”
- Being joyful. “The Apostles proclaimed: ‘Jesus has died for you. Jesus has risen. He triumphed over death and hell! He will return and you will be able to enter into

His glory!’ The congregation received that message and believed in its fulfilment. That is why they had joy in Christ.”

- Being steadfast. “The congregation has to go through hardships. Children of God have to deal with trials and difficulties. But the first congregation remained steadfast and did not use the trials and burdens they experienced as an excuse. Even in the face of adversity they followed the teachings of the gospel.”
- By bringing our offerings. “The first Christians knew that if the Apostles were to be able to fulfil their mission, they would need help. They also knew that the Apostles would need money to fulfil their commission. It is the same today.”

CORE THOUGHTS

Acts 4: 31

“And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.”

The congregation supports the work of the Apostles by worshipping God and through prayer. Every child of God is called on to help the Apostles by professing their faith and proving their love for one another, by revealing their joy in Christ, by being steadfast, and by faithfully bringing their offerings.

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

(LUKE 6: 27-36)

After Jesus had called His twelve Apostles, He spoke to the people. He explained how they should behave.

Love your enemies, and be good to everyone who hates you. Bless those who curse you and pray for those who offend you.

If someone slaps you on the cheek then offer him the other cheek as well.

If someone takes away your coat then let him have your shirt as well.

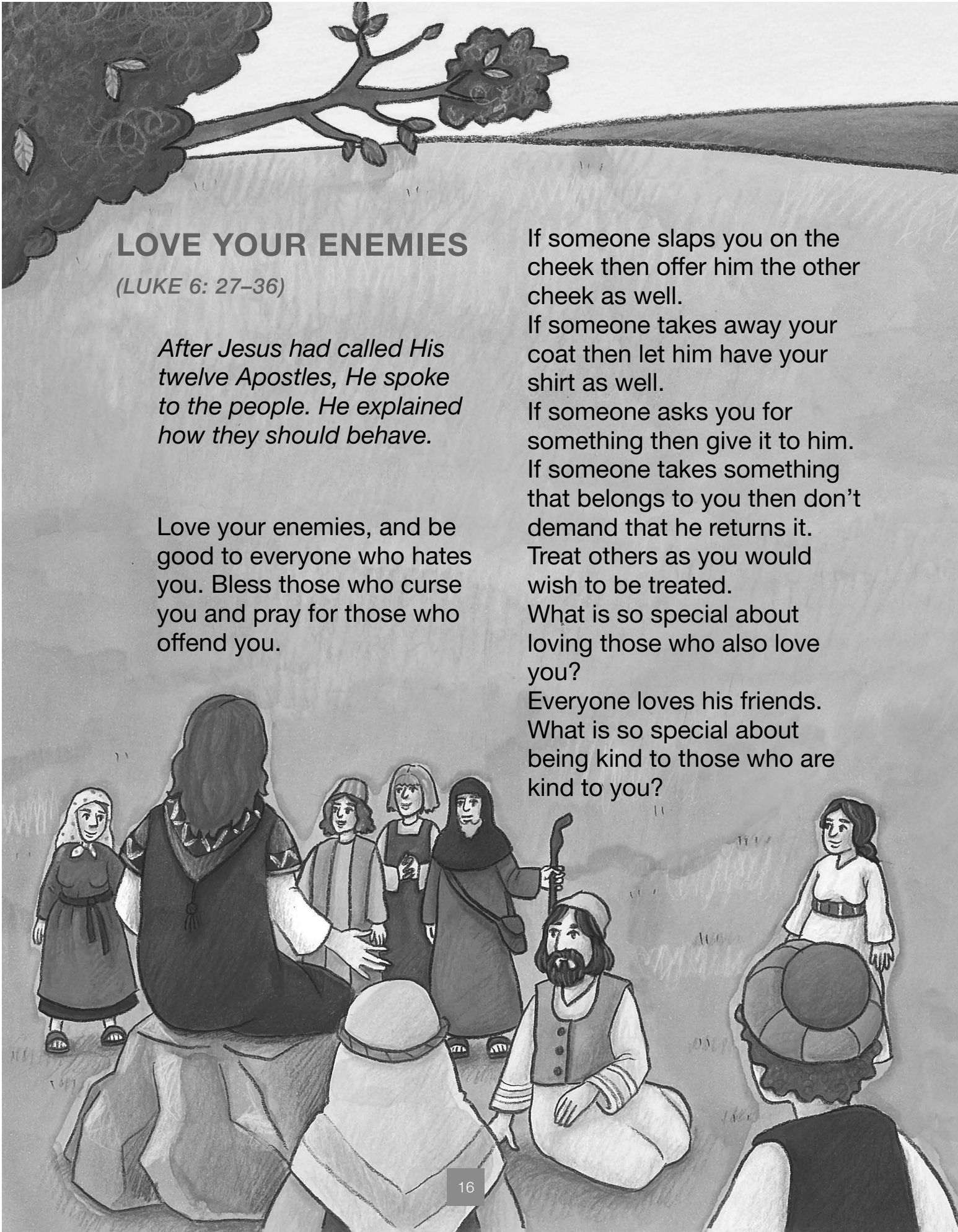
If someone asks you for something then give it to him. If someone takes something that belongs to you then don't demand that he returns it.

Treat others as you would wish to be treated.

What is so special about loving those who also love you?

Everyone loves his friends.

What is so special about being kind to those who are kind to you?

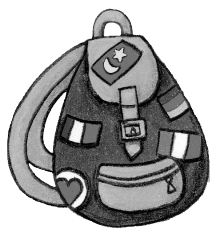


Everyone behaves like that. What is so special about giving something to people if you can expect to receive something in return? Everyone does that. Love your enemies and be good to them. Give to those who will not give you anything in return.

God will then reward you. You will be children of the Most High. God is good even to those who are unthankful and cruel. Have pity on others just as God, your Father, has pity on you.

The **commandment to love our enemies** is part of a longer sermon that Jesus preached to many people. In Luke's gospel we can read about a sermon He held on a level place. It is therefore often called the Sermon on the Plain. It is similar to the Sermon on the Mount recorded in Matthew. Both begin with beatitudes, continue with the commandment to love our enemies, and conclude with a warning to act upon that which has been spoken.





AT KOTOSAYA'S IN NADI (REPUBLIC OF FIJI)



A word that is frequently used here on our island is *bula*. It is the Fijian word for "Hello". *Ni sa bula vinaka* means "a warm welcome". So, *ni sa bula vinaka*, dear friends, to Matanitu Tu-Vaka-i-koya ko Viti, the Republic of Fiji. Visitors from abroad come by plane to Nadi International Airport, which is located on

the main island, **Viti Levu**. We live near there.

I have only ever been on a plane once. But one day I would like to be a pilot, and I am working hard so that this dream can come true. When this picture was taken I was in grade seven. I was twelve years old at the time. My name is **Kotosaya**. This is a snapshot of me (on the right) and my best **friend**, Camari. We both love to sing.

We are both looking forward to going to youth meetings together once we are confirmed. I enjoy going to Sunday School and am proud of the fact that I sing in the children's choir. My **mother** Karalaini also sings in the choir in our congregation in Natalau. In 2007 Chief Apostle Wilhelm Leber visited us here in Natalau. That was wonderful!



We live in Nadi in **my grand-parents'** house. They were the first New Apostolic Christians in Fiji. My grandfather is our District Elder.

The Republic of Fiji consists of over 300 islands, but only one third are inhabited and not every island has its own congregation.

My favourite food is tapioca and taro with fish or chicken. It tastes wonderful, especially when it is cooked in a **lovo**, an earth oven. The food is wrapped in banana leaves and cooked on hot stones in the ground for hours. Sometimes I catch the fish myself.



I don't have any siblings, but I have lots of friends and also some **pets**. I have a dog called Thursday and two cows who are called Batista and Betty.



My father, Alenisa, is a farm hand. Sugar cane, bananas, and coconut palm are the main sources of food for the people on Fiji. These plants are depicted on our **national flag** together with a white dove. Fiji was a British colony for almost a hundred years and that is why the Union Jack is depicted in the upper left quadrant. Our flag was raised for the first time on 10 October 1970. That was when Fiji became independent.

Letterbox



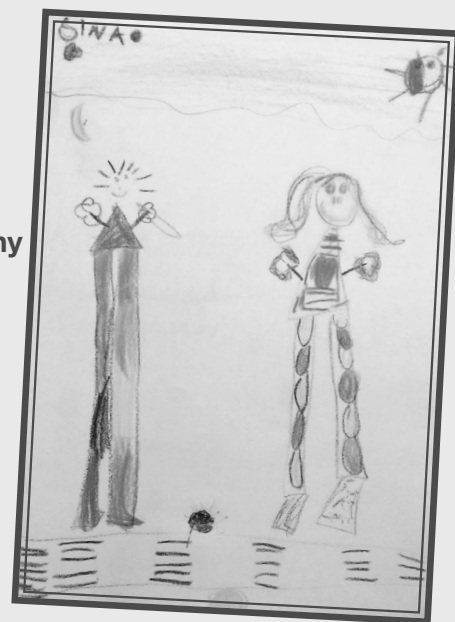
WHAT IS AN ENEMY?

"An enemy is someone who wants to do bad things to you. An enemy can also be a bad thought that you can't get rid of or a great fear that you can't overcome."

Melina, 11, from Ostelsheim in Germany

"An enemy is someone who threatens another person with a knife."

Sina from Augsburg-Lechhausen in Germany



"An enemy is someone who is jealous of my laptop or my pocket money. He does everything he can to make my friends and me feel bad."

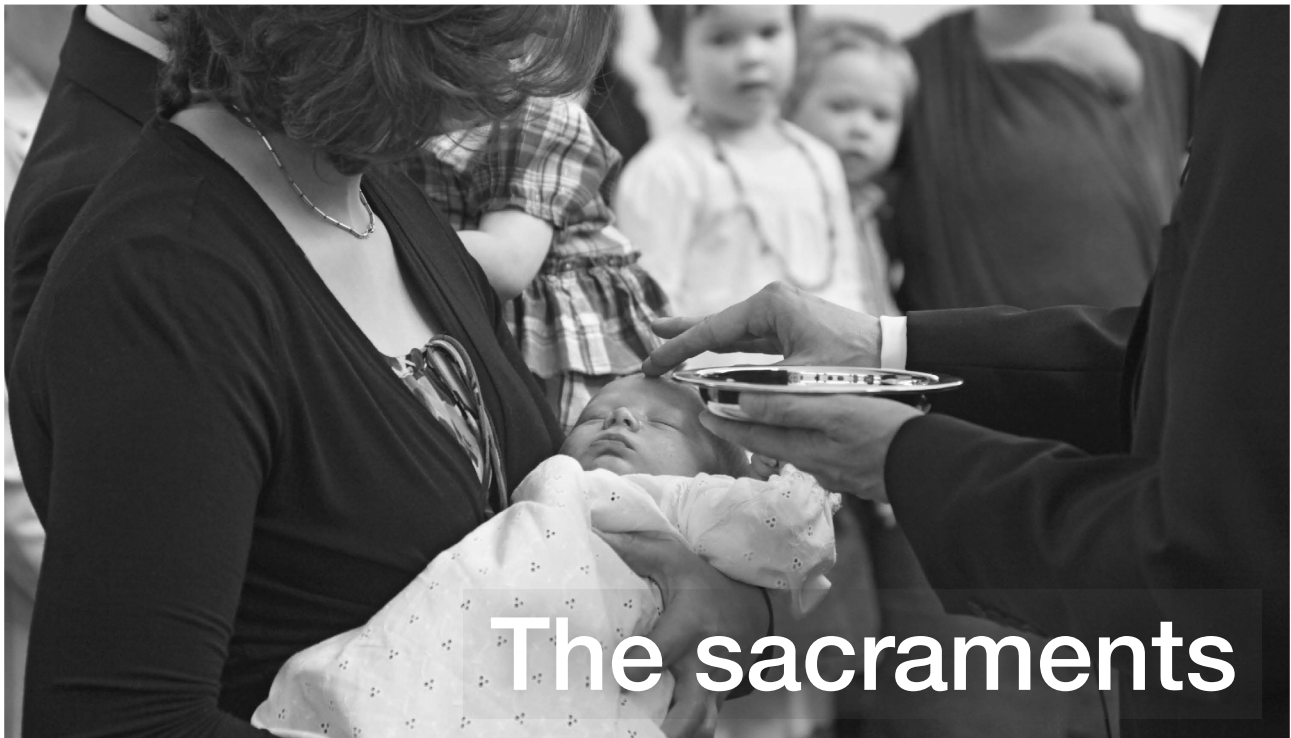
Anaise, 13, from Mauritius

"At school someone stole my ball. He showed me that he had taken it, but he would not give it back to me."

Jonathan, 10, from Mauritius

"Someone who doesn't like me and has nothing in common with me is an enemy. At school I have a couple of enemies who say bad things about me."

Anastasia, 10, from Mauritius



■ Oliver Rütten

This past September, the *Catechism of the New Apostolic Church in Questions and Answers* was published. *community* presents excerpts of some of the 750 questions and answers. In this issue we will look at the sacraments and life after death.

What are sacraments?

Sacraments are fundamental acts of God's grace. In these holy acts—which are performed by human beings upon human beings—God grants the recipient salvation.

What is the purpose of the sacraments?

The sacraments allow human beings to attain salvation: through them, human beings are adopted into the fellowship of life with God and preserved in it.

Receiving the three sacraments of Holy Baptism with water, Holy Sealing, and Holy Communion gives a human being the opportunity to be united with the Lord at the return of Christ.

What occurs in Holy Baptism with water?

Through Holy Baptism with water a fundamental change in the relationship between a human being and God comes into being. Through the washing away of original sin, the baptized is led out of his original state of remoteness from God and enters the proximity of God. He becomes a Christian.

Through his faith and profession of Christ, the baptized now belongs to the church of Christ.

What did Jesus say to His disciples concerning baptism?

After His resurrection, Jesus gave His Apostles the Great Commission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28: 19). Baptism is thus one of the tasks of the Apostles. When the New Testament speaks of "baptism", it is often referring to a two-part baptism, namely with water and with the Holy Spirit (Acts 8: 14 et seq.). Holy Baptism with water and the baptism of the Spirit are thus closely linked.

Who can receive Holy Baptism with water?

All human beings can receive Holy Baptism with water. The prerequisite is that they believe in Jesus Christ and His gospel.

Why can children be baptized?

The statement of Jesus: "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10: 14) indicates that the blessings of God should also be made accessible to children. This includes the sacraments.

The New Testament attests that entire households were baptized together: “And immediately he and all his family were baptized” (Acts 16: 33; cf. also 16: 15). Households and families include children. From this the Christian tradition of baptizing children has developed.

Moreover, when children are baptized, those entitled to raise them profess belief in Jesus Christ on their behalf and take responsibility for the religious education of their children in the sense of the gospel.

Are baptisms performed in other Christian denominations valid?

Yes, the dispensation of Holy Baptism with water is possible and effective in all parts of the one church of Christ. Baptism with water is the first step on the way to perfect redemption. Wherever believers are baptized with water and in the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the baptism is valid. Baptism with water has been entrusted to the church as a whole. The reason for this lies in God’s universal will to save.

From what does the term “Lord’s Supper” derive?

The term “supper” refers to the circumstances in which Jesus Christ instituted this sacrament: on the evening before His crucifixion He celebrated the Passover meal with His Apostles.

What happens when the wafers are consecrated?

The body and blood of Jesus Christ become present in the consecration. Bread and wine are not changed in their substance through the consecration. In other words, the bread and wine are not transformed. Rather, the substance of the body and blood of Jesus is joined to the bread and wine. This event is described as “consubstantiation”.

In Holy Communion, bread and wine are not mere images or symbols for the body and blood of Jesus. Rather, the body and blood of Jesus Christ are truly present after the consecration.

Is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ present in Holy Communion?

Yes, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is present in Holy Communion. This sacrifice is not repeated, however, as it has been brought “once for all” (Hebrews 10: 10, 14).

What are the effects of Holy Communion?

Holy Communion establishes intimate fellowship with Jesus Christ. It imparts the nature and strength of the Son of God. Partaking of Holy Communion also serves to promote the unity of the believers with one another, because they develop together into the nature of Jesus Christ. Thus Holy Communion is an important means of preparation for the return of Christ.

What is Holy Sealing?

Holy Sealing is the sacrament whereby the believer receives the gift of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands and prayer of an Apostle. The believer thereby becomes a child of God with the calling to become a firstling.

How is the sacrament of Holy Sealing dispensed?

The sacrament of Holy Sealing is dispensed by Apostles when they impart the gift of the Holy Spirit in the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit to a baptized person. In so doing they lay their hands on the forehead of the baptized believer and pray.

What are the effects of Holy Sealing?

In Holy Sealing, the believer is enduringly filled with the Holy Spirit. God thereby allows him to share in His being. God thus grants him His strength, His life, and His love for mankind: “The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Romans 5: 5).

The sealed believer is now the property of God. God’s Spirit has taken up His enduring dwelling place within him (cf. Romans 8: 9).

The human being is now a child of God. He has been called to be a firstling; the rebirth thus has a present effect in childhood in God and a future effect in the calling to become a firstling.

As a child of God, the believer is now an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ. The Spirit of adoption, which is active within the human being as a result of Holy Sealing, now confidently addresses God as “Abba, Father”.

If the sealed believer gives the Holy Spirit room to unfold, divine virtues will come into being. These are described figuratively as “fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5: 22).

| Life after death

Is there a life after death?

Yes. Man is both a physical being and a spiritual being. He is an entity consisting of body, soul, and spirit. The human body is mortal and is thus transitory. It is taken from the earth and will return to the earth (cf. Genesis 3: 19). Soul and spirit, by contrast, live on after physical death, and are thus immortal. The personhood of a human being—that is, his essence, that which comprises him, and that which he has experienced, felt, believed, and thought—thus continues to exist after physical death.

“For God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of his own eternity” (Wisdom of Solomon 2: 23).

What is death?

There is a distinction between the physical death and the spiritual death of a human being. Physical death signifies

the end of life on earth. When it occurs, soul and spirit leave the body. Spiritual death is the separation of a human being from God. It is the consequence of sin. When the Bible speaks of the “second death” (Revelation 20: 6; 21: 8), this refers to the separation from God that takes effect after the Last Judgement.

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6: 23).

Who has power over death?

The triune God is Lord over life and death. Through His resurrection, Jesus Christ has conquered death. Thereby He has given mankind access to eternal life: “... our Saviour Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1: 10).



Frank Schultdt

What is the significance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation for the resurrection of the dead. Since He has resurrected, the dead will also resurrect, “some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12: 2).

“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15: 51–52).

Are there any references to life after death in Holy Scripture?

A life after physical death is already suggested in the Old Testament. In the New Testament it is attested on several occasions. For example, we read as follows in 1 Peter 3: 19–20: “By whom [the Holy Spirit] also He [Jesus Christ] went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.”

Where do human beings find themselves after physical death?

The souls and spirits of human beings who have died enter the realm of the dead. We also describe this as “the beyond”.

Is there a reincarnation of the dead?

No. Any notion of repeated lives on earth (reincarnation), whether as a human being, animal, or plant, contradicts the statements of the Bible and thus the content of the gospel: “... it is appointed for men to die once” (Hebrews 9: 27).

The term “reincarnation” refers to different conceptions—none of which are consistent with Christian doctrine—of repeated human existence on earth in various forms.

Can we connect with the departed?

By remembering the departed and praying for them, we have a connection with them. Attempting to contact the departed through necromancy or channelling is forbidden by God and is thus a sin: “There shall not be found among you anyone ... who [is] a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord” (Deuteronomy 18: 10–12).

What is the condition of the souls in the beyond?

The condition of the souls in the beyond is an expression of their proximity to, or remoteness from, God. A person’s soul has not undergone any change as a result of physical death. A person is not only defined by belief or unbelief, reconciliation or irreconcilability, love or hatred on this earth, but also in the beyond. This condition is also addressed in the parable of Jesus of the rich man and poor Lazarus (Luke 16: 19–31), when He speaks of a place of security and a place of torment. The departed can become aware of their condition. Those who suffer torment can hope for help.

Can the condition of the souls in the beyond be changed?

Yes. Since the sacrifice of Christ, it has been possible to change the condition of the souls in the beyond for the better. After His death, Jesus Christ went into the realm of the dead and preached there. The preaching of the gospel implies an opportunity to change for those who accept it in faith. Therefore a human being can also attain salvation after physical death.

How is it possible for souls in the beyond to change?

Souls in the beyond who have never heard of the gospel, never had their sins forgiven, and never received any of the sacraments find themselves in a condition of remoteness from God. This condition can only be overcome through belief in Jesus Christ and His sacrifice and by receiving the sacraments.

Can we help the departed attain salvation?

Yes, we can intercede in prayer for unredeemed souls and ask the Lord to help them. Likewise, we can pray that these souls come to believe in Jesus Christ and that they are open and prepared to accept the salvation God wishes to grant them.

Since both the living and the dead in Christ comprise a single fellowship, they will work both here and in the beyond in the mind of Christ, in other words, they will intercede in prayer for the unredeemed.

Redemption itself can only occur through Jesus Christ, however.

“The ministry is so great and its bearer so small”

The gap between expectations and reality, between the ministry and its bearer ... This field of tension made for some moving moments in a divine service for ministers in Europe last September: the Chief Apostle apologized.



Oliver Rütten

The minister as a servant of God and a servant of the congregation ... That was the topic of the divine service that took place on 27 September 2015 in Düsseldorf in Germany. All active and retired ministers in Europe were connected by video transmission. Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider asked the congregation to show more humility. One particularly important aspect he made clear right at the beginning of his sermon.

Scale and holiness of the task

“We believe that the Lord Jesus gave the Apostles a particularly holy and great task: we have to proclaim the gospel, offer salvation, and prepare the bride of the Lord,” the Chief

Apostle said. “The more we Apostles occupy ourselves with this, the holier this task becomes for us and the more we realize: this is something we will never manage.”

“First of all, this applies to me in my ministry as Chief Apostle. We are not able to cope with the holiness and scale of such a task,” he made clear. “We will not be able to manage because the Chief Apostle and the Apostles are still imperfect human beings.”

Disappointments and injuries

“Sometimes difficulties arise, and sometimes the brothers and sisters are a little bit disappointed because the Apostle

ministry is so great and its bearer so small. Sometimes the one or other is even hurt because the Apostles are not as holy as their ministry,” the Chief Apostle continued.

“I would like to apologize on behalf of all Apostles and ask you to please forgive us. Forgive us if we have hurt you, if we have disappointed you. We promise we will make every effort in executing our Apostle ministry even better.”

“Don’t cut yourselves off from Jesus Christ”

It was not the first time that the Chief Apostle clearly addressed the fallibility of the Apostles. “Sometimes you have to suffer because of our imperfections,” he told the ministers in Indonesia on 27 June 2015. “No Apostle is perfect, no Chief Apostle is perfect—and you forgive us. We are doing our best to improve. We are so thankful that you accept us despite our weaknesses.” “

And the Chief Apostle went even further during a divine service in Saarbrücken in Germany on 5 July 2015. “We call all those who have left the Lord for whatever reason: you are more than welcome to come back,” Chief Apostle Schneider said during the celebration of Holy Communion for the departed. “Please accept our apologies if we, if the congregation, or the Church has done something wrong. Please come back, don’t cut yourselves off from Jesus Christ because of our imperfections.”

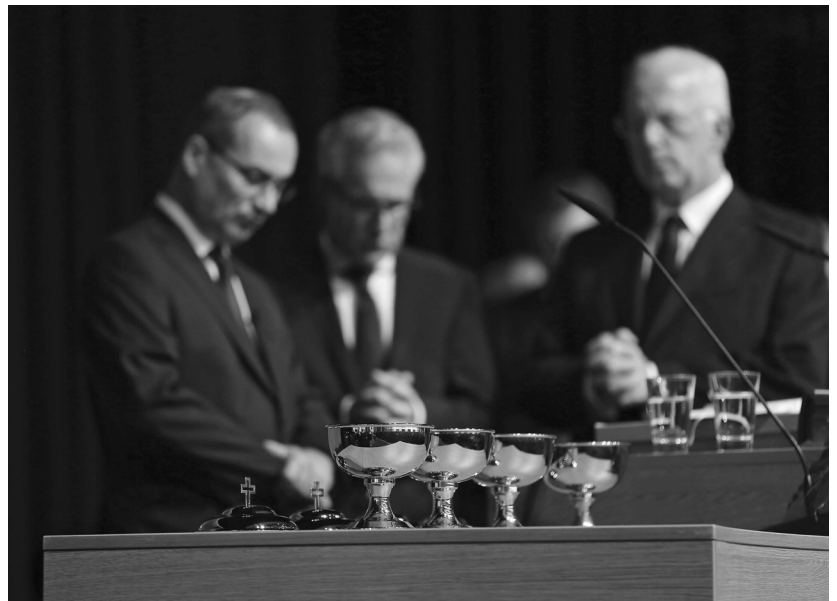
In line with his predecessors

Such confessions are not a spur-of-the-moment idea, but belong to the core commission of the ministry for the Chief Apostle. “The Apostle ministry is the ministry of reconciliation. This is what it says in Scripture,” he explained in an interview in October 2014. And what is most important, he continued, is that we admit our own faults. “We really mean that. It is not only a statement in the Catechism, but it is our deep inner wish to do justice to the will of God.”

With this stance, Chief Apostle Schneider is fully in line with his predecessors. “I extend a hand in reconciliation, also on behalf of the Church,” Chief Apostle Wilhelm Leber had said at the European Youth Day in the year 2009, addressing the Apostolische Gemeinschaft (Apostolic Community). “Mistakes were also made from our side, the side of the New Apostolic Church.”

Learning from mistakes

And Chief Apostle Richard Fehr wrote in an article in the German edition of the *Our Family* in 1996: “Wherever people work together mistakes will be made. It was not always possible to prevent mistakes being made in our Church in the past, and this cannot be ruled out now nor in the future. Important is,” he continued, “that we realize that we are all still imperfect and that we learn from our mistakes.”



Left: Also in Düsseldorf were the retired Chief Apostle Wilhelm Leber (right) and District Apostle Armin Studer (left)



© Smileus - Fotolia.com

"The stranger is your neighbour!" This was one of the core messages from Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider in the past year. This will also continue to occupy us this year—especially in times of terrorism and war, waves of immigration, and xenophobia.

The year 2015 ended as it began: with bloody attacks in Paris. On 7 January Islamic extremists killed 16 people in the offices of a satirical magazine and a supermarket. And eleven months later, on 13 November, terrorists murdered some 130 people at eight different locations in the French capital. New Apostolic Christians worldwide reacted with compassion and pensiveness.

There is violence everywhere

The Chief Apostle and the District Apostles interceded in prayer on behalf of all the victims and their loved ones, but also encouraged the members of the Church to see the bigger picture. "Things like this occur every week in one or the other place around the world—and they are terrible no matter where they happen," said Chief Apostle Schneider, referring to attacks in Niger, Mali, Kenya, Afghanistan, and Syria.

What this means for the people on the ground in concrete terms was shown on *nac.today*. For example, more than 4,500 members from the Baringo region in eastern Kenya were on the run from conditions akin to civil war. Divine services had to be cancelled in Niger after several dozen Christian churches went up in flames as a result of violent riots.

Do not give room to hatred

In addition to comfort, the divine services conducted by the Chief Apostle offered direction for dealing with hostile fellow human beings in the aftermath of the attacks. "Hatred has no place in the house of the Lord," he said in a divine service in Zwickau (Germany) in November. "I cannot assume that all Christians are bad because a few Christians have done something terrible. By the same token, I cannot hate all Muslims just because a few Muslims have committed terrible things."

Again and again, Chief Apostle Schneider put the focus on love for our neighbour. “Our neighbour can be the stranger who is completely different from us, or who has a completely different culture or belief from our own. But even if he has a completely different nature or opinion, he remains our neighbour,” he made clear in a divine service in Luxembourg.

Our neighbour: friend, stranger, enemy

Whether friend, stranger, or enemy—everyone is our neighbour. And how are we supposed to love them? In a divine service he conducted in Buenos Aires in November, the Chief Apostle gave some very practical instructions concerning this: give your friend what you yourself expect of him, share with the stranger what you yourself possess, and do not begrudge your enemy the salvation you wish for yourself.

This neighbourly love has been demonstrated by our brothers and sisters around the world in many different ways. For example, the young people of the Paris-North district prayed for both the victims and the perpetrators of the terror attacks. In South Africa, one Bishop took a stand against xenophobia by making house visits during a wave of violence. And in Europe numerous congregations have become involved in providing aid to the refugees who are pouring primarily into Germany from war-torn regions.

Doing good and sharing with others

People from Eastern Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East are fleeing to Europe by the hundreds of thousands. Their plight has moved the heart of many. Along with other Christians, various initiatives and organizations, New Apostolic members are helping alleviate the need of these refugees. These efforts range from fundraising campaigns to becoming involved and helping directly.

The European District Apostles have also provided support with practical advice and financial action. “But do not forget to do good and to share.” It was with this reference to the words recorded in Hebrews 13: 16 that the Chief Apostle appealed to the brothers and sisters in a divine service in Rottweil (Germany) in September. “Let us not do anything on the basis of calculating what we can get out of it,” he said, rejecting all notions of self-promotion or missionary efforts as motives. “What we do should simply be done out of pure love for our neighbour.”

La Grande Orientale: Flooding in Isangi



■ ENA RDSudest

Isangi is a town in the Democratic Republic of the Congo located about 130 kilometres north-west of Kisangani in the province of Orientale. Here, at the confluence of the Lomami and Congo Rivers, floods caused a great deal of property damage and personal hardship this past November and December.



Quite a number of families lost their houses and everything they possessed. Also New Apostolic families were affected. There was a great outpouring of help and relief aid. The members of the New Apostolic congregation in Kisangani, for example, sent clothing, sugar, soap, and other essential items to Isangi.



Huge distances and strong community in America

Optimally organized both as a team and in terms of leadership: that is how the New Apostolic Church presents itself in the Americas.

Community activities in Canada

What was billed as one of the top events on one side of the Pacific cannot fail to be mentioned on the other side of the ocean, namely the Move-a-thon, a fundraising competition between the District Churches of Canada and Australia. Members from a total of 160 congregations walked, ran, cycled, or paddled in order to raise funds for charity. In Canada the proceeds will go toward relief projects for the homeless.

The Canadian District Church also counted the National Pillar Conference in September—a summit of young adults who are especially active and thus play a significant role in their congregations and districts—as one of its most important events of the year. Another important event was a theological seminar in June—complete with national video transmission. And the month of October featured a very

special Thanksgiving concert: in the New Apostolic congregation of Kitchener Central, musicians from various Christian denominations came together with a single collective desire, namely to praise and glorify God.

Training workshops in the USA

A unique set of leadership training workshops was conducted across the USA in the latter half of last year. A revolving team comprised of employees from the New Apostolic Church USA and dedicated volunteers travelled to 13 different regional locations to make connections with local congregational leaders. In each location, a full Saturday of workshops was dedicated to sharing information and providing hands-on training in selected subjects that lead to improved congregational health. Part of the agenda was organized into three separate learning tracks with break-out sessions: music and worship; small group facilitation;



- 1 | Heartfelt thanks to District Apostle Norberto Passuni
- 2 | Young adults from across the country meet for the National Pillar Conference in Canada
- 3 | Theological seminar for ministers
- 4 | District Apostle Mark Woll with leading ministers from Canada

leadership—developing a Christ-centred congregational culture, planning the midweek experience, and shared leadership.

Huge distances in Brazil

A visit from the Chief Apostle is always the highlight of the year for any New Apostolic congregation. From an international perspective this would summarize nearly 60 events that are strongly similar in sequence from welcome event to festive concert, divine service, and farewell. And yet in some countries things are a little different on account of local conditions—like Brazil, for example, a country which Chief Apostle Schneider visited this past November. The country is 4,300 kilometres wide and 4,500 kilometres long. The great distances can also be felt in congregational life: the choir and orchestra for the Chief Apostle service in the congregation of Fortaleza was comprised of 100 members from outlying congregations. Each of them covered between 350 and 1,000 kilometres to be there—and not only for the divine service, but also for the practices ahead of the service.

Leadership change in Argentina

Chief Apostle Schneider placed a man of great faith into retirement in Argentina this past October, namely District Apostle Norberto Passuni, who had led the New Apostolic Church in the countries of Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay since 2008. District Apostle Passuni had served as a minister for 42 years, 19 of them as an Apostle. To succeed him, the Chief Apostle ordained the hitherto District Apostle Helper Enrique Minio (55) as the new District Apostle.

NACare, a new charity in Australia

The New Apostolic Church Australia has established its own charity. The name says it all: NACare. The intention of NACare Foundation, which is its official name, is to provide initial relief through the network of ministers and members in the affected area.

The New Apostolic Church runs a number of charities throughout the world. In Africa these are NAC Relief Organization (NACRO) und KUMEA; in Asia the NAC SEA Relief Fund; in Europe the Missionswerk of the New Apostolic Church Southern Germany, NAK-karitativ Germany, NAK-Diakonia Austria, NAK-Diakonia Switzerland, NAK-Humanitas Switzerland; in North America NAC USA Charitable Ministry and NAC Canada Foreign Extension; and now NACare in Australia.

Cape Town has a District Apostle Helper



Ashley Vlothman

On Sunday, 13 December, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider celebrated a divine service in our Tafelsig church in Cape Town (South Africa), where a congregation of some 3,000 members had gathered. Many tens of thousands more in the Cape district watched the broadcast over the NACTV network in their congregations.

The Chief Apostle appointed Apostle John Leslie Kriel as a District Apostle Helper. He placed Apostle Brian E. de Vries into retirement and ordained Peter Lambert and Robert Ernest Worship as Apostles.

Nigeria, between religious freedom and terrorism

Every day the Chief Apostle prays for persecuted Christians. And one of the countries he has in mind is Nigeria. This coming weekend he will celebrate a divine service in Nigeria, a country being ravaged by Boko Haram, a militant Islamist group.



Left: District Apostle Michael Ehrich (centre) and Apostle Volker Kühnle (right) are welcomed by members in Nigeria

“They are real survivors,” Apostle Volker Kühnle says about the people of Nigeria. He is familiar with the country and its people from 15 years of pastoral care work. He is responsible for the approximately 290,000 New Apostolic Christians there. “The Nigerians are mostly a fun-loving people despite all the problems they have gone through,” he says, thinking about all the ordeals the country has been through from the Biafra war, to military rule, and now Islamist terrorism.

A knack for business

Nigeria with its 180 million people is Africa’s most populous country by far. The country has vast oilfields, but the majority of the people are desperately poor. A knack for business helps in the battle to survive. “They are the most ingenious people I know,” the Apostle says cautiously, because he is also aware of some of the Nigerian scams.

Numerous religious denominations

Nigerians are a believing people. The population is equally divided between Islam and Christianity, and then there are traditional religions. “Everybody believes in something.” There are hundreds if not thousands of Christian denominations alone. Many are organized into individual churches and pay their leaders, pastors, or parish priests. “That does not make it easy to win ministers for our Church and hold on to them considering they are not paid.”

Work by two district churches

When he began to work in Nigeria, Volker Kühnle sometimes came upon two New Apostolic congregations in one place. This was even the case in small villages. This curious situation resulted from the way missionary work was done at the time. Two districts had actually started to establish



A street market in Nigeria, part of the informal economy where most Nigerians make their living

the New Apostolic Church in Nigeria at the time: a district from Germany (Hesse) and Canada. In the year 2001 the New Apostolic congregations in Nigeria were placed under the care of the New Apostolic Church Southern Germany. Apostle Kühnle was responsible for the pastoral care work in Nigeria until the end of 2015. The local Apostle Geoffrey Nwogu has now been entrusted with this task.

Persecution of Christians

Locals usually have easy access to places and people, but when it comes to the north of the country it becomes extremely dangerous even for them—also for Apostle Nwogu. Suicide attacks, mass abductions, and other atrocities are the order of the day. Responsible for these attacks is Boko Haram, a militant Islamist group who is threatening Christians, among others.

“This also affects us,” Apostle Kühnle reports. Buildings have to be secured with barricades against car bomb attacks. Ministers are abducted right out of our churches and killed. People are afraid. Alone in the city of Maiduguri we have lost nine of eleven congregations. “And we are a small denomination and are not even in the focus all that much,” he says, adding that the situation is far worse for Catholic churches.

The Apostle does not want to go into detail. “We preach forgiveness and reconciliation. I don’t want to stir up emotions. It would make things even worse for our brothers and sisters. The Christian commandment that requires that we forgive our enemies gets an entirely different meaning here.”

A new medical centre in Zambia



NAC Zambia

The Vice President of Zambia, Inonge Wina, thanked the New Apostolic Church Zambia for partnering with the government in the quest to deliver quality health care to the people. Mrs Wina met with District Apostle Charles Ndandula and other representatives from the government and the church on 17 December 2015 to inaugurate a health centre, the Graceland Chisanga Mission, in Mkushi. This project was realized by the Church with support from the government and will provide public service.

Disaster relief in Nepal



NAC Canada

In April and May of 2015 the world looked on in horror as disaster unfolded in Nepal: an earthquake with a magnitude of 7.8, as well as similarly serious aftershocks, devastated vast regions of the country. Some eight million people were affected; many lost their homes and livelihoods.

New Apostolic relief agencies lined up together with other international aid organizations to lend a hand: NAK-karitativ and the Missionswerk from Germany, NAK-Humanitas from Switzerland, as well as the relief agencies of Canada and the USA were ready to help with money for both immediate emergency measures and longer-term development projects.

I Ambassador for Christ



Our Chief Apostle, District Apostle and Apostle Volker Kühnle in the service in Uyo, Nigeria

What are the tasks of the Apostles in the church of Christ?

Jesus Christ rules His church. To this end He makes use of the Apostles. The Apostle ministry is the original ministry of the church. It is the only ministry given by Jesus Himself. The most important tasks of the Apostles include the proclamation of the gospel throughout the world, the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins, the dispensation of the sacraments for the living and the dead, and the ordination of ministers. So it is that the bridal congregation is gathered and prepared for the return of Christ through the activity of the Apostles.

Catechism of New Apostolic Church in Question and Answers: Question 402

The motivating force for ministers

The motivating force for ministers

What do church districts and cars have in common? Both need an engine. This is something Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider illustrated on his trip to Africa where he ordained new Apostles. "No matter how beautiful a car may be, if the engine does not work, it is not good." This is what the Chief Apostle said in Yamoussoukro in Côte d'Ivoire on 12 January 2016 when he ordained seven men as Apostles. "You are the engine, the force that motivates the ministers," he said at the ordination.

To love, comfort, and encourage

To the seven Bishops, District Elders, and District Evangelists who had been designated to receive the Apostle ministry, the Chief Apostle said, "The Apostle has to be a motivating force for the ministers. And how do you do that? Love, comfort, and encourage the ministers and let them feel the nearness of Jesus like this."

"The Lord wants to appoint you as ambassadors of Christ," the Chief Apostle continued. When it comes to ambassadors, the person per se is unimportant, "Important is what he represents." And this applies all the more in our life of faith: "Children of God want to hear the voice of the Lord through you."

Already two days before, the Chief Apostle had ordained four new Apostles in Nigeria, in the city of Uyo. "You have been called by



Ordination of four new Apostles in Uyo, Nigeria

God and not by man," he said. And the divine promise applies: "I will be with you whenever you do My will."

Reasons for the ordinations

The death of Apostle Lekie Baovi in March 2013 and the retirement of Apostle Augustine Namnse (both Nigeria) in April 2014 had left a gap. Adding to this were the retirements of Apostles Brandy Felix Emanerame of Nigeria and Isaac Newton Amoah of Côte d'Ivoire, which took place in January while the Chief Apostle was there. Both men had turned 65.

The following Apostles were ordained

- § for Nigeria: Chima Okpara Ibekwe, Paul Ufuoma Ogboru, Samuel Peter Usoro, and Godday Otunuya Odili;
- § for Côte d'Ivoire: Seudie Firmin Zran;
- § for Guinea: Saa Marc Leno;
- § for Ghana: Timothy Akubia, Robert Asampong, Edward Nzimah Hayford, Moses Otchere Ayarkwa, and Paul Kyereme Yaw.

The ordination of additional Apostles had also become necessary because of organizational changes in Nigeria, Ghana, and Guinea.

www.nac.today

New NAC Hymnal for West Africa

In 2015 a new Hymnal was introduced in the 11 countries of West and Central Africa, where the NAC South-Germany cares for. The old international NAC Hymnal, which was no more printed since 2004, and also the old Hymnal from Canada, were replaced.

So the new Hymnal contents were in 3 parts: a section 1 with international songs, section 2 with songs from the English Hymnal which is published in South Africa.

In section 3, we find nice "local songs" in different tribal languages, which are very popular. Everyone can buy the Hymnal at a reduced price.



Nigeria: Victory with Christ

On Sunday, 10th January, our Chief Apostle conducted the festive Divine Service in our Church in Four Towns-Uyo.

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." Such was the Bible text from 1 John 4: 1, 4, which formed the basis of the sermon.

"The Spirit from below does whatever he can to separate the believer from God," was the basic message of the divine service. "And this spirit can only be conquered if God is great in one's own heart." Concerning this, the Chief Apostle cited five examples.

Lie number one: "You do not need God. You can manage well without Him." In order to resist this, we must behave like children. A child knows that he/she needs his/her parents, because there are many things the child cannot do on his/her own. There are so many things that we cannot understand, know, or do without God. "The fact is: we need God and do not want to do anything without Him."

Lie number two: "If you do not succeed in life, if you are sick, if you have no money, then your faith is simply not great enough." This spirit seeks to bind our faith to earthly life. "Seek first the kingdom of God," said the Chief Apostle in reference to Jesus' words in Matthew 6:33. "This is what lives in us, and it is for this reason that we do not pursue any earthly purposes with our faith."



Lie number three: "Jesus isn't telling the truth His gospel will not work in my situation." The adversary appears very powerful today and often scoffs at believers. Yet in the awareness that His God was guiding him in the battle, David triumphed over Goliath in his time. "Jesus, His love, and His Spirit tell us, 'Trust in Jesus Christ. No one is as perfect and strong as He is. In the end He will gain the victory!'"

Lie number four: "My master is delaying his coming. He is slack concerning His promises." Mary had been given the promise that the kingdom of her Son would have no end. And as He ended His life on the cross, everything seemed wrong. "But she remained with Jesus because she loved Him. We too should remain resolute with Him because we love Him. Our love for Jesus Christ is greater than any other thing."

Lie number five: "These are not true Apostles! They have no power." – "The Apostle ministry of the present day does not prove itself by working miracles," said the Chief Apostle, and then went on to apply this to some issues of a regional character. "Our answer to this is, 'I am aware that these men are not perfect, but they believe in their commission. I believe that they can prepare me for the return of Christ.'"

"So those are the spirits against which we must battle today. But in our hearts, there is one who is greater than he who is in the world. It is for this reason that we are able to resist all of these influences. May this year be a year of victory over all of these things!" said the Chief Apostle in conclusion.

Nigeria: Retirement and ordinations

Four new Apostles for Nigeria

In accordance with all Apostles from Nigeria, the District Apostle used this opportunity to reorganize the Apostle areas in the country. In order to serve the congregations in future even better, it was reasonable to equalize the areas. In consequence, four new Apostles have been ordained by our Chief Apostle:



Apostle Chima
Opara Ibekwe (55)
Aba,
Mid-East area



Apostle Paul
Ogboru (57),
Port Harcourt,
South-South area



Apostle Samuel
Peter Usoro (52),
Ikot Ekpene,
South-East area



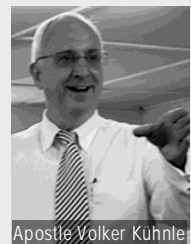
Apostle Godday
Utunya Odili (48),
Benin City,
South area

The District Apostle informed the congregations, that the mission of **Apostle Volker Kühnle**, who served as lead Apostle in Nigeria for 17 years now, has ended. "He also thanked the Apostle for his work, his love and all his engagement also in Nigeria – may

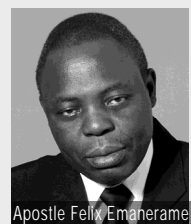
God Almighty bless him and his beloved ones!". Responsibility for Nigeria has now been entrusted to Apostle Geoffrey Nwogu.

Apostle Felix Emanerame in retirement

The Divine Service by the Chief Apostle on 10 January 2016 in Uyo had a special accent by the fact that Apostle Felix Emanerame from Port Harcourt stepped into retirement due to having reached the time limit of active service. "The Apostle served for 37 years, with 17 years as an Apostle of the Lord. He was joyful and humble and had a high knowledge and understanding about God's plan of salvation. He was an obedient follower and a wonderful blessing bearer," our District Apostle said. "Again we want to thank him for all he has done in great love, and we wish him together with his dear wife and the entire family the full blessing of God in the years ahead!"



Apostle Volker Kühnle



Apostle Felix Emanerame

Ivory Coast: Holy Communion essential for our salvation

On the 12th of January 2016, our Chief Apostle conducted a divine service in Yamoussoukro (Ivory Coast).

The Bible Text was: "Then Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.'" (John 6: 53-54)

To help explain that the receiving of Holy Communion was essential for eternal life, the Lord refers to manna. It is by this bread from heaven (cf. Ex 16: 4) that the people of Israel could survive in the desert, walk towards the Promised Land and defeat their enemies. The manna could not be stored; it had to be collected each time God sent it. Partaking in Holy Communion has no dramatic effect. The effectiveness of this sacrament is only revealed over time. The worthy and regular receiving of Holy Communion gives us the strength to move forward towards our goal and win victories over evil. On the contrary, if we deprive ourselves of Holy Communion we will no longer make any spiritual progress and will endanger the divine life placed within us.

"How can we worthily receive Holy Communion?" The Chief Apostle answered by saying: "First, by receiving the absolution with a believing and repentant heart, followed by making the celebration of Holy Communion a declaration of our faith:

n in Jesus' sacrifice – here we see the definitive proof of God's love.

Even faced with misfortune, we proclaim that God loves us;

n in Jesus' resurrection – we believe in Jesus' victory over evil and we trust Him;

n in His presence – we believe that Jesus is present in His work and seek fellowship with Him through the word and Holy Communion;



Our Chief Apostle in the divine service of Yamoussoukro

n on His return – we clearly state that our priority is to prepare ourselves for it;

n in His Apostles – we faithfully follow them, knowing that it was to them whom the Lord entrusted the commission to celebrate Holy Communion and to prepare us for His return."

By celebrating Holy Communion, we thank God for Jesus' sacrifice, the salvation He offers us and the future He has reserves for us. By sharing the bread from heaven with our brothers and sisters, we also proclaim our determination to be one with Jesus and each other (cf. 1 Cor 10: 17).

It is true that we can proclaim our faith, praise God and express our willingness to be united some other way – for example, by prayers and songs of praise. But that would deprive us of the spiritual food contained in the sacrament. In fact, it is only by worthily receiving Holy Communion dispensed by the Apostles that we can strengthen our fellowship with Jesus Christ and thus prepare ourselves for His return.

Ivory Coast: Retirement and ordination

In the Divine Service on 12 January 2016 in Yamoussoukro (capital of Ivory Coast) our Chief Apostle placed Apostle Isaac Newton Amoah into retirement.

Apostle Amoah, born on 15 August 1950, was ordained by Chief Apostle Hans Urwyler in 1986. He served for more than 38 years as a church minister, among them for 30 years as an apostle.

"Throughout the years, Apostle Amoah fulfilled his tasks with abundant blessing, intensive commitment and great humility" is how our District

Apostle paid tribute to the ministration of the longest serving Apostle.

As his successor, the previous District Evangelist Seudie Firmin Zran (born 22/08/1975) was ordained into the Apostle ministry in this divine service.

On the occasion of the retirement of Apostle Amoah and ordination of Apostle Zran, the districts in the Ivory Coast were restructured.



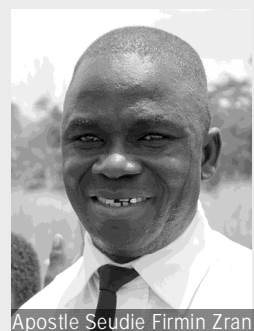
Our District Apostle with Apostle Amoah

Guinea: New Apostle

In the same service, the Chief Apostle additionally ordained the previous District Elder Saa Marc Leno from Conakry (born 24.07.1980) as Apostle for Guinea. The districts have also been restructured in Guinea.



Apostle Saa Marco Leno



Apostle Seudie Firmin Zran

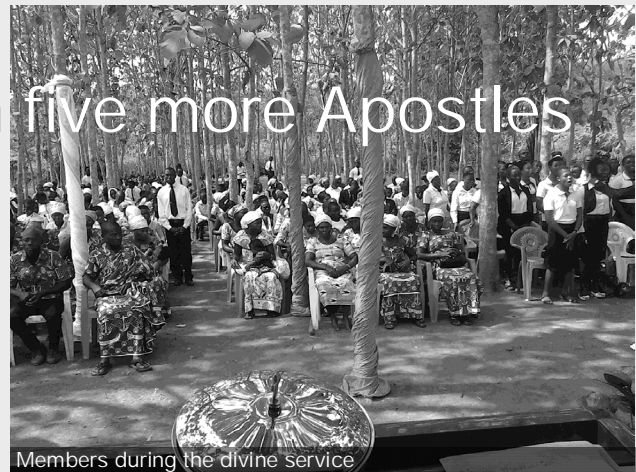
Ghana:

Ghana is blessed with five more Apostles

On the 12th of January 2016, our Chief Apostle conducted a festive divine service in Yamoussoukro (Cote d'Ivoire). Our District Apostle has invited all the active Apostles of Ghana to participate in this festive divine service. During the divine service five new Apostles were ordained for Ghana.

Our District Apostle wrote to the congregations as follows, "the ordinations were aimed at equalizing all the Apostle areas as far as possible in terms of sizes, membership and number of congregations to ensure that all congregations are better served in the future"

The newly ordained Apostles were assigned the following working areas:



Members during the divine service



Apostle Robert Asampong, Koforidua



Apostle Hayford Nzimah, Wiawso



Apostle Moses Otchere-Ayarkwa, Sunvani



Apostle Timothy Yaw Akubia, Volta North



Apostle Paul Yaw Kyereme, Techiman

This brings to sixteen the number of active Apostles in Ghana. Our District Apostle pleaded with brothers and sisters to give their full support to the decision taken and to receive their bearers of blessing in order to prepare the congregations for the return of Christ.



Apostle Oppong thanking Apostle Darko

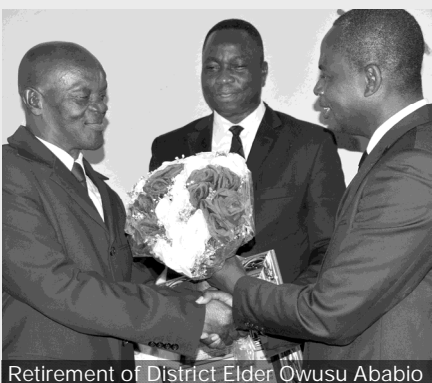
On their return from Cote d'Ivoire two of the newly ordained Apostles Hayford Nzimah and Otchere Ayarkwa were introduced to the congregations in two separate divine services at Debiso and Breman Districts by Apostle Oppong-Brenya on the 16th and 17th January 2016 respectively. At Elluokrom in the Breman District the divine service was held in the open space under shaded trees to accommodate the large number of members whom our small church could not contain.

Apostle Benjamin Darko who previously worked with the two former Bishops in this vast area bid the congregation farewell to take over the newly created Dunkwa Apostle Area. OP

Ghana: 2015 retrospective

Events of the past year, 2015 is still fresh in our minds. Deep reflection of the past year fills our hearts with joy and great confidence on our journey home.

Among such special events was the retirement of District Elder Owusu Ababio who served as a minister for over twenty five years until the later part of January 2015



Retirement of District Elder Owusu Ababio

The visit of the District Apostle in July 2015 when he conducted divine service for the departed at Koforidua which was televised live on the National TV

The crossing of the Volta Lake by Apostle Oppong-

Brenya to the Afram Plains accompanied by Apostles Boakye and Dzatta also together with their Bishops.

The combined youth divine service at Cape Coast by three Apostle Areas namely Cape Coast, Koforidua, and Takoradi are all worth mentioning. OP



Crossing the Volta Lake on a ferry

MORE NEWS FROM NAC GHANA:

www.nac-ghana.org



South Germany:

Divine Service with the Chief Apostle

The Chief Apostle conducted a divine service in Ulm on February 7th, 2016, which was transmitted to the European countries belonging to the working area of our District Apostle.

Bible text: And He said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks."
But he said, "I will not let You go unless You
bless me!" (Genesis 32: 26)

Core thoughts: God promised Jacob that He would bring him back to his father and make him a source of blessing (Genesis 28: 14-15). Jacob believed the promise and followed the godly instructions (Genesis 31: 3). On the journey to his homeland, Jacob battled for God's blessing. He didn't want even more earthly wealth, his desire was to return to his father and see the fulfilment of the godly promise.

We also want to be blessed! God has promised to lead us into His kingdom and allow us to become the royal priesthood, a source of blessing for all nations in the thousand-year kingdom of peace. We believe in this promise and follow the godly teaching.

On the pilgrimage toward our heavenly home we are also confronted with afflictions, misfortune and disappointments, and we experience grief. We then want to fight resolutely so that we can remain faithful to God and receive His blessing! God always defends those who battle in this manner.

Thanks to the Holy Spirit we are able to perceive God's close presence even in grief. Agreed, we may not necessarily survive a trial unscathed. Sometimes our life has changed completely as a result. But then we can experience God's blessings just like Jacob did: God blesses us in that He

- permits us to experience His nearness,
- grants us His grace,
- cares for us,
- grants us access to His glory, and
- allows us to be a blessing.

