

community

The New Apostolic Church around the world

03/2017/EN

The celebration of Holy Communion

100-Year Anniversary of the Combo-wafer

Divine service in N'Djamena:
We will remain true to our
promise

Editorial:
Praising and giving thanks

Doctrine:
Humbleness

New Apostolic Church
International



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Praising and giving thanks

Dear brethren in faith,

Our motto for the year, namely “Glory be to God, our Father”, contains three tasks which we have resolved to perform in the year 2017. Once we have become aware of the magnitude of God and His creation—which was the first of these tasks—we will want to praise God and give thanks to Him. Given the knowledge that we have gained in so doing, the wrong response would be to remain motionless, inactive, and mute.

Praising God and giving thanks—how do we succeed at this in concrete terms in our daily life?

We give thanks to God through our willingness to sacrifice. This is not just a matter of money. It is all about the gratitude we feel toward God. We are grateful to God and give Him back a portion of that which we have received from Him in the first place.

We also give thanks to God through our willingness to reconcile. Since we are thankful to God for His grace and forgiveness, we are also prepared to forgive our neighbour.

We can also give thanks to God by serving Him. We do not serve God because we wish to earn something or get something from Him. We serve Him because we have already



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received everything from Him, because He has promised to make us His heirs!

Now that we have recognised the magnitude of God and His creation, let us glorify God and give thanks to Him for His grace and loving care. We can thank Him through our willingness to sacrifice, our preparedness to reconcile, and by serving Him and our neighbour.

Warm regards,

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

Jean-Luc Schneider

| We will remain true to our promise

Some 1,000 believers gathered in N'Djamena, Chad on 22 January 2017 to enjoy a divine service with Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider.



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Daniel 3: 17-18

"If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."

My very dear brothers and sisters in Christ, dear guests, I am happy to be able to share this divine service with you and to receive the blessing of our God together with you.

This morning we have heard a Bible passage which tells us the story of Daniel and his companions. Oh, I am sure that all of you here in N'Djamena know this story.

Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, had invaded Israel and Judah, and had taken prisoners, whom he led away to Babylon. And among them were Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He made them a deal and said, "Listen, I would like to propose something to you. You can study in my court for three years." And in the world of that time, Babylon was truly the most advanced civilisation. And the king told them, "You can study here for three years, and afterward you can occupy important posts within my kingdom"

This was an unheard-of opportunity for these poor young men who had been led away into captivity, but the condition was, "Come, but you will eat the food of the king, and drink the drink of the king." The young men were very interested in this proposal, however, they said, "But we can-

not eat the food of the king. It is against our faith.” And they made a compromise and said, “Let us eat our own food and we will follow your teaching. And you will see: God will grant us success.” And that was what they did. They remained faithful to God. They continued to obey the law, and they studied (cf. Daniel 1). And not only were they able to occupy great positions in the kingdom, but they even became a source of blessing for the king and the whole country. That was how well they served the country.

Later on, king Nebuchadnezzar had a statue built and decided, “Now no one will worship any other god. Everyone will now worship this statue and those who do not do so will be killed!” And here our three young men realised, “Well, there can be no question of this! This time there is no possible compromise. Either we deny our God and live, or we remain faithful to God and die. But there is no compromise possible. It is one or the other.”

Our first priority is the kingdom of God.

And they remained faithful to God and said to the king, “If our God so desires, He can deliver us. Our God can indeed save us from death, but whatever happens, we will not deny our God.” You know the story. The king had them thrown into the furnace, and when the king looked inside the furnace, he noticed that there were no longer three men, but now four. The angel of the Lord was with them in the furnace in order to protect them. In a flash he had them taken out of the furnace. They then became even more important in the kingdom and truly became a great source of blessing for everyone (cf. Daniel 3).

Dear brothers, dear sisters, this ancient story teaches us a great deal about our life of faith. These young men were part of the Chosen People, the people of God. We are the elect of God. We are those whom God has chosen in order to be His children. When we were baptised with water, when we became Christians, we promised to resist sin and follow Jesus. When we were sealed by an Apostle, when we received the gift of the Holy Spirit, we committed ourselves to prepare for the return of the Lord. These are the two promises, the two commitments, we have made. It is our resolve to resist sin and follow Jesus, and it is our desire to allow the Apostles to prepare us for the return of Jesus.

However, we still have our lives on this earth. We must go to work, we must earn our daily bread in order to have enough to eat, to clothe ourselves, to have accommodations. We must occupy ourselves with our children and their futures. And just because we are Christians, just because we are children of God, this does not mean we do not desire to

succeed in our lives here on earth. We are not condemned to remain poor because we were born New Apostolic! It is not forbidden for us to succeed in life because we are children of God. It is completely normal for us to have the desire to succeed in our lives. It is completely normal for us to desire happiness in this life. It is completely normal for us to hope for a certain degree of social success in life.

The example of these young people simply shows us how we must act. Our first priority is the kingdom of God. We have promised to keep the commandments. We have promised to prepare ourselves for the day of the Lord. If we try to succeed in life, if we try to earn more money, to have some success, to have happiness, we must always do so while at the same time keeping the commandments of

God and giving priority to our souls. That is our commitment. Yes, we want to succeed in our lives on earth, but in so doing we keep the commandments of God and give priority to our soul. And the example of these

young people shows us that it is perfectly possible to do so. But we must act like these young men.

We must obey the commandments and remain faithful, and on the other hand, we must also work. We cannot tell the dear God, “Alright, listen: I will do my part and keep the commandments, I will try not to commit sins. I will go to church and I will look after the needs of my soul. But now give me the money!”

We must do both! We must keep the promises we have made to the dear God, but we must also work just like everyone else, and if we do both—we work, we invest for ourselves and for our children, but all while keeping the commandments of God and giving priority to our souls—then God can grant us His blessing.

And how does this blessing manifest itself? At times, God tells us how to succeed in life, and so we succeed in life: we have money, we have our health, and we have a good profession. But in that case, the blessing is not only manifest in that we have this success, but also in that we still have Jesus Christ! We have kept Jesus! We have peace in our hearts, we have salvation. What a blessing!

And at other times, the blessing manifests itself differently. Perhaps we do not receive everything we wanted to receive. Perhaps we do not succeed in all that we have undertaken, despite the fact that we have obeyed God, we have kept the commandments, and so on. But then we realise: there is

blessing from God nevertheless! Even though none of these wishes came true, we still have peace in our hearts. We do not feel the need to accuse our neighbour. We are not bitter. We are not aggressive. Even though not all of our wishes may have come true, we have kept peace in our hearts and are happy in Jesus Christ!

That is the blessing which God grants those who obey Him and do His work. Depending on His will, He at times grants us success and, beyond that, we still have peace in our hearts. On the other hand, even when we have not sold our soul to the devil, God at times tells us, “No, I will not grant you success, but I will give you My blessing nevertheless.” And even though we may not have received everything we wanted, we have peace in our hearts and are happy in Jesus Christ. And we are a blessing for others.

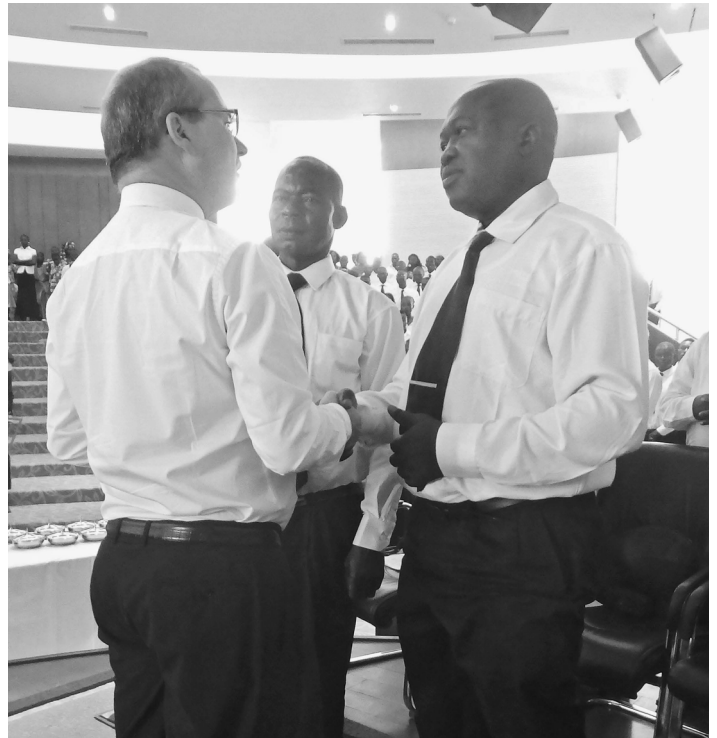
Brothers, sisters, those who keep the commandments will never hurt their neighbour.

Unfortunately, many people today want to succeed at any cost. They want to become rich. They want to become famous. They want to become happy, and in order to achieve this goal, they are prepared to crush anyone who gets in their way. Those who wish to succeed while keeping the law of Christ and the law of God are a blessing for others because they will never achieve their own happiness at the expense of others. They will succeed and yet not harm anyone. They are a blessing because they are true witnesses of Christ. They demonstrate that it is indeed possible to do that which Jesus asks of us. It is possible. This is something we can learn from the first part of the story.

Now we come to the second part of the story with the statue and the furnace. We too at times find ourselves in situations where we cannot make compromises. We have to choose. Either we are with God or we are against God. We may be in a situation in which it is necessary to renounce God, to deny God, in order to obtain something, and in such a case, no compromise is possible. And at such times we must make the right choice.

In certain situations we are confronted with adversaries—something the New Testament calls “enemies of the cross of Christ” (cf. Philippians 3: 18)—and we are confronted by people, no matter who they are, who cause us to suffer and who treat us badly because we are Christians, because we are New Apostolic children of God.

In a number of countries in this world, Christians are persecuted because of their faith, and some are even confronted with the choice: “Either you deny Jesus Christ or you



Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider ordains Ndangalngar Nao (right) and Jean Blague Koilyoumtan (centre) as Apostles

will be killed.” And many Christians have the courage to say, “I would rather die than deny Jesus.” This was not only the case in the time of the early Christian church. Unfortunately this still happens in the world today, and we pray for these Christians and ask God to come to their aid. Here in N’Djamena, we are not in this situation, but there are nevertheless people who cause us to suffer because we want to respect the rules of God. There are people who make fun of us because we are New Apostolic Christians. There are people who simply treat us badly on account of our faith.

Brothers and sisters, let us likewise resist. I know, it is often easier to say, “Fine, but if that is the case I will go to another church. I will change religions in order to be left in peace.” No! Let us remain faithful to Jesus Christ. Let us remain faithful to our baptismal vow, faithful to our vow of holy sealing. We would rather suffer a little than deny our faith.

Dear brothers and sisters, those who do this will make the same experience as Stephen. He too suffered because he remained faithful to Jesus Christ, but in his suffering he saw Jesus Christ in heaven watching him. The Lord was right there with him (cf. Acts 7: 54-55). Those who suffer for the sake of Jesus Christ will always experience that Jesus is with



them and that He will come to their aid and comfort them. These young men told the king, "You can do whatever you like, but our God is stronger. He can deliver us from death." And as for us, we tell the devil, "Oh, you can make us suffer today, but Jesus is stronger than you are. At the end of the story, He is the one who will win. He will deliver us from evil and give us eternal life, and because we have this promise, we refuse to deny Jesus Christ and we refuse to deny our faith. We would rather suffer a little today for the sake of Jesus Christ in order to remain with him for all eternity tomorrow."

Another situation: at times we must give up some of our wishes, some of our desires, because they are not compatible with our faith. Perhaps we aspire to a certain degree of wealth or a certain social position. We would dearly love to occupy one or the other position in life, fulfil this or that function, possess this or the other thing, but then we realise that in order to fulfil this wish we will have to disobey God. In order to obtain that which we want, we will have to lie. In order to get what we want, we will have to steal. In order to be part of one or the other circle, we will have to engage in some sort of corruption. And there we have to say to ourselves, "Ah, no!" We must make a choice.

"I prefer to remain faithful to God and obey Him rather than receive and obtain that which I would like to have."

Dear brothers, dear sisters, there are certain situations where there is no room for compromise. If we were required to deny God or go against the Ten Commandments in order to obtain something, to secure a certain position, or to become part of a particular circle, then we would simply have to say, "No! I do not want to deny my God! I would rather renounce my ambitions and give up my wishes than betray God! We prefer Jesus Christ to all the riches of this world and all the pleasures of this earth!" In such cases we must remain firm.

It is not only a question of keeping the commandments of God. We have also made a promise, we have also made a commitment, to prepare ourselves for the return of the Lord. And for this we need the divine services, we need the word of God, we need Holy Communion, and we need to follow the Apostles. And here too we are at times confronted with choices in life, but we know very well, "If I follow this path now, I will no longer be able to attend the divine services."



Allow me to give you a more concrete example: “If I marry this man, I will be obliged to adopt his religion. I will never again be able to go to my Church. I will be obliged to go to his church—and all of a sudden, I will no longer be able to prepare myself for the return of the Lord. I will no longer have the Apostles, I will no longer have Holy Communion.”

My dear fathers, what choice will you make for your daughters? This is just one example.

Do you remember when you brought your little girl to the altar to be sealed? You made a promise to the Lord: “I will make sure that she will be able to take part in the day of the Lord!” But you know very well that if she now marries this man, she will be obliged to follow him into his church. What choice will you make? This is just an example—after all, here we are in the Maison de la Femme [National Training Centre for Women in N’Djamena, Chad], so this is quite appropriate.

My dear brothers, my dear sisters, at times we need concrete examples in order to really understand what we mean to say. I take this very, very seriously. When we are con-

fronted with such a choice, let us make the right choice! We keep the commitment we made at our baptism and at our sealing, and we would rather renounce certain things than deny Jesus Christ.

One day the Lord told a man, “Come, follow Me.” And this man replied, “Yes, yes. I will come, but first I must go and bury my father.” And Jesus said, “Let the dead bury their

own dead. Follow Me right now” (cf. Matthew 8: 19-22). For a Jew it was inconceivable not to bury one’s father after he had died, and anyone who failed to follow this rule would really make an outcast of him-

self from society in so doing. But with this example, Jesus simply wanted to show that following Him is more important than the rules of society.

Dear brothers and sisters, we are all part of a certain society, of a certain culture, of a certain tribe, of a certain tradition, and that is all very well. But if the traditions of our family, of our culture, of our society necessarily prevent us from following Jesus Christ, then we are obliged to say, “Stop! Here we can go no further!” And even if everyone around

*The Lord asks us to
forgive our neighbour.*

us puts pressure on us and says, “But that is how everyone does it! That’s what we do in our tradition!” we say, “We respect that, but you must also understand us: the call of Jesus is more important than these traditions.”

And I will mention a third matter where there can be no possible compromise in following Jesus. We must renounce the old Adam. We must renounce the old Adam, the old creation. Those who are baptised with water and the Spirit must cause the old Adam to die in order to become a new man in Christ. And this is something that Jesus showed us. Apostle Paul portrayed it well. In order for one creation to grow in Jesus, the other must diminish.

We renounce everything in our character and in our personality that does not please God. We all have our own character. We all have our own personality. We all have our own opinion, our own ideas, but there are certain ideas and opinions with which Jesus is not in agreement. I can have an opinion on the subject of my neighbour and I can say, “Yes, but I know he is mean. I know he is like that. I have experienced it myself!” And Jesus tells us, “Yes, but as for Me, I see him in a totally different way. As for Me, I love him and I want him to be saved just like you!” But when does the fight begin? Who is right? Is it Jesus who is right, or am I the one who is right? I can explain, “Yes, I know that this person is a bad fellow,” but then I will be in disagreement with Jesus Christ, and thus it will be necessary to make a choice. Either you keep your own opinion and are not in agreement with Jesus, or you must abandon your own opinion and be at peace with Jesus Christ. Which will you choose?

The Lord asks us to forgive our neighbour. So then some will say, “Yes, but if I forgive you now it is just a bit too easy for you. If I do that, I will no longer have my pride, I will lose face. If I forgive, I will look weak! I will humiliate myself!” Perhaps even others will say, “My brother, everyone will treat you like a weakling, but you have let it happen. You are letting him do as he pleases! Why are you forgiving him?” But we know that because we have need of grace for our own sins, we must ourselves forgive. For us, the peace and grace of Jesus Christ are more important than our pride and our desire for vengeance. And so it is that we renounce our pride and renounce that which we consider to be justice, and we follow the path of Christ by forgiving others.

We also renounce anything that could be harmful to our unity. Some say, “Yes, but I know what I am doing. It’s alright. I am the one who is right,” and that may very well be true: perhaps they are indeed right. The only problem

is that, by their behaviour, they are destroying the unity of God’s children. So what do you want? Do you want to be right or do you want to preserve unity? For those who wish to follow Jesus Christ and prepare themselves for His return, the unity of the people of God is more important than being right. And for the sake of Jesus Christ, they will accept the idea of being wrong—all to preserve the unity of Christ.

So, my dear brothers and dear sisters: that is what this story has to teach us. We have been elected by God. We have promised to be faithful to Him. We have promised to keep the commandments and to prepare ourselves for the return of the Lord. This does not prevent us from succeeding in our lives. We must work. Those who obey and work are blessed by God. God will give them success and also give them peace. And even when there is no success, they will have peace and joy in their hearts—peace in Jesus Christ. They will be a blessing to their surroundings because they will not harm anyone else in seeking their own success.

But there are certain cases where we are obliged to make a choice. There are no possible compromises. And in such cases we would prefer to suffer for and with Christ, rather than deny Him. We renounce all that which could prevent us from following Jesus and attaining our goal, and we allow the old Adam within us to die in order to become a new creation in Jesus. And the dear God guarantees us His blessing if we act in this manner. The young men in our Bible text were saved from death and even received more exalted positions in the end than they had before. Jesus will give us salvation. He will allow us to resurrect and reign with Him as kings and priests in His kingdom. For this reason, let us not hesitate: we are on the side of Jesus Christ! Amen.

CORE THOUGHTS

God blesses the work of those who obey Him by giving them His peace. He grants salvation to those who renounce sin and follow the Lord without compromise.

Following in the footsteps of the Son



Michael Voigt



How do you reach a goal? Certainly, the best way is to follow in the footsteps of a successful forerunner. Here is how the example set by the Son of God leads man to the heavenly Father—a service held by Chief Apostle Schneider in Hannover on 11 December 2016 in Hannover (Germany).

These verses are a reference to the incarnation of the Son of God: “Jesus Christ was true God and true Man,” the Chief Apostle explained.

True God ...

“He was the image of the invisible God. God came to earth in the Son of God, and through Him and in Him God became visible. One could recognise God and see how He really was and is.”

- God is the truth: “The Son of God was here. God had promised this and now it had been fulfilled.”
- God is love—not a theoretical kind of love, but a dynamic kind of love: “He went right to the end, right to the cross.”

- God is near: “He shared the fate of mankind—even suffering and death.”
- God is grace: “He is not the God who wants to avenge Himself and punish human beings.”
- God is the Almighty One: “Nobody could stop Him. He was stronger than death.”

... and true Man

“Jesus was a man like all others. He was like all other men, and yet He was the Son of God,” the Chief Apostle continued. “How are we supposed to understand that?”

- Jesus is the new Adam: “... the man who has a good relationship with his God.”
- Jesus is the firstborn among many brothers: “He has



Guests in Hannover: District Apostles Charles S. Ndandula (Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe; 2nd from Left) and Leonard R. Kolb (USA; 2nd from right)

given power to those who believe in Jesus to become children of God.”

And that means, the Chief Apostle said, that as children of God we are to become like God. “More specifically this means to be like Jesus Christ was, and to have the same relationship with God as Jesus Christ.”

The image as an ideal

“What was so peculiar about the fact that the Son of God was on earth?” was the question regarding the guiding principle. And: “What should distinguish us?”

- The clear awareness of His divine Sonship. “As children of God we know that we are on the path that leads to the Father. This awareness must live in us every day, in every situation in our lives. We know that things will not remain as they are. This is merely a stage, and we are on our way to the Father.”
- The close connection to our heavenly Father. “We must to listen to Him, we must speak with Him, because we want to get to know Him better.” For this we need the word from the Holy Spirit and an active prayer life.
- Our boundless trust in the Father. “I don’t understand anything at all any more. I am at my wits’ end. I am finished. This is all too much for me, but I trust in You, Father. I put everything into Your hands.”
- Our obedience towards the Father. “We have our own ideas, we have our own wishes—and that is fine. We are aware of all the offers in this world, and we also use them, but there is a limit: this is the will of God.”
- Our service to man: “We place ourselves at the service of our fellow human beings in order to serve God. Salva-

tion is the Lord’s business, but we are at His service so that our fellow human beings can recognise the offer of grace.”

“This is not something that I came up with. It comes from Paul,” the Chief Apostle said at the end of his sermon. “God sent His Son. He was a Man on this earth, but He was also the Son of God. We are to become like Him because we are children of God. I think that is a wonderful mission.”

CORE THOUGHTS

Galatians 4: 4–5:

“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, reveals God to us as He is. Becoming children of God through the Son of God, we are called to conform to His image. We long for fellowship with our Father, we trust Him, we submit to His will and we serve Him.

A total of 334 believers, among them 74 guests, assembled in the conference centre of the Saskatoon Inn (Canada) for a divine service with Chief Apostle Schneider.



■ NAC Canada

| Nine ways God helps

Strength, comfort, and blessing—God helps in many different ways. Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider illustrates this with the biblical example of Jacob. And how do we access this divine help? Following are some answers from a divine service conducted by Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider on 12 March 2017 in Saskatoon, Canada.

Here the prophet is addressing the exiled Jews in Babylon. He reminds them that they were elected by God through their ancestors, such as Jacob, to be saved by Him and to testify of Him to all the other nations.

What does this biblical event have to do with us today? “We are the elected people who have the possibility to be part of the bride of Christ,” the Chief Apostle said. Some might think: “O well, our congregation is so small and weak ...” But poor Jacob had nothing, only a stone to lay his head on. And what happened? The promise was fulfilled and he became the father of a great nation.

“God wants to help us enter into the kingdom of God,” the Chief Apostle said. And what does this help consist of?

- Protection: “He will always make sure that nothing can

hinder our salvation. Sure, we have to deal with difficulties. But if God sees that it becomes too difficult, He will use His power to remove the obstacle.”

- Grace: “He forgives us so that we can work unencumbered. And He tells us, ‘Do not worry so much about earthly things. That is an unnecessary burden you are carrying. Just forgive your neighbour. It will make things much easier for you.’”
- Consolation: “If things become too difficult, the Holy Spirit will give us a glimpse of the glory of God. He will show us how great the love of Jesus Christ is. Sure, we cannot see it with our eyes, but we can see and feel it with our soul and with our heart.”

“God also helps us to obtain blessing,” the Chief Apostle continued. “How does He do that?”



The divine service was transmitted to many of the 100 congregations in Canada.



- Through the commandments: “Those who act according to His law, who put His gospel into practice, will have peace and joy in their hearts.”
- Through examples: “One can also be peaceful and joyful in sorrow. That is not a theory: we can see it in our congregations. Just open your eyes.”
- Through the gift of the Holy Spirit: “Give yourself enough time to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit in your heart.”

And finally, God helps us to be true servants and witnesses of Christ by opening up our understanding

- for His plan of salvation: “He will send His Son for the bride of Christ, but that is not the end of the story. This will be followed by the kingdom of peace in which all of mankind will be able to hear the gospel.”
- for the proper motivation: “God does not force people to follow Him. He wants them to feel His love and then decide themselves to follow Him.”
- for our own actions: “God wants us to be witnesses so that our neighbour can experience God’s love.”

And how do we avail ourselves of this help? Here Chief Apostle Schneider once again referred to the example set by Jacob: his unshakeable belief in the promise, his fight to the end, and his willingness to serve the Lord. “God will help those who struggle for their salvation, and He will bless them.”



CORE THOUGHTS

Isaiah 41: 13–4:

“For I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, ‘Fear not, I will help you. Fear not, you worm Jacob, You men of Israel! I will help you,’ says the Lord and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.”

The Lord’s help ensures that those who truly desire it, may be blessed, serve Him and enter into His kingdom.

In the end, love is all that counts

God looks upon the heart: motivation is more important than deeds. And more important than the number of people assembled is the measure of love in their hearts. Exactly 333 participants attended the divine service in Daejeon, South Korea on 29 May 2016.



■ NAC Korea

God can see more, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider said at the beginning of the service, and used the example of David to illustrate this. Of all the sons of Jesse, the youngest and smallest was chosen. “God could see that his heart was humble and full of the fear of God.”

David proved this in his fight with Goliath as well as in his struggle with King Saul. David did not suppose that he would conquer the giant. His attitude was: “God will win the battle.” And when David came upon the sleeping king in a cave, he did not follow his companions’ suggestion to kill him. He could not see the will of God in this.

“Because David was humble and God-fearing, God could was able to give him the victory,” the Chief Apostle contin-

ued. “We want to have victory in Christ. We do not have to be strong for this. All we have to do is put ourselves in God’s hand and be humble and God-fearing.”

Bad deeds

“Man only looks at deeds. God looks into the heart.” The same applies to sinners. “Man looks at the sin and condemns the sinner, and God sees the sinner but looks at the heart. And according to the heart He grants grace or not.”

The Chief Apostle gave two examples to illustrate this. When Saul was disobedient toward God he blamed the people instead of admitting that it was his fault. “He did not find grace.” When David arranged it so that Uriah was



District Apostle Helper David Devaraj
(India)



District Apostle Helper John Sobottka
(Canada)



District Apostle Helper Andrew H.
Andersen (Australia)

killed in battle so that he could have Bathsheba for himself, he realised what he had done wrong and repented.

“That applies to us too: no one is perfect. Let us admit our sins and repent, for then God will grant us grace.”

The divine standard

God sees the heart. This not only applies to bad deeds. “We do not want to serve God and be obedient out of fear or calculation,” the Chief Apostle said and addressed our motivation. “When we offer we do so because we are thankful to God. When we serve Him we do so out of love. And if our service and our offerings are based on our love and our gratitude, then God will grant His blessing.”

When it comes to blessing, God looks at the heart too. “For some people blessing consists of being in good health, having money, and being successful.” But: “That is not the way God wants to bless us. God wants to bless our hearts.” A joyful heart, peace in Christ, coming closer to God, and becoming more like Him—that is the blessing God will grant us.

“God looks at the heart, at the invisible things. This also applies to the Church,” the Chief Apostle said. Judging by human terms, the completion of the Church would mean that it becomes more and more popular and that it would continue to grow. “But God looks at the heart. The perfection of the bride of Christ cannot be expressed in numbers.” The only thing that counts for God is the love of the bride for Christ and the neighbour, as well as unity. “And once He sees that there is enough love for Christ, enough love for the neighbour, and enough unity, then He will say, ‘Now I can come!’”



CORE THOUGHTS

Jeremiah 17:10:

“I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.”

God considers our heart’s disposition. He gives victory to those who fear Him, gives grace to the repentant, blesses those who serve Him with a pure heart, and saves those who are filled with the love of Christ.

THE MESSIAH AND HIS KINGDOM OF PEACE

(ISAIAH 11)

It is a little over 700 years before Jesus' birth. There is a prophet who lives in Jerusalem. His name is Isaiah. Through him, God announces the coming of the Messiah. Isaiah also describes how it will be when the Messiah establishes His kingdom of peace:

A rod will come out of the stem of Jesse (the father of David) and a branch will bear fruit out of his roots.

The Spirit of the Lord will rest upon Him: the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

His delight will be in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by that which His eyes see, nor pronounce His verdict by what His ears hear.

Rather, He will judge the poor with righteousness and decide in fairness for the meek of the earth.

With the rod of His mouth He will strike the violent, and slay the wicked with the breath of His lips.

Fairness will be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt around His waist.

The wolves will live with the lambs and panthers will lie down with the young goats. Calves, young lions, and cattle will be led together by a little child.

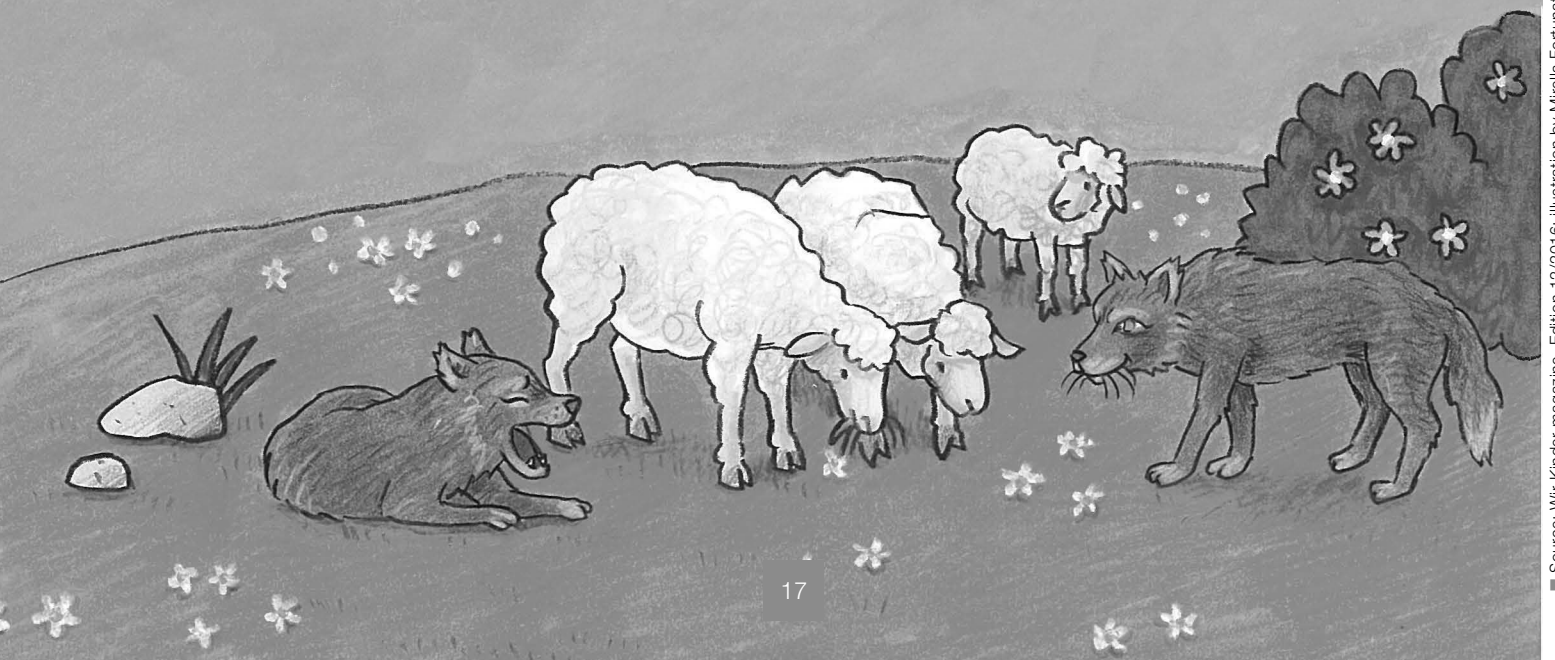
Cows and bears will graze together, and their young will lie down together.

Lions will eat straw just like oxen. Nursing infants will play near the hole of the cobra, and weaned children will even be able to put their hands into the viper's den.

No one will do evil. There will be no more sin on God's holy mountain. The earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord, just as the sea is filled with water. And in that day there will be a Root of Jesse who

will stand as a banner to the people. The Gentiles and nations will seek Him and His place of residence will be glorious.

In the Bible, a person is called a prophet if he has been elected by God to proclaim His will. The prophets admonish the people of Israel and warn them of destruction. This is because the Israelites and their rulers refuse to listen to the will of God, and worship idols instead. Many prophets speak about the future. Prophet Isaiah in particular often talks about Jesus Christ and the day of the Lord. Isaiah describes the birth, the activity, and the suffering of the Son of God.



AT SUHANI'S IN RAIPUR (INDIA)



My portrait - I like **flowers**!

My name is Suhani, I am nine years old. I live in Raipur City which is the Capital of Chhattisgarh State in India. Raipur is a city where cycling is very popular. Even I like cycling. Look at my **bicycle**.

My father's name is Daniyal. He owns a fashion store. I like fashion and dressing up, but unfortunately they only sell men's clothes! My mother's name is Janki. She stays at home, looking after the house and us two children. My brother, Aryan, is 12 years old. This is part of my extended family, including some of my aunts and uncles, cousins and second cousins. However, this is only my father's side of the **family**, so imagine a family portrait with all of them in it!



Welcome to my house. Like many families in India, we live in a small single storey house. The four of us share one bedroom and we have a hall, a small kitchen, and a bathroom.



My **favourite food**:
Italian pasta and Yippee!
noodles. So yummy!



This is me in front of the **school gate**. I go to an English Medium school and I am currently in fourth grade. As the name suggests, most of my subjects are taught in English, but at home we speak Hindi which is a national language of India.

Here are some **paintings** which I created in school and at home. I like drawing and painting.

Whenever my father is free, I like to go to a mall with him where we like to go shopping and spend time in the play zone. I like **car racing simulators**!

Here I am in front of the **church** with my brother, parents, and grandparents. We do not have our own church building in Raipur, so we have been renting a hall for the past thirty-five years! We are eight Sunday School children who are taken care of by five teachers, including my mother. In Raipur, we usually have Sunday School on Sunday morning and then join the congregation for divine service.





Humbleness – a hallmark of the elect

ZoneCreative - Fotolia.com

The relationship we have with God is reflected in the relationship we have with our neighbour. This not only applies to love, but also to humbleness. Following are some remarks from Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider concerning this fundamental Christian virtue.

Humility is of central importance in Christian doctrine. Jesus made humility before God an indispensable prerequisite for receiving salvation (Matthew 18: 3–4). The writings of the New Testament describe humility before others as an identifying characteristic of the elect (Colossians 3: 12; Philippians 2: 3–8). Thus it seems appropriate to me that we should take a closer look at this term and ask ourselves what it means for us today.

Humbleness before the Most High

The aspect of “humbleness before God” is certainly the easiest to grasp. Being humble before God entails

- recognising that we are completely dependent on the grace of God.
- showing the fear of God: God is perfect and infallible—we can neither understand Him completely nor force Him to do anything.
- surrendering ourselves completely to His love.

To be humble before God does not imply that we should disdain our own person. The commandment to “love our neighbour as ourselves” clearly shows that God does not forbid us from valuing—that is to say, loving—ourselves or taking care of ourselves. Let us beware of false humility, which would have us believe that we are incapable of doing that which God expects of us. Those who are truly humble will bear in mind that God knows them better than they know themselves, and that with the help of God they will certainly manage that which God expects of them.

Humility before our neighbour

Humility before our neighbour is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, who teaches us that

- God does not love human beings for what they are, but rather that He loves them because He is love. He loves our neighbour as He loves us, even though our neighbour may be completely different than we are. Therefore

my neighbour does not have to become like me in order to be loved as I am loved.

- we are all reliant on grace, irrespective of our accomplishments.

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul advises: "... but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself" (Philippians 2: 3). At first glance, this passage appears unrealistic. After all, it seems as though it would require us to think of ourselves as being fundamentally inferior to everyone else, no matter what they are like. This interpretation is not appropriate, however. Evidence of this is that Paul did not regard himself in this way and did not hesitate to explain that he was in no way inferior to others (2 Corinthians 11: 5).

We find an initial explanation of this Bible text in the next verse: "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Philippians 2: 4). The word "also" is important here. Nothing prevents us from making decisions in our own interests, provided that these also take the interests of others into account.

The example of Jesus Christ

However, Paul goes even further. For him, our humility must be in line with the example of Jesus Christ, "who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2: 6–8).

Jesus was aware of His divine position and power. Nevertheless, He subjected Himself completely to the will of His Father. He humbled Himself to the level of the sinners, served them, and suffered for them, in order to ultimately be elevated with them.

To have the same point of view as Christ means that we are aware of our election just as the Lord was aware of His. We acknowledge that we are just like our neighbour: like him, we are sinners who need grace in order to be delivered. And we know that we have been sent in order to serve them, inspire them to do good works, and to help them on the path to salvation.

Humility as a servant of God

In the awareness of the holiness of his ministry, a servant of God is humble. He knows that he will always be dependent

on grace. Even if we have exercised our ministry for decades, we must never become accustomed to it.

A humble servant fulfils the instructions of his Lord in all respects. No situation can justify his failure to implement the will of Jesus Christ! Beyond that, he has a proper appreciation of his commission. The Lord sent His Apostles out in order to teach what He had taught them—thus the ministerial mandate only extends to the preaching of the gospel. Although our knowledge and experience may prove helpful in certain cases, we cannot invoke our ministerial authority in order to teach personal experiences of faith as binding.

Certainly it is up to us to think about the future, to develop projects, and to put them into practice, but we cannot compel or force God to do anything. It is He who decides on the results of our endeavours. Apostle Paul was also fully aware of this when he wrote to the Ephesians: "But I will return again to you, God willing" (Acts 18: 21). God did not allow all of Paul's plans to succeed (Romans 1: 13). Why should He do so for us?

Our humility before the congregation

In accordance with the example of Jesus, the Apostles are servants of all (John 13: 15). They do not have dominion over the faith of the congregation, but are rather fellow helpers to the joy of its members (2 Corinthians 1: 24; Catechism 7.6.3). All ministers understand themselves as servants, but are they really? To my great regret, I notice here and there that some ministers

- are still confusing "ministerial authority" with "ministerial hierarchy". They abuse their positions in order to impose their advice upon members, even going so far as to imply that their salvation depends on obedience to the instructions they have been given.
- are very easily offended and annoyed. Do they perhaps assign too much importance to their own person?

For my part, I make every effort to be open to suggestions and new things, but I do not understand why some act without having first sought counsel or consent from their leaders. I am convinced that God will always arrange things in such a manner that the thoughts born of the Holy Spirit will indeed be implemented. I am just as convinced that any sort of renewal that aims to divide cannot possibly be a step in the right direction.



■ NAC DR Kongo

The humbleness of the Church

Being aware of one's own place—that is humbleness. This not only applies to individual human beings, but also to the Church as a whole. Following are some thoughts on this from Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider.

I was once asked the question of what will happen to the Apostle ministry and the sacraments in the thousand-year kingdom of peace. I would like to share with you some personal reflections on this subject without elevating them to the level of an inviolable truth.

The future of the apostolate

As a fellowship of the elect, the church of Christ will also continue to exist in the new creation (Catechism 6.4.5). With regard to the apostolate at work within the church

and the sacraments dispensed there, it would be a good idea to go back to the beginnings of the church. Jesus commissioned His Apostles to serve as ambassadors in His stead after His return to the Father. He established the church in order to make it possible for human beings to receive the doctrine of the Apostles and the sacraments necessary for salvation. Our Fourth Article of Faith states that the Apostles of Jesus have been sent until His return.

In the thousand-year kingdom of peace, Jesus Himself will be present on earth—which means that His ambassadors

will no longer be needed in order to represent Him. The mandate of the elect, of the royal priesthood, will be to serve as messengers and witnesses of Christ, just as the disciples did when Jesus Christ was on earth.

The future of the sacraments

The sacraments dispensed in the church are “signs”. They come into being through the union of a visible element with a word that refers to a reality behind this word (Catechism 8). This reality is nothing other than the presence of the Redeemer. Since Jesus Christ will once again be visible in the kingdom of peace, the sacraments will no longer be needed. Jesus will make direct use of His salvific power, just as He did on earth with the thief on the cross, for example.

My personal opinion is that I would be lacking in respect for Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, if I were to insist that the Apostles and the sacraments will still be required in order to attain salvation in the thousand-year kingdom of peace.

The New Apostolic Church

Led by living Apostles, the New Apostolic Church must also be humble:

- neither the New Apostolic Church nor the Apostles who lead it are capable of replacing the present authorities or solving the problems of this world.
- not even we have the power to give advice in all matters.
- we are well aware that we are imperfect human beings, and we do not by any means maintain that our predecessors were infallible. The Church apologises for the mistakes that have been made, but we cannot change the past. All we can do is ensure that the mistakes of the past are not repeated, knowing that we will inevitably make others ...
- the fact that we are convinced of our doctrine does not prevent us from acknowledging the spiritual wealth present in other churches or the accomplishments of their members.

In conclusion I would also like to share with you a quote that I really enjoyed. Dorotheus of Gaza, a monk who lived in Palestine during the sixth century, wrote: “Souls are like fruit trees. When these trees bear a great deal of fruit, they bow their branches to the ground under the weight. On the other hand, those branches that do not bear any fruit rise up. There are even trees whose branches were attached to stones to force them to bow down so that they could bear fruit. It is the same with souls: when they humble themselves, they bear rich fruit, and the more they bear, the more humble they become” (Dorothee de Gaza, Instructions 1-XVII, Sources Chrétiennes, 1963; free translation from the French).

“And be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time”

(1 Peter 5: 5-6)

Masthead

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Editor: Peter Johanning



INA Brazil

Congregation with the highest elevation

This is not a congregation you happen to come across as you stroll along. In fact, at 4,000 metres it is about as close to heaven as you can get. But Pacharí has a lot more to offer: a Deacon well past retirement age and an ingenious way of calling the faithful to worship.

Pacharí is situated at exactly 4,055 metres above sea level, making it the highest New Apostolic congregation in the world. Fifty members call this congregation in the Andes home: 300 kilometres east of the Pacific and 140 kilometres from La Paz (Bolivia), high up in the mountains.

Llamas, sheep, and ships

There is plenty to see in the province of Omasuyos: mountains, meadows, llamas. But if you hope to find large numbers of people you will look in vain. Instead you hear and

see flocks of sheep, which are kept and tended by the inhabitants of the highlands. Another thing you see is one or the other big ship.

Not far from Pacharí is Lake Titicaca, the second largest lake in South America. Because of its altitude it is also called “lake in the clouds”. Its northwest-to-southeast direction is about 178 kilometres and it is about 76 kilometres across at its widest point. The lake sits astride the border between Peru and Bolivia. Situated at 3,812 metres above sea level, it is the world’s highest lake navigable to large commercial vessels.

The village of Pacharí is comprised of small houses that are spread over the plateau. There is neither electricity nor running water. Communication with the outside world is difficult at best and sometimes impossible. The brothers and sisters walk to church over rugged mountain trails, up to a distance of four kilometres.

Retirement at 85

At the end of December 2016, District Apostle Raúl Montes de Oca visited his brothers and sisters in Pacharí. He was accompanied by ministers from the capital. Everyone enjoyed the fellowship and the divine service. There were joyful encounters with the children and the older members, directly in the clouds.

There was, however, also a little bit of sadness: the only Deacon of the congregation, Cecilio Mamani, was placed into retirement—at 85. “We nearly had to postpone the retirement,” District Apostle Montes de Oca said: “Shortly before we arrived, we received the information that the Deacon was not home. He is a shepherd and was further up in the mountains with his sheep.” In the end, everyone was there for the service, including the Deacon.

The congregation will now be cared for by the ministers from the neighbouring congregation of Villa Bolívar, which is close to La Paz, 140 kilometres away. Divine services in Pacharí are celebrated on the first and third

Sunday of the month. The sermon in Spanish is simultaneously translated into Aimara, one of the official languages in Bolivia.

Community life

There is no religious instruction and Sunday School in Pacharí. “We don’t have any teachers,” the District Apostle explains. “That is why we still have not managed to draw up a curriculum.”

Village meetings, which are usually organised at short notice, often disrupt the life of the New Apostolic congregation. The brothers and sisters in Pacharí, like the majority of Bolivia’s population, belong to the indigenous peoples. Decisions concerning everyday life and their coexistence in the village are taken together. These village councils are often announced at the last minute and require the presence of the men—regardless of whether a divine service is scheduled.

A bell summons the people to worship

The men in Pacharí bring their sheep to pasture high up in the mountains. When the Priest sounds the “bell” to summon the faithful, the brothers hurry down the mountain to service. It is not really a bell that the Priest strikes, but an iron, whose sound everyone is familiar with.

Below right: District Apostle Raúl Montes de Oca (left) and Deacon Cecilio Mamani (centre) after the divine service



To service with the Richard F

Every Sunday, about twenty brothers and sisters are picked up at home by the Richard F and are taken to the Delta congregation.

The eight-metre motorboat that is used in the Tigre Delta region of Argentina is named after the former Chief Apostle Richard Fehr (1939–2013). The small white boat with a powerful outboard motor has been in service since 17 August 2002. Sunday for Sunday it serves as a water taxi for up to eighteen brothers and sisters who live in the

Delta region—about 30 kilometres from metropolitan Buenos Aires (Argentina).

A second boat, with a capacity of up to 55 passengers, carries the name Maranatha, which means “Our Lord comes”. The motto of Chief Apostle Fehr has been painted on the boat in large black letters, port and starboard. The helmsmen, who are members of the congregation, have been trained. One of them is the rector of the congregation, Priest Miguel D’Addario.

On the water to divine service

“For the members of the congregation the trip begins at 7:30 every Sunday morning,” Viviana Aloy, nac.today correspondent in South America, says. “The families come down to the river’s bank early in the morning and wait for

The “Richard F” and the “Maranatha” also take the brothers and sisters home again after service



The youth from the Argentinian province Misiones—a thousand kilometres away—visit the Delta congregation



the boat to take them to church.” The trip takes them across the Tigre, the Luján, and the Abra Vieja—three of the 350 rivers and streams in the Delta region.

The twenty children of the congregation love their Sunday boat trip: “They have their breakfast on board,” Sister Aloy reports. That makes things at home a little more relaxed for the families on a Sunday morning.

A few steps from dock to church

The church building of the Delta congregation is typical for the region, and is made from bricks and wood. On account of it being very close to the bank of the river, the church is built on hardwood piles, for which quebracho and curupay wood is used. The church’s location directly on the banks of the Abra Vieja is a great advantage on the one hand, but it can also prove to be a challenge when the water levels rise or fall too much. When the water level is low, only the small boat can navigate the canals and side arms of the rivers, making it necessary for the Richard F to make several trips.

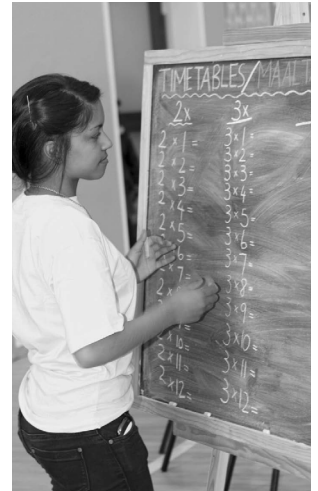
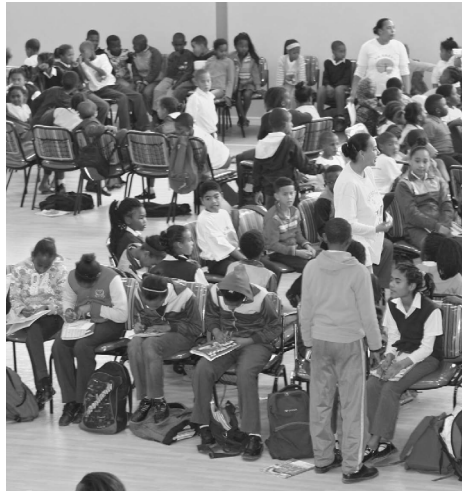
The Delta congregation is one of the few New Apostolic churches that has its own dock, making it fairly comfortable for the brothers and sisters to reach the church, which is just a few steps up.



When the District Apostles met in Buenos Aires in 2011, they also visited the Delta congregation. Both boats were used. On the left: the then District Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider

Splashes and waves

“Anyone who strives for lofty goals must learn to remain calm at the helm,” Chief Apostle Fehr cited when he took office on 22 May 1988 in Fellbach in Germany. At the time, he most certainly did not have the small boat in mind that has now been taking members to church for so many years in South America and that carries his name. And sitting calmly at the helm is the captain-cum-Priest.



“Masakhe” gets children off the street

Love your neighbour as yourself! Gladly. But how do you do that in a place that is ruled by drugs and violence? A project in our Leiden Central church in South Africa shows how. It not only offers children a safe haven but also helps them with their education.

Nearly 300 children are sitting in study circles, notepads on their laps, and pens poised. They put their heads together and whisper, and then a hand shoots up here, and another one there, and they speak to an adult, a facilitator, who goes around. It is homework time in the New Apostolic church in Leiden Central in Delft, a suburb of Cape Town.

A daily dose: drugs and violence

It is one of the most unusual church buildings that the New Apostolic Church has. During the week it is a multi-purpose hall, and on Sundays it turns into a church—the purpose it was built for. The idea of the church is to be a safe haven in an area notorious for high crime. Some 150,000 people populate the township of Delft that is known for its substandard schools, high unemployment, drug abuse, and gang crime.

The children are affected the most, says Ursula Poggenpoel-Smith, the programme manager at Masakhe NPC, a New Apostolic initiative. Children are left to fend for

themselves in a society where one parent is all they have, where drugs and violence are the norm—something that is much more likely than getting a warm meal. Their only role models are gangsters, drug dealers, and people with flashy cars. It would be a positive outcome if these children did not turn into gangsters or drug addicts.

Between dreams and daydreams

Getting these children off the street and keeping them off is the objective of the New Apostolic Church, something they have been involved in since September 2016. Since then, Masakhe, the charitable branch of the New Apostolic Church Southern Africa, has been running a programme that aims to offer children a safe place.

“A place where they can receive a meal, develop their life skills, receive homework assistance, and where they are safe after school,” Ursula Poggenpoel-Smith says in her quarterly report. “A place where children can be shown a better way, and be given the tools to deal with all of the traumas



Leiden Central: a church in South Africa that converts to a multi-purpose hall



Aunty Lilly and Kathy waiting for the lunch rush

they experience daily; a place where they can play, day-dream, and just be children.”

Help for children and helpers

About 260 to 300 children come to the multi-purpose hall every day. Religious affiliation does not matter. The programme is open to anyone. In addition to receiving help with their homework, the children are taught very practical things such as hygiene, manners, and self-discipline, and are instructed in safety issues. The New Apostolic Church collaborates with professional partners: the fire department, social workers and psychologists, and the Education and Health Departments.

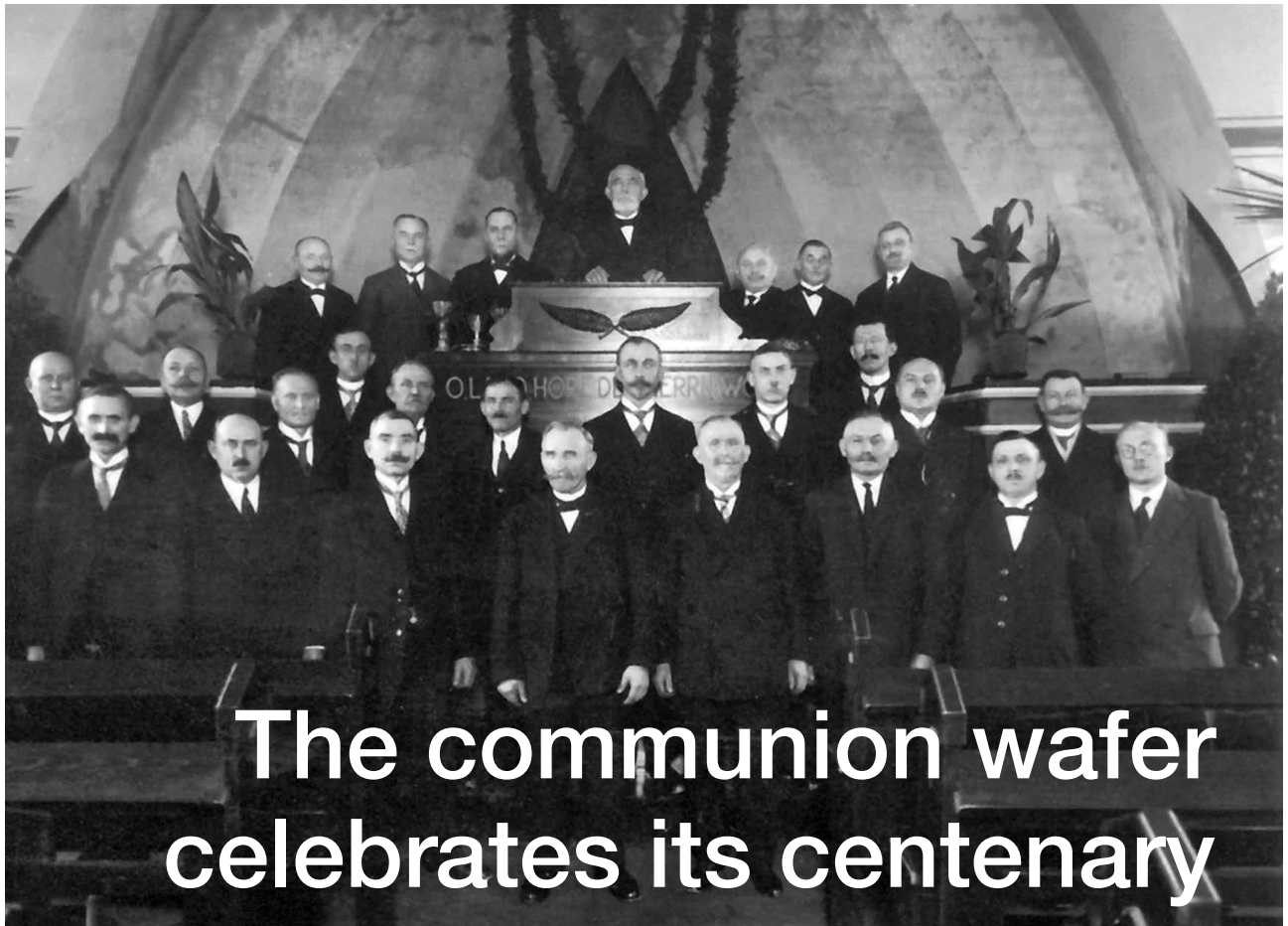
Without a team of volunteers none of this would be possible, Ursula Poggenpoel-Smith says. Seniors volunteer and share their life experience. Young mothers, unemployed youth, and others also help and encourage the children to follow their dreams. The volunteers all receive training in First Aid. There is a close co-operation with two colleges

to have those volunteers trained who are interested in becoming Early Childhood Development Facilitators (ECD), so that the programme can offer them the prospect of employment on a short-term contract.

The gospel live

But for this to happen, MASAKHE Welfare NPC has to become self-sustainable. The search for funders and sponsors is underway. The first supporters have responded. A hotel chain donated book shelves for a small library. The idea for the library is based on South African Toy Libraries, where children who have no books or toys of their own can borrow some.

Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider was very impressed by the concept of Leiden Central. He recently explored the safe haven when he was in South Africa at the end of 2016, and spoke with rectors there who have to do pastoral care under extreme conditions. His conclusion: “Fantastic,” he says, when asked by nac.today: “That’s it, the gospel.”



Zentralarchiv NAC Northrhine-Westfalen and bundesarchiv.de (Soldiers in the First War)

The communion wafer celebrates its centenary

Three drops are celebrating their centenary. On Good Friday 1917, the Chief Apostle officially celebrated his first divine service without sharing the cup. Instead he dispensed communion wafers. What is normal today had become an absolute necessity at the time. Why?

“There will be a change in the celebration of Holy Communion.” These were the words Chief Apostle Hermann Niehaus used to introduce a new era on 6 April 1917 in Bielefeld (Germany). Until then it had been common practice to dispense the bread in the form of a wafer and to offer the wine in a cup. From now on, the wine would be found on the wafer in the form of three drops.

Two problems ...

With World War One raging in Europe, it was almost impossible to find wine. “We have already tried to solve the problem by mixing the wine with water, but even so there will not be enough,” the Chief Apostle said in this historic divine service.

Cholera, typhoid fever, and tuberculosis. The fear of epidemics had forced the focus on hygiene. The cup was wiped with a cloth after each participant had taken a sip from it, and then it was rotated slightly. “However, even the partakers of communion rotated the cup, and some only sipped from it, barely touching the cup with their lips.”

... and three solutions

A leading article in a German Church magazine of the time (Neuapostolische Rundschau), published on 25 March 1917, offered three solutions.

One option was to introduce small individual cups, as the Protestant Church in Germany had already done. But more

or less ornate vessels would introduce class differences into the celebration of Holy Communion, “which is to be avoided from a strictly religious point of view”.

The second option was to spear the wafer with an ivory fork, dip it into the wine, and then dispense it to the brothers and sisters—something the congregations in Holland did. But in no time the wafers would be soggy and stick to people’s hands. From a hygienic point of view, this approach was not much better.

The last option: “The war has taught us a number of things.”

Necessity, the mother of invention

October 1915, at the front lines in France. A soldier with the initials W. G. receives a letter from the Chief Apostle, containing Holy Communion wafers: “We not only pray and intercede for you, but also allow you to participate in the sacrifice of Jesus through this.” In reply, W. G. writes: “I am as a happy as a little child, here on my straw bed.” This response is printed in the January 1916 edition of the *Neu-apostolische Rundschau*.

Initially, the wafers were accompanied by small bottles of wine. But they somehow always disappeared from the par-

cels—as did cigarettes. Soon after the outbreak of World War One in 1914, the Chief Apostle therefore provided soldiers fighting at the front with a combination wafer. “We consecrate the cup [with the wine] and the wafers and then drizzle some of the wine on the wafer.”

It is not the amount that counts

Does this still correspond to Holy Communion as instituted by Jesus Christ? The Chief Apostle responded with a comparison to baptism: “There are certain denominations that immerse themselves fully in water. For us the sprinkling is enough.” With this he expressly referred to the Catechism by Martin Luther in this Good Friday service: “Not the water is important, but the word of God that accompanies the water.”

“If thousands of people are happy with the sprinkled wafers, so are we,” Chief Apostle Niehaus said in the Good Friday service: “The bread [wafer] will be sprinkled with three drops of red wine, so that it can be seen.” To begin with he instituted this in his own working area as an Apostle. It became compulsory for all following a joint decision, which was communicated by way of a circular in the latter part of the year 1919. “Following a resolution by the Apostles’ Council, this now applies throughout the Church.”

Below left: A letter to the frontlines containing a consecrated wafer, and a little bottle of wine
Below right: Soldiers in the First World War lie in trenches during a break in the fighting



District Apostle Michael Ehrich:

I want to praise the Lord as long as I live



© nac.today

This year's motto encourages us to praise and honour God with our whole being.

Of course we can enjoy what we have achieved or be happy that we have succeeded at something after putting a lot of effort into it. But let us never forget that, in the end, we have God to thank for everything.

HE is the Giver of all good things, in the earthly and in the spiritual. HE carries us, when we have reached the end of our tether. HE lets us grow in the mind and nature of Jesus.

If we think about this we will feel an urge to thank Him, to praise and honour Him – in words, works, and through our nature.

In a hymn it says something to the effect of: "I want to praise the Lord as long as I live." Not every now and then, not only when there is a concrete reason to do so—but as a dominant inner attitude.

This attitude can be expressed, for example, in prayer and in our conduct when we trust in God and lead a life that pleases Him. That means giving the divine life room and following the Lord consistently. That means working along in His work—not only in a project-related way but continually and fulfilling our tasks in a sustainable and reliable manner.

HE will respond with His blessing—one that lasts and will culminate in our sharing eternal fellowship with Him.



Apostle Oppong at the Altar

Ghana: Blessed Encounters – Glory to God Our Father

Glory be to God our Father (the purpose of our calling) was the theme for the annual Youth Camp held from 10th to 13th August, 2017. The festive gathering held at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology,

and Marriage. The Youth were very privileged to be taken through a career seminar by the Chief Executive Officer of Public Sector Reform in Ghana, Mr Kusi Boafo. On Saturday, the Youth embarked on a health walk, games and finally, Bible Quiz.

The summit of the Youth program was the divine service conducted by Apostle Samuel Oppong Brenya on Sunday the 13th August, 2017. The text chosen was from Proverbs 8:32 "Now therefore hearken unto me, ye children; for blessed are they that keep my ways".

Kumasi hosted 2895 participants from seven Apostle areas. It was under the theme: Glory be to God our Father (the purpose of our calling).

Various programs were conducted for the Youth. The programs included discussions on the Apostle's Creed and Holy Communion, Health Talk on general diseases and Relationship



Youth on the brass instrument



Tug of Peace

Nigeria: Recognize, give thanks and proclaim!

This message from Chief Apostle Jean Luc Schneider came with three tasks to be observed and put in practice by all New Apostolic Christians worldwide for the year 2017: Let us recognize the glory of God in His works, thank Him for His gifts, and proclaim His glory! With all humility, faith and trust in the chief apostle, members in different districts observed the tasks which formed the motto of the year to organize so many programs.



Apostle Hagher with the Ikeja Central church choir



Joyful youths after a meeting with Apostle Hagher at Ikeja Central Church

These include: choir concerts, children's day, musical evening, women and men conventions, visitations to hospitals, orphanages, camping, without exceptions of ministers meetings and divine services.

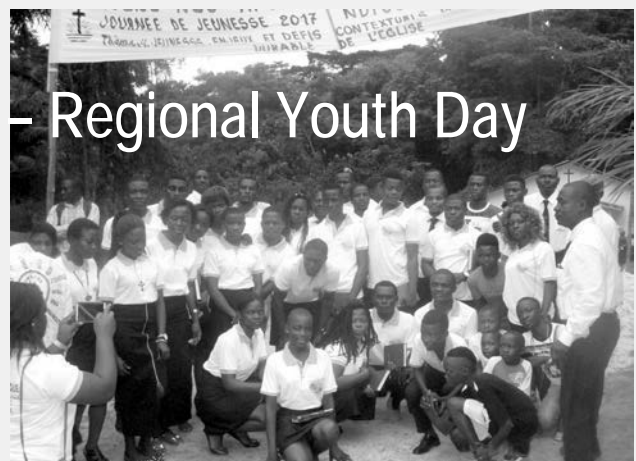
In Lagos, South west Nigeria, the motto of the year and the tasks given to us by the Chief Apostle were at the top of all the youth divine services, concerts and youths meetings conducted this year. During one of such programs, Apostle Emmanuel Hagher admonished the youth to recognize the glory of God in their conduct, to thank him for the gift of their election by grace as children of God and proclaim the name of God in their homes, schools and any other place they could find themselves. He told them that the name "child of God" is better than fames, riches.

Cameroon-Francophone: "Glory be to God our Father!"

The regional youth day held in the Ndtoua community, Bipindi district, from 3 to 6 August 2017, had as a general theme "Youth, contextual challenges and challenges for the sustainable development of the church".

The arrival of the delegations of some 60 young people from a few districts on August 3, 2017 was followed that same day by the opening divine service, officiated by the Apostle Ebanga Edoa Félicien. The General Introduction reviewed subjects with questions such as:

What can be the impact of the development of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) on the church in general and on youth in particular?

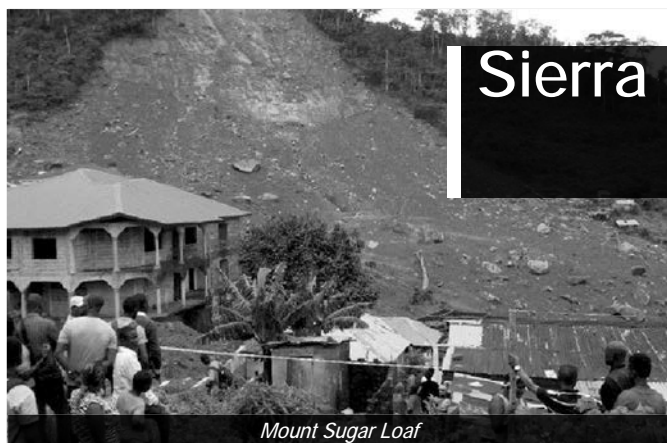


What can be the influence of our traditions or culture on our commitment and also commitment to Christ? What are the challenges for the Church and youth at the dawn of the third millennium?

The main sub-topics

- "Sex and its Consequences"
- "Influence of Fashion on Youth"
- "How to develop our communities"

The moments of entertainment were the football game that pitted the youth of the church with those of the village. This day of youth ended on 6 August 2017 with the divine service.



Mount Sugar Loaf



Flooding

Sierra Leone: Saved in disaster

The people of Freetown, Sierra Leone woke up at 4am to experience a tragic mud from Mount Sugar Loaf, which was associated with terrible rainfall and flooding.

The mud, the stones and the trees of the mountain covered hundreds of houses (houses, zinc houses and makeshift of all sort). It formed a large flooded river that bore great trees, stones, elements of the ruins by force. Those who have survived, not only lost their loved ones but houses, properties, etc. - Thousands of them are registered for gastronomy.

People glorify God for His mercy, goodness, and love even in the time of tribulation. It is wonderful how people were saved from the mudslides and floods. - Some people in these communities had moved / traveled the day or the night before the disaster. An incident of a lady who had brought her two small children to a dry land and while she returned to take their food, was trapped by the flood. The children were saved later.

Even in the greatest catastrophe the help of God can be experienced in the rescue. People glorify God for His mercy, goodness, and love even in the time of tribulation.

Benin: Glory to God means also to protect the creation

After more than four hours sitting in a motorized boat, Apostle Yedenou, accompanied with Elder Houénou Isaïe and two other brothers, visited Gbannan.

At the end of the divine service gathering the brothers and sisters of the lake congregations of Gbannan Saïdonou and Kodéto, Apostle Yedenou shared some thoughts on this year's motto: "Glory be to God, Our Father" The parable of the mines taken from Luke 19 served as a basis for this exchange. It was a matter of insisting on our duty to protect and better manage the works of God manifested in creation. "... You are in a lake area where fishing and farming are your only means of subsistence. For each of us, it is a question of giving glory to God through responsible management of natural resources ... Overfishing,

bush fires and other unsavory practices destroy biodiversity as well as the hope of future generations ...". The "Medokpokonou", an intensive fishing practice specific to this environment, has been demonstrated as a harmful method that does not honor God our Heavenly Father. The chiefs of the villages of Gbannan and Saidonou were present at this meeting.



Apostle Yedenou

Benin: Special youth camp in the town of Comè

It is with the theme "Glory be to God, our Father!" motto of the year 2017 that more than two thousand young people from different districts of the working area of Apostle Olou gathered for a youth camp in the city of Comè from 17 to 20 August 2017. The event was colorful. Several activities, from the training workshops, to a youth march through the city, a well attended choir concert and eventually the divine service by Apostle Olou, were accomplished with great joy. During the festive divine service on 20 August 2017, Apostle Olou explained that "to glorify God" is to acknowledge that He is the author of will and power in order to submit to His will (Philippians 2:13). Five priests and a deacon were ordained during this divine service. The young people returned joyfully with the commitment to glorify God in their thoughts, deeds and by their life of faith.



Liberia: Support for three orphanages



Dolo's Town Orphanage Homes

Apostle Alexander Wreh handed over a donation from the Jörg Wolff Fondation and the New Apostolic Church to three orphanages in the Margibi region. Mother Martha Kassely, who received the food and other supplies on behalf of one of the orphanages, thanked the church and the donor for the gesture, which she regarded as a "gift to the needy in society." In the house were those who lost their parents as a result of the outbreak of the Ebola virus disease, where the Dolos city was hard hit. She concluded with the words that the orphans are provided with personal contributions by good-hearted people. JE

Cameroon: Apostle Nabru Tita departed

For 15 years the Apostle had acted in this high ministry. Our District Apostle wrote in the mourning news:

"The Apostle was a devout and extremely reliable servant of God. As a result of his sincere and genuine manner he was a loving spiritual leader for the ministers and brethren entrusted into his care and always a reliable and brotherly co-

worker for his bearers of blessing. Oneness was always a special concern of his. Through his strength and joy in faith he was able to achieve much in the English-speaking part of Cameroon, even under difficult circumstances."



Ghana: Youth Lecture

On the 12th February 2017, Accra West district of the New Apostolic Church in Ghana organised lecture for the Youth at the Accra Central Church. The topic was "How to maintain a healthy relationship".

Using PowerPoint presentation, the retired Bishop Ampadu introduced a new concept of group work to bring out individual understanding of the topic - "Dating The Right Way." The entire five groups made good presentations.

Continuing, the Bishop lectured on Healthy/Unhealthy Relationships and other related issues, for example, Communication, Respect for each other's privacy, Being supportive and Anger management. He urged the youth to eschew violence and promiscuity. The youth were encouraged to consider 1st Corinthians 6:18-20 during relationships and were emboldened to flee fornication. AM



Group work discussion

Sierra Leone: Our Future Generation

One of the most important soul care works in the church is the children, through Sunday School and Confirmation classes. In spite of this, a divine service for children was recently conducted in Bo, the second capital city of Sierra Leone.

Apostle Albert Garber, who is responsible for South/West Sierra Leone invited children from six congregations in and around Bo. Children from Bo central congregation, New London, Manjama, Sembehun-Kokofeleh, Farlu and Torbu gathered in the central church of Bo for the service.

The children's choir performed before, during and after the divine service. It was interesting to see a choir conducted by a child. They also presented dramas of bible stories, recitation of bible verses which brought unique joy to all present. SA



Apostle Garber with cross section of the children

South Germany: Divine Service with the District Apostle

On Sunday, July 16, 2017, the District Apostle held a divine service in Munich/South Germany which was transmitted to a number of countries in his area of responsibility in Europe and West Africa.

Bible text: **"Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"**
(Ephesians 4: 3)

Core thoughts: "Unity of the Spirit" is possible and necessary despite all cultural differences (Ephesians 3: 5-6). All ministers are called to be one with their Apostle and amongst themselves (Catechism Chapters 7.6, 7.7, 7.8). This is the basis for oneness in the congregations. This concerns neither outer appearances nor Church directives – on the contrary, the essentials must be identified by the "unity of the Spirit": namely the doctrine. If "unity of the Spirit" exists:

- The ministers proclaim the gospel in a uniform manner: this provides certainty and orientation for the congregation. No minister is permitted to preach his own doctrine or a "special doctrine".
- Preparation and orientation according to Christ's return is the focal point: we are focused on the return of Jesus Christ, and therefore this or a reference to it must be expressed in every divine service.
- We convey our belief to others that Jesus Christ was sent by God (John 17: 21). All are called to carry further the gospel, this is also possible without speaking: the gospel can be made accessible to others by the manner in which we lead our life.
- We seek fellowship with one another, one wishes to exchange thoughts, and one shows interest towards others: this includes personal pastoral care. Time should continue to be made available for pastoral care visits. Love is a sign of recognition of Jesus' disciples (John 13: 34-35).

The "bond of peace" makes "unity of the Spirit" possible. The peace which comes from the Lord should bond us all together. This peace can be gained by receiving the Lord and therefore those whom He sends (Matthew 10: 40). The offer of peace made by the Lord must be accepted. Then fear and doubt will vanish, the power of the Spirit can develop, and we are witnesses of the Lord in word and deed.

