

community

The New Apostolic Church around the world

02/2020/EN



The sacrifice of Jesus Christ

Editorial:

Happy in following

Divine service:

Christ makes free!

Doctrine:

The significance of the
sacrifice of Jesus Christ

New Apostolic Church
International



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Happy in following

Dear brothers and sisters,

It is our greatest wish to have fellowship with God and one another for all eternity. Jesus Christ has established the prerequisites for this. His life and death, His resurrection and ascension, as well as His return had—and still have—precisely this objective. If we remain at His hand faithfully, He will lead us securely into His kingdom.

However, we also want to be happy in our lives. This is certainly possible for us even as we follow Christ:

- a humble person who is determined to do good works, who loves his neighbour, and who helps him, will always find a place in society.
- God blesses the believer and gives him peace—the believer can remain calm and composed, no matter what happens.
- Jesus Christ liberates us from the fear of commitment. To those who are determined to do His will Jesus gives the opportunity and the prerequisites to be happy in married life and parenthood.

Christ liberates those who put His word into action. He gives them the opportunity and the prerequisites to become



■ NAC International

that which they have resolved to become. Thanks to Him we can overcome evil, grow into His image, and become worthy to enter into His kingdom. And already today, we can lead a happy life and be a blessing for others.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a vertical line that curves to the right at the bottom, with a horizontal line crossing it.

Jean-Luc Schneider

On 5 January 2020, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider celebrated a divine service in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, which was transmitted to congregations in West Africa, as well as in Belgium, France, and Western Switzerland.



■ NAC Switzerland



Christ makes free!

Galatians 5: 1

*Stand fast therefore in the liberty
by which Christ has made us free,
and do not be entangled again with
a yoke of bondage.*

My dear brethren in Christ, today I would like to emphasise a special aspect, a special characteristic of God: God is absolutely free. Freedom is a popular topic in the world today, and for good reason, by and large. But the perfect example of freedom is God. God is absolutely free. Why? Because God is perfect. He does not need anything or anyone. He is the One and Only. God is perfect. He needs absolutely nothing. In other words, He never acts on the basis of obligation or out of the need to satisfy some sort of requirement. He is perfect. He needs nothing.

No one can force Him to do anything. God is almighty and completely sovereign. He never acts under pressure. He does absolutely anything He wishes to do, and nothing is impossible for Him. That is perfect freedom. If we were to

say this about a person, we would all have an unpleasant feeling in the pit of our stomach and think: “If someone does just as he pleases, then he is completely unpredictable.” This does not apply to God: God is immutable. God is true and faithful. He is dependable and is faithful to Himself. Therefore He also does everything He says He will do. He keeps His word. He has set forth a specific number of laws. He makes His will known. And He is absolutely faithful. Yes, He does whatever He wants, however He is dependable. He is not moody. His actions are not unpredictable or arbitrary. He is trustworthy.

God does not love out of compulsion. God loves because He is love—and He loves unconditionally. He does not say, “If you do this or that, then I will love you.” Not at all! He loves unconditionally. He loves without expecting anything else in return. Whether or not a human being reciprocates His love, God still loves him the same way. His love is an unconditional love, a perfect, limitless love. The love of God is the most beautiful expression of His freedom. God loves unconditionally, boundlessly, and without expecting anything in return.

As I mentioned, God created human beings with their own free will, and human beings made poor use of this freedom. They distanced themselves from God. In Paradise they were disobedient and thereby found themselves under the power of sin. They became slaves to the evil one. But since God is love, He decided: “I want to save mankind.” In His love He sent His Son Jesus Christ to this earth—we do not need to go into further detail here—and Jesus Christ sacrificed His life for the salvation of all human beings without exception or limitation. He surrendered His life by His own free will, so that anyone who so desires can escape the influence of evil. The fact is that all those who decide to follow Jesus can be baptised. Through baptism, Christ liberates us from original sin and grants us access to fellowship with God. God’s objective is not merely to free mankind from the bondage of the evil one and liberate human beings from the influence of evil, but to lead us into His kingdom. He wants to lead us into His kingdom, where the perfect and eternal freedom of God that was once a part of the creation will once again prevail. Human beings will have fellowship with God, in which they will be eternally free, once and for all. In the meantime—between the event of our baptism, when we were redeemed and liberated from original sin, and the day when the Lord returns in order to lead us into

perfect and eternal freedom—a process takes place. I call this the “liberation process”: Christ wants to liberate us so that we can be free, just as the Man Jesus Christ was free during His earthly life. This is the motto that I have proposed for this year in agreement with the District Apostles: “Christ makes free.”

He desires to make us free in eternal fellowship with Him. This year we will focus on the motto: “Christ makes free.” During our earthly lives, He desires to make us just as free as the Man Jesus Christ was while He was on earth. Jesus Christ was free because He said, “The devil, the adversary, may come, but he has nothing on me. He has no claim to me!” Why? Because Jesus Christ never committed even a single sin. That is why the evil one, the devil—or whatever you want to call him—had no claim to Him. Jesus had never sinned.

As a Man, Jesus Christ was free of all sin. Naturally this will not work so easily for us. No matter what we do, we will not succeed at being free from sin—howev-

er, this is not so dramatic, since Christ desires to liberate us. He grants us His grace and His forgiveness, and He tells us: “If you come to Me and believe in Me, if you repent and ask for forgiveness, I can free you of your guilt, I can erase your sins—and then the devil will have no more claim to you either. My grace is a perfect grace. And once I have forgiven your sins, the devil has no more right to you, and you will once again be a perfectly free human being, free from all sin.”

Christ was free from all sin, and He desires to make us free as well. Jesus Christ was a free Man. He had absolute dominion over Himself. Naturally He was a human being like all the rest. He had the same physical and moral needs as we do. He was a Man as we all are, but He remained Master of Himself. He had decided: “I am the beloved Son of My Father. It is important to Me to have fellowship with My Father. It is important to Me to obey My Father. It is important to me—and it is my goal—to return to My Father. First and foremost, I am the Son of My Father.” The devil came to Him and tempted Him by promising Him money, power, and glory. He wanted to satisfy His normal physical and natural needs. But Jesus was always very careful to make a clear distinction. “Wait a moment! Yes, certainly I have various needs. I do have a mission to fulfil, and I will need this and that... But the priority over everything else is My will to remain in fellowship with My Father. First and

God is free, but He does not act in an arbitrary manner. He is trustworthy and faithful.

foremost, I am the Son of My Father, and I want to return to Him.” It was for this reason that He never became a slave to His humanity. He remained Master over Himself and His physical needs. Not once did He allow Himself to become subject to the needs of daily life.

Christ wants to make us free. Clearly we have needs in our lives. We have to eat. We have to drink. We need clothing. We must be able to realise our hopes and dreams in life. These are absolutely justifiable needs. We even need success. We want to find fulfilment in our lives, have our place in society, and we want to realise certain hopes and dreams. This is absolutely legitimate. However, in the process, Christ wants to help us not to become slaves to material things, or to our humanity. Christ teaches us to set the right priorities in life. “Yes, indeed, I need this, I need that!” But be careful! These needs must never call my childhood in God into question. They must never impair my relationship with God.

Dear brother, dear sister, perhaps this sounds a little complicated, but it isn’t really. Just think for a moment! Who are you? We have made a choice. We are children of God. We have surrendered ourselves to Christ. We have promised to follow Christ. We want to have fellowship with God. And we want to enter into His kingdom. This affects me. My humanity, my needs, my passions, my wishes must never lead me to deny myself. I am the one who has sworn faithfulness to God, who wants to be in fellowship with God. And my needs, my wishes, my passions—everything that comprises my daily life—must never cause or obligate me to deny myself. Christ wants to set us free so that we can be masters over ourselves. Jesus Christ was a free human being. He had absolute control over Himself. He had decided once and for all: “I have come forth from the Father and I will go back to the Father. You can do whatever you want, but I will return to My Father and no one will prevent Me from doing so.”

He was acquainted with tribulation, suffering, attacks, and betrayal. He was injured, tortured, and killed—whatever you could imagine—but all without success. He knew: “God will redeem Me. God will see to it that I can return



*If I remain faithful,
I know where my path
will take me.*

to Him.” Jesus had this trust in God. Certainly He feared suffering. Naturally He was afraid of death. This reality is only too clear from the gospels. Jesus did not go into death without a care! He did not make light of this and say, “Oh well, it’s not so bad. Of course I have to pass through this, but...” No. No! He feared the pain. He feared death! He was a Man, a real human being, just like you and I. But He had the certainty: “God will deliver Me. I will remain faithful to Him, which is what gives Me such certainty. I will enter into My Father’s kingdom!”

He was not subject to the prevailing circumstances nor to His sufferings. To the very end, He remained the master of His fate. Christ wants to make us free, just as He Himself was free. We too are exposed to trials, sufferings, and the attacks of the evil one. We are victims of the evil that surrounds us. We are dealing with the enemy of Christ, with all his temptations and attempts to separate us from God. But we also have the assurance: “If I remain faithful, God will lead me into His kingdom and deliver me.” No one is stronger than He is! Even if we dislike these trials, even if we fear suffering and death, at least we are spared this



uncertainty! We have the certainty: “If I remain faithful, I know where my path leads. I will follow it to its goal.” This assurance gives us incredible confidence. Even if everyone else is worried and thinks, “What will become of us? What will happen in ten years? Where will we go then?” Then I can say, “I know where I am going, namely into the kingdom of God.” Naturally it is possible that I might become sick, or that I might even have to die. No one likes this. This is terrible, no doubt about it. But despite all of that, I know where I am going.

Jesus Christ was a completely free Man, even in His dealings with His neighbour. He demonstrated an incredible freedom in this respect. He didn’t care one bit what the majority might have to say about Him. He even threw tradition to the wind. He only believed one thing: human beings, the way God sees them, are souls loved by God, souls whom God desires to save. He was completely free in His dealings with women. Let me underline once more that at the time, this was revolutionary behaviour! He, the Rabbi, the Master, had female disciples—this was something completely extraordinary for that time. To have women among His disciples was an impossible thing in the Judaic world of the time. He was even financially supported by rich women. He spoke to them in complete openness—something totally new, which we completely underestimate today. This was revolutionary! When He resurrected, the first people to whom He showed Himself, and whom He then even commissioned to announce His resurrection, were the wom-

en! Even in this respect, He was completely free. He was also completely free in His dealings with children. In His time, children were considered irrelevant and insignificant. He, however, let them come to Him on certain occasions. His relationship to strangers was completely free: He took care of a Greek woman, a Samaritan woman, the Roman captain, and so on. It was all the same to Him what others thought or said about this. All He saw were souls whom He had come to save. He was totally free, completely free, even with respect to the sinner. He ignored what others would likely say. For Him, the only thing that counted was the soul, whom God wished to deliver—just take Zacchaeus as an example. In His total freedom, He did not care a whit about the talk of others. He saw His neighbour with the eyes of God. Christ wishes to make us just as free as He was. He teaches us to love just as He loved.

Jesus Christ was a free Man. He had full trust in God, and He knew: “My Father will give Me everything that belongs to Him. Everything that is His also belongs to Me.” He was conscious of this great wealth, and was completely free as a result. He knew exactly: “If someone does Me an ill turn now, it will bring Me nothing to desire revenge, or to repay evil with evil.” He was perfectly happy with that which His Father had already given Him, and with that which the Father was yet to give Him. He thus knew: “Getting revenge on the perpetrator and punishing him will bring me nothing.” Because He possessed this wealth, He was always prepared to forgive, even those who had crucified Him:



“Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do.” He had this freedom because He knew: “The Father will give Me everything. Whether this person is punished or not makes no difference to Me. I have everything already.” He was also free to forgive. Christ wants to make us free.

Last year we had the motto: “Rich in Christ.” We have not forgotten this. We preserve it in our hearts. And if we are truly aware of the wealth God grants us, He can also free us of our desire for revenge. Do you know something? Those who are out to get revenge, who have this insatiable thirst for revenge—you know, when you want the other person to be punished, when you wish God would destroy him, when you want him to suffer, when you want him to be reproached—at times this thirst for revenge is unquenchable. No matter what happens, one is never completely satisfied, and ultimately we cannot help realise that those who cry out for revenge like this have become slaves to this spirit. These people cannot find any peace. The idea that a guilty person should be condemned and punished by a court of law is another matter entirely. This has to do with the domain of life in society. That is absolutely the rule. But here we are talking about our relationship with God. If we do not ask God to punish the guilty party, if we do not ask God to exclude him from salvation, then we are prepared to forgive him. After all, it will bring us nothing to do evil

to someone else or to repay evil with evil. And then we realise: “But I already have everything! This desire for revenge only robs me of my peace, my inner composure, and calm. But if I forgive, then I am truly free.” Christ wants to make us just as free as He was. You are so rich in Christ that you can afford this luxury. Do not become a slave to the spirit of revenge! Christ trusted in God: “God will grant Me everything I need.”

He was free of all fear and anxiety. Thus He was completely free to serve God and His neighbour. He was free to serve. He did not calculate what He might gain by performing a good deed. “If I do this for him, what do I get in return? If I rush out to help this person, what will he or she then do for me? What advantage can I gain, what benefit for myself can I get out of it?” No! He was absolutely free: “I serve because I want to serve”, because He no longer had any fear for Himself. He trusted in God. “God will grant Me everything that I need. Therefore I can serve without fear of losing anything.” This is another kind of freedom that Christ wishes to give us. If we put all our trust in God, then God will give us everything we really need: “My grace is sufficient for you.” And so I will be completely free to serve. I have no more fear about myself. I no longer have to calculate what advantage I can gain by doing something for God or my neighbour, or whether it will serve for my own advantage.

Those who calculate in this manner are slaves. On the other hand, those who trust in God are aware of their wealth and are thus completely free to serve.

And in closing, one last point: it is recorded variously in the gospels that Jesus spoke freely and openly. Once again: He did not worry in the least about how others might react. He had come to proclaim the gospel, the will of His Father, whether it was comfortable for others or not. He said, “This is how things are and no different!” Naturally, this also brought Him quite a bit of trouble, because people did not always agree! And the Pharisees, well, He really annoyed them. But Jesus was not concerned about this. “This is the truth,” He said. Or at other times He said, “This is the will of My Father.” Even in this respect, Christ desires to make us free. Now, we are here in Switzerland—and what’s more, in the French part of Switzerland—where things are always very friendly. All the people are nice and friendly... Nevertheless, today everyone has the right to say what he or she wants. One can publicly bring to expression the most improbable ideas—I am trying to say this diplomatically—the most misplaced opinions, and the greatest nonsense, and simply say, “Well, that is just my freedom of expression. Everyone has the right to express his or her thoughts.” I respect that. However, in that case, it should also be accepted when we Christians say what we think! We should also make known our commitment to the values of Christianity, and we should also be respected for it. In Switzerland that is surely not a problem, but in other countries it is becoming a problem. Everyone says whatever he or she thinks, but when a Christian says, “Wait a minute! What about love for our neighbour, forgiveness, honesty, work—all of these things are important, aren’t they?!” he can be happy if he isn’t shot! That will not do. Even here, Christ wants to make us free, and encourages us by saying, “Talk about your goals. I am not asking you to convert the whole world, but the voice of the gospel should be heard!” After all, someone has to say, “No, that will not work. We cannot talk like that. I do not agree with that. We cannot treat people like that. This opinion is not consistent with the gospel. I love Jesus and follow Him. And I also ask you to respect my faith.” Now it is not my intent to become a political leader or introduce any sort of revolutionary ideas, but—pardon me for saying it so directly—as the one responsible for the New Apostolic Church, I think I can say that we also expect the world to respect our faith and our convictions. Freedom for every individual only exists if the other person is just as free as I am. Let us see to it that the voice of the gospel continues to be heard. Let us not allow ourselves to be discouraged. Let us not be afraid to show that we follow Christ. Here too, Christ wants to make us free. Let us not be afraid to speak openly of our commitment to the gospel and its values.

Christ was free. He has also freed us from original sin through Holy Baptism with water. Christ wants to make us just as free as He was. He wants to grant us His grace and free us from the burden of sin, from the weight of sin, which impairs our relationship with God, and causes discontent, sullenness, and sadness. Christ wants to make us free. We must not become slaves to our humanity. Naturally we have human needs, but above all, let us remain what we are: we are children of God. We have surrendered ourselves to Jesus. We have made the commitment to follow Him, and let us never deny this by any means! No matter what may come, everything else is of secondary importance. We have decided: we want to enter into the kingdom of God. Christ wants to give us the freedom to be masters over our own destinies. Neither death, nor suffering, nor hardship, nor temptations are to prevent us from doing so. If we remain at the hand of Christ, none of these things will be able to prevent us from reaching our goal. Christ wants to make us free with respect to others: thus we are neither naïve nor weak individuals, but rather strong and capable of loving our neighbour because we know: “God wants to save him. I respect Him. He is a human being, a soul, whom God wants to save. Jesus has also died for him.” Christ desires to make us completely free in our dealings with others. He wants to make us free in our way of serving. We are free, and can thus serve without calculation or any other precondition. We are capable of this. We are free to forgive, because we know that revenge and punishment will not bring us any satisfaction at all. It would only hinder us. We have the will to forgive, and we do so often and freely because we are followers of Jesus Christ. With Christ we can be completely free.

From a divine service by the Chief Apostle

CORE THOUGHTS

Jesus Christ makes us free by relieving us of our guilt and bondage to sin, by enabling us to love unconditionally and to do good works, by enabling us to be masters of our own destiny, and by leading us into His glory.



■ NAC USA

The kingdom of God: both a present and a future reality

“It is Jesus who rules over His church. Let us therefore be careful that we do not act like kings.” Strong words from the Chief Apostle in a divine service in Santo Domingo. How it came to this ...

Hispaniola Island is situated in the Caribbean archipelago, known as the Greater Antilles. It is the second largest island in the region after Cuba. Two separate independent states share the island: the Dominican Republic in the east and Haiti in the west. Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider conducted a divine service in Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic on Saturday, 22 June 2019. All members of the Church in the country were invited for the occasion.

The Chief Apostle explained that as the Lord Jesus was praying with His disciples, they realised that something special was happening. “That is why one of them asked Him

to teach them to pray. And He began to say what came to be known as the Lord’s Prayer and instructed them to pray just like this.” The first important thing is the invocation of God and praising Him. The first plea, however, is: “Your kingdom come.” Here Jesus demonstrated a clear priority. The Son of God did not come into this world in order to do miracles or to solve all problems. He came in order to save mankind and to lead them into the kingdom of God. That is what salvation means. “And when we pray, ‘Your kingdom come,’ we acknowledge this principle: He wants to save us and lead us into His kingdom. He doesn’t want to heal us or make us rich.”

On Friday, 21 June 2019, the Church leader met with Apostles and Bishops on the island of Hispaniola. On Saturday and Sunday he celebrated two services with brothers and sisters: one in Santo Domingo and one in Léogâne



The future kingdom of God

Of course, the Chief Apostle continued, this plea from the Lord's Prayer first of all refers to the kingdom of God to come. For Christians today the text underlines the belief that God wants to free mankind from the bondage of evil and lead them into the kingdom of heaven. It is therefore the declared goal to be part of the bride, whom Christ will allow to enter His kingdom upon His return. Ultimately, it means living in God's eternal kingdom in the new creation, created by God, in order to replace the one forfeited by human sin.

The present kingdom of God

However—and the Chief Apostle made a point of emphasising this in his sermon—the kingdom of God is also an image that refers to the presence of Jesus Christ among mankind today. Anyone who has been reborn of water and the Spirit can participate in it if he knows that he is completely dependent on grace and cannot earn salvation through his own works, if he allows God to rule over him, and knows that he must work for his salvation today.

What does that mean for us?

Then, continued the Chief Apostle, the presence and dominion of Jesus Christ will be become more and more noticeable in our congregations.

- “The kingdom of Jesus is not of this world. The primary task of the church is the preparation for the return of Christ. Let us never forget: what Jesus does in His church is far more important than what we do!”

- “It is Jesus who rules His church. We are all just servants who serve the Lord and one another. Let us therefore not act like little kings.”
- “Our peaceful coexistence is subject to the law of Jesus. Let us contribute so that love, patience, and grace rule in our congregation.”
- “Let us be confident: ‘Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom’ (Luke 12: 32).”

After the divine service, the Chief Apostle and his party continued to Haiti on the other side of the island, where he conducted another service the next day.

CORE THOUGHTS

Luke 11: 2:

“Your kingdom come”

- God reigns in the Church and in us.
- We wait for the kingdom of God to come. We want Jesus to reigns in our heart.
- We want the presence of Jesus to be more and more perceptible in our congregation.

More than 4,500 believers gathered in the central church in Lusaka for the service



■ NAC Zambia

The right choice: God has priority!

“God help me!”—a call that is often expressed aloud in times of decision. It was concerning times such as these—and what they are good for—that Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider preached in a divine service he conducted in Lusaka, Zambia.

The focus of the sermon on 21 July 2019 was a familiar plea from the Lord’s Prayer: “And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” (Matthew 6: 13a). “This constitutes the plea that God may lead and help the church,” explained the Church leader. After all, the disciples of the Lord Jesus also witnessed how He would withdraw in silent prayer. And they also noticed that He would always return from each of these prayers with new strength. From this they concluded that the prayers of their Lord were of a special kind, and so they asked Him, “Lord, teach us to pray.” He then prayed the Lord’s Prayer with them.

Temptations lead to decisions

One of the statements in the Lord’s Prayer expresses: “And do not lead us into temptation.” At first, this sounds a little strange, conceded the Chief Apostle. “After all, does God set a trap into which we are supposed to fall?” His answer: “No! Definitely not! God does not want us to fall into sin, but rather that we overcome sin!” Our task is to decide against

sin by our own will. This requires a battle—but without a battle, there can be no victory. “We must therefore be tempted in order to gain the victory. We must decide for God and renounce the evil one. That is why we make this statement when we pray.” Behind this is the desire that God may allow us to make a clear decision—namely for Him and against sin. To this end, we request His help, His support, and His strength: “Lord, help us make a good decision, and help us overcome sin.”

When Jesus was in the wilderness ...

The Chief Apostle used the majority of his sermon to explain the temptations of the Lord in the wilderness to the congregation. After all, Jesus Himself was also tempted. As true Man, He too had to resist sin. And as a Man, He too had to decide for God when confronted with evil.

The temptation scene in the wilderness incorporated several parts. First came the battle against hunger, said the Chief



Left: During the divine service District Apostle Charles S. Ndandula retired. Above: the Chief Apostle appointed Kububa Soko as the new District Apostle for Zambia, Malawi, and Zimbabwe

“At times,” he said, “we forget that we have been elected for a specific task! God has called you in order to serve Him here on earth and in the coming kingdom of peace! We are elected to serve His church and our neighbour.”

His will, not ours, be done

Temptation number three: finally the devil proposed that Jesus should throw Himself from the pinnacle of the temple so that the angels could catch Him up and save Him as stated in Holy Scripture (Luke 4: 9, 11). Once again, Jesus refused to tempt God. He knew that this was not the way to win people for

God. He did not want to impose His will upon God’s will by forcing Him to intervene.

“Let us not try to impose our will upon God,” was the caption for this part of the Chief Apostle’s sermon. “Naturally, the Bible tells us that God blesses those who obey Him, and that He hears the prayers of the righteous. But our prayers and our obedience do not oblige God to do what we want!” Instead, let us ask God for the strength to overcome our own will, just as the Lord did: “...Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will” (Matthew 26: 39).

Apostle. Holy Scripture relates that Jesus did not eat for 40 days and 40 nights. Accordingly, the first temptation was: “If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread” (from Luke 4: 3). “Doubts were expressed here about whether He was really the Son of God,” stated the Church leader. He went on to add that we often experience similar things today: difficult times can cause us to call the love of God into question. “At such times, let us ask God to help us to overcome doubt and to trust in Him.”

Salvation has priority

Temptation number two: Jesus was shown all the wealth and all the kingdoms of the world. The evil one was willing to give it all to Him, if only He would fall down and worship him (Luke 4: 6-7). But Jesus declined the offer. “At times we too see the success of the wicked,” said the Chief Apostle. At such times we might likewise be tempted to resort to sin in order to fulfil our needs and wishes. “But we ought rather to ask for God’s help in order to overcome sin.”

“We follow Christ because we want to enter into the kingdom of God. God has priority,” said the Chief Apostle in all clarity. Naturally, human beings can still ask for their daily bread and take care of their natural existence. “But this is not the highest priority in our lives.” After all, “we are not here in order to become rich, but in order to serve the Lord and our neighbour.” And beyond that, “Let us ask God to help us make the right choice. Our priority is the salvation of our souls!”

CORE THOUGHTS

Matthew 6: 13a:

“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one”

We ask God to help us to overcome doubt, sin, and our own will.

We ask God to make the choice to prioritise salvation, serve God and love our neighbour.

Everybody should feel loved

If love is considered a chore, then something is wrong with our understanding of the gospel. After all, love is the standard for interpersonal relationships, the Chief Apostle said in a divine service recently.



■ NAC Western Pacific

In mid-September 2019 Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider immersed himself in the world of Oceania. The first leg of his journey to the District Apostle area of the Western Pacific was Samoa. He conducted a divine service in Apia on 15 September 2019 at the Tatte Convention Centre in the presence of the head of state and his wife. The focus of his sermon was brotherly love, of which Apostle Paul writes.

Paul already took his mission to prepare the church for the return of Christ very seriously, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider said in his opening address. He taught them a faith that persists in difficult circumstances, in trials and

tribulations. “Faith means trusting in God,” even when you do not feel His love, when you do not perceive His omnipotence, the Chief Apostle said.

Brotherly love is the standard

Paul explained to the believers at the time how important brotherly love among them was. He referred to the fact that this commandment was, after all, not his own idea, but the will of God. “In other words: this love is the standard, the unit of measurement of our spiritual maturity.” God does not look at our deeds, the Chief Apostle continued, but at

our love. “I am not sure that every child of God has understood that,” the Chief Apostle said. The best way to strive for brotherly love is to follow and imitate the example of Jesus Christ. “It is not enough to do a good deed every day. We need to follow and imitate Jesus Christ. He tells us how to love.”

Accept one another!

Jesus wants us to love one another as He loves us, the Chief Apostle pointed out. “Actually, He would have so many reasons not to accept me. But He never says that. All He ever says is, ‘Come, you are welcome.’” And in the congregation the same must apply: “Accept your sister, your brother as they are. Don’t put conditions on your love.” Instead, brothers and sisters should support one another, have time to listen to each other, to share their joys and sorrows, and forgive each other. Jesus loved His disciples even when He did not get from them what He wanted from them: sometimes they disappointed Him or even betrayed Him. Yet He never considered His disciples a burden. On the contrary, “He thanked God for His brothers.”

The same should apply today. “Sometimes we say how nice it is to be part of a congregation, but at the same time complain about the difficult people around us.” That means we focus on the weaknesses of our brothers and sisters instead of really loving them, the Chief Apostle said.

At the same time, he did concede that he sees a lot of love when he looks at the many congregations around the world: “Much good is being done out of love for one another.” That is important and needs to grow. “Everybody should feel loved!” In our society people become more and more selfish. “It is always about me, about my ideas, my wishes, my needs—always me, me, me.” In order to be able to survive in such a society, we need to grow in love in order not to become selfish ourselves. “Remember that what we know about the love of Christ is far more important than what we know about our neighbour.”

This is the goal I am working towards

So, what is the true core of brotherly love?” the Chief Apostle asked: Our wish is that all people—“our neighbours”—may be saved by Jesus Christ. “It is my wish and my earnest endeavour that everyone can enter the kingdom of God. This is what I am working towards and praying for! Let’s help each other in reaching the goal of our faith.”



After the divine service Chief Apostle Schneider and Head of State Va’aletoa Sualauvi II met for a short discussion

CORE THOUGHTS

1 Thessalonians 4: 9:

“But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another”

God requires that we love one another as He loves us. Brotherly love is expressed through tolerance, sharing, forgiveness, support, and thankfulness. We can and must still grow in brotherly love.

THE PENTECOST MIRACLE

ACCORDING TO ACTS 2: 1-47

It is fifty days after Easter, on Pentecost, and the Apostles and other men and women who followed Jesus are gathered together in a house in Jerusalem. They are waiting for the power of the Holy Spirit to come to them, just as Jesus has promised them.

Suddenly a rushing sound arises from heaven like a mighty storm and fills the whole house. Tongues like fire come to rest on each one of them, and the disciples are filled with the Holy Spirit. He even causes them to speak in other languages about the great deeds of God. At the same time, there are pilgrims from Mesopotamia, Asia, Egypt, Libya, and Rome visiting the city. They have travelled there in order to bring offerings in the temple in Jerusalem. Many pilgrims come to the house, where the disciples filled with the Holy Spirit begin talking to them. The listeners suddenly notice something remarkable: each one of them is able to hear

the message in his own language.

The listeners ask themselves: "How can this be possible?"

These men come from Galilee! How are they suddenly able to speak in other languages?"

Some of them think the disciples might be drunk. But then

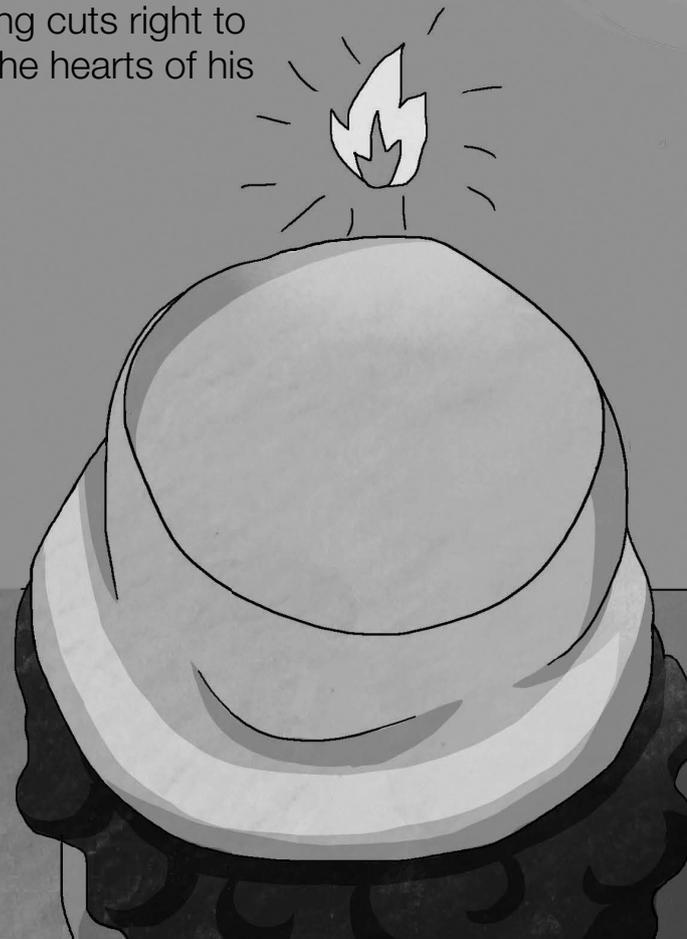
Peter takes centre stage and says, "None of us are drunk!

Today a great miracle has occurred. God has poured out

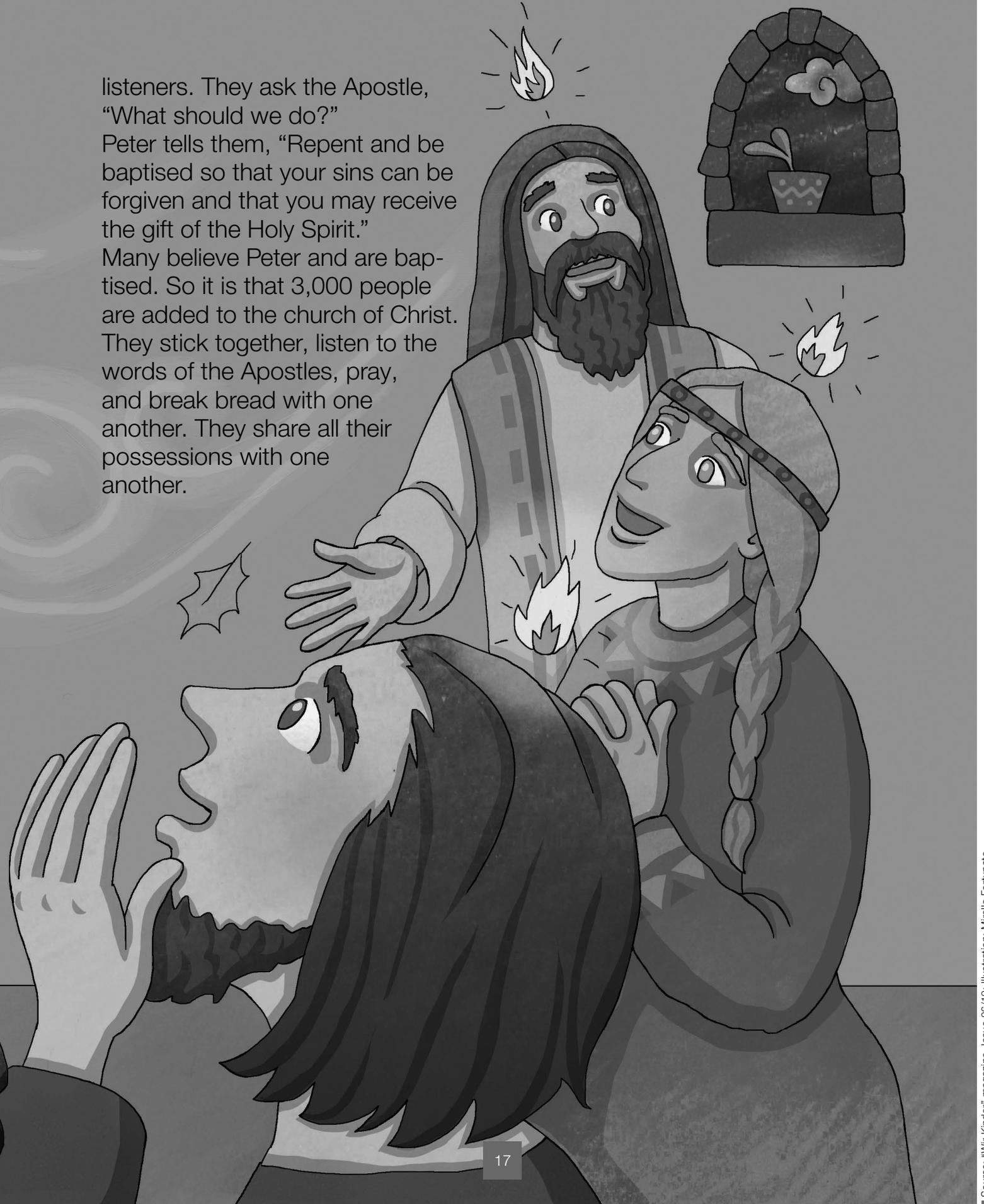
His Holy Spirit, just as He has promised through the prophets."

Then He tells them about Jesus, how He had been crucified and had risen from the dead.

Peter's preaching cuts right to the hearts of his

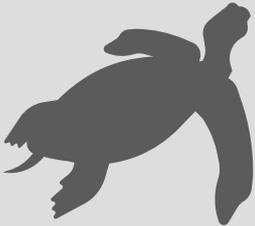


listeners. They ask the Apostle, "What should we do?" Peter tells them, "Repent and be baptised so that your sins can be forgiven and that you may receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Many believe Peter and are baptised. So it is that 3,000 people are added to the church of Christ. They stick together, listen to the words of the Apostles, pray, and break bread with one another. They share all their possessions with one another.



ON A VISIT TO SOPHIE'S IN NOUMÉA, NEW CALEDONIA

Good day, my friends! My name is **Sophie**. I am nine years old and live in Nouméa, which is the capital city of New Caledonia. If you were to dig a tunnel from Europe straight through the world, you might just arrive in my garden!



New Caledonia lies in the South Pacific, next to Australia. The island was discovered in the eighteenth century by the English seafarer James Cook. New Caledonia is home to the largest lagoon in the world. Since 2008, it has been included in UNESCO's World Natural Heritage list. The diversity of the animals and plants that live in the lagoon is quite extraordinary. For example, there are dolphins, thousands of colourful fish, turtles, and many other animals. One of them is the **nautilus**, a

living fossil. This species has already existed for 400 million years—and was here long before the dinosaurs.

Earlier, I told you about my garden. In fact, it belongs to my **grandparents**. They take care of me because my mother is not well and cannot look after me right now. My grandmother's

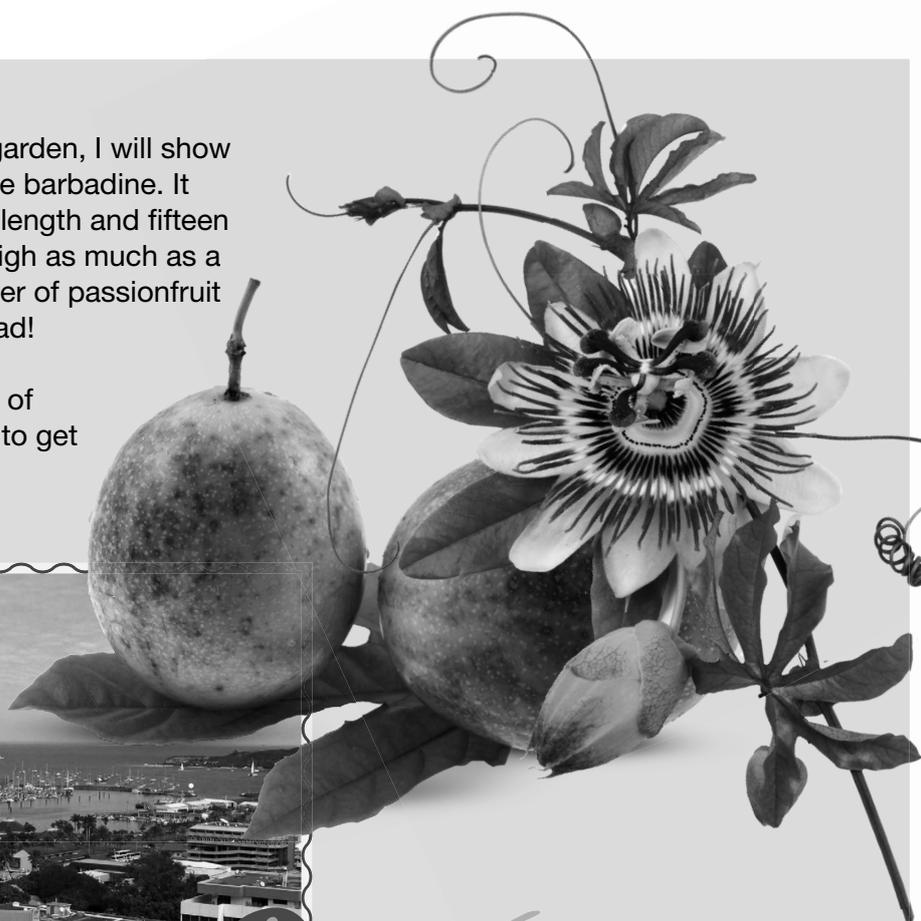
name is Yvette, and my grandfather's name is Eugene.

He is a retired Priest. I also have an older sister called Zoélie and a brother whose name is Jean-Luc. He was named after our Chief Apostle. They do not live with us, but with foster families.



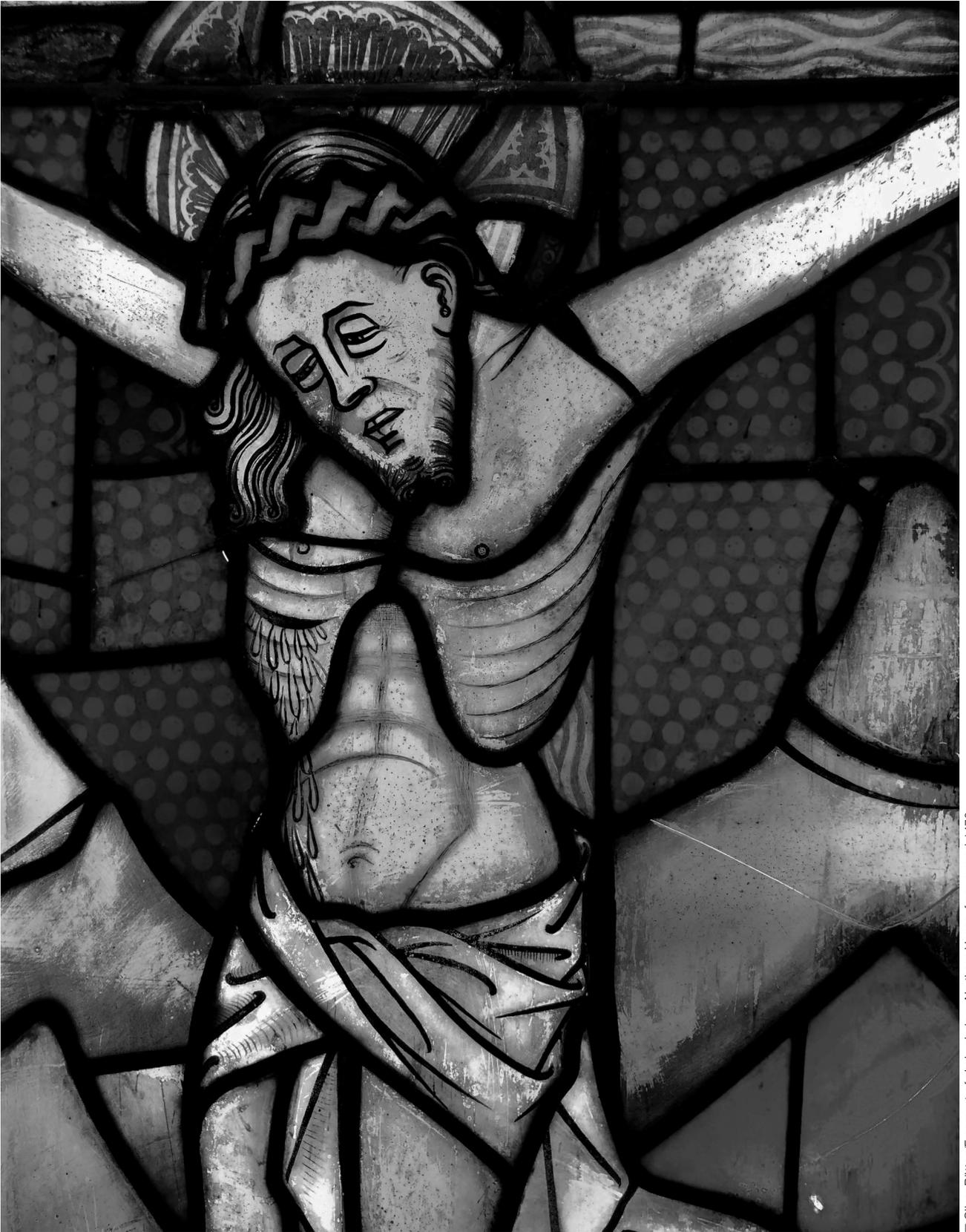
If you ever come to my grandparents' garden, I will show you a large fruit that grows here. It is the barbadine. It can grow as large as 30 centimetres in length and fifteen centimetres in thickness, and it can weigh as much as a kilogramme. The **barbadine** is a member of passionfruit family and tastes delicious in a fruit salad!

We live in St. Michel, which is a suburb of Nouméa. We have to walk half an hour to get to **church** on Sundays.



Not long ago, we had our first visit from our **District Apostle** Rainer Storck. He was accompanied by our Apostle Jeannot Leibfried. We had prepared a song to welcome the two of them. My heart was beating very quickly when we sang it. We also placed garlands of flowers around the Apostles' necks. This is part of our tradition of hospitality. After the divine service, I was allowed to take a photo with our District Apostle. I will guard it like a treasure!





■ Oliver Rütten/Fragment of choir window, Northern Hesse, from around 1470

The significance of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ

What significance does the sacrificial death of Jesus have for us? Why did Jesus Christ have to suffer and die? Answers from a doctrinal article by Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider.

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ—that is to say, the death of Jesus—is the essential foundation of Christian faith, life, and proclamation. Concerning this we read as follows in the Catechism: “The core of the gospel is Jesus Christ who, through His death on the cross and His resurrection, created eternal salvation. Thus the cross of Christ became the epitome of God’s reconciliatory actions toward sinful mankind.

The words of Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 1: 18 demonstrate a conflicting understanding of Christ’s death on the cross: ‘For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.’ Death on the cross was generally considered a defeat, the ignominious end of a despised person who had been cast out of human society. But here, according to the wisdom of God, the apparent defeat is really a victory which laid the foundation for an immeasurably great work of redemption. Through the resurrection, God acknowledged the Crucified One as the Christ (Acts 2: 36). In Him alone eternal salvation is given” (CNAC 3.4.9.9).

Jesus’ death on Golgotha established the new covenant into which both Jews and Gentiles can be incorporated through baptism with water. Salvation thus has its foundation in the sacrifice of Christ, which is granted to human beings in order to liberate them from remoteness from God. “Through the sacrifice of Christ, mankind’s relationship with God has been set upon a new foundation. The merit Christ thereby acquired makes liberation from sin—and the undoing of permanent separation from God—possible: ‘Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation’ (2 Corinthians 5: 17–19)” (CNAC 4.4.2).

The sacrificial death of Jesus and faith

In the context of his remarks concerning the relationship between faith and works, between the gospel and the law, Paul speaks of the expiatory character of Jesus’ death. Paul emphasises the importance of belief in Jesus Christ in order to attain righteousness before God. Righteousness signifies the experience of God’s nearness and salvation. The Apostle writes as follows: “... [Jesus was] set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Romans 3: 25–26). That the death of Jesus has an expiatory character can only be recognised by faith and can only be accepted in faith. As transgressors against the law themselves, it is impossible for human beings to overcome or erase sin on their own. It is here that Jesus Christ intercedes for the sinner by taking his sins upon Himself in a substitutionary capacity, and dying the death to which the sinner has actually been condemned.

Faith is thus the key to understanding, as well as an essential element of accepting the sacrifice of Christ, because it is only through faith that even the sacraments and the forgiveness of sins can develop their power and effect salvation.

The sacrificial death of Jesus and Holy Baptism with water

The relationship between the crucifixion of Jesus and baptism is addressed in Romans 6: 3–7. Apostle Paul states that the baptised is integrated into the death of Jesus. The Christian is directly united with the death of Jesus through the sacrament of Holy Baptism with water. Here Paul writes,

“Do you not know that as many of us as were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death? [...] knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin” (verses 3, 6, and 7).

The Catechism likewise elaborates on the relationship between Holy Baptism with water and the sacrificial death of Jesus in the context of Romans 6: 3–8: “The baptised shares in the death of Jesus Christ and in His new life. Seen in a spiritual sense, he partakes in the experience of Jesus Christ. Just as Christ died on the cross for the sins of mankind, so the baptised is to be ‘dead indeed to sin’ by renouncing it. Baptism incorporates the believer into Christ’s activity of redemption such that Christ’s death on Golgotha also becomes the ‘death’ of the baptised: this signifies the end of life in the condition of remoteness from God and the beginning of life in Christ. Baptism imparts powers to wage the battle against sin (Romans 6: 3–8; Colossians 2: 12–13). Baptism is ‘putting on Christ’. With it, the first step on the path to renewal of the inner man has been taken: ‘For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ’ (Galatians 3: 27). This image constitutes the basis for abandoning one’s old way of life and putting on the virtues of Christ. It describes that which comes to expression in the term ‘repentance’, namely the act of turning away from one’s old nature and turning to the Lord.

This means that one must earnestly endeavour to lead one’s life in accordance with God’s will. The baptised person vows to conduct and organise his life under the regency of Christ” (CNAC 8.1.6). The Apostles—and this is one of their most important tasks—preach the crucified Christ, in other words, the “message of the cross” (1 Corinthians 1: 18). They spread awareness about the relevance of the cross for salvation, and call out to all human beings: “Be reconciled to God!” (2 Corinthians 5: 20).

The sacrificial death of Jesus and Holy Communion

The connection between Holy Communion and the sacrificial death of Jesus is also mentioned in the Catechism: “Holy Communion is a meal of remembrance because it first of all commemorates the death of Jesus Christ as a

unique event which is valid for all times. The remembrance of this event is important because it emphasises that Jesus Christ is true Man who had to suffer real death” (CNAC 8.2.8). That Holy Communion is also a remembrance of the death of Jesus and His continuing message is stated in first Corinthians: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes” (1 Corinthians 11: 26). Remembrance and proclamation of the sacrifice of Jesus occur wherever the Lord’s Supper is celebrated and wherever its character as a meal of remembrance is preserved.

The sacrificial death of Jesus and forgiveness of sins

Since the state of being a Christian—that is to say, of having acquired a completely new status before God—is itself rooted in the sacrificial death of Jesus, it is not appropriate to identify the sacrifice of Christ with the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins in the divine service. The sacrifice of Christ is indeed the basis upon which the forgiveness of sins can be pronounced and effected, however, the forgiveness of sins is only one product of this sacrifice—albeit an extremely important one.

The Catechism makes it clear that the forgiveness of sins in general is closely related to the sacrifice of Christ: “The perfect sacrifice of Christ replaced the sacrificial service of the Old Testament. Jesus Christ led a life without sin. Through His sacrifice, the willing surrender of His life (John 10: 17–18), He broke the power of Satan and conquered the devil and all his works, namely sin and death (2 Corinthians 5: 21). Since then the forgiveness of sins—in the sense of erasing—has become possible (Hebrews 10: 18), as has redemption from sin and death (Romans 3: 24)” (CNAC 12.1.8.3).

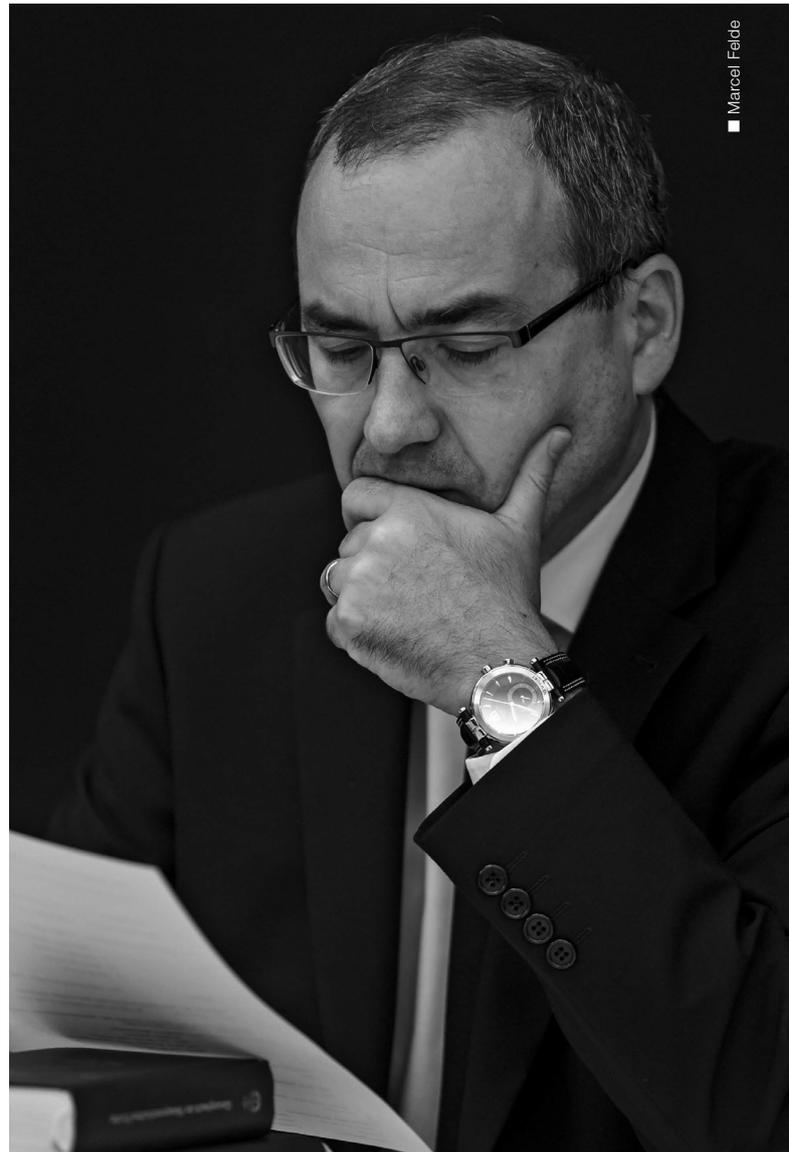
Through His death, Jesus Christ has effected forgiveness of sins for all those who belong to Him. This can be directly experienced through the washing away of original sin in Holy Baptism with water. It is through this act that the sin which radically separates mankind from God and conditions the human state of remoteness from God is neutralised—in other words, washed away. It is for this reason that the Catechism states: “The fundamental liberation from the rule of sin occurs through Holy Baptism with water,

in which original sin is washed away” (CNAC 2.4.3). The Creed of Nicaea-Constantinople also points in this direction when it says: “We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins.”

Besides this, the Apostles received the commission from the Risen Lord to proclaim the forgiveness of sins (John 20: 23). This commission, which the Apostles fulfil, serves to liberate the repentant sinner from the burden of sin, with which he has charged himself through his evil thoughts and deeds. Here the Catechism states: “Forgiveness of sins must be proclaimed. Jesus pronounced forgiveness of sins upon individuals (Luke 7: 48, inter alia).

Forgiveness of sins occurs through the absolution, which is proclaimed in the name of Jesus Christ by authorised ministers. It is generally proclaimed in the divine service to the congregation. However, it only has its effect on those who grasp it in faith and fulfil the corresponding prerequisites. The authority to proclaim the forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus is contained in the ministry of reconciliation, namely the Apostle ministry (John 20: 23)” (CNAC 12.1.8.7).

The Catechism also expressly points out that the forgiveness of sins pronounced in the divine service does not occur automatically: “The absolution proclaimed in authority and in the name of Jesus, when grasped in faith, erases sin” (CNAC 12.1.8.8). The “forgiveness of sins proclaimed before the consecration of the elements of Holy Communion also enables believers to worthily partake of Holy Communion” (CNAC 8.2.14). Believers who hear the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins and accept it in faith receive the certainty that the grace and mercy of God will accompany them in their lives. God inclines Himself to the sinner and liberates him from his debts again and again.



■ Marcel Felde

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 Editor: Peter Johanning



■ Joachim Schmidt



A dream come true

Her biggest wish seemed unattainable. But Ashley-Ann unexpectedly found helpers. Here is how the physically handicapped young woman from South Africa was able to participate in the International Youth Convention in Germany.

Ashley-Ann Kortje (29) lives in Riversdale together with her parents, 300 kilometres east of Cape Town. Her legs ceased to grow at the age of five. She depends on a wheelchair to get around. On prosthetics she can only walk a few steps.

Ashley-Ann would love nothing more than to stand on her own two feet, also figuratively speaking. She attended a school for children with special needs in Cape Town. But due to a lack of funds, classes there stop after grade eight. The fact that Ashley has no high school diploma makes it difficult for her to find a job. With the wages her parents earn as farm workers and a small state support the family just manages to keep their heads above water.

The wish to be there

In spite of a hard life, the family radiates a joyful faith. Like many thousands of other New Apostolic young people, Ashley-Ann was really excited about the International Youth Convention 2019 (IYC 2019). She pictured how ex-

citing it would be to be there and whom she would all meet there—all the time knowing only too well that her dream would never come true.

Then one night she actually dreamed that she was in Düsseldorf (Germany). First thing in the morning she told her mother about it. Her mother listened, but reminded her of their circumstances. But she did say to Ashley-Ann: “Keep your dream alive. God alone knows how everything will turn out.”

A desire to help

Joachim Schmidt (56) from a congregation in southern Germany is an avid motorcyclist. His wife, Elke, shares his passion. The two are friends with like-minded brothers and sisters not only in Germany, but also in South Africa.

Joachim, a self-employed energy consultant, and his wife—who themselves have three grown children and are now grandparents—wanted to offer a young South Afri-

Ashley-Ann gained unforgettable impressions at the IYC in meetings with young people from South Africa and with the Chief Apostle (right)



can brother or sister with special needs the possibility of attending the 2019 youth convention in Germany. A first attempt failed. “Our little project, for which we had prayed long and hard, almost came to nothing,” Joachim says, “but the principal at the South African school we had spoken to saw our disappointment and made a suggestion ...”

A first meeting

A few days later, Elke and Joachim Schmidt drove to Riversdale to meet Ashley-Ann. After a warm welcome the tension in the room was palpable. When the German visitors introduced themselves and extended their invitation to Ashley-Ann to attend the youth convention, mother and daughter were speechless. “It took a minute until they realised what we had in mind. Cautiously, Ashley-Ann started to ask questions and then told us about herself,” Joachim Schmidt remembers.

“Shortly before we left, the mother said something to Ashley-Ann in Afrikaans, which the family’s Priest translated for us: ‘Your dream has come true!’ When we asked what she means, Ashley-Ann told us about her dream. When we heard this it was a sign for all of us that God must have had a hand in this.”

A lot of red tape had to be dealt with until all the documents necessary for Ashley-Ann’s trip to Germany were together. “But with God’s help and support from Joanne and Anton de Waal, our dear biker friends from Riversdale, Ashley-Ann managed to get a visa for Germany in time,” the Schmidts said. To make sure that nothing would go wrong in the end, the couple flew to Cape Town to meet Ashley-Ann and accompany her on her flight to Germany.

Right in the middle of things

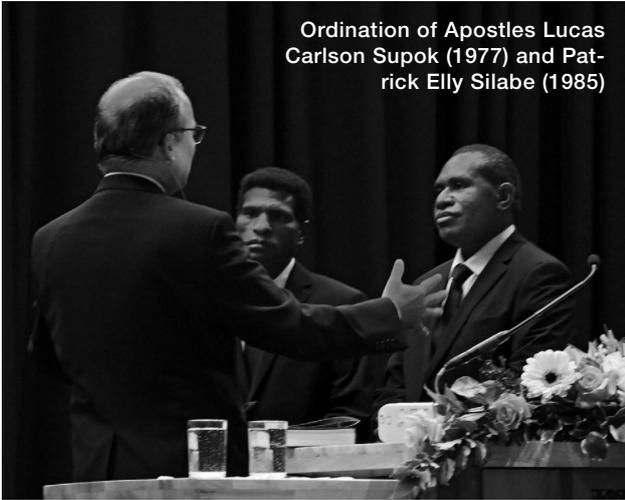
Even months after the youth convention, Ashley-Ann still talks about her trip as though it was yesterday: “I am so grateful to our heavenly Father that He made it possible. Sometimes it feels as though I am still there because my memories are so intense.” One very special experience she had at the IYC was meeting the Chief Apostle. “To actually see him in real life, and not only on TV or in a magazine, was an amazing experience. Also that I was allowed to be so close to the Chief Apostle during the divine service I would never have dreamed of.”

The young sister is so grateful to all the people who made this miraculous experience possible: the school’s principal and the de Waals in South Africa, and particularly Elke and Joachim Schmidt. “I really appreciate what they did for me. I will never forget their love and kindness.”

Elke and Joachim Schmidt are happy that they were able to make Ashley-Ann so happy by making it possible for her to attend the youth convention. “The experience with Ashley-Ann was very special for us, because even when we had the feeling that all our efforts were in vain, God opened a door at the right time, solved problems, and gave us the right thoughts.” The couple has taken the young woman into their heart and would like to continue to support her so that her other big wish can come true: completing school and graduating, and continuing her education so that she can stand on her own feet.

This article was originally published in the German magazine “Unsere Familie”, edition 20/2019.

NAC Western Pacific (1), NAC Zambia (2)



Ordination of Apostles Lucas Carlson Supok (1977) and Patrick Elly Silabe (1985)



Ordination of Apostles Curdwell Mukwati (1961) and Collins Chazilwa Luhanga (1980)

Changes in the circle of the Apostles

Only a few retirements and ordinations have taken place recently in the circle of the Apostles—the past six months comprise a relatively calm half-year characterised by continuity. There are currently 349 active Apostles around the world.

A total of 249,700 ministers around the globe are active in diaconal or priestly service. Together with the Apostles, they care for our members in 58,500 congregations throughout the world. The apostolate consists of 325 Apostles, 8 District Apostle Helpers, 15 District Apostles, and one Chief Apostle.

Ordinations and appointments

On Saturday, 6 July 2019, the hitherto District Elder Mukoka Jean Kabala (1977) was ordained an Apostle. Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider performed this act in a divine service in Inkisi, Democratic Republic of Congo.

Elsewhere on the continent, District Apostle Kububa Soko (1969) succeeded District Apostle Charles S. Ndandula. In a divine service on Sunday, 21 July 2019, Chief Apostle Schneider appointed the hitherto District Apostle Helper a District Apostle for the District Apostle district of Zambia, Malawi, and Zimbabwe. District Apostle Helpers Rob-

ert Nsamba and Arnold Mhango support the new District Apostle.

In a divine service on Sunday, 22 September 2019 in Christchurch, New Zealand, the Church's leading clergyman also ordained two Apostles for Papua New Guinea, namely the hitherto District Elders Patrick Elly Silabe (1985) and Lucas Carlson Supok (1977). They succeed Apostle Zuhuke Hungito, who died of heart failure in October 2018, while on a journey to visit members.

For the District Church of Southern Germany, the international Church leader ordained the hitherto District Evangelist Andreas Mathias Sargant (1968) an Apostle. The Chief Apostle performed this act in a divine service on Sunday, 8 December 2019 in Fellbach, Germany. Apostle Sargant is to succeed Apostle Wolfgang Zenker.

On Friday, 13 December 2019, Collins Chazilwa Luhanga (1980) and Curdwell Mukwati (1961) were ordained as



Retirement of District Apostle Raúl Montes de Oca (Brazil)

Apostles for Zambia and Botswana, respectively. The Chief Apostle performed the ordination in a divine service in Walvis Bay, Namibia.

Retirements

On Saturday, 6 July 2019, Chief Apostle Schneider retired Apostle Innocent Kabuela (1954) in a divine service in Inkisi, Democratic Republic of Congo. The latter had served the District Church of the Democratic Republic of Congo-South East as a minister for 37 years, 11 of them as an Apostle.

District Apostle Charles S. Ndandula (1953) was also retired. On Sunday, 21 July 2019, the international Church leader celebrated a divine service in Lusaka, Zambia, where he discharged the Apostle from active service. Charles S. Ndandula had served as a minister for 35 years, fourteen of them as a District Apostle for the area of Zambia, Malawi, and Zimbabwe.

After 47 years of ministerial activity, the Church leader retired the District Apostle for Brazil and Bolivia on Sunday, 4 August 2019. Raúl Montes de Oca (1953) served in various ministries for nearly five decades, 16 of them as an Apostle. On the same date as the retirement, the two District Apostle districts of Brazil and Argentina were amalgamated to form the new District Apostle district of South America. District Apostle Enrique Eduardo Minio is entrusted with its leadership.

By commission of the Chief Apostle, Apostle Kindangu Wingi retired Apostle Jean-Baptiste Mater (1959) in a divine service on Sunday, 20 October 2019 in Mushi, Demo-

cratic Republic of Congo. The Apostle had served the members in the region of Bandundu for over 20 years.

In a divine service in Fellbach, Germany on Sunday, 8 December 2019, Apostle Volker Kühnle (1953) and Apostle Wolfgang Zenker (1953) were likewise retired. The two ministers had served the members in Germany and various countries of Africa over many years and decades.

Deaths

On Tuesday, 1 October 2019, Apostle Capote Marcos Misselo (1970) died as a consequence of a serious automobile accident. Apostle Misselo is survived by his wife Teresa Verónica Lino and seven children. He is the biological brother of District Apostle Helper João Uanuque Misselo. Apostle Misselo served in various levels of ministry before being ordained an Apostle for the working area of Angola in November 2008.

District Apostle districts

The New Apostolic Church is structured into fifteen District Apostle districts around the world. These areas are led by District Apostles. The following Apostles bear this responsibility:

- Michael David Deppner (1961) - Democratic Republic of Congo-West
- Michael Ehrich (1959) - Southern Germany
- Joseph Opemba Ekhuya (1969) - East Africa
- Edy Isnugroho (1963) - South East Asia
- Leonard Richard Kolb (1956) - USA
- Rüdiger Krause (1960) - Northern and Eastern Germany
- John Leslie Kriel (1956) - Southern Africa
- Enrique Eduardo Minio (1960) - South America
- Wolfgang Nadolny (1956) - Berlin-Brandenburg
- Peter Schulte (1963) - Western Pacific
- Kububa Soko (1969) - Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe
- Rainer Storck (1958) - Western Germany
- Tshitshi Tshisekedi (1972) - Democratic Republic of Congo-South East
- Mark Woll (1959) - Canada
- Jürg Zbinden (1958) - Switzerland

Some of the District Apostles are supported by District Apostle Helpers, who generally work in selected countries:

- David Devaraj (1959) - India
- Frank Stephan Dzur (1959) - Canada
- John William Fendt (1957) - USA
- Arnold Ndakondwa Mhango (1957) - Malawi
- João Uanuque Misselo (1965) - Angola
- Mandla Patrick Mkhwanazi (1963) - Southern Africa
- Robert Nsamba (1962) - Zambia
- John Sobottka (1956) - Canada

Everyone is to know: we will not tolerate this!

The New Apostolic Church strongly condemns violence and sexual assault. A clear signal is now coming from South Africa. Yesterday the District Apostle Meeting Africa dealt with this issue.



Peter Johanning

District Apostle John L. Kriel (Southern Africa) spoke at the International District Apostle Meeting in November 2019 in Zurich (Switzerland)

The national church leaders of the African District Churches meet regularly. A major topic yesterday was the new policy against sexual abuse in the District Church of Southern Africa.

A signal to society and members of the Church

Why a new policy? Because it is necessary. The policy of “what you don’t talk about doesn’t exist” is no longer tolerable. Both the number of cases reported by South African crime statistics as well as their severity are alarming.

The issue needs to be accepted by society as a whole. “We do not only have to do something—the people must also know that we are doing something about it!” District Apostle John L. Kriel from Cape Town said.

Chief Apostle Schneider even went a step further: “The people, our congregations, and all our members are to hear that the New Apostolic Church does not tolerate sexual abuse!”

Against any form of sexual misconduct

The policy sets the framework for dealing with “any form of sexual misconduct” by ministers or functionaries. The document defines responsibilities, describes preventive measures, installs procedures for suspected cases, and outlines pastoral care for those affected. The policy is comprised of 18 sections and will come into effect on 1 May 2020. It will be translated into all official languages in South Africa.

The policy deliberately refers to “misconduct” and not just to “assault” or “abuse” because the measures are not only directed against criminal acts, but also against the non-punishable violation of another person’s personal boundary. This includes gestures or comments, but above all the violation of the principle of pastoral care—for example, when those in need of love and care are exploited by those they go to for help.

The District Church Southern Africa is working closely with relevant professionals and organisations. It is up to the victims alone to decide whether legal proceedings should be initiated. Cases of sexual misconduct among minors are always reported to the police in accordance with South African law.

Children and youth deserve special protection

Other District Churches have a similar approach. For example, the New Apostolic Church Southern Germany refers to its policy of sensitising leaders at all levels as “Konzeption Achtsamkeit” (awareness concept). Preventive measures include a written voluntary agreement as well as an extended certificate of good conduct. This applies to all ministers, as well as teachers and other persons who deal with children and young people.

An external lawyer searches for possible entries in criminal records on the basis of the Child and Youth Welfare Act. If there is an entry due to sexual assault, he informs the District Apostle only. He in turn will ensure that the person concerned no longer performs any task within the Church that brings him or her in contact with children or young people.

District Apostle Michael Ehrich from Southern Germany had presented this at the International District Apostle Meeting in Goslar (Germany) in June. He had given an overview of the individual elements of the concept by recounting the experiences to date. He also emphasised at the time that this was about an inner attitude, a stance one needs to take, in order to create awareness for a mindful attitude towards children and young people.

Preventing violence and sexual assault



Oliver Rütten

It is a burning social issue, and it doesn’t stop at the doors of the church either. Nevertheless, everyone is to know that the New Apostolic Church condemns violence and sexual assault in the strongest possible terms. Such actions are violations of human personality and dignity.

It is certainly of benefit to do as much as possible in order to prevent violent or abusive incidents, which often have lifelong or even life-threatening consequences. After all, any case of abuse is one case too many! This is something on which everyone can agree. “Awareness” is the name of the concept that the New Apostolic Church of Southern Germany has developed over the last few years. This term is intended to clearly define the form that our interactions with other people should take: we are to be attentive, considerate, and respectful of others. And it is also important for each and every individual to be mindful and have the necessary “awareness” in order to avoid getting into situations that might be misinterpreted!

In the spring session of the international District Apostle Meeting in Goslar, District Apostle Ehrich gave his brothers some profound insights into the individual modules of the concept, and shared a wealth of details with respect to the experiences to date. Appeals and flyers alone will not suffice. It is all about inspiring a fundamentally new mindset and creating an awareness for how to interact respectfully with children and youth. This requires comprehensive and regular instruction, he said. Ministers, teachers, and all functionaries in the Church districts and congregations who have any contact with children or youth in their church duties—all of these are part of the target group for a kind of thinking, a framework of action, which has now existed in the District Church for over ten years—and is constantly evolving.



privat

Ayumba Eca Christophe with his wife and their children



There is no peace in our country

Christophe has lived in a refugee camp for 23 years. He not only looks after his own family there, but as a Priest also provides pastoral care for his brothers and sisters in faith. His life is one of huge challenges and an even greater dream.

“We are doing well and are bearing up under the circumstances thanks to the love of Jesus,” Ayumba Eca Christophe writes. The Congolese refugee is husband, a father of eight, and a Priest. Nyarugusu refugee camp in Tanzania has been his home for two decades now. He has an old mobile phone, which allows him to stay in touch with his family at home, his friends, and brothers and sisters in faith. Christophe not only works in the refugee camp, but also conducts divine services for his brothers and sisters.

Months on the run

At the time they had had to leave their home in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, where rebels were fighting against the Mobutu regime with help from three neighbouring countries. It was a protracted, cruel conflict that destroyed livelihoods, tore families apart, and cost many lives. For weeks they wandered until they were led

to the Nyarugusu refugee camp by officials of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Tanzanian authorities.

It's not a prison, but there is no freedom either

This is not a prison, Christophe says, but we are not free to do what we want either. “We can only generate a small income, just enough to survive.” However, the father and husband still has not given up on his dreams. “We would like to relocate from our asylum country to a third country, for example the USA, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, or Germany. There we could live in peace.” And there is hope. “Some New Apostolic Christians have already left the refugee camp,” Christophe says. Thanks to the UNHCR resettlement plan they were able to leave and resettle abroad.

Nyarugusu refugee camp is spread over an area of seven square kilometres in the western province of Kigoma in Tanzania. “With about 150,000 refugees the camp is the largest and best-known refugee camp of the twenty-first century,” Wikipedia says. The camp was created by the UN-HCR and the Tanzanian government in 1996 after an estimated 150,000 Congolese from the Democratic Republic of the Congo crossed the border into Tanzania in order to escape civil war.

Church built in self-help

Christoph not only looks after his own family, but also thirteen other families in the camp. “I am a Priest. Our congregation includes three other Priests, an Evangelist, and a Shepherd.” Our congregation is not the only one in the refugee camp. “In total there are eight congregations in Nyarugusu: 3,200 New Apostolic Christians are divided into congregations A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and H,” he explains.

Two thirds of the New Apostolic Christians across the globe do not have a church building of their own. They worship in the open air or in rented premises. Here in Nyarugusu, however, the brothers and sisters have churches. They are not only thankful for this, but also a little proud. “All of our churches were built in self-help. We really put in an effort and received small donations from the USA—from the brothers and sisters who were able to emigrate there thanks to the resettlement programme and who now support us financially in the camp.”

Holy Communion every Sunday

The divine services provide Christophe and his brothers and sisters with confidence and hope. “We gather for

divine service every Sunday. We pray and celebrate Holy Communion regularly, in all of the congregations!” the Priest says. The atmosphere is always very festive, he adds. Many of the brothers and sisters come dressed in black and white—it is important to them.

We even have a choir of about 20 to 25 members. “When there is a funeral service or the Apostle announces his visit, the choir quickly grows to 150 members,” the Priest says. Last year, District Apostle Joseph Ekhuya visited us. He is responsible for Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. His visit brought great joy to the brothers and sisters in the refugee camp.

Trust in God

Christophe is married to Kisiya Bushiri Clementine. The couple has eight children: “A blessing,” Christoph says. They have two sons, Uhana Patient (21) and little one-year old Jack, and six girls: Louise (16), Wakati (14), Vumilia (13), Johari (11), Masoka (7), and Durcas (3).

Ayumba Eca Christophe is a French teacher and works at one of the schools in the camp. He speaks Swahili, Kibembe, French, and English. He earns 20 dollars a month—which is not nearly enough to provide for his family.

“I pray fervently to the almighty God for help,” Christophe says. His biggest wish is to be able to emigrate through the resettlement programme of the UNHCR. “Beyond that I am happy that I know the way of salvation laid by Jesus Christ.” He adds, “Even if we have to cope with an unbearable situation, we place our trust in God. One day He will wipe away our tears and we will see the glory of God.”



One of eight congregations in the refugee camp. The brothers and sisters have built their own church



DISTRICT APOSTLE MICHAEL EHRIK: Retain Our Trust

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Situations and conditions sometimes exist which make us sad or worried or perhaps even despondent. Many people are highly anxious and apprehensive as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. In addition, there are so many other difficult circumstances worldwide. For example, our Brothers and Sisters in some areas of Africa are experiencing emergency situations which are difficult to imagine. We can learn from these brethren how to preserve our faith and trust in the Lord even in such highly difficult situations.

In such circumstances, each and every one of us must prove that that we retain our trust in the Lord and continue to look up to Him. We are protected through His loving care. Let us never forget that He knows us personally and our whole life! Therefore, we want to trustingly commend



everything to Him even if an occasion arises where we are at a loss. United with Him, we will find peace for our soul and always a perspective in life always.

I therefore wish to extend this thought to you: whatever the future may bring, the Lord's word continues to apply: "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28: 20).

The Lord's promise also applies to us, that He will return and take us unto Himself. Then we shall be with Him for all eternity.

There, we shall be free from all worries, burdens and suffering – we shall then experience unclouded joy and perfect peace.

With sincere greetings, yours

Michael Ehrich

DISTRICT APOSTLE AREA: A Special Kind of Easter

On Sunday 12th April, 2020, history was made in the New Apostolic Church. A momentous achievement amidst an unraveling global crisis. Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider celebrated Easter by coming right into the hearts and homes of members worldwide, serving us with a special Easter message of peace, comfort, security and joy.

How was this possible?

The Chief Apostle, following a discussion with the District Apostles, decided to conduct the Easter service in a special way; a single divine service with a global congregation. "It is



Our Chief Apostle served with the word from Revelation 1, 17b-18

important to me that the faithful should still have the opportunity to celebrate Easter in fellowship" remarked the Chief Apostle.

Transmission via satellite, telephone and internet was used to accomplish this. In West Africa, the District church leveraged on the video-sharing platform, YouTube, to serve many hearts and souls with the revealed message of the

Resurrection. Interestingly, this divine service was held in the reception area of the church-owned Bischoff Publishers in Neu-Isenburg (Germany).



Apostle Sam and family (Ghana) connected to the service via a smartphone



Two brothers translated and edited the Chief Apostle's service into a local language podcasts to be shared on social media



Apostle Nwanza (West Nigeria) with family experiences the divine service via a notebook

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC:

Fundamental Directives



Strictly observe that which the countries, regions and responsible authorities recommend and impose regarding infection protection.



Thoroughly and repeatedly wash your hands with soap every day.



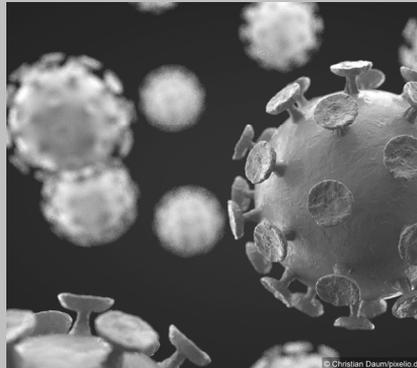
Safe greetings: Greeting without shaking hands



Keep your distance: At least 1.5 meters to the next person



Avoid crowds of people - stay at home



If no divine services can be celebrated, members have the opportunity to receive the transmission of a service on Sundays mornings. The services will be translated into English, and French can be received per live stream via: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCo3T4QaA3Ry33JVjJAgAG8w>



Cough and sneeze in a “hygienic” manner, in other words in your sleeve or crook of your arm and not towards others



Keep your hands away from your face.



Protecting your neighbour: Wearing a mouth-nose-protection mask



Sick people should stay at home until they fully recover



Do not make any visits to hospitals or nursing homes, except in emergencies (spiritual care for the dying)

DISTRICT APOSTLE AREA: Video Divine Services

In the wake of lockdowns and bans on public gatherings, the District Apostle has decided to continue with online divine services. Despite a global pandemic, we can still experience a Holy Spirit-led fellowship through the online divine services.

Thanks to technology, the omnipresence of the Holy Spirit can be felt in every heart and soul at the same time, everywhere! Many brothers and sisters experience the video divine service at home. This creates a



For the transmission of the video divine services in several languages a complex technology is needed

words of Jesus Christ: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4: 4).

special spiritual connection between Europe to Africa.

These video divine services take place because divine services are not possible as usual. However, for the believers it is of great importance to experience these divine services, in which the proclamation of the Word of God takes up a large part, as our District Apostle referred to the



Priest Abebe and family (Nigeria) experience the service via a smartphone



Apostle Sam (Ghana) and family also celebrated the video divine service



Shepherd Richard with family from Ekpan (Nigeria) during the divine service



A youth teaching how to wash hands with soap properly

NIGERIA: Build Awareness

The youth from Gra congregation launched a #Covid19 Awareness campaign. The sensitization process aimed at minimizing the spread of the Corona virus disease in Nigeria.

By educating the masses on the proper and frequent 20-second hand washing practice, the #Covid19 Awareness campaign received a huge response as artisans, drivers, passers-by and passengers were engaged in the activities.

Apostle Goddey Odili of South Working Area of Nigeria in a news interview advised members and the public to pray in humility as well as observe all precautionary measures to prevent the spread of #Coronavirus disease in Nigeria.



HITV News interviewing a participant



Apostle Odili during the interview on HITV News



The Chairman of the Trust Fund receiving the cheque from Lead Apostle Ohene Saffo

GHANA: Help for the Neighbor in Need

The New Apostolic Church in Ghana captured the news headlines on most television and radio news for graciously donating some amount towards the COVID-19 Trust Fund, set up by the President of Ghana. Lead Apostle Benjamin Ohene-Saffo, presented the cheque on behalf of the Church at a short ceremony in Accra.

In a related events, due to the lockdown in Accra for the COVID-19 pandemic, Rectors of some congregations in the Accra East and West districts, distributed items to needy members. These included tins of mackerel, rice, sardines, bottles of cooking oil, tomato puree and some fruit drinks. Winneba East District also presented some foodstuffs to be given to needy members within the lockdown area.



The bulk purchase ready to be distributed among some needy members



Bishop Asare thanking the brothers and sisters in Winneba district for their gesture to their brethren in Accra



The children expressed our joy through hymns, sketches and poems

GABUN: Social and Humanitarian Action

The members of Libreville and Owendo gathered together in our Angondjé congregation, at the national headquarters of our Church. The children present expressed their joy through hymns, sketches, poems and appropriate Bible passages. However, the great novelty was the social and humanitarian action of the congregation of Angondjé. With love, they gave gifts and food to the children of the Sunday school.



The mothers of Angondjé gave gifts and food to the children of Sunday School

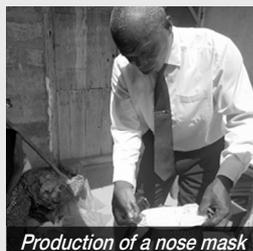
GHANA: Active Assistance

During pastoral visits of Apostle George Sam (Takoradi) to older brothers and sisters, he also distributed hand sanitisers.

He advised them to take seriously the precautions announced by health and government authorities. He also demonstrated a do-it-yourself nose mask during his visits.



Apostle Sam giving a hand sanitiser



Production of a nose mask

Mourning for two faithful Apostles

NIGERIA:

**Apostle
Paul
Ufuoma
Ogboru**

* 20/03/1958

† 13/02/2020



Apostle Paul Ufuoma Ogboru from Nigeria passed away on Thursday, February 13, 2020.

Apostle Ogboru had been working in this high spiritual ministry since 10th January 2016 and his area of work was - already in the many years of his blessed ministry as a Bishop - in the south or southwest of Nigeria.

For some time the Apostle had been ill. In a note of mourning, District Apostle Michael Ehrich, whose area of work includes this most populous African country, wrote: "Even if the departure of our Apostle was a redemption for him, saying farewell to a loved one is always difficult and filled with sorrow. Our heartfelt sympathies go out to his wife and family and all those who have followed."

**SIERRA-
LEONE:**

**Apostle
Robinson
Musa
Saidu**

* 12/11/1948

† 09/03/2020



Retired **Apostle Robinson Musa Saidu** from Sierra Leone died after a long illness on Monday, March 9, 2020.

For just over 13 years Apostle Saidu worked in this high spiritual ministry in the neighboring West African countries of Liberia and Sierra Leone in great blessing. For reasons of age, he retired on April 25, 2014.

The apostle had been ill for a long time, and so his departure meant a release from physical suffering for him. However, saying farewell to a loved one is always difficult and fills the bereaved with sorrow, emphasized District Apostle Michael Ehrich, whose African ministry includes Liberia and Sierra Leone. We extend our heartfelt sympathy to the children of the deceased Apostle and their families - the Apostle was widowed - and all other relatives, as well as to the brethren in faith who are grateful for his work and were close to him.

District Apostle Area: Divine service with the District Apostle

On Sunday, May 10, 2020, a central video divine service took place again, and could be celebrated at home via internet livestream or telephone transmission. The divine service was conducted by District Apostle Michael Ehrich in the church of Karlsruhe.

Bible text: "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear Him."
(Psalm 103: 11)

Core thoughts: The District Apostle placed the emphasis on the fear of God in the Bible text.

Fear of God is manifested, he said, among other things in gratitude, humility, trust in God, and love.

In the course of the sermon, the District Apostle explained that fear of God means to love God and to seek Him with all one's heart. In a broader sense, fear of God is thus also expressed in the willingness to make sacrifices and serve God - out of love.

The District Apostle also gave concrete advice on the points mentioned above. With regard to thankfulness, he spoke, for example, about the many reasons to be grateful to God. First and foremost, he mentioned gratitude for the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ and also for the further experience of divine love, as well as gratitude for the richness of the divine services and for fellowship and participation from the congregation. We must also show gratitude for the two great divine promises, "which give us security and purpose": the promise of Jesus according to Matthew 28:20 to be with His own until the end of the world, and the promise of His return.

"When we are filled with the fear of God, we do not quarrel with God," said the District Apostle, "but rather we are thankful for what we have."

