

community

The New Apostolic Church around the world

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Overcoming fear

Editorial

It is finished!

Divine service

Overcoming fear
with Jesus

Doctrine

Proclaiming God's will
correctly

New Apostolic Church
International



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| It is finished!

We cannot even begin to imagine what went through the heart of our Lord Jesus when He said the words on the cross, “It is finished!” (John 19: 30).

In Gethsemane, Jesus had prayed to His Father to share His feelings with Him. He knew that God is omnipotent, omniscient, and perfect; and above all, He knew that God loved Him. But as a true human being, Jesus was also afraid of what lay ahead of Him. He was not superhuman. After an intense inner struggle, He decided to trust God. He said, “Not My will, but Yours, be done,” (Luke 22: 42). He knew the Father’s will and wanted to fulfil it right to the end.

On the cross, Jesus felt abandoned by God. That hurt Him even more than His wounds. However, this feeling hurt did not call into question His trust in God. On the contrary, He placed His entire being in the hands of God. At the moment of His death, Jesus was able to say, “It is finished!” God had answered His prayers by giving Him the strength to fulfil His mission perfectly.

Like Jesus, let us stay in touch with God. Let us entrust everything to Him, absolutely everything: our joys, our worries, our fears, our questions, our doubts, and our



NAC International

wishes. Let us learn to trust in God: in His power, His wisdom, and in His love. This is a learning process and sometimes requires intense inner struggles. By praying, “Your will be done,” we ask God to give us the strength for these struggles. This is a prayer God will answer.

Heartfelt greetings



Jean-Luc Schneider

Overcoming fear with Jesus



■ New Apostolic Church San Francisco

Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider conducted a divine service in San Francisco, California (USA) on 13 October 2024

Dear brothers and sisters, the programme I received for today is entitled: “Thanks be to God!” Last Sunday I conducted a Thanksgiving Day service in Germany. When we celebrate Thanksgiving we thank God, our heavenly Father, in a special way. We bring a special offering, we celebrate a special service, and sing songs of thanksgiving. But we actually have reason to thank God, our Creator, every Sunday, indeed every day. He gives us what we need in our daily life. It is not enough to just say thank you and bring an offering. Let us use the gifts that our heavenly Father has given us to do good. This is a wonderful way of thanking God the Father and Creator.

We thank God the Son for His sacrifice, for His teaching, for having established His church, and for sending His

John 14: 1

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.”

Apostles. He has opened the way to salvation for human beings. He has made it possible for us to have forgiveness of sins. We can use the gifts He has given us to thank Him: we thank Him for the forgiveness of sins by forgiving our neighbour. We thank Him for the gift of the church and the apostolate by attending the divine services and accepting what He offers us.

We thank God the Holy Spirit who has given us the possibility to become a new creation in Christ and to become like Christ. Let us use these gifts to do good and prepare ourselves for the return of Christ.

Today we have a very interesting Bible text. Each time I find a Bible text for a divine service, I always have to check first whether it has already been used over the last few months and whether it works in all the languages. And I discovered that this particular Bible text was translated differently in the various languages. In English and in Spanish it says: you believe in God, believe also in Me. That was new to me, because in German and in French, my language, it is a bit more emphatic: believe in God and believe in Me. So it is not exactly the same. Both translations are correct. The Greek original can be translated either way.

In the previous chapter, Jesus announces His suffering and death to the disciples, identifies His betrayer, and predicts Peter's denial. This worried the disciples. They were wondering what it all meant. Then Jesus tells them, "Let not your heart be troubled!" And to complete the verse using the NKJV version of the Bible: "You believe in God, believe also in Me." I like this translation. In order for them to be able to cope with everything that was going to happen, Jesus admonished His disciples to believe in God—but no longer in the way they had been taught according to their tradition. Jesus had revealed to them the true nature and true will of God. This was what they were to believe in.

The disciples were all devout Jews. For them, the will of God was expressed in the Ten Commandments, the Mosaic Law. They thought that in order to please God you had to obey these commandments and then everything would be fine. They would be blessed and God would help them. He would give them health and prosperity and they would be happy. This was the traditional Jewish faith in which Peter was brought up. When Jesus told them that He would be arrested and killed in Jerusalem, Peter said that this must

not happen. After all, Jesus was a devout Jew and obeyed the commandments. God could not allow Him to suffer. Jesus made it clear that things did not work that way. The old belief ... On the other hand, the people at the time believed that God punished those who were disobedient. This was a deeply rooted belief of the Jews. If someone was blind, lame, or poor, it meant that this person or his parents had done something wrong, and God had punished them. The thinking was: he is blind so this must be God's punishment for some wrong that had been done. Something like this cannot happen to a devout person. Misfortune was seen as divine punishment. Traditional belief ...

The Israelites were firmly convinced that they were the chosen people, and that God would support His people in the battle against their enemies, who believed in other gods.

According to Jewish understanding, God hated the enemies of Israel and wanted them killed. They believed that all sinners would have to be eliminated, and God would help them if needed. Remember Peter.

When the soldiers wanted

to arrest Jesus, he took his sword and struck one of the soldiers, cutting off his right ear. Traditional belief: God supports His people in their fight against their enemies.

They were waiting for the Messiah. They saw that Israel's situation was not ideal, but they were convinced that God would send them, the chosen people, a king and restore the kingdom of Israel. Then they would have peace and prosperity, and everything would be fine, as it used to be. Traditional belief ...

And Jesus said, "You believe in God, believe also in Me." They were supposed to believe in His person and His teaching, because with their traditional beliefs they would not get far in this new situation. Several times, Jesus said something to the effect of: you have been told this and that, but I tell you what the will of God is; the will of God is that you believe in Me, that you believe in My teaching, that you believe that I have been sent by God, that you believe in My sacrifice, that you believe in My way to be saved. God's will is: love God and your neighbour. And if you do this God will bless you.

But Jesus also made it clear that God's blessing was not what the people thought it meant according to their traditional beliefs. Jesus had not come to heal all the lame and blind. He had not come to solve people's earthly problems.

Let us use these gifts to do good and prepare ourselves for the return of Christ



He had come to give them eternal life, eternal fellowship with God in His kingdom, where there will be no more evil, no more sin. That is the will of God. He wants to deliver us from the dominion of evil and lead us into His kingdom.

And what if you do not do the will of God? Jesus taught that God will not punish or kill anyone for it. God is not a punishing God. Even if people choose not to obey Him, if they do not follow Jesus Christ, God still loves them. His love is unconditional. No matter what humans do, God will always love them with the same love. He will never turn away from them.

But what about our enemies? Jesus also taught His disciples that their enemies were not those who believed in something else, who worshipped a different god. The real enemies were not sinners, but sin and the evil one. But He wanted the disciples to trust Him. He would conquer evil and help His own to overcome it. Then, as He promised, He would come again and lead them into His kingdom, which is not of this world. His kingdom is in heaven with God.

All of this is what Jesus meant when He told His disciples that it is good if they believed in God, but that they should



also believe in Him, in His teaching. They were to believe in the God whom Jesus revealed to them. Because then they would be able to cope with the situation they would soon be facing.

So much for the disciples. The same word applies to us today: "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me." We do not always really understand what is happening either, and that worries us. Sometimes it even makes us afraid because we do not know how to deal



with things. This morning Jesus tells us, “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.”

Sometimes it is unsettling when you realise that even believers have to endure suffering. You have given your best, are faithful, serve the Lord, bring your offerings, and help your neighbour. You have done your best. And then you ask yourself: Why do I have to endure all this trouble? Why is everything going wrong in my life? Why does God permit this? Is this a punishment? We do not understand the ways of God. I can tell you that I feel that way quite often. I ask God, “What are You doing? What is the point of this whole thing?”

But then the Holy Spirit tells us, “Have faith in God.” But not in the old way of believing that tells you that you will be blessed, happy, healthy, and prosperous if you are nice, kind, and faithful—because that, obviously, is not how it works. Believe in Christ and trust in Him. Christ was the much-loved Son of God. Just remember how He suffered!

The fact that God loves you does not mean that you will never suffer. The love of God does something else. The love of God helped Jesus to overcome the situation, to remain faithful, and to have eternal life.

*God even loves those
who do not choose to
follow Christ. His love
is unconditional*

Brothers and sisters, I am sorry, but there is no explanation for why you are experiencing hardship, why you must go through trials. I cannot tell you why you must go through this or that situation. I have no idea. But trust in the teachings of Jesus Christ! He told the people, “God loves you; trust Him!”

If things are not going well, it does not mean that God has forgotten you. It does not mean that He has rejected you. Trust Him. He wants to deliver you from evil and death once and for all. He wants to lead you into His kingdom. Believe in Christ and in His teaching. Trust in God and trust in His love. In the end, you will see that God really always loved you with great love. Have faith in God. Believe in Christ, also in His person and in Him as an example. He loves you just as God loved Him.

Apostle Arnaud Martig (right) from Canada was assigned as a District Apostle Helper for the District Apostle Area Canada



When we look at what is happening in the world we are confused and disturbed. We have the impression that the power of evil is growing stronger worldwide, and more and more bad things are happening. What should we do? Believe in God, but also believe in Christ! It strikes me that some Christians think that all the misfortune in the world is due to the fact that human beings no longer do the will of God. So everybody should obey God's rules and commandments. And some look in the Bible and write down all the rules they can find. And if necessary, they even invent new rules: if you do this, if you do that, then God will bless you, your problems will disappear, everything will be fine, and the world will be a better place ...

I have an issue with that because that is the old belief. Believe in God, yes, but please also believe in Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ told us that we cannot be saved by playing by the rules. That does not work. To be saved, one must be reborn of water and the Spirit and grow into the image of Christ—become Christlike. You must learn to love God and your neighbour in the right manner, and for this you must change and become like Christ. One day, Jesus will return and take those to Himself who have endeavoured to become like Him and lead them into the kingdom of God. That is salvation.

This has nothing to do with keeping a number of laws and commandments. Many people keep the law, but what about their heart attitude? What about their love for their neighbour? The more they observe the law, the less love some have, the less they accept others who do not observe the same laws. That is not the right way. We must become like Jesus Christ and follow the path He shows us, His gospel, His Apostles, His sacraments. That is the way to salvation, to eternal life. Believe in God, but please believe in Jesus Christ and in His teaching as well!

In a parable, Jesus speaks about weeds among the wheat. These weeds can also be a cause of concern for us. There are things that are going wrong in the Church, I can see that too. Some think that those who do not behave as they should must either change or leave the Church. They think there should be no place for them in the Church. The Church should not tolerate such behaviour. I have to ask the question: Are you sure that their sins are worse

than yours? How many times has God told you to change? Imagine God comes and tells you, "Change or leave!" I tell you, the Church would be empty. I can tell you with certainty that I would not be here.

Believe in God, but also believe in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has taught us: Keep the commandments, but above all love God and love your neighbour. God loves the people around you, even if they do not change. God's love is unconditional, and He wants you to love your neighbours, even if they do not want to change. Prove to them, prove to God, prove to others that you are able to love like Jesus Christ—even those who do not want to change.

Jesus even said, "Love your enemies." This is exactly what He expected from His disciples: love without any conditions. God loves sinners. He will love them until the end. And He wants us to become like Christ and love in the same way. Do you understand what I mean? This idea that people should either change or leave definitely contradicts the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is not acceptable. Believe in God and believe in Christ.

It could also unsettle us when we see that the New Apostolic Church, led by Apostles, is anything but successful in some places. There are so many other churches and denominations that are much more successful, that have many more members. Is our doctrine the right one? Does it correspond to the will of God? Should we perhaps go to another church?

Believe in God and believe in Jesus Christ. Seen from the human perspective, others are perhaps more successful and their churches are full. But remember Jesus Christ. How



District Apostle Michael Deppner



Apostle Karl Orlofski



District Apostle John Schnabel

successful was He? In the end, there were just a few standing at the foot of the cross. Everybody else said that He had lost, had lost the game. “God was not with Him. He’s alone and they killed Him.”

We know the end of the story. Jesus Christ was the victor. Yes, they killed Him. And yes, He was alone. But He was victorious, and no one could stop Him from fulfilling His mission and bringing redemption to humankind. Believe in God, believe in Jesus Christ. He has promised that He will be with His church and His Apostles until the end; that He will complete the work He has begun in us. This is what we believe, even if the Church appears to be weak by human reckoning. He has sent His Apostles to proclaim His will, to administer His sacraments, and to prepare the bride of Christ. We cannot measure the value of this doctrine in membership figures. That would be nonsense. Otherwise Jesus Christ would also have had to give up.

He was successful because He trusted His Father. The church will be completed if we trust in Jesus and God. Jesus sent His Apostles and said not to worry, “I will prepare My bride and I will take her to be with Me.” Trust in Jesus Christ and do not be influenced by the apparent success of others. That is not what it is about. The important thing is our salvation.

I don’t know how many people living in this country today are destined to be part of the bride of Christ. All I know is that Jesus wants you to be part of it. And if we believe in God and believe in Christ until the end, then we will be part of the bride of Christ. That is certain. Don’t let your heart be troubled. Believe in God. Believe in Christ and trust in Him.

And the last point. At times it can be unsettling and confusing because we just cannot imagine ever becoming as Christ wants us to be. When we look at ourselves, our weaknesses, how difficult it is for us to do the will of God and behave the way Jesus wants us to—to forgive, to love, to overcome as He wants us to overcome—then we realise that we will never be able to do it.

Believe in God and believe in Christ! He has called you. He has chosen you and He tells you that He will never leave you. He wants us to be in eternity with Him. And as long as you are determined to follow Him, He will help you. We will never manage to become perfect by our own efforts. But He will make us perfect.

All He asks of us is that we remain faithful, are humble, and love. Let us do our best to increase our love for God and our neighbour and trust in His grace. That which we cannot do, He will do for us.

CORE THOUGHTS

We believe in God and in the teachings of Jesus. God grants eternal life to those who believe in Christ and follow Him. We trust in the love of Christ, His church, and His Apostles.

| From sin to freedom by grace

The fight against sin, the struggle for grace, and the willingness to forgive are part and parcel of Christian life. The Chief Apostle used his sermon in Accra in Ghana for some important clarifications and impulses.



Eric Ampadu

Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider shed light on the subject of forgiveness during his visit to the central church in Accra in Ghana on 24 November 2024.

Forgiveness: a universal desire

The Chief Apostle began by pointing out that the pursuit of forgiveness is the same worldwide, regardless of culture or origin: “We pray together, ‘Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.’ This is done the same way in the USA, in Germany, in Ghana, or in India.” But God’s reaction to sin is not anger, disappointment, or frustration, he went on to explain. Referring to Adam and Eve he said that the fact that both were expelled from Paradise and were separated from God was not a divine punishment, but the consequence of their actions: “They were no longer doing the will of God. It was impossible for them to stay in a place where everything was according to God’s will.”

Why ask for forgiveness?

For us today this means that the awareness of being a sinner should not lead us to fear punishment from God. “Let’s

be honest. Sinners are not punished in this world,” Chief Apostle Schneider said,

Our motivation to ask for mercy should not be fear of punishment, but our own choice in life to want to do the will of God, as well as the realisation that we cannot do this in on our own. “So why do we ask for grace and the forgiveness of our sins? The answer is found at the beginning of the Lord’s Prayer: ‘Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.’” For perfect fellowship with God we need grace and forgiveness, Chief Apostle Schneider said.

Although it is possible to forgive the person who wronged us, we often realise that it is pretty much impossible to forget what they did to us. The Chief Apostle said that God does not expect such bad experiences to be erased from our memory.

Forgiveness is something else, the Chief Apostle explained: “Forgiveness is when you remember what happened—what the person has done or said—but when you feel peace in your heart when you think about it; when you no longer

The brothers and sisters were excited to have the Chief Apostle visit them in Accra



harbour thoughts of revenge, anger, or hatred. That is forgiveness!”

And to receive forgiveness we do not have to offer up a sacrifice as in Old Testament times or pay a certain amount of money. All that God requires is that we make the effort to forgive our neighbour: “This shows that we are serious and really want forgiveness.”

The liberating power of forgiveness

As long as you have not been able to forgive, the person who has wronged you still has power over your soul, the Chief Apostle said. “Because of this person you have no peace or joy. He or she has power over you. Your heart is full of anger, full of hate.”

Even if you continue to suffer the consequences of wrongful conduct, forgiveness is like telling the perpetrator: “I will not allow you to steal my joy or peace.” The Chief Apostle went on to explain that “when you forgive your neighbour, you take away the power he or she used to have over your soul and life”.

Unity through prayer

The struggle for forgiveness is also an element of unity: “You know, we pray: forgive us our debts. So that means forgive me, but also forgive him ... and her ... and her and him.” So this is not only about being healed ourselves, but we are praying for all to be healed.

Nevertheless, one thing is clear: society cannot function without laws. Those who do wrong can be forgiven, but they must still face the consequences of their actions. Here the Chief Apostle made reference to the criminal who was crucified together with Jesus. Although Christ had granted him forgiveness and grace, the man still had to be punished because he had done something wrong and had been sentenced by society.

It takes time to forgive

In all His teachings, Jesus made it very clear, “You cannot receive forgiveness from God if you do not forgive your neighbour.” However, there is often not a quick-fix, Chief Apostle Schneider said. People can do such terrible things that it often surpasses all imagination.

But even if it seems impossible to forgive someone: God does not look at the result of our efforts, but at the sincere willingness to forgive. “It will take time, but He will help you and you will make it.” And for one reason only, “Not just because we want to be exempted from punishment, but because we want to be one with God. We want to have fellowship with God.”

CORE THOUGHTS

Matthew 6: 12

“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”

In the Lord’s Prayer, we confess our sins. Sin separates from God. The forgiveness of our sins gives us back access to fellowship with God. We forgive others because we want to follow Christ.

Blessing is all about our soul

Oh to be wealthy, good-looking, and healthy! But are these the blessings of God? What God really wants to grant us is spiritual blessing. Following are some insights into the true content of blessing—and what we can do with it.



■ NAC Scotland



“When the New Testament speaks of blessing, it always has to do with the relationship between God and humankind,” Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider said in October 2024 in Glasgow, Scotland. “Above all, God wants to grant us spiritual blessing. It’s all about our soul.” That was also the point of the Bible text from Ephesians that served as the basis of the divine service.

After reading the Bible text, the Chief Apostle launched into an explanation of the blessings listed in Ephesians.

Divine election

“The first one is something we have just read about, namely our election.” But this must be understood correctly. After all, it is not a question of someone having chosen us and rejected someone else. The only important thing is that the decision is made by God, not by human beings: “God has decided: ‘I love you. I want you to be with Me.’” God elects even before a person even exists. This makes it clear that the election is not based on our merits, but is based solely on the love of God.

The revelation of His will

“The second blessing is that we know the will of God.” At times people have a very negative conception of His will, for example, that God wants us to obey, serve, or even suffer. And that we have to bow before the will of God. But in thinking this way, one tends to forget what God actually wants: “He wants me to enter into His kingdom. He has prepared the way. All I have to do is follow this path.” And: “He also wants all human beings to have eternal fellowship with Him.”

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ

“Another blessing that is mentioned here is the fact that Christ has come to this earth and has died for us.” This has a very personal dimension: “He had to die for me, for me, my person.” And: “That was decided before the foundation of the world, because for God, both the past and the future are present.”

“We have become children of God and joint heirs with Christ.” With the first, God is telling us: “No matter what you do, no matter how you behave, you are and remain My



Apostle Andreas Sargant was called to serve the congregation in Glasgow

child.” The second part means: “You can inherit everlasting life, the glory of God.” And neither of these are empty promises: “I give you the guarantee—and this guarantee is the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

The power of the Holy Spirit

“The gift of the Holy Spirit is also a power that works within us.” And incidentally, it is extremely powerful. It is precisely this power that made it possible for Christ to resurrect from the dead. This power makes the believer capable of walking in the light and in love—in other words, of following the example of Jesus. However, this is not a matter of following certain rules, but rather of renouncing evil and doing good works.

“One last point, and that is the end of the letter: we are part of the church, having been incorporated into the body of Christ.” And this means: “You will receive the word, you will receive the sacraments, you will receive forgiveness for your sins—everything you need in order to become like Jesus. This is not possible outside of the church.” The members of this body of Christ are interconnected. Although they may have different personalities, gifts, responsibilities, and conditions of life, it is still possible for them to become one in Christ.

A double response

Thanking God for His blessings is not limited to singing praises together in the divine service. “We have to go a little

further.” On the one hand, we are to reciprocate God’s love and align and arrange our own lives such that it will be possible for us to be with Him. And on the other hand, we have to use the power of the Holy Spirit to combat evil and follow Christ, as well as use our own gifts to contribute to the well-being of the Church and its members.

CORE THOUGHTS

Ephesians 1: 3–4

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.”

Spiritual blessing helps to strengthen our relationship with God. He has chosen and taught us, renewed us, and incorporated us into His church. We love Him, we follow Christ, and serve the church.

The proper way to love

Okay, so you're supposed to love God above all things and your neighbour as yourself. But how do you actually do that? The Chief Apostle had a simple formula for this: recognise and reciprocate the love of God. Following is the user's manual.



■ Dedy Febrivono



“As human beings, our love is never perfect. It could always be greater and better,” Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider said in Denpasar, Indonesia, on 4 June 2024. Naturally, our example is Jesus Christ, he explained. He was “the only person who had perfect love for both God and His neighbour”. In addition, he said, that Apostle Paul knew from experience: the greater the love, the greater the blessing.

The right way to love God

What does it mean to “love” in this context, anyway? “This does not mean that we have to love God the same way we love our wives, our husbands, our children, or our friends.” Rather: “We trust Him. He is our only God. We do His will and we want to be with Him.”

In order to strengthen this love, the Holy Spirit shows us all the things that God does for us human beings:

- He sent His Son to sacrifice His life, so that we may have eternal life.
 - He loves us despite our behaviour. He gives us something that we cannot earn: grace!
 - He never uses His power to force us to love Him. He respects the free will of humankind.
- To recognise the love of God in this way helps us to make the right decisions:
- You cannot measure the love of God by the money you have, nor by the question of whether you are healthy or not. We have understood that God's love consists of the gift of eternal life.
 - The Holy Spirit also helps us to discern between the spirits. We must always concentrate on our relationship with God, and then we will know: yes, this is what I should do, and that is something I should not do.
 - Having the ability to discern also means being aware of our need for grace. And we do everything we need to do in order to obtain forgiveness.
 - We do not do what we do to reap personal benefits or because we want to get something back, but rather



The Chief Apostle and District Apostle Isnugroho in Denpasar



Those who know this will be able to treat their neighbour properly:

- The only thing we can do for others is to help them discover that God loves them.
- Be a source of blessing. Try to behave as Jesus would behave in this situation.
- When we do good works for our neighbour, we are also doing something good for God.
- Just remember how much you suffer when someone refuses to forgive you. Treat your neighbour the way you want others to treat you.
- Everyone needs love. But this also requires actions, not merely words.

because we love God and because we are grateful to Him.

- Those who love God do their part to contribute to the unity of the people of God. After all, they know that this is very important to Jesus.

The right way to love our neighbour

The same thing applies to our love for our neighbour: it is not a question of loving our neighbour the same way we love our partner, children, or friends. “Rule number one is to love your neighbour as God loves him. Rule number two is to love your neighbour as yourself.”

Here too the Holy Spirit strengthens our love by deepening our knowledge. However, this knowledge is not focused on our neighbour and what is going on inside him. Rather, the Spirit “tells us how God loves our neighbour”. Just like us, our neighbour must be delivered from the evil one, receive grace, and know he or she is loved.

CORE THOUGHTS

Philippians 1: 9

“And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment.”

We love God because He first loved us. The Holy Spirit helps us to recognise the love that God has for us. He tells us how we can respond to His love. We love our neighbour as God loves us. The Holy Spirit tells us how we can express this love to them.

JESUS COMES TO ZACCHAEUS' HOUSE

BASED ON LUKE 19: 1-10

One day Jesus went to Jericho. A rich man lived there. His name was Zacchaeus and

As Jesus walked through the streets with His disciples, He was surrounded by a large crowd of men, women, and children. Everyone wanted to see Jesus.

Zacchaeus wanted to see Him too, but he could not see anything through the crowds because he was too short. Zacchaeus found a sycamore tree and climbed it so he could see Jesus better.

When Jesus reached the tree, He looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, be quick and come down, I want to visit you." Zacchaeus was overjoyed that Jesus wanted to visit him, but the other people were not

happy. They said, "How can Jesus go to visit a sinner like him!"

Zacchaeus was sorry he had taken so much money from people. He said to Jesus, "I will give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone, I will repay them four times as much as I took."





AT LEONARD'S IN KINSALE, IRELAND

"Hello, my name is Leonard." This is how much English I could speak when we arrived in Ireland. I am nine years old and live in Kinsale on the south coast of Ireland right now. We are here for half a year. "We" is my 13-year-old sister, Kim, and my parents.

This is me with my big sister on the **first day of school**. We are wearing school uniforms. They are compulsory for all school-children. It was a nice surprise that I had the only German-speaking teacher at our school. My dad thinks that only God could organise something that great.

I am a keen **DIYer**. Here I am helping to insulate a house. I also like climbing and swimming, playing football, and biking. Biking here is dangerous, though, because there is not enough space for both cyclists and motorists on the narrow, winding roads bounded by stone walls on both sides.

We miss our friends from Switzerland. But the people here are nice and we have already met some children. I like to play with younger children. Making friends with children my age is hard for me. I have Down syndrome, which means that I cannot talk very well. And then children my age quickly get bored with me.



We go to the beach every evening. Many Irish people go swimming all year round, even though the temperature in winter falls below 10 degrees Celsius. They say you get used to it. I prefer to use a **surfboard** and let myself be carried to shore by the waves.

Many Irish people have dogs. I often play with them on the beach. In the water we often see **seals**.



There is a congregation in **Cork**, and we have divine services there every second Sunday. On the other Sundays, we watch a service at home on the computer. I don't like that as much. I really miss Sunday School in my home congregation in Switzerland.

If my mother did not object, my dad and I would eat pasta with sauce every day. But here we have the chance to try all the local dishes with **fish and potatoes or cabbage**.

Mom thinks that a well-balanced diet is important. Sometimes it tastes pretty good.

In February, I will be going back to my old class in Switzerland. By then I am sure I will know a bit more English than I did on my first day here in Ireland.





Maichev - stock.adobe

Proclaiming God's will correctly

The focus of a divine service is the proclamation of God's word. But even if the sermon is delivered in free discourse it must not be arbitrary. In this essay, the Chief Apostle explains the requirements that lead to the proper preaching of the gospel.

The Catechism describes the proper proclamation of the gospel as a characteristic of the apostolate (CNAC 6.4.2.3). The Lord sent out His Apostles and gave them the mission to teach. In the power of the Spirit, they are to proclaim the gospel of the birth, the life and activity, the death, the resurrection, the ascension, and the return of Jesus Christ.

When the Apostle ordains a minister, he confers upon him by the power of the Holy Spirit the authority to properly proclaim the word. The ordained minister can from then on preach the gospel in divine services and convey the word of God in pastoral visits.

In accordance with the Bible

The proclamation of the word occurs in the proper manner only if it is in accordance with the Bible, in particular with the words of Jesus Christ as handed down to us in the New Testament.

To be conform to the Bible does not mean to adhere strictly to its literal meaning. The important thing is rather to remain faithful to the message of the gospel. This approach requires that the biblical text be interpreted in the light of the Holy Spirit.

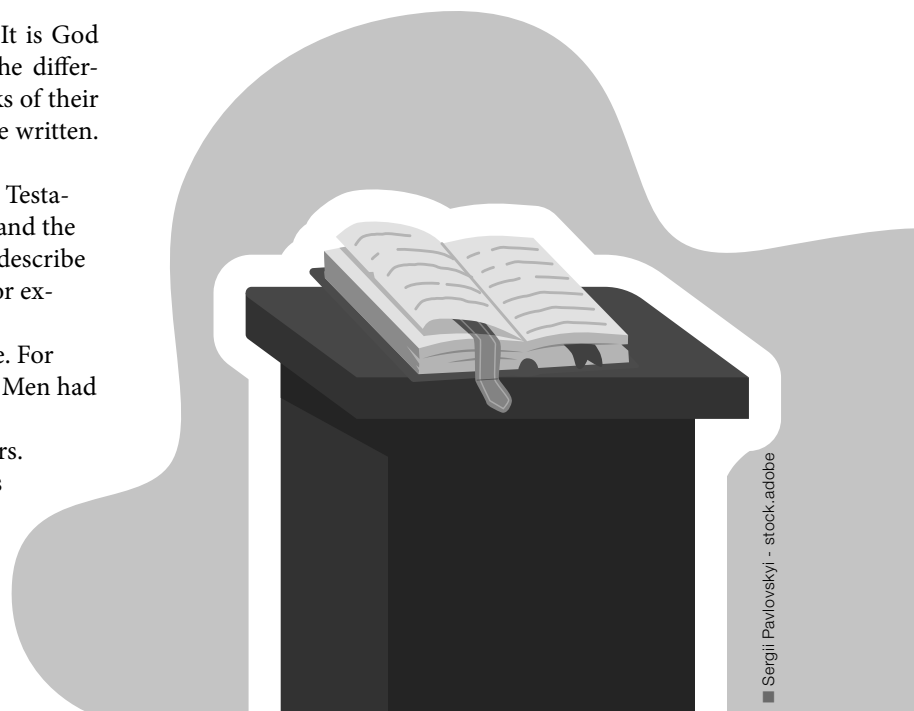
We believe that God is the author of the Bible. It is God the Holy Spirit who has inspired its authors. The different books of which it is comprised bear the marks of their respective authors and the era in which they were written. The texts reflect

- the scientific knowledge of the time. In the Old Testament, the earth was the centre of the universe, and the sun and moon revolved around it. The gospels describe epilepsy as the manifestation of an evil spirit, for example.
- the social structure and the customs of the time. For Paul there was nothing revolting about slavery. Men had short hair and women had long hair.
- the personality and the concerns of their authors. Matthew sought to convince the Jews that Jesus was the fulfilment of the Old Testament. Mark wrote for the benefit of the Gentiles in a language that was simple enough for them to understand, while Luke addressed his gospel to more cultivated people in more advanced language, and emphasised the situation of women and the poor.

In order to understand the message of the Bible, it is important to take this human factor into account. Ignoring this principle and limiting oneself to the literal meaning of the text alone can lead to aberrations. In the seventeenth century, for example, the church condemned Galileo for maintaining that the earth revolved around the sun. As far as Rome was concerned, it was necessary to keep to the biblical texts (Psalm 93: 1; 104: 5; Joshua 10: 12–13), which stated that the sun revolved around the earth!

Having inspired Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit is the only one who can also unlock its proper understanding. God sent the Holy Spirit to enable human beings to know His will and to attain salvation. It is said that Galileo defended himself by explaining that the Holy Spirit had not been sent to teach the orbits of the sun and the moon, but to make us disciples of Christ. Read in the light of the Holy Spirit, the Bible shows us the way to salvation. It is not intended to replace science, nor to regulate life in society.

Jesus explained to the disciples of Emmaus that the Old Testament had to be interpreted with Him as its basis (Luke 24: 27, 44–45). For us, the content of Old Testament writings is only relevant to the extent that it conforms to





Chief Apostle. It is clearly defined in the Catechism of the New Apostolic Church and discussed in the official publications of the Church. In order to be proper and apostolic, the preaching of a minister of the New Apostolic Church must be in accordance with this doctrine.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit tells us the word of Jesus Christ, which is eternally valid (Mark 13: 31). The proper preaching of the gospel not only speaks of salvation, but also imparts salvation. Since the gospel is preached in a true and proper manner by the Apostles and the ministers ordained by them, God confirms their words.

It is therefore essential for any minister who is called to preach to sanctify himself in order to be able to understand the message of the Holy Spirit, and to impart it in the appropriate manner. Let us be aware, however, that we will always remain imperfect, despite all our efforts to sanctify ourselves. Although inspired by the Holy Spirit,

the gospel, as it has been handed down to us in the New Testament.

We believe that it is to the Apostles—in their capacity as stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Corinthians 4: 1)—that Jesus gave the power to interpret Holy Scripture. Guided by the Holy Spirit they teach us those things from the Bible that are critical for our salvation.

In accordance with the doctrine

“The preaching of the Apostles of Jesus active today is based on the statements of Holy Scripture. They are guided by the Holy Spirit in their teaching commission. ... Beyond that the Holy Spirit imparts to the apostolate new insights about God’s activity and plan of salvation, which, although intimated in Holy Scripture, have not yet been fully revealed. An important example that bears mentioning is the teaching that salvation can also be attained by the departed. On the basis of this teaching authority, it is incumbent on the Chief Apostle to proclaim such revelations of the Holy Spirit, and to declare them as binding doctrine of the New Apostolic Church” (CNAC 1.3).

The New Apostolic doctrine is therefore based on statements of the Bible and deepened, where necessary, by the present revelations of the Holy Spirit as validated by the



our preaching cannot be perfect in the sense that it would be a perfect and exclusive expression of the divine will. Our preaching will inevitably reflect our personality and our life. It will bear our mark, just like the writings of the Bible bear the mark of their authors.

Allow me to cite two examples to illustrate this.

The first is that of Apostle Paul, who advises the single members and the widows of Corinth not to get married (1 Corinthians 7: 8). Being single himself, he felt that they would thus be better able to prepare themselves for the return of the Lord (1 Corinthians 7: 32–34). He is also of the belief that it is good for a man not to have sexual relations (verse 29). Even though he points out that he did not receive an order from the Lord on this matter (verse 25), he still credits the inspiration of the Holy Spirit for allowing him to arrive at this opinion (verse 40). History has proven him wrong.

- If all the Christians had followed his advice, they would not have had any descendants, and the church would not have been able to survive.
- Today it would not occur to anyone to question the commitment of the married men and women who have served the Lord in the church.

The second example is that of Chief Apostle Bischoff. He believed firmly in the imminent return of the Lord, and was convinced that Jesus would return in his lifetime. As respectable as it was, we know today that this personal conviction should never have been elevated to the level of doctrine.

In both of these cases, the message inspired by the Holy Spirit was the same: “The Lord is coming soon! Get ready!” This message still applies! But because those who preached this message added their own personal opinion, that part of their preaching has not been confirmed.

It is not always possible, or perhaps even desirable, to banish all personal feelings from our preaching. Let us simply be sure to make a distinction between the preaching of the gospel—which derives from our ministerial author-

ity—and our own thoughts, which may or may not be as well-founded.

In the same vein, it has also happened that a minister promised a sick person that he will recover. Such a promise only reflects the compassion of the minister and his desire to encourage the person who is sick. It does not derive from his ministerial authority, and cannot be considered a true preaching of the gospel. The Lord sends us to comfort the believers, to strengthen their faith, and to prepare them for His return—not to perform miracles or even announce them.

It should also be noted that sanctification is not only incumbent on the minister who is called to preach. The believers must likewise sanctify themselves in order to profit fully from the true preaching of the gospel. If they allow themselves to be guided by the Spirit, they will be able to perceive the truth of the gospel despite the human inadequacies that may also be present in the preaching. Thus their faith will be strengthened and their souls prepared for the return of the Lord.

SUMMARY: At ordination, a minister is given the authority to properly proclaim the gospel.

The proper proclamation of the word is characterised by the fact that the sermon is consistent with the gospel and the doctrine of the New Apostolic Church. The New Apostolic doctrine results from the Apostles’ interpretation of the Bible in the power of the Spirit. Defined ultimately by the Chief Apostle, it is set forth in the official publications of the Church, particularly in the Catechism.

The minister must sanctify himself in order to recognise the divine message and impart it in unadulterated fashion. The members of the congregation must also sanctify themselves in order to perceive the message of the Spirit and be strengthened.

It's time to do good

Good news from all over. A group of young people in Europe planted trees, helpers in Asia distributed seeds in remote areas, and teachers in Africa went back to school. The stories are inspiring and encourage us to follow suit.



■ NAC SEA Relief Fund

Seeds for remote villages



Neither bad weather nor a lack of roads could stop the helpers from the NAC SEA Relief Fund from bringing seeds to those in need. On behalf of the German aid organisation NAK-karitativ, the Filipino helpers made their way to remote areas to bring corn seeds to farmers and their families. Many challenges have to be overcome before these farmers can even begin to start sowing and harvesting. In a town-hall meeting in Lake Sebu in the Philippines, the aid agency reached 756 families and distributed seeds. This was

an important contribution to combating a possible famine due to climate change, the aid organisation writes on its website.

Twenty-fifth anniversary

The congregation of Garín No. 2 in Argentina celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of its church on 13 October 2024. The preparations for the big celebration took a whole



■ NAC Argentina



Anniversary celebration



Young people engage in a tree planting project



Vanessa Schmidt

week. The brothers and sisters spruced up the church building, and organised flowers and balloons for decoration. Apostle Claudio González was among those invited to the festive service. “Dear brothers and sisters, I wish you a very happy birthday,” he began his sermon. He not only looked back on the eventful history of the congregation, but also ahead to the future: our salvation through Jesus Christ. The congregation had another reason to celebrate because it received two new ministerial gifts: the Apostle ordained two female Deacons for the congregation.

Making good use of time

A Chinese proverb says, “The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago, the second-best time is now.” In October 2024 then a group of young people from the Emden church

district in Germany got up early and decked themselves out with rubber boots and spades to make a contribution to nature and the environment. The young people planted twelve mixed fruit trees and field maples in a local community area of Brookmerland. They really enjoyed doing it.

Sunday School matters

“Sunday School matters” was the motto on the badges that the Sunday School teachers of the Somerset East district in South Africa received. Eugene Felkers, the district rector, together with Apostle Area Sunday School co-ordinators Shauneen Baatjies and Amanda Scharneck, conducted a workshop on leadership and leadership accountability at the beginning of November last year. The Sunday School teachers learned more about their role and how to lead those entrusted to them. After the presentations, the highlight of the day was to show appreciation to the Sunday School teachers for their work and dedication over the past year. In addition to the badges, the teachers received a certificate as a token of appreciation. This was followed by lunch for everyone.



A thank-you for teachers



NAC Southern Africa

Changes among the apostolate

Ordinations, appointments, assignments, and retirements—there was a little bit of everything: the second half of the year 2024 included more than 40 ministerial acts within the circle of the Apostles.



■ Marc Genoux



■ NAC Congo-West

Appointment of District Apostle Deubel in Switzerland (left) and assignment of District Apostle Helper Mukinda Mudinganyi (top) in Lubumbashi for Congo-West

Leadership change in Switzerland

After having served in ministry for some 48 years in total, District Apostle Jürg Zbinden was granted a well-deserved retirement last September. Apostle Thomas Deubel was appointed to succeed him as Church leader for the working area of Switzerland. The latter is now responsible for the brothers and sisters in Austria, Bulgaria, Cuba, the Czech Republic, Gibraltar, Hungary, Italy, Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Switzerland. Christophe Domenig was ordained as an Apostle for parts of Switzerland.

Two new District Apostle Helpers

In recent months, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider assigned two District Apostle Helpers: for the District

Apostle Area of Canada and the Democratic Republic of Congo-West. Apostle Elie Tatien Mukinda Mudinganyi will henceforth assist District Apostle Michael Deppner in Central Africa. And Apostle Arnaud Martig is to become the successor to District Apostle Mark Woll. His working area includes Bangladesh, Cambodia, Canada, the Central African Republic, Chad, India, Nepal, Pakistan, the Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Sri Lanka.

Generational change among the Apostles

In mid-July, a total of five Apostles were retired in the Democratic Republic of Congo South-East: Symphorien Mutombo, Gaston Ndaye, Médard Mbayo, Jean Sanki, and Paul Batakila. In that same divine service, the Chief Apostle went on to ordain eight new Apostles for this Dis-

Assignment of District Apostle Helper Arnaud Martig (below right) for the district of Canada



■ NAC San Francisco

trict Apostle Area. Their names are: Mujing Remy Mutond, Cibwayi Michel Sebwila, Muamba Ben Sabue, Badibanga Samuel Tshinsambi, Kabunda Bernard Katende, Mako Joseph Mutamba, Mwitwa Dominique Kapesha, and Musuyi Felecien Ilunga.

In the neighbouring working area of the Democratic Republic of Congo-West, Apostle Frederick Makaya Mbungu was retired from ministry and Philippe Kiakuma Nsukula was ordained an Apostle.

There was also a change in Ghana: Moses Otchere-Ayarkwa retired from active service in the Apostle ministry as scheduled, while Patrick Konadu Yiadom took up the ministry in his place. In Guinea, the congregations can likewise celebrate the ordination of Jacques Tolno. In addition, Ganpat Singh was ordained an Apostle in India.

Mozambique now has two new Apostles as well, namely Fernando Domingos and Dias Paulo Tesoura. In Nigeria, Emmanuel Adeyemi was ordained to the Apostle ministry, while Geoffrey Odinakachi Nwogu was retired.

In Southern Germany, Hans-Jürgen Bauer retired from ministry, while Volker Keck was ordained as the new Apostle for the area.



■ NAC Congo South-East

Ordination of eight Apostles for the Democratic Republic of the Congo South-East (top) ...



■ NAC Canada

...and three Apostles for Asia

A rather more extensive generational change has taken place in Tanzania: Apostles Joseph Celestine, George Epimack Chitemo, and Jani Leonard Malila have retired from ministry, and the newly ordained Apostles for the region are Nico Esili Mahenge, Adson Ngalinda Stewart, John Yonathan Mwedugo, and Cosmas John Maguhwa.

The same pattern of one Apostle retiring and a new one taking his place also applied to two other African countries. In Togo, it was Sédjro Kodjo Amevo who concluded his active service as an Apostle, while François Esse Yovo took his place in the Apostle ministry. And in Uganda, Pius Bitayi retired from active service in ministry as scheduled, while George William Odwori assumed the Apostle ministry in his place.

Improving the lives of the vulnerable

Around half of the people in the Central African Republic depend on humanitarian aid. And this is where OSNAC, a New Apostolic relief agency, comes in. It is taking small steps and making a big difference.

It is raining cats and dogs. But neither the young people nor the many others who have gathered in Boali in the Central African Republic seem to be bothered by it. Their joy is unbroken. With umbrellas, high-visibility vests, and printed T-shirts they make a cheerful scene despite the gloomy weather. They are attending the inauguration of a well as part of the Central African Youth Day. This pump finally gives the inhabitants of Boali access to clean drinking water, allowing for a better quality of life, a lower risk of disease, and a far better future. Shortly afterwards, the sun breaks through the clouds.

Thanks go to God and to OSNAC. The abbreviation stands for Œuvre Sociale Nouvelle Action Caritative, a new aid agency. It was founded in 2021 by the New Apostolic Church in the Central African Republic (CAR). OSNAC helps people regardless of ethnicity and religion. The aid agency presented three projects in its recently published annual report.

Displaced in their own country

The Central African Republic lies almost exactly in the centre of the African continent. It is almost as large as its neighbour South Sudan but has only 5.6 million inhabitants. The population density is just nine inhabitants per square kilometre. Most live near the many rivers in the south-west of the country, where the temperatures are more moderate and there is more biodiversity. The tropical rainforest grows in the south, while the north with its savannas has a hot semi-arid climate. And there are diamonds and uranium: the Central African Republic has a wealth of natural resources. However, in 2019 it was also third last on the Human Development Index, which looks at poverty and wealth in a total of 190 countries.

After the colonial era, the country was plunged into many crises and today rebels and militias fight each other. A path toward stabilisation is almost impossible: the losses and the



Inauguration of a borehole pump in the pouring rain



Arnaud Martig

desire for revenge on both sides are too great. As a matter of fact, incursions and spillovers from neighbouring countries exacerbated the conflict—and there was no help from the rest of the world. The grim statistics of a few aid organisations that are still on the ground: around half of all people in the Central African Republic need humanitarian aid and over a fifth are displaced—limiting their access to essential services. The people are refugees in their own country.

Don't look the other way

The New Apostolic Church in the country and in Canada (District Apostle Mark Woll is pastorally responsible for the Central African Republic) is not looking the other way. With OSNAC, the Church wants to help the local people both with humanitarian aid and in the longer term.

The borehole pump, which was overhauled at the Boali Comprehensive School in cooperation with the New Apostolic Church Canada, was reinaugurated in August 2023 at the local Day of the Youth. The aid organisation describes what all had to happen before it could be reinstalled. A detailed inspection of the pump ensued. Once the problems were identified, all the defective components were replaced. All parts of the pump were thoroughly cleaned to remove sand, mud, and other contaminants that could affect its operation. The pump was then tested to ensure it was functioning properly. Parameters such as water flow, pressure, and energy consumption were checked and adjusted accordingly. After successful tests, the repaired pump was handed over during the Day of the Youth and a committee was set up to monitor and maintain the pump so that the local people would be able to enjoy the benefits of clean water for a long time to come. Children, teachers, and neighbours are happy to have access to clean water.

OSNAC also came one step closer to its goal of making high-quality education accessible to children and adults last year on 15 October. Some 200 school kits were handed over to orphans, who are often disadvantaged in terms of education. The school kits motivate and encourage the children and relieve the financial burden on their families.

Going where poverty is worst

The aid agency responded to severe flooding in Bimbo in January 2024. The Oubangui River had burst its banks in Mpoko-Back near Bimbo, leaving devastation in its wake. Hundreds were affected: houses, shops, chicken fences, and more were under water and destroyed. OSNAC responded



Many people in the Central African Republic live in extreme poverty. The aid organisation OSNAC is on the ground and doing its share to help where it can

quickly. On 12 January, the helpers distributed non-food items. The kits contained cooking utensils, hygiene products, and urgently needed medicine. On the ground, the helpers kept their eyes open to see if they could organise any further aid that was needed. In the worst affected areas, OSNAC was able to help two hundred flood victims with the kits and provide further assistance to another fifty people who had been impacted severely. This was all made possible by a donation from the New Apostolic Church of the Central African Republic.

The aid organisation wrote afterwards: “The year 2023 was marked by OSNAC’s sustained efforts to meet the needs of vulnerable people in the Central African Republic. Thanks to our partners and volunteers, we have been able to carry out significant projects in the areas of water, education, and humanitarian aid. We remain determined to continue our mission and make a positive difference in the lives of those most in need.”

| A sign of God's consistent care

Since the end of October last year, liturgy is literally an open book in the New Apostolic Church: all prescriptions for divine services can be found on nak.org, the official website of the Church.



■ Marcel Felde

The term “liturgy”, which derives from the ancient Greek word *leiturgeia* (“public service”), denotes the prescribed sequence of the divine service, as well as the words, actions, and gestures it involves. But why do we need something like this in the first place?

“People tend to think that the liturgy was prescribed so that there is order and that things are the same everywhere. The real purpose, however, is something entirely different,” Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider explained a while ago. “The liturgy, because it is always the same, is a sign to the faithful that God is reliable: ‘See, no matter what happens in your life, no matter what happens on earth, I am the Lord and I do not change. I am here.’”

Changing tradition

This means that liturgy is as much a part of Christianity as the Amen we say in church. Indeed, this expression of affirmation is one of the oldest liturgical formulae documented in the New Testament.

The specifics of the structure and sequence of a divine service are characterised by the particular time and its circumstances. The New Apostolic tradition ranges from the liturgy book of the Catholic Apostolic Church (1843) to the so-called Stechmann liturgy (1864) and the Wachmann liturgy (1895) to the most recent liturgical reform in the years 2010 to 2020.

One step at a time

During these ten years, specifications for New Apostolic divine services were published step by step. In 2010, 2013, 2015, and 2020 four separate volumes of the *Divine Service Guide* for ministers were published on the subject.

Apart from the fact that these publications had all been written by changing groups of authors, a lot had happened in the meantime. In 2012, the Catechism was published as the most comprehensive presentation of the New Apostolic doctrine to date. To this end, our definition of ministry was analysed and revised more fundamentally than ever before.

Pieced together

With this in mind, the *Divine Service Guide* working group was asked to bring together and harmonise the previous prescriptions and order of worship. “The adaptations mainly concern the following points,” the Chief Apostle writes in a circular to the Apostles.

- uniform language
- adaptation to the Catechism and our new concept of ministry
- omitting of canon law aspects (*Guide for Ministers*)
- explanations on Holy Sealing and ordination

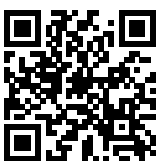
Noteworthy too about the last point is the fact that this is the first time that the liturgical requirements for acts which are reserved solely for the ministerial authority of an Apostle are publicly documented.

Online and available for download

Liturgy of the New Apostolic Church is the name of the new publication. It covers everything from divine services with their usual elements to special forms such as services for the departed, the dedication and decommissioning of churches, as well as weddings and funerals. The dispensation of the sacraments and acts of blessing have been given their own chapter, as have acts in connection with ministry and service.

The complete text—as well as the *Catechism of the New Apostolic Church* and the *Guide for Ministers*—can be found online at nak.org, the main website of the New Apostolic Church International. It is also possible to download a 99-page PDF file containing photos to illustrate the acts.

The book is available in English, French, German, and Spanish. Other languages will be made available by the District Apostle Areas themselves.



To the *Liturgy of the New Apostolic Church*

Also on nak.org



Written in faith for people of faith: the *Catechism of the New Apostolic Church* is the doctrinal reference book on the New Apostolic profession. It is the normative and most systematic description of the Church’s doctrine to date.

The *Catechism of the New Apostolic Church in Questions and Answers* has been prepared in methodical-didactical format in order to facilitate access to the content of the CNAC. This will also make it possible to impart the doctrine in a suitable manner through church instruction around the world. By way of 750 questions and answers, readers are taken by the hand, so to speak, and led from one statement to the next in a manner that is easy to understand.

The *Guide for Ministers* is also intended to promote the unity of the Church and impart security in church activities. It represents a global framework that largely guarantees the required flexibility and the necessary room to manoeuvre. The scope of its provisions takes into account the cultural differences that exist around the world, and allows the Regional Churches to issue additional regulations for their working areas.

What does the New Apostolic Church have to say about things like fasting, gene therapy, or ecumenism? What is the Church emblem all about, and what is Holy Sealing? Concrete answers to concrete questions from A to Z can be found in the glossary. These range from theological aspects of Church doctrine to the medical and ethical problems of daily life.

The *Media Centre* contains videos of the New Year’s messages from previous years, the Statutes of the New Apostolic Church International, photos, and much more.

DISTRICT APOSTLE MICHAEL EHRICH: Trust in God

Dear brothers and sisters,

In the Book of Psalms we read: *“You hold me by my right hand”* (second part of Psalm 73:23). Despite all the doubts, despite the inner struggles and temptations (*“Thus my heart was grieved, And I was vexed in my mind”*, verse 21), the psalmist remains with God.

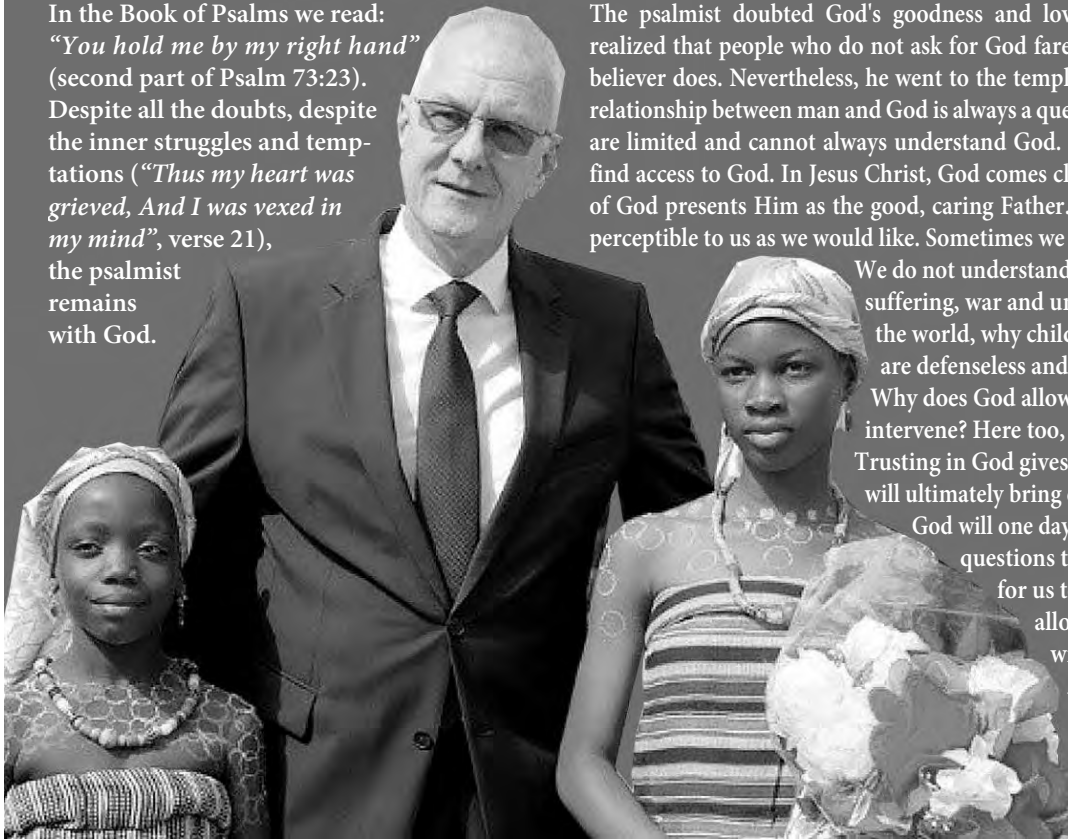
The psalmist doubted God's goodness and love. He was unhappy and realized that people who do not ask for God fare much better than he, the believer does. Nevertheless, he went to the temple and prayed to God. The relationship between man and God is always a question of trust. We humans are limited and cannot always understand God. Only through faith do we find access to God. In Jesus Christ, God comes close to us, because the Son of God presents Him as the good, caring Father. But God is not always as perceptible to us as we would like. Sometimes we do not understand him.

We do not understand why God allows so much suffering, war and unfavorable conditions in the world, why children starve, why people are defenseless and at the mercy of others. Why does God allow this? Why does He not intervene? Here too, trust in God is the key. Trusting in God gives us the certainty that he will ultimately bring everything out and heal it. God will one day provide answers to all the questions that are still unanswered for us today. Our trust in God allows us to always remain with God.

With warmest regards,

Yours

M. Ehrich
Michael Ehrich



BENIN:

Let us trust in God

From Saturday 19 to Sunday 20 April, the brothers and sisters of the Comé and Grand-Popo districts met to celebrate Easter. The theme was “Trust in God”. A festive divine service was held on Sunday by Lead Apostle Vincent Yedenou, assisted by Apostle Justin Olou. The text was taken from Genesis 15:6: “From our trust in Christ, we draw the strength to stand on the path to the kingdom of heaven”. At the end of the divine service, the young people and women enlivened the day with various folkloric events.



The young people were happily to experienced Easter with the Apostles

TOGO:

Expressing trust in God

The Dabada Condji congregation from the Togolese district of Lomé Centre is pursuing the bold dream of founding an orchestra. Despite initial skepticism, the music project was built on trust in God. The first steps of the orchestra were dedicated to theoretical training, introduction to musical notation and learning instruments. The orchestra gave its first public performance at Easter. It used music as a means of expressing trust in God.



The newly formed orchestra at its first performance at Easter



The Brass Ensemble in the Easter Sunday service

GHANA: Sounds of Tema

Towards the end of 2023, the community of Tema congregation decided to found a brass-band. However, there was a challenge: the congregation had limited funds to finance the ensemble, buy instruments and hire an instructor. It was the rector's prayer request to mobilize funds. Without his knowledge, two brothers agreed to support the project. Today, the Tema Brass Ensemble is a shining example of trust in our heavenly Father. He can move hearts and provide help.



The Tema Brass Ensemble invited to the Accra Central congregation



Lead Apostle O.Nwanza and Apostle G.Gwani after the divine service

NIGERIA: Rewarded trust

Our brothers and sisters in the Abuja congregation have been praying for many years for a new location near the Airport Road Axis, given the distance between their homes and the nearest church. Faith and trust in God were rewarded for the brothers and sisters in Lugbe: a location was found and a new church building was constructed. To the great joy of the brothers and sisters, the Lead Apostle conducted a divine service in the newly dedicated church in Lugbe. This experience resulted in great praise to God.



Ministers in the newly opened Lugbe congregation in Abuja

SIERRA LEONE: Praise the Lord

Singing in the choir, praying instruments or conducting and other activities, are building blocks for great trust in the Lord. It is in this regard, like many other congregations that the Congo Town congregation in Makeni, North of Sierra Leone, recently organized a choir/musical festival. Apostle Tamba Bangura and many other ministers participated to promote the youth. When the choir sings, accompanied by instruments one would imagine the time, commitment and devotion



Congo Town choir pose

choristers take to let out melodious renditions, to God's glory and to the spiritual upliftment and amusement of the congregation.

When we are faithful in deep trust of God, we proclaim and profess His will not only by preaching but singing songs of praise to Him.

Trusting the Lord, leads us in the preparation of divine fellowship now and await the praise and worship of heaven upon Christ's return for His own.



Apostle Tamba Bangura giving certificate of appreciation



The choir in action



The Libreville congregation discussing trust in God

GABON: Strengthening trust

In an effort to strengthen their faith, brothers and sisters in Libreville gathered to share their experiences on "trusting God." Led by district ministers, participants learned that trusting God means relying entirely on Him, even without seeing results, according to Proverbs 3:5-6. Three traits of a trusting believer were highlighted: faithfulness, hope, and love. Through real-life stories, the faithful understood that trusting God brings peace, strength, stability, and attracts divine favor.



Impression of the congregational meeting

GUINEA: Praying with trust

The 14 years old Sunday school boy Michel reports: "After searching for the key to my mini box for quite a while with my older sister Angeline, unsuccessfully and discouraged, I remembered my Sunday school lesson on the effects of prayer in faith. I immediately began to pray with tears, and my prayer was answered. My joy was great and also my gratitude that after so much fear and uncertainty, I could finally find the key to the mini box at the foot of the sofa."



Michel and his mother are grateful for the recovered key



Joyful members after divine services with Apostle Ignatius Chi Nche.

CAMEROON: Proven trust!

Our brothers and sisters in the Ambombo, Eka and Ngala congregations in the Bussam district of northwest Cameroon were excited to welcome an Apostle for the first time in six years. The encounters with the local Apostle, Ignatius Chi Nche, were filled with overwhelming gladness



Lead Apostle Oscar Nwanza (left) and Apostle Ignatius Chi Nche

and gratitude. In the midst of terrible armed conflicts, during which regular divine services could not take place for a long time, our brothers and sisters impressively demonstrated their trust in God.

GHANA: Two prayers, one answer

Shepherd Kwapong, the Rector of the Osu congregation, prayed in his heart for a willing learner to take up a trumpet the congregation had bought as part of their orchestra. Far away in DR Congo, Brother Exaus had requested to carry along a trumpet from his congregation to serve at Osu. That request was denied. Both did not give up and trusted in God for an answer.

As divinely arranged, Brother Exaus arrived in Accra and shared his story with the Shepherd.



Brother Exaus blowing the trumpet

The Osu rector, not hesitating, silently brought out the 'abandoned' trumpet and handed it surprisingly over to Brother Exaus. Both of them happily recognized, that this was God's answer to their prayers.



Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider at the altar



Chief Apostle posing with the children before the divine service

NIGERIA:

“...called to be a Blessing”

Chief Apostle Jean Luc Schneider’s visit to Nigeria from February 28 to March 2, 2025, was filled with joy and blessings. He was accompanied by District Apostles Michael Ehrich (South Germany), Kububa Soko (Zambia), Lead Apostles Benjamin Saffo, Yedenou, Leno, Oscar Nwanza and several Apostles.

On March 1, the day before the festive service, several ensembles performed a festive concert at Freedom Park, Lagos, to emphasize the importance of the divine service for the departed.

On March 2, over 2,000 people attended the special divine service at Lagos Central Church, which was broadcast nationwide. The Chief Apostle’s sermon centered on Genesis 50:20: “But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive”. God’s good plans include both the living and the departed. The Chief Apostle highlighted Joseph’s story as an example of faith and forgiveness, urging believers to trust in God’s promises and to remain faithful. Sacraments for the departed were also



Chief Apostle and District Apostle with the choir after the concert



The choir and orchestra during the divine service

TOGO / BENIN / GHANA:

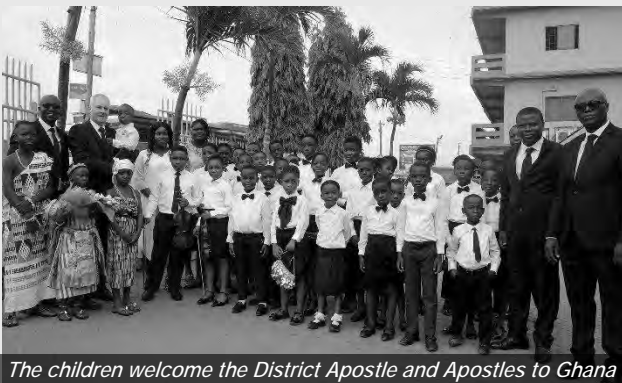
A blessed journey

On January 22, District Apostle Michael Ehrich conducted a festive divine service in Lomé, Togo. His journey then took him to Cotonou, Benin. There he conducted another divine service on January 23. His last stop was Accra, the capital of Ghana. Here he held an Apostle and Bishop meeting. The crowning finale was the festive divine service in the central church in Accra on Sunday, January 25. On his trip through Togo, Benin and Ghana, the District Apostle retired a total of 15 district ministers and assigned 27 new ones.

SIERRA LEONE:

Help for spiritual growth

On April 3, 2025, District Apostle Ehrich traveled to Bo, where he conducted a divine service. Some ministers from Liberia and that part of the country were appointed or assigned as district and deputy district rectors. On April 4, Apostles and their spouses met in Kissy to discuss community responsibilities and preparation for the return of Christ. The visit concluded on April 5 with a music concert in Goderich and a festive divine service in Freetown, broadcast via YouTube. Some District Leaders were appointed and assigned as District Leaders.



The children welcome the District Apostle and Apostles to Ghana



A pose after the ministers and wives meeting at Kissy

SOUTHERN GERMANY: Divine service with the District Apostle

On March 23, 2025, District Apostle Michael Ehrich conducted a divine service in Munich-Laim (Southern Germany), accompanied by all Southern German Apostles and Bishops.

The divine service could be followed live in the District Apostle's European working area and online on YouTube.

Bible text:

“Then He said to *them* all, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me’.”
(Luke 9:23)

Core thoughts:

The District Apostle emphasized that Jesus addressed his words to everyone - and therefore the call to follow Him applies to everyone, regardless of their circumstances. The close bond with Jesus Christ is the essence of our faith. It is therefore important to detach ourselves from all other dependencies and attachments - be it to material goods or other people. ‘Our faith should not be dependent on anything or anyone except Jesus Christ alone,’ said the District Apostle.

Serious discipleship means acting like Jesus: He was single-minded and focussed on his mission. Our mission as Christians is to proclaim the gospel without being pushy. Jesus was compassionate; He performed miracles because He was moved by people's suffering. We should also show compassion and build bridges. Jesus was also a pastor and cared for the soul of his neighbour - that is a task for the entire congregation.

In conclusion, the District Apostle spoke about the statement ‘and take up his cross’. The cross is the central symbol of Christianity and stands for sacrifice and devotion. Some things have to be consciously given up in order to consistently follow Jesus. Even if following is sometimes difficult, it is essential, underlined the District Apostle.

